

THE CONSTANT GARDNER  
A memoir of Colin Oxenham Gardner,  
anti-apartheid activist and academic

**Mary Gardner**  
with contributions from comrades and colleagues



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*The Constant Gardner*

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Colin was a very sincere, consistent, immensely decent person

—*Yunus Carrim*  
*activist and member of the South African Parliament*





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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AUETSA	Association of University English Teachers of South Africa
AZASO	Azanian Students Organisation
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
CALS	Centre for African Literary Studies
CCB	Civil Co-operation Bureau
CCSA	Community Chest of South Africa
CDF	Conference for a Democratic Future
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CSU	Catholic Students Union
DESCOM	Detainees Support Committee (Pietermaritzburg, later Detainees Aid Committee)
DFC	distinguished flying cross
DP	Democratic Party
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
ECC	End Conscription Campaign
FEDSEM	Federal Theological Seminary
FFF	Five Freedoms Forum
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDASA	Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa
JASA	Joint Academic Staff Association (of the University of Natal)
LDA	Liberal Democratic Association
MASA	Medical Association of South Africa
MEDUNSA	Medical University of South Africa
MIDI	Msunduzi Innovation and Development Institute
NAMDA	National Medical and Dental Association
NCFS	National Catholic Federation of Students
NECC	National Education Co-ordinating Committee
NIC	Natal Indian Congress
NIS	National Intelligence Service
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
PACSA	Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness
PDA	Pietermaritzburg Democratic Alliance
PFP	Progressive Federal Party
PMBCC	Pietermaritzburg Council of Churches
PTBA	part-time BA
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SAPA	South African Press Association
SB	Security Branch (of the South African Police)

SCA	Students Christian Association
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London)
SRC	Students Representative Council
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDUSA	Union of Democratic University Staff Associations
UDW	University of Durban-Westville
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNIBO	University of Bophuthatswana
UNISA	University of South Africa
UNIZUL	University of Zululand
UNP	University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg)
UTASA	University Teachers Association of South Africa
UWW	United World Way
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand
W/O	warrant officer

## **PREFACE**

This is a memoir written by Mary Gardner, interspersed with the thoughts of others, directly and indirectly reported. Then there is the voice of Colin, which is printed in indented passages.

Apart from Mary the main contributors to this book are: Babu Baijoo, city councillor who took over as Speaker of the Msunduzi Municipality after Colin; Bill Bizley, who was a colleague of Colin's in the English Department at the University of Natal; Yunus Carrim, a fellow activist and ANC member of the national parliament; Bill Guest, a university colleague from the Department of Historical Studies; Ben Dikobe Martins, a poet, ANC member of parliament and a former political prisoner; and Christopher Merrett, a fellow member of the Detainees Support Committee (DESCOM), 1986–1991 and who served as secretary to both the Joint Academic Staff Association of the University of Natal (JASA) and the University Teachers Association of South Africa (UTASA) while Colin was chairperson from 1983 to 1988.





## FOREWORD

When Colin Gardner died in 2013, friends and colleagues lamented the fact that he had not written his autobiography. For decades, Colin had been an anti-apartheid activist. He was both a witness and a role player in just about every aspect of the struggle for freedom, particularly in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. His wife, Mary, took on the challenge, writing this memoir. With the skill of a nifty crafter, she has woven the multiple strands of Colin's life – academic, activist, poet, politician, son, father, husband and friend – all of this, against a backdrop of his committed Catholicism.

This book may have its gaps; for example, readers may want to know more about Colin's time as a city councillor under the new democratic dispensation. However, it must be borne in mind that this is Mary's recollection. She could not always be fully involved in Colin's activities, especially as she took on more of the responsibility of running the home and her own career as a senior English teacher. What Mary does offer is a deeply insightful glimpse into Colin's personality and the struggles he endured to live up to his own personal ideals.

The title of the book, *The Constant Gardner*, borrowed from the John le Carré novel, could not be more apt. What shines through in this memoir is the consistency of Colin's commitment to his activism and to making the world a better place. His life was not easy, dogged throughout by personal challenges. Despite this, he remained a consistent advocate, no matter the cost, to champion the ideals of justice, caring and decency. Yes, Colin was constant. Whether he was asked to lead a protest march; deliver eulogies at funerals of victims of violence; or support detainees and families affected by forced removals, he never said no. He was a constant presence on the frontline of the anti-apartheid struggle.

The richness of this account is due in large part to the relationship between Mary and Colin. As a friend Else Schreiner says, 'We never thought of you as two separately, but always as a couple. Somehow both strongly independent at the same time a vital part of each other.' Mary Gardner's memoir is not just the story of an extraordinary human being, it is a welcome addition to the written history of South Africa.

*Nalini Naidoo*  
*Journalist and activist*



# 1

## FATHER AND CHILDHOOD

Why do I speak so loudly to my father?  
A deep conviction tells me that I'd rather  
be my full self than merely a bequest.  
My noise shows that my self is under test.

It is usual, perhaps, to begin a biography with the birth of the person whose life one is writing about. In this case, though, I am going to begin with the life of Colin's father, Dr William Henry Gardner: his influence upon Colin was great, as is suggested in the verse with which the chapter begins.

When I was a little girl, I saw the old film *The Lady with the Lamp*, the story of Florence Nightingale, which left an enduring impression of that horrifying Crimean War; and what do I discover? Some seemed to think that Colin's grandfather on his father's side fought in it, in the 1850s about 170 years ago. Did he? He was of an age to have done so.



*Colin's father, William Gardner*

Unfortunately, Colin could not have asked his grandfather. Henry George Gardner, head gardener at Dulwich Park in Dulwich Village, London, born in 1832 was 70 when his son, William Henry, was born in 1902. Henry's first wife had died and he then married Annie Oxenham, much younger than he was. He died when William was still a small boy. Left to bring up William, Annie took on a job as cook to a wealthy family as she could keep her son with her. Among other duties, she cooked eight breakfasts every morning. Henry had other children from his previous marriage, but they were almost middle-aged and scattered and William never met them. William, or Will as he was called, went to primary school, as even poor children did then. The problem

arose when he turned fourteen, as he would then have had to attend a fee-paying grammar school, which poor children could not afford. He was very intelligent and had no intention of leaving school. Instead, he joined Wilson's Grammar School in Camberwell on a scholarship. He was older than the other boys and had not studied a foreign language, which worried his headmaster, who later described his progress as 'extraordinarily rapid' and was sorry to lose him as he left to teach in 1921. He had attained honours in the London Schools Examination, his subjects including French and German. He was also a school prefect.

He was a good sportsman and played both football and cricket for South London Schools and was junior fencing champion. There are numerous school stories about him. I cannot vouch for the truth of them, but they were certainly part of family legend. He was waiting to bat once, reading. An English teacher asked, 'Gardner, what are you reading?' 'Old English,' he replied. 'Join my class tomorrow morning,' said the teacher, in those pre-bureaucratic days. He studied Latin and Greek in the lobby, telling the French teacher that he was studying German and the German teacher that he was studying French, as he felt that he had sufficiently mastered both those languages for the purpose of writing an examination, as indeed he had. He entered a scholarship exam and was beaten by Winifred (Winnie) Markby, from Sydenham High School, whom he later married. His classmates were so disgusted they chased him all round the cricket pitch.

'I didn't take up the scholarship,' said Winnie. 'It was for a teaching diploma and I did not want to have to stay single so that I could teach'; a requisite in those days for women teachers. Winnie's father was involved in shipping insurance. She became a shorthand typist, employed in a business on the banks of the Thames, and was one of the crowds T.S. Eliot describes as walking over London Bridge and back every day. She enjoyed life as a young woman in London. Years later, I once said that if she found herself suddenly in a group of Eskimos (Inuit), she would manage a lively exchange with her interest in people and her vitality.

Will Gardner taught as an assistant master at a school in Northamptonshire while studying privately at London University for his BA Honours, which he gained in 1925. Writing a testimonial for him, Walter Harvey MA (Cantab), headmaster, described him as 'a man of very high ideals and unblemished character ... winning the esteem and affection of the boys'. He acquired other skills during his years as a schoolteacher. I once asked him how he had learned to be such a skilful carver of roasts and he replied that he had had to carve,

somewhat parsimoniously, for seventy very hungry, impatient boarders. He had to produce plays, some of which were comedies he wrote himself, and do all the other things required of an English teacher, as well as coach sport, all of which he did very successfully. He moved to a school in King's Norton, but was not content with being an English schoolmaster as he felt the impetus to study, so he decided to enrol for a Ph.D. John Hyde met him when they applied for a post for which neither was accepted, and was then appointed with him to Richmond and East Sheen County School for Boys in 1927. He taught with him until 1947 and said of him: 'the hardest-working and the most modest schoolmaster I have ever met'. In 1928 he married Winifred Millicent Markby and they settled in East Sheen. Their family houses backed onto each other. According to Winnie's niece, Sheila, they had become friendly when they were both working in the back gardens of their houses and Winnie threw a brick over the wall and hit Will. As was normal until fairly recently, she gave up her job when she married and settled into the life of a housewife. She managed the finances and ran the family, and her knowledge of shorthand and typing came in useful as she helped in the preparation of Will's books. Their first son, Paul Markby, was born in 1931.

Will maintained his interest in literature and published articles, notably one on *The Mayor of Casterbridge* in 1930. He also published a book of poems *Salamander in Spring and other Poems* in 1933. But he was also working towards his Ph.D.

Perhaps because of his interest in languages, and therefore in words, he had become fascinated by the poetry of Gerald Manley Hopkins, a Roman Catholic Jesuit priest, whose poetry was innovative and unconventional, not always easy to understand, and at that time still not much appreciated. Although Hopkins had died in 1889, it was only 25 years later in 1914 that his poetry had first been published. In Will's own words, when his book was published: 'My serious work on Hopkins began ten years ago (in 1934) and was originally determined by two desires: first, to produce a book which would enable others to follow, with profit, my own efforts to understand this puzzling and strangely exhilarating poet – to share, in fact, my growing admiration for his rare individual qualities; second, to cover my chosen ground with such thoroughness that my work would satisfy university requirements as a thesis for a doctorate in philosophy.' He quoted two lines that rang in his head: 'The grey lawns cold, where gold, where quickgold lie'; and 'Didst fettle for the great grey drayhorse his bright and battering sandal.'

This turned out to be a much greater task than he had envisaged. In order to understand Hopkins, he felt he had to comprehend fully Hopkins' beliefs and the Jesuit way of life. He was supported in this by members of the Jesuit community, became very friendly with some of them, and was given every help and encouragement by them and by relatives of Hopkins. Reading Old English while he had been waiting to bat was now enormously helpful to him. He also studied Welsh as Hopkins had spent time in Wales. The effect on his life and, eventually, on Colin's was significant. It led, among other things, to his and his family's conversion to Roman Catholicism. Colin recalls:

My father took me to a Catholic Mass – he wanted to give me a choice of whether I wanted to go or not – and I was so enchanted when at the consecration they rang the bells ... It was actually that, that made me become a Catholic. Much later Archbishop Hurley asked me how do you spell bell(e)? which I think was quite funny.

It took two volumes to analyse, explain and do justice to Hopkins. Publishing the volumes was delayed by World War II and the shortage of paper, so that the first edition was published only in 1944, one hundred years after Hopkins' birth. In 1934, the year in which he began writing, Will's second son, Colin Oxenham, was born so the real beginning of his work on Hopkins and the birth of his second son coincided. He was awarded his Ph.D. Will began to publish articles on Hopkins, the first in 1936. His third child, Susan Janet, was born in 1939. She was physically and mentally challenged and suffered from childhood arthritis and poor eye co-ordination. She was difficult to categorise, as part of her mind remained childish but part was quite intelligent and imaginative. A cousin of mine once smuggled an eagle from South Africa to Rhodesia as it was then called. Hearing this, Susan immediately said: 'It isn't legal/ to smuggle an eagle.' She asked her father to write a limerick using the word Niagara. He obliged, rhyming it with piagra. Colin, many years later, said of her, 'A remarkable instance of two minds: poetic, alive, a good vocabulary; another part trivial. At her best an equal to my mother – and more original.'

*Colin, aged about 5, East Sheen, 1939*



They lived an ordinary suburban life, going to the seaside for holidays or into the country and, as the boys grew older, playing in the streets and on the common with their friends. At the beach, Colin kept disappearing, so they had to attach a placard to his costume (fairly voluminous in those days) saying in what part of the beach his family were located – near which breakwater, with the woman wearing the orange shirt. Winnie's sister, Kath Mahon, helped keep an eye on Colin as Winnie had her hands full with Susan. It was on occasions like these that Colin became particularly friendly with his cousin, Sheila Mahon. As Winnie had only one sister and she had only two children, Sheila about Colin's age, Moira Mahon, later Pugh, far younger, they did not have big family gatherings, but they must have enjoyed visiting Annie Gardner with her cooking skills. Colin describes his grandparents:

My father's father died long before I was born. My father's mother I don't remember very well: she was pleasant, but always seemed to me a bit stern. My mother's father was a rather grumpy person, whom as a child I didn't take to much. He was also diabetic, and had had a series of operations on one of his legs which culminated in his having the leg amputated. He lived to a fairly advanced age, and was still alive, though by then blind (another result of diabetes), when I was on vacation from Oxford. I used to take him for walks in Dulwich Village. He was by then a mellowed friendly man. As we walked he pointed out to me the various sites and old buildings: he knew the place by heart. My mother's mother was a delightfully kind sympathetic person. We loved her – and my father, her son-in-law, used to say that she was a saint.

Paul joined Cubs, but Colin, faced with a bucket of potatoes to peel, decided against it. Paul developed a love of London, a skill at telling somewhat exaggerated stories and an eye for absurdities. His Scout training made him good at camping, cooking over campfires and adventuring; as a student he spent many holidays climbing and camping in the Drakensberg, later caravanning in France. Their father used to tell them marvellous bedtime stories, elaborate and imaginative. They suspected that if he had published his stories, he might have made more money than he did from his Hopkins books! His parents worried about Colin; he was a quiet boy and could spend hours entertaining Susan. At one time they feared that he might be a little slow himself and were amazed and reassured when his first school report described him as 'one of the cleverest boys that the teacher had encountered'. It was quite a difficult time



for Winnie as Will was working very hard and she carried the burden of three young children, but uncomplainingly as she understood and appreciated her husband's interests. And then began World War II, declared in September of the year in which Susan was born.

Gradually everything changed. Life became much harder for Winnie. Susan had to have frequent visits to the hospital and that meant a bus journey with a bulky pram, a gas mask and emergency supplies in case there was an air raid. Rationing was introduced with queues in order to buy essentials. Each member of the family was allowed a weekly ration of things like butter, bread, sugar, meat, eggs and tea and most other food was in short supply. Susan had to be lugged to the queues as there was no one to leave her with, or the boys were sent if they were not at school. Clothes were rationed, too, and this was difficult with Paul who was very adventurous, and outgrew clothes at a great rate, and Colin who played soccer. Colin was quite small until he suddenly put on a great spurt of growing in his early teens. When people visited friends or family, they had to take their rations with them and the host family was hard put to it to provide cakes – sometimes liquid paraffin (the medicinal kind) was used to make cakes. In addition, there were seasonal shortages. Most families had an allotment some distance from their houses where they were able to grow vegetables and keep chickens, and the boys worked there. Will would have benefited from what he had learned from his father. Nothing was wasted. Almost the only thing that went into the dustbins was dust. There was even a pig tin in all the streets provided with vegetable peelings. Children were given Horlicks tablets for extra nourishment and Colin liked Horlicks. I remember seeing some in a chemist once and buying them for him as a treat.

Long before the outbreak of war, it became apparent that it was inevitable and preparations began. Germany had been preparing for war; Britain had not and now had to catch up. For the first time in history, towns were vulnerable from the air and the sea no longer protected Britain from attack. The blackout was introduced, curtains allowing no slit of light through, headlamps were masked and streetlights were doused. How did you get around after dark? There were white strips near the ground on lampposts, cars had a strip of white paint painted on their sides, policemen wore white sleeves and ordinary people wore gloves with white on the palms. Air raid shelters were built in the streets, even in private houses and gardens. There was a Morrison shelter under the dining room table in the Gardner house and an Anderson shelter in the garden. Signposts were removed so that in the case of a parachute attack there would be no indication of which direction to go to find places. Remembering one of



the horrors of World War I, gas masks were distributed to every person in the country and children took them to school with their satchels and lunchboxes.

For parents it was a harrowing time. The family was spared one fear: teachers were not encouraged to join the army as teaching was considered an essential service, but many of them joined the Home Guard or became air raid wardens, which involved working after hours and at night, sometimes all night. Will joined the Civil Defence, became an air raid warden, deputy post warden and incident officer and was on the Territorial Reserve of Officers, but continued his work on Hopkins. He must have had very little sleep, especially when there were attacks in the neighbourhood: 'He spent whole nights on duty throughout the war,' says his friend Hyde. The wardens were expected to check that everybody observed the blackout, put out fires where they could, rescue people from bombed buildings – often itself a dangerous task – and provide tea and comfort to stressed people. They would be on duty until the all-clear siren sounded. Colin was five when World War II broke out.

I lived in East Sheen, in south-west London. I can locate Sheen now, of course, a pleasantly leafy district, in relation to the rest of London and the rest of Britain and the world; but then it was simply where I lived, and the world didn't stretch far beyond the few suburban streets, lined with semi-detached, grey-brick houses, that I got to know by being wheeled by my mother in a pram, and later by walking, usually by her side.

I remember the moment of the declaration of war, with everyone clustered round the old brown wireless set. Something big had happened which I didn't understand, but it was somehow both frightening and exciting. My brother, Paul, three years older than me, knew more about it (as he always seemed to know more about everything) but he used his knowledge, such as it was, both to impress me and to frighten me a bit more.

But by the time of the blitz on London in 1940 I knew exactly what was going on. The Germans were the enemy – motivated by the kind of evil which seemed inherent in the very notion of being German – and they sent their bombers over London every night. My mother, my brother, my baby sister, Susan, and I used to sleep in the Anderson shelter, half submerged in our little back garden, just next to the monkey-puzzle tree. My father was a leading air raid warden and seemed to spend many nights dealing with emergencies in the streets.

For anyone who lived through the war in Britain, the most haunting sounds – sounds etched forever on one's soul – were those of the sirens. There were two sounds. First, that denoting an air-raid, when the siren was switched on, and then off, and then on, and then off again, and so on and off, producing a sickening rising and falling, a fresh start followed by a slump, a wail followed by a whine, like a ghastly psychic switchback ride. That sound came to symbolise all that was dreary and ghastly. The other sound was the all-clear, and was a single unbroken sound. How wonderful that came to feel: it seemed to gather within itself all that one associated with happiness, calmness and beauty.

Our part of London was not bombed as heavily as many other parts, but I was often woken up in the night by the noise. The loudest sounds and the greatest shakings of the earth came, I soon realised with relief, from the anti-aircraft guns stationed in nearby Richmond Park. (It was only after the war that I discovered that they were largely bluster and seldom shot down enemy planes.) But the sounds of aircraft often woke me too. 'Are those our planes or theirs?' I used to ask my mother. 'Ours,' she would reply firmly. Later I realised fully that she couldn't have known, but I suspect that even then I was dimly aware that I was allowing myself to be reassured. My question and her answer were a ritual, but it was a ritual that permitted me to go back to sleep.

I recall the night when the London docks were set on fire. My father, conscious that this must be an historic moment, woke us and led us stumbling from the shelter out into the chilly garden to see the great red glow in the sky. To me it was mainly a visual sensation though I was told that it was momentous.

In the dark of the night, then, the war was pretty scary, but during the day it was often fun. On the way to school we used to search the gutters and pavements for pieces of shrapnel, and the boy who brought in the largest chunk of metal (it was a co-ed school but this seems to have been a boys' game) was the unofficial class champion for the day. We used to impress one another with stories of what we'd heard and occasionally seen during the night: a lot of what we said was boys' exaggerations and lies.

In many respects my primary school years during the war were probably pretty normal. Certainly, the authorities managed to keep

the schools operating efficiently, and, looking back, I don't think anyone could have had a much better education than I got at my state school during those years of war. But permeating and round the edges of what was I suppose the normality of school routines, there was always the drama of war. Partly there was the constant awareness that it was going on: even if nothing special had happened in Sheen—and between the blitz of 1940 followed by the heavy raids of 1941 and the flying bomb attacks of later 1944 there were long periods of nothing-in-particular; there were always the news broadcasts and the newspapers (I used to glance at them at times) telling of the great events taking place elsewhere.

But the war never left Sheen for long. In those early years of the Blitz, when we looked for shrapnel on our way to school, I at times found myself having to walk right into the street in order to skirt a huge pile of bricks and masonry that had been shed by a building that had been hit during the night raid. We heard little of people being killed in the raids: the bulletins didn't talk of casualties, and parents seemed very skilful at keeping this aspect of the bombing from the hearing of their children. One girl from my class suddenly ceased attending; it was some years later that I realised that she had probably been killed in a raid.

There were sometimes daytime air raids: when that happened, the whole school went underground, each class to a long cylindrical shelter. It was quite a problem for a teacher to keep order when the whole class stretched away from her for about fifteen yards or so, the pupils sitting down the two sides of the shelter, almost knee to knee. Still, I received some of my most memorable lessons about life and the world in those pencil-shaped air raid shelters. I also recall lessons which were boring or (because I was at the wrong end) largely inaudible.

Colin was not a great reader as a child and missed out on most of the well-known children's books:

But the war also provided plenty of material for games. We didn't play cowboys and Indians: it was always the English against the Germans. Sometimes the games had a good deal of authenticity. I remember an elaborate contest on Sheen Common in which a number of English soldiers were fighting against those who had reluctantly agreed to be

German soldiers. It turned out to be a real struggle, as the soldiers of both sides made their way across the field on their stomachs, shooting and being shot at. The whole scene was brought to an abrupt end when the air raid sirens went, and real German bombers appeared in the sky. We scuttled off to the nearest concrete public shelter, where we sat listening to the sounds of bombs, and waiting for the all-clear.

Then there was our aircraft recognition club. A group of seven or eight of us, all aged about nine, decided to pool our collections of aircraft recognition cards, postcards which had photographs of the plane in question (British, German or American) on one side, and a silhouette plan and specifications on the other side. We became experts at knowing which plane was which. In the end we asked if we could have a competition with a group of air raid wardens, one of whose tasks was to become skilled at aircraft recognition (for after all it was always useful to know whether a particular plane in the sky was yours or theirs). Well, we beat them hands down! In some instances, our victories were perhaps a little academic. We would say, 'What's that?' One of the wardens would say, 'Don't be silly, that's easy: it's a Spitfire of course.' But we'd howl with knowing mirth. 'You can't say it's just a Spitfire: what kind of Spitfire is it?' 'Seems a pretty ordinary sort of Spitfire to me.' 'You're wrong. Look at the exact shape of its engine. Look at its clipped wings. Note that it has cannons, not machine guns. It is a Spitfire Mark 13A.' But we really did know more about planes in the sky than they did: for us schoolboys it was a passion and a hobby; for them, working men and husbands and fathers who often spent their nights keeping watch in the streets, the whole thing was less than exciting.

Bill Bizley, one of Colin's colleagues, remembers that 'the little boy evacuated from London lived for a while near an arterial British railway line, so Colin can still discuss, to this day, the different performances on a nearby incline of some of Britain's most famous steam locomotives.' Germans versus English provided exciting games, but they still played soccer in the streets, usually with a tennis ball. There was not much wandering around at night so in the evenings and days of bad weather Colin used to plot strategies for imaginary soccer games and draw them, a good preparation for the skilful soccer player that he became. Even then his instinct was to reach for a pen if something particularly interested him.

Meanwhile his father was inspiring new generations of schoolboys, coaching their sport, producing their plays, supporting his colleagues. ‘Dr Gardner was a comedian. This may surprise the youngsters; but Old Boys will remember his performance as a navvy in that well-known sketch *The ’Ole*. He was a batsman – the best but one on the staff. He was also a footballer, playing for Casuals,’ wrote Mr Hyde. Winnie, on the other hand, was depriving herself of all that she could for the sake of the children, drinking tea or smoking when she felt the pangs of hunger. When she arrived in South Africa after the war, she was so thin she looked half-starved. She relied on Paul to help her with practical things like changing light bulbs or trying to fix the iron. Paul was very different from Colin and, Colin said, teased him unmercifully.

David Thomas, one of Colin’s London school friends, remembered Colin’s mother: ‘I remember a warm and relaxed welcome when I was at your home ... the ease I felt at being in “her” house. That was rather important to the rather timid boy I was.’ He remembered Colin’s father taking them at the age of eleven or twelve to a football match ‘where I was entranced by the way he played with language as he entertained us



*The Gardner family: Paul, Susan, William and Colin (with cat), East Sheen, during World War II*

by trying to define the stage of waiting we were at during the build up to the start of the game. It was along Churchill’s lines: “We’re coming to the end of the beginning of the waiting, or perhaps the beginning of the end of the waiting, and then we’ll move to the end of the beginning of the waiting’ and so on into yet more subdivisions of time until the players came out of the tunnel. Colin did not remember this, but at that age perhaps one’s friends listen with greater interest to one’s parents’ words:

As the war wore on it began to be clear to everyone – even to a nine-year-old child – that the Axis powers could not win. They could make things difficult for a long time, but they couldn’t win. With the might of the USA and the USSR both on our side, it was impossible not to

feel confident – the beginnings of an informed adult confidence, not just the fantasy-bravado schoolboy confidence that we had all had (most of the time) from the first. I have my own distinct memory of the great build-up to the D-Day invasion of 6 June 1944. Troops, mainly American, were moving from all over the British Isles down to the south-east of England. (There was no concealing such huge troop movements of course. The only unanswered question was where exactly the invasion would be aimed at.)

One afternoon I was just about to cross the Upper Richmond Road, the arterial road that goes through East Sheen, when a convoy of troop carriers came along. There was at first nothing very unusual about this: troops moved backwards and forwards a good deal at that time. But this convoy went on and on and on: I must have stood watching it and waiting to cross the road for well over half an hour. Everyone waited for the invasion to take place – even I, three weeks before my tenth birthday. Then it happened, and before long it became clear that it had succeeded, and this meant that the end of the war must come before very long.

But in the very week of the great invasion, Hitler let loose his revenge attacks on London – the flying bombs, V1s, or doodlebugs as we called them. At first these just kept coming and coming. There were no wailing air raid sirens (we rather wished there were); there was a raid on all the time. The pilotless plane bombs would fly across the Channel with their jet engines, which would then cut off, the machines would drift for a mile or two, and then blow up on contact with the ground. We were all afraid of them, but we all got used to them. After a few weeks everyone in London developed the uncanny power of being able to hear the shutting off of an engine that one hadn't been aware one had been listening to. And it was the distant shutting-off of an engine that might be dangerous: the doodlebug might drift in the other direction (in which case one wouldn't even hear the explosion) or it might drift towards one. The sound of a loud engine suddenly stopping, though quite impressive and intimidating, was not a cause for immediate worry: it was very unlikely that a doodlebug that was so close would come to earth nearby.

Several weeks after the attacks had begun my family went away to South Wales for a holiday that had been arranged several months earlier. We had planned to be away for ten days or so, but stayed away

for nearly two months. My father wanted us to be out of London at this dreadful time. It was the only moment of the war when I could be said to have been evacuated.

The boys quickly picked up a Welsh accent, so they were sent to buy rations, as the Welsh were rather indignant at the English coming to their country and using their supplies. The man living next to them showed Winnie his greenhouse full of tomatoes, but refused to sell any to her. This memory rankled. Years later, 'I don't like the Welsh!' she said to Welsh Bob Jones, also a colleague of Colin's for a while, when he visited and she and Susan were living with us:

By the time we returned the attacks were becoming less frequent; in fact, as I learned later, the same number of doodlebugs was being launched – one every five minutes – but the British defence system was gradually mastering the art of eliminating them before they reached London. When I returned to East Sheen, I discovered that a road quite close to ours had been largely destroyed by one of the bombs. After the V1s there were the V2s – the rockets, designed by Werner von Braun, which went fifty miles into the air before landing on London. We read about them and heard frightening rumours about them, but I was mercifully never in or close to the path of one of them. My father in his capacity as an air raid warden told me a few sobering facts: I was by then old enough to know such things. Certainly, these new weapons were an amazing and surprising rabbit for Hitler to pull out of his hat at this late stage in the war. Gone forever were the days of the morning shrapnel and the aircraft recognition club.

But, of course, it was all to no avail. The Soviet armies rolled in towards Germany from the east, while the American and British and other armies rolled in from the west. The end was inevitable. Then it came: VE Day, Victory in Europe Day. (A few months still till VJ Day.) It was a moment of colossal joy and release. My father took Paul and me up to the centre of London, where we joined the huge crowd outside Buckingham Palace. I had hardly ever been to the middle of London: war conditions didn't favour travelling. So, the high weighty buildings and the massive crowd made it all exciting and fascinating. We were all crammed very tightly together; fortunately, my father took me up on his shoulders. At times one noticed that the person next to one had closed eyes: he or she had fainted but had been unable to fall over! The mood of the crowd was – inevitably



– intensely jovial, patriotic, and indeed monarchical ‘Where’s our Georgie?’ people shouted. And sure enough, King George VI and all the members of his family came out on to the balcony, and waved happily to the rapturous crowd. Churchill was there too, and got a great deal of rousing applause, but I was surprised that he (the hero of the war as far as I was concerned) seemed clearly second in the people’s affections to the king and queen.

These were momentous times for a young boy. But my real revelation came the next day. I had gone up to Sheen Common, I suppose to play cricket with some friends, and somehow, I arrived before them, and I found myself alone in this green open space for fifteen minutes or so. And suddenly I realised: there was no longer any war! I couldn’t remember a time when there hadn’t been a war. What did it mean? War was for me part of the universe. It struck me that there would be no more air raids or flying bombs or rockets. There is no one out there trying to kill me! There is no evil force trying to blot us all out... It was undoubtedly the most remarkable moment my life had had. I felt an almost intolerable sense of personal happiness and relief. Nor was it just a matter of a threat removed: it was something more positive; it was a gift, a blessing. A great weight, a weight I had not realised that I had been carrying, was lifted miraculously from my shoulders. The green common, the wide blue sky, the whole world sang one crystalline note – a rich and beautiful all clear.

Life gradually returned to normal; gradually, as the disruption of war continues long after peace has been declared. Shortages of food continued, it took many years for the bombed sites to be rebuilt, returning soldiers faced many problems, but children went to school, played soccer, did homework; but without gas masks or pieces of shrapnel. Colin settled down into a routine with his friends at the local school where his father taught the older pupils. He also learnt the piano. Interestingly his teacher was a coloured woman from Cape Town:

I started secondary school at the age of ten, in September 1944. (At the time the flying bomb attacks on London were still going on, though the gunners on the ground were beginning to get the better of the intruders.) The East Sheen and Richmond Grammar School for Boys – to give it its full cumbersome name – was an extremely congenial place. Of course, I had all sorts of advantages: most of my



friends from the nearby elementary school had come on to the school with me; I liked going to school; I did well in the classroom (in every subject except Maths); I was a keen and proficient footballer; and I was fairly popular.

But the school itself was pleasant. Discipline was firm and sensible but never excessively strict. There seemed to be a general feeling that, all other things being equal, boys would probably behave themselves pretty well without much coercion. (I have since realised that the fact that most boys came from comfortably off families would have contributed to a general lack of the sort of rebelliousness found even then in some working-class schools). The school prefects were people who seemed to be natural leaders in their community and they were liked and respected by the boys. Some of the prefects, I remember, were distinctly brainy; others were more distinguished for their brawn. But even the latter were not feared by even the youngest of the boys. The school had a uniform – a blue blazer with a badge, a blue tie and a blue cap – but there seemed to be no distinct rule about wearing it. A fair number of the boys had the blazer and the tie, but they didn't always wear them to school. Some boys, I seem to remember, never came in any part of the uniform. Perhaps the school tightened up its rules later when clothes rationing was finally phased out. But I always enjoyed the sense of freedom suggested by the school's both having and not quite having a uniform.

To me, in those innocent days of pre-puberty, the school was a kind of haven (not that there was anything at home that I wished to escape from), even a kind of heaven: at it one could talk endlessly to one's friends, learn interesting (but occasionally amusingly boring) things in the classroom, play long games of football (using a tennis ball) and generally relax into the business of growing and being happy.

Indeed, what he said about the school was borne out by Professor John Carey, who lived in Barnes, near East Sheen, and came to the school the year that Colin left, so they never met. Carey, who was an English professor at Merton College, Oxford described it as 'a wonderful school'. The masters appointed by the headmaster, H.H. Shepherd, 'were the kind of people who change you for life... In today's academic scene several would be university professors, but their great gift as teachers, was that they made you want to be like them – to know the things they knew and value the things they valued.' He mentions Dr W.H. Gardner as being

one of these teachers, though he had left the school just before Carey arrived. He also mentions Mr Hyde, the French master.

Colin's father's books were published in 1944 and he therefore became well-known and admired in academic circles. He hoped to leave school teaching. He applied first for a headmastership. His pupils did very well in examinations: it 'has very rarely occurred that even the weakest of them fell below "credit" standard,' wrote the head of the Richmond and East Sheen County School for Boys in recommending him for a post as headmaster. He was not successful – the headmasters under whom he had studied or taught had been to Oxford or Cambridge. What he really hoped to do was to get a university lectureship where he would be able to spend more time on research. But he found this very difficult as he was not an Oxbridge graduate and this counted strongly against him; it was before the advent of the red-brick universities, so there were few universities. He taught evening classes at the Hammersmith Commercial Institute and 'the complaints of the students died away and the classes became popular' as he encouraged them to produce a magazine in their free time, quite unusual for Commerce students. He looked further afield for university lectureships and was offered two, one at Spokane in America and one at Pietermaritzburg:

Then in late 1946 a shock came. My father, who had been a teacher at the school but who had made something of a stir with his critical study of Hopkins (published in 1944), decided to accept a senior lectureship at the university in a place in South Africa called Pietermaritzburg. I remember the family sitting round a table, saying, 'Should we go to Pietermaritzburg or to Spokane?' And to a young Londoner like myself, it was really a choice between two versions of Timbuktu. We were going to move from the happy world in which I flourished into some totally strange place.

# 2

## ‘AWAY FROM ALL THESE STREETS’

‘To a woman going away’

Well, go away from all these streets  
and leave this rubbish and this love behind,  
Shirley. Whistle to a world which greets  
and will crush your coming. Be not out of mind.  
Parting is a fact and as shrill as a knife.  
Can one be kicked cut humbled bundled into life?

Although this is addressed to a friend, Shirley, and is about emigrating from England many years later, it suggests the experience that Colin had as he left England for South Africa. So began the upheaval, separated from all that was familiar, all that was home, all his friends. ‘We were a close-knit family and it broke our hearts when Colin and family emigrated from England,’ said his cousin Sheila. Colin’s music lessons came to an end, as they could not take the piano with them. Some of the places that he knew as stamps in his album were going to become familiar.

They had time to recover from the upheaval of departure, as they travelled on a Union Castle boat. Colin and Paul were amazed at the quantity and variety of food and the casual way in which leftovers were thrown out to the fish – or so Colin said. To begin with they found themselves among the few in the dining room and indulged by the waiters. As the voyage progressed, the tables filled up. This was the beginning of the unfamiliar for them – new experiences, new weather, new places. They went ashore at Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London. They were introduced to stringy, messy mangoes – Will never ate them again.

When they arrived in Durban, they stayed for a while with a cousin of Winnie’s, then made their way to Pietermaritzburg. New lecturers were housed in fairly primitive houses at Oribi, which had been a hospital and convalescent camp for soldiers during the war. Students and ex-soldiers who were students were also housed there as there were no men’s residences on campus. They



*Paul, Colin and Susan Gardner,  
Oribi Village, Pietermaritzburg, c.1948*

One interesting thing about our moment of arrival, which was in September 1947, was that the National Party passed a bit of retrospective legislation which said that only people who arrived before a certain date became South African citizens automatically and I think it was two weeks before we arrived. This had repercussions later on.



*Paul Gardner, Jane Jackson, Mary Macauley,  
Colin, Winnie, Susan and William Gardner,  
Jesmond Road, Pietermaritzburg, 1952*

made friends amongst the new lecturers – Professor Fairbrother (Chemistry), Professor Farrar (Classics) among others, who had sons of similar ages. I am not sure how long they stayed there, but they eventually bought a conventional house in Scottsville in Jesmond Road, with a Cezanne-like view of the hills, trees and red-brick houses; and within walking distance of the university, and cycling distance of Maritzburg College, which both Paul and Colin attended:

So, in September 1947, I found myself going for my first day at Maritzburg's most prestigious state school, Maritzburg College. (It was a school for white boys; all schooling in South Africa was segregated. Not that I was particularly aware of this at the time: there had been no black boys at my school in Sheen.) We had been warned that there was great strictness about uniforms: as I went into the school almost everything on me was new and gleamed

in the school colours of black, white and red. The first boy that I saw was dressed in khaki shirt and shorts, with a school blazer over the shirt. Hey, what was all this about strictness in the uniform? But I soon discovered that this boy, like many others around, was a boarder who would not be allowed to leave the school property until he was dressed in full school uniform. We hadn't had any boarders at the East Sheen and Richmond Grammar School.

I felt very strange. Added to the strangeness of being at a school where I knew no one was the fact that I had only been in the country for two or three weeks. I was sent to a classroom, where the other boys stared at me briefly and then forgot about me.

At the mid-morning break, I entered into my first tentative conversation with a classmate. I asked a question or two, and then, in response to his queries, began to say a little about myself. Suddenly an older boy in blazer and khaki shirt came up to us and shouted at me: 'What on earth do you think you are doing?' I was astonished and looked at him blankly. 'Don't be cheeky. What do you think you are doing?' I replied: 'I've no idea. What am I doing?' This infuriated him: 'So you think you're clever, do you?' After a while I managed to find out that I had committed one of the terrible Maritzburg College crimes: as a 'new boy' – a category of person I had never heard of – I had dared to put one hand in my pocket!

It turned out that there was an elaborate code of conduct for new boys, and that I had acted as if the code did not exist. What was serious about this, I discovered later, was that I had taken a crucial step, albeit unwittingly, towards undermining the very fabric and structure of this eighty-year-old school. If new boys started putting their hands into their pockets, what would happen next? The school – or the school as represented by the prefects – was unable to imagine itself except as an institution held together and dignified by a network of forbidding rules.

I got used to the school of course. After a while I did pretty well at it, academically. It had some excellent teachers; I even became good at Maths. And I made friends. In the end I even came to like the institution to some degree. But I never felt at home at it as I had at my previous school. I am in some danger of being unfair to Maritzburg College. It had to bear the burden of my suffering the wrench of leaving my friends and home in south-west London. It was forced to

become the representative of an odd new country. My rite of passage at the age of thirteen also coincided with the full onset of puberty, which usually brings problems and discontents.

But no. What Maritzburg College taught me, at that moment and in many other incidents – and in this way as well as the other less paradoxical ones it was indeed an effective educational institution – was that I was living in a society ruled to a large degree by the irrational, by irrational fear. The fear that I had experienced in London during the war was never irrational: it made perfect sense to be afraid of being killed by a bomb. But College taught me about obsession, about haunted rituals, about bluster covering confusion.

An irony of the codes of conduct of Maritzburg College was that they had come, originally, from those devised in English public schools (that is, private schools) in the nineteenth century. We in East Sheen had known nothing about this sort of thing. But whatever their origin, the routines and phobias of Maritzburg College were certainly, by the late 1940s, distinctively white South African. This became clear when we all had to do cadets, on Friday afternoons. The shouting prefect became the screaming junior officer, ordering his charges to keep their backs straight and march in line and thus uphold the honour of the school and of white South Africa.

Colin was given special permission to study French instead of Afrikaans. Like his father he was good at sport. He was a runner and was part of the College athletics under-14 team. Though he played rugby at College (under-14B and under-15B), his main sport was football and this was not considered worthy to be played at College, even less for which it awarded colours. 'But the word got around that "Gardner plays soccer." And this was considered to be really an almost disreputable activity at that time.'

In the *Witness* in January 2016 there was a photo of the first boy awarded colours for soccer at Maritzburg College, almost sixty years after Colin's arrival. Colin's soccer coach was a master at College, Andy Stewart, who coached over the weekend and taught him Latin, very successfully, during the week. He played for Savages, somehow an inappropriate name for something Colin participated in, and was welcomed as a boost for the team. (Savages, one of South Africa's oldest football clubs, celebrated their 135th anniversary as I write this in August 2017.) He played rugby on Saturday mornings and soccer in the afternoon and became vice-captain of the Natal Schools side.



When John Willie Hudson, his headmaster, heard that he had won a Rhodes scholarship, Paul heard him say, 'Gardner, Gardner – there was something about him ... I know – he played soccer!' (Colin was caned once when he was taking off Hudson in front of his classmates, unaware that Hudson was observing him from the doorway.) Hudson, however, taught him Maths very successfully.

Colin and John Deane had shared a desk and had been great friends and this is what John wrote about their years together: 'In 1948, when I was in my second year at Maritzburg College, a new boy arrived in our form 4A class. It was Colin Gardner, whose family had recently come from England to Pietermaritzburg, where his father had been appointed to a senior lectureship in English at the Natal University College (which the following year became the University of Natal). We sat at solid oak double desks, there was an empty seat next to me, and it was allocated to Colin. Most of our subjects were taken in the same classroom, and so we sat next to each other for most of the school day. Our daily proximity led to friendship, and in fact we continued to sit next to each other for the rest of our school career, until we matriculated at the end of 1950.'

'Most 14-year-old boys manage to get along with each other, but Colin and I seemed to have a particular affinity. Not that he didn't make other good friends, but the two of us shared certain interests and attitudes, and above all congruent senses of humour, that were special to our friendship. Perhaps, also, the fact that we were the two youngest boys in our class was a factor. Only with hindsight do I realise that the first year at a new school in a new country must have been quite difficult for him in many ways. Years later he spoke about the great difference in ethos and atmosphere he had experienced between Richmond and East Sheen Grammar School and Maritzburg College. At the time his classmates were not aware that he was probably making many adjustments, which even with the resilience of youth could not have been easy.'

'In his schoolwork, though, he was on familiar and secure ground. We were in the A class, and from the outset he coped easily with the rigorous academic discipline. Our subjects were English, Afrikaans, Latin, History, Mathematics and Physical Science, but in place of Afrikaans Colin was permitted to take French with a private tutor. Ours was a talented and competitive group; and on the results of our final Joint Matriculation Board examinations Colin was the top scholar at Maritzburg College – dux of the school.'

'In those three years – between the ages of fourteen and sixteen – we were almost inseparable at school. One of my strong memories is how much we

laughed together. We were determined to find humour wherever we could – in things our masters or our classmates said, in what we read, in what we did. I regret to say we thought our own jokes very funny. Later, as a teacher myself, I think I was inclined to be fairly tolerant of pupils' facetious remarks, because I would remind myself: "That's just the sort of thing Colin and I would have said!" A weekly ritual was our visit to the school Reading Room to look at the latest issue of *Punch*. There wasn't enough time in the short break to read any of the articles, but the cartoons were our staple diet. You could almost say that we laughed our way through our last two years at school. But in our defence, I must add that we obviously got down to some serious study, too, inspired by one or two special schoolmasters. But though they may have inspired us, we must sometimes have been a sore trial to them, and to their less inspiring colleagues. I can imagine remarks in the staff room like "Deane and Gardner were impossible today. They shouldn't sit together." But somehow the two of us led a charmed life, and kept our double desk.'

'We volunteered for dramatic productions, which culminated in our being in the cast of *Twelfth Night*, a co-production with Girls High School, which added to the interest and excitement of it. We took part in debates, and in our final year when Dickens' unfinished novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* was one of our prescribed English texts, we played parts in a mock trial of the chief suspect.'

'I was a rather unwilling participant in cricket and rugby, but Colin played the latter game more willingly and successfully than I did. He had played soccer in England, but that game was regarded with contempt at Maritzburg College in those days. Nevertheless, Colin was one of a small group of College boys who defied the prevailing prejudice and played soccer for a town club. That and my membership of Professor Alan Hattersley's Scout troop were probably the only out-of-school activities we didn't share.'

'At that time almost all day boys came to school by bicycle. I had a sturdy Rudge-Whitworth, and rather envied Colin his lighter and more stylish Raleigh (or was it a BSA?) with its white mudguards and drop handlebars. An uncle and aunt of mine lived on a farm beyond Howick, and Colin and I once spent a holiday with them, cycling the 35 kilometres from Maritzburg carrying our necessary belongings in saddle bags and haversacks.'

'I knew the farm well, having spent many holidays there; but a farm (and a South African farm at that) was new to Colin. We tramped in the hills, swam in the river and played in a tin canoe, accompanied by an old dog named Dan, who, missing my older boy cousins who had grown up and left home, was



very happy to have us as replacements. We watched the cows being milked and rode on the back of the truck when my uncle took the cans to the depot a few miles down the valley. We had the run of the large rambling farmhouse, which was lit at night by candles and paraffin lamps. In the evening, or when it was raining, there were many books to read. There was also a portable wind-up gramophone with a selection of records, including a number of humorous songs, which we played over and over until we knew the words by heart. My aunt, with three sons of her own, knew the kind of meals to provide for fifteen-year-old boys. It was a very enjoyable time for both of us, but for Colin there was also the novelty of the experience. Mary tells me that in later years he sometimes spoke about that farm holiday with great pleasure.'

'After matriculation, we both enrolled for a BA and it was a foregone conclusion that we would both take English as a major subject. Our schooldays were over, and our student years, except perhaps for Rag weekends, were less mad but no less enjoyable. Our curricula, except for English and Latin, differed, but beyond lectures new horizons opened up and new interests developed. I recall how Colin and I listened several times to Schubert's Great Symphony which his father had given him on a set of 33 rpm records. We agreed that though on first hearing it had "gone past like a train" (Colin's phrase) as it became more familiar, we knew we were hearing something great and memorable. I don't know about Colin, but Schubert has always been one of my favourite composers, and I'm sure that shared experience when we were young has something to do with it.'

'Our student years together ended when Colin went to Oxford, and inevitably our lives and careers diverged. But the friendship begun in our boyhood continued. It's not the sort of thing Anglo-Saxon males tell each other, and I never told Colin how grateful I was to have him as a friend.'

Colin seemed to have a special gift for friendship. Charles Darwin said, 'A man's friendships are one of the best measures of his worth.' Colin valued his friends and tried to keep contact with as many of them as he could. Almost all the tributes that came after his death mentioned his friendship and how much it was valued. A school friend, in a letter when they were both retired men, wrote, 'Your friendship, first established in 1948, means much to me, even though we have, since schooldays, so seldom come into contact with one another. I must say that I find, at this stage of our lives, that it is the people that I have known for fifty years or so who mean the most to me, and you are one of whom I have only the most pleasant of memories.' In another letter, received in 1996 and written by his wife Jean Irwin as he lay dying: 'Only

yesterday, Vincent [an Oxford friend] said, 'I must get a letter off to Colin – I didn't know him for long, but he made a deep impression on me.' Other lasting friends from school and university days; well, I won't list them – there are too many and I would hate to offend someone by leaving out a name. Ian Hughes, who first met Colin at a National Catholic Federation of Students (NCFS) conference in Cape Town in 1953, said of him: 'I admired and loved him. He was my closest friend and I miss him.'

# 3

## ‘I WAS INTERESTED IN MY STUDIES’

Colin ended his school career at Maritzburg College as dux of his year. Surprisingly, he achieved an A for Maths and a B for English. But at university he chose to follow in his father’s footsteps and take a BA degree, majoring in English and French, and including History and Latin:

I was interested in my studies, I was doing well at them, so a lot of my time was spent simply going to lectures and reading and writing essays and things. I was a person who spent I suppose ninety percent of my time working as an academic. It was interesting and exciting for me.



*Inter-Varsity Soccer Tournament, Stellenbosch, 1952.  
Colin is in the back row, second from the right*

He still played football, first for the university side, and later for South African Universities, and was often singled out in reports of games. The *Natal Witness* (undated) wrote: 'There are four good newcomers to the [university] senior team. One of them, Neville Alcock, has played in the Natal League; another, Colin Gardner, for Natal schools. In 1953 he was one of the successful Maritzburg United team that won the Natal Cup after '28 years of failure by local teams' with a photo of Colin in mid-air as he headed a ball. He ran in the Rag Relay between Pietermaritzburg and Durban. In 1956 he captained the university team. In addition to sport, he was a member of the Dramatic Society and acted in plays. As a schoolboy of thirteen he had participated in Mark Prestwich's production of *Oedipus Rex*. He had to lead the blind Tiresus on to the stage:

it was no sinecure – each night he was blind drunk. This meant that the innocent-looking boy leading him on to the stage has spent at least a quarter of an hour searching for him in those dark rooms and corridors at the back of the Old Main Building, and that the firm hand with which he held the venerable-looking prophet was an instance not of precocious histrionic skill but of bitter necessity.

On one notable occasion I came down for the weekend, partly to see his father's production of *King Lear*; and spent Saturday coaching him in the part of Edgar as Poor Tom, as the student taking the part of Edgar had been involved in an accident and was in hospital. He participated in student politics and was a member of the Students Representative Council, together with later friends, Michael Nuttall and John Mitchell, and colleagues, Alistair Verbeek and Roger Raab.

Colin and John Deane edited *Nux Magazine* – to distinguish it from the *Nux* newspaper – writing editorials and articles, collecting articles, short stories and poems. There were about five or six editions. One of the articles was in response to Verwoerd's Bantu Education Act of 1953. John Deane wrote articles, for example on 'The Bones of Rag' and 'Quo Vadimus?' about the future of the university. In the March 1953 edition, Colin interviewed Fine Art students who were to enliven the university with murals; among them was Jane Jackson, later to become his brother, Paul's, wife. He also joined the CSU (Catholic Students Union) taking over as chairman at the end of his first year:

It was quite a keen grouping of Roman Catholics and we took our beliefs and commitments very seriously. From that moment onwards



*Photo by A. V. Farren.*

Back Row (left to right): D. F. Gawler, J. N. Clatworthy, P. S. du Toit, C. O. Gardner.  
Middle Row: D. H. M. Wright, W. R. Weeks, M. Hensley, A. A. Verbeek, Miss E. M. F. Fletcher,  
E. G. Boonstra, J. A. J. Maree, R. M. Osborne, P. M. F. Dauncey.  
Front Row: Miss J. S. Ingham, R. E. Raab, J. V. Mitchell (President), M. Nuttall, Miss J. B. Findlay.

*Students Representative Council, UNP, 1955*

– although it took a bit of time to develop – my sense that the political affairs of South Africa were important grew, partly, simply, from my Catholic commitment, the idea that Jesus encourages his followers to consider the plight of the poor, the needy, those less privileged than oneself, was a call to resisting what was happening more and more. I also became involved in NUSAS [National Union of South African Students]. There was an easy association between NCFS and NUSAS: they usually held their conferences at the same centre to simplify attendance at each other's sessions.

Colin felt, looking back, that students were moving in a left-wing direction, but were not in contact with the main movements, were not really aware of what was happening in the liberation movements or in the ANC. For example, the Freedom Charter was adopted on his 21st birthday, and he was unaware of it. There was not much contact between people of different racial groups,



except in national meetings. But belonging to CSU and NCFS meant that he did meet students from other disciplines and other races. Among close friends were John Bishop, Ian Hughes (Mathematics) and David Mayne (Economics). Robert Mugabe, who became President of Zimbabwe, was a member of the NCFS from Fort Hare and Colin met him at conferences: 'Most courteous and helpful' as the mother of one of the Johannesburg students described Mugabe.

John Bishop had this to say: 'Colin and I embarked on our first year at UNP, the Maritzburg branch of the University of Natal, in February – or was it March? – 1951. A long time ago and my memories are sadly faded. We were both Oppidani, i.e., we lived at home and were day boys at the university. Colin's home in Jesmond Road was very close to the campus and his dad was a senior lecturer in the English Department, under Professor Geoff Durrant, so that department was home-from-home for Colin. Also, Colin's elder brother Paul was in at least his third year studying Architecture in Durban and had a girlfriend (later his wife) Jane Jackson at UNP. (Jane was later responsible for matching Jess with me!) So, Colin was already well adjusted to the university even before he enrolled. I think he always intended to follow in his father's footsteps as an English don. Colin was also very fortunate to be one of a large cohort of bright boys from his year group at Maritzburg College entering UNP together. A number of them became my friends also. Besides English, Colin read French and History in his first year. I cannot remember what fourth subject he chose.'

'By contrast, I was the only boy entering UNP that year from St Aidan's, a small, all-Catholic, Jesuit school in Grahamstown. Unlike Colin, I enrolled to study Physics, Chemistry, Maths and Applied Maths. What did we have in common then? Well, we were both Catholics, sons of convert fathers and I don't think any of Colin's mates from Maritzburg College were Catholics. We were both immigrants to South Africa from England. I had only been two years in South Africa. Colin had been about four. I was pretty determined to remain British, reinforced in that attitude by badinage from my South African companions at school! Colin, embedded from the start in Maritzburg, South Africa's most English city, felt more at home, I think. Although embarking on a Science degree, I shared with Colin a love for English literature. I had had a great teacher for English at St Aidan's and the South African matric course for English in 1950 was cleverly designed to encourage the study of numerous selected novels – albeit the marks for each comprised only about 1% of the total! I was reluctant to give up all study of English literature so I

compromised by taking English as an extra, non-examined, fifth subject in my first year. Colin, Mary, Jess and I were fellow classmates that year in English.'

'We were also united by participation in the activities of the Maritzburg CSU. I had been an embryo member of the CSU (or, more accurately, the NCFS) for about a year before even enrolling at the University! I had heard about it while still at school, and got in contact with Peter Hunter who was then a senior student at Maritzburg and, importantly, that year's president of the NCFS. Peter's enthusiasm was extremely infectious and I succumbed immediately. It felt like being secretly recruited by MI5. With hindsight, I now recognise and confess that I probably was never a Catholic for the right reasons, i.e., for love of Jesus and the desire to serve Him. I was, I now think, a Catholic in the sort of way people are committed members of a political party or loyal to their motherland. I wanted to propagate my beliefs. Peter described how the NCFS was opposed to South Africa's nationalist government and its apartheid policy in particular, how Catholicism was referred to as *die Roomse gevaar*. This tied in with my boyish image of a Brit, still fighting the Boer War! (Bear in mind, World War II had ended only five years earlier, and many of the Nats had favoured the Nazis.)'

'Especially in our first couple of years, Colin and I enjoyed many evenings talking and discussing. Colin was enthralled by all he was learning in English, French and History, and he just couldn't wait to pour out to a responsive listener all the burgeoning views and ideas that his lectures stimulated. I, for my part, was only too eager to listen to material that was new to me and much more directly appealing than the somewhat pedestrian Science I was exposed to in those early years. I was painlessly imbibing the Humanities without the grind of writing essays or sitting exams! Colin had a wonderful way of driving ideas – especially those he disagreed with! – to the limits of exaggeration and distortion and beyond, so as to display what he considered their absurdity. He was a verbal cartoonist. To listen to his outpourings was such wonderful fun. Colin was particularly excited by the French Revolution and especially the intellectual revolution generally referred to as the Enlightenment with its abundance of thinkers and philosophies. Indeed, Colin was swept away by the flood of original thought that burst the dam of medieval mental conservatism and continues in full flood to the present day. In me, he found an enthusiastic and co-operative listener who helped him formulate his ideas.'

'We were fortunate in that we often had the use of my mother's little two-seater car in which to sit and talk at length in comparative comfort. Mostly for Colin to talk and for me to listen! But we had our distractions. I remember

one evening we spotted a police car, registration NP 27, cruising round Scottsville to check that courting couples in parked cars were of matching colour! We followed NP 27 around until he noticed and read us the riot act. On another occasion we were hitch-hiking from Maritzburg to Joburg, wearing our university blazers to advertise our impeccable background. To our great surprise and even greater embarrassment, we were picked up by a black businessman in a quality car. We were tongue-tied with shame. I remember also playing tiddlywinks on the floor with Colin's dad – a professor! And singing "On Ilkley Moor baht 'at" in the Gardners' living room. Colin and I spent a couple of long vacations working together in the rather dreary back office of Shuter and Shooter, the booksellers. I was most grateful for the relief his companionship and humour afforded in that uninspiring environment.'

'Colin was very active in many areas of student life. I particularly remember him playing Dogberry in *Much Ado about Nothing*. He also played soccer, a fairly unusual sport in South Africa. I believe he even played for the Maritzburg City team. He would have preferred Arsenal.'

'In what I think was 1952, a revolution transformed the NCFS. It was initiated at Wits and/or UCT and brought to Maritzburg by those who had attended that year's NCFS conference at Rhodes. I can't think why I didn't go that year and I don't think Colin did either. The revolution was inspired by a charismatic priest who was delivering crash courses – leadership courses I think they were called – lasting about a week, to small groups of Catholic university students in South Africa. In pursuit of his personal vocation to be an apostle to students, he was called Diego. It was his policy not to wear either his proper name, Father Connery, or his dog collar so as to appear what is now called cool and in tune with the student ethos, rather than stuffily clerical.'

'His objective was to form closely bonded ginger groups that would practise an active, all-embracing, Catholicism of mutual support and concern that would act as a leaven within the university milieu. The concept was inspired, I believe, by communist cadres active in the French Resistance and by the worker-priests of Latin America. A brotherly, mutual, outward-going Catholicism, embedded in our student environment, rather than merely expressed in private devotion. We adopted a much more co-operative and less competitive attitude to other Christian groups like the SCA – the Student Christian Association. (With hindsight, one can see that our little local revolution was a sharply focused expression of a movement that has been – and still is – gradually shifting Catholicism from Counter-Reformation to Ecumenism over the last century or more.) This movement certainly enlivened, enthused and transformed the



whole NCFS. It had a particularly marked impact on Colin who started to take his faith much more seriously, going to daily mass whenever he could, certainly most days. In this, his serious response, Colin, was distinguished from many, probably most, of us, myself included, who enjoyed the new vitality largely because it was so much fun.'

'In our third and fourth (or honours) years, Colin and I were both working harder at our academic work and had less time for the long evening discussions of our earlier years. Mary, a year older than Colin, was no longer a student in Maritzburg like us and had started teaching in northern Natal. It seems they became somewhat estranged and I remember driving Colin up to see her to try to heal the breach. Happily, they were soon reconciled! At some time during his honours year, or very shortly afterwards, Colin was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship, which he took up in September or October 1955, going to Wadham College, Oxford. Jess and I went to Cambridge the following year. We saw Colin only rather occasionally and he finished his course well before us and returned to South Africa while we remained in Britain.'

Diego did create for Colin a Damascus moment. He became strongly committed to Catholicism, though certainly not uncritically, and he retained this commitment to the end of his life; the sense that he felt he had a duty and a responsibility, a calling, to use his talents to try to create a better world, that his life should be to some extent a life of service.

Friends, Frances and Dave Gosling, after his death wrote: 'Colin was someone who made us feel that there was hope for a better world.' Words to this effect were common in the tributes after his death. He had, then, the intensity of the newly converted. Looking back at his earlier years, Colin wrote in 1969:

Yesterday I read some old letters of mine.  
In those days, I thought my heart was big.  
But now I discover the facts of the case:  
my 'seriousness' had made me a prig.

In 1952 the CSU decided to attend the St Patrick's Day Ball in the rather dusty, wooden-floored parish church hall of St Mary's in town. Training College members of CSU also attended. It was at this ball that I met Colin. He was a first-year student at university so we were both in the same year. And so it was that we met and danced and chatted and that led to a life-long commitment.

Colin and I attended English classes together. Six of us, second-year Training College students, chose to do first year at University. Given a choice,

I would have done History too. We had not much time as the Training College contingent was taken back as soon as lectures ended and these three subjects (English, Afrikaans-Nederlands and Geography) followed each other – presumably why they were chosen, though we *were* there for tea. We had to get back for the more interesting second-year courses – Theory of Education, for example.



*Colin and Mary as students in Pietermaritzburg, c.1954*

Colin and I didn't go out much at first – Training College had compulsory prep and rules about where we could go when we were allowed out at weekends. 'Hotel dances lead to hotel bedrooms,' said the then principal. Very few students had cars and there were not all that many buses at night. But our friendship did progress. I remember boasting to my fellow students that my boyfriend was acting in *Henry IV* and he appeared on stage as Bardolph, drunken and with a very large red nose – not exactly the heart-throb they might have been expecting!

We studied English under Geoffrey Durrant, a formidable

and inspiring professor, and under Colin's father, with his wonderful sense of drama, his warmth and his humour. The following year I left to teach in a primary school at Hattingspruit, where Colin came up to visit when he had the chance. He was regarded as something of an oddity in a largely Afrikaans community. He hitch-hiked up and slept in the school library. There was not much entertainment – no coffee shop, just dusty streets surrounded by fenced farm land, and small houses.

When I travelled to Pietermaritzburg, I caught the train in the evening and then had to wait on Ladysmith station for about five bleak hours in a stark waiting room, freezing cold in winter, until the connecting train from the Free State came in at about 4.00 am and reached Pietermaritzburg at about 6.00 am.

Colin would be there to meet me and we rat-tatted home on his brother's 50cc motorbike, disturbing the sleeping town as we rode up College Road into Scottsville. People were stirring – there were some lights on in bedrooms and kitchens and African servants emptying dustbins or letting the dogs out. Shift workers were returning home looking tired and grubby. Colin's parents' house smelt of apples and faint odours of last night's meal and the stronger smell of his father's pipe, and we played Mozart, Beethoven or Schubert in the living room while waiting for the family to stir.

They were worlds apart, the world of the university and the world of Hattingspruit. Hattingspruit was the world of the Afrikaner nationalist, railway workers and the kind of underbelly of white society, where girls often left school after Standard 6 or 8 and worked in low-paid jobs until they married, young. I was regarded as a strange phenomenon: *Sy's Engels en Rooms!* (She's English and a Roman Catholic). Colin was even more so. He'd hitched, once with a black family, he spoke French rather than Afrikaans, he was quiet and courteous; but was at something of a loss in local conversation.

The university was the world of plays and concerts and socials and meetings and demi-johns of cheap wine, and earnest discussions in which you put the world right, and a closeness to friends that you would perhaps seldom see again; yet, meeting anywhere in the world, you could take up conversations forty or sixty years later. There were challenges and arguments, passionate convictions, conferences with their share of fun, parties and, always, as a kind of theme 'I have to get my essay/assignment/reading done by tomorrow/end of the week/before the vac.' Those were heady days, really, without the sobering responsibilities that came later.

We communicated mainly by letter, a suitably cheap mode of communication for a student: we could not afford phone calls. I can find very few of the letters:

Rain they asked for and rain they got. Unfortunately, a good deal of that which was yesterday aimed at the thirsty Natal crops became uncomfortably lodged in my clothing as I cycled home in the downpour. I was utterly waterlogged. I feel cold, wet, tired, overworked, pedantic, dirty ...

Now, my darling Diana, Ann, Jean, Ivy, Dawn [all of them struck out] Mary, you see I am dying of love for you all [all struck out]. What can I do, having you here with me not?

‘A light-hearted Valentine’s Day poem’

I am bored by lips that are parted for convention and  
 My mouth is tired of the taste of tea,  
 But I can have a life to rivet my attention and  
 You will your valentine’s valentine be  
 If you will my valentine be.  
 I am shocked by doctrines that I cannot even mention and  
 My ears are weary of the fool’s philosophy,  
 But I can hear sayings to suit my comprehension and  
 You will your valentine’s valentine be  
 If you will my valentine be.

But there were also serious letters describing his life and thoughts, much more revelatory.

Colin obtained his degree with certificates of merit in all ten subjects. In 1952 he was awarded a University of Natal Scholarship, which would continue as long as his results were as good. In 1954 he did English Honours. In 1955 he was awarded the M.K. Rosenbach Family Scholarship dependent on his studying full-time. He had been offered the possibility of a bursary from the French government and the chance to study in France. Also asked to teach some French courses in the absence of Professor Tricaud, head of the French Department, while she was on sabbatical, he had to turn down the French bursary offer.

Having decided to complete my BA, I came back to Pietermaritzburg in 1955 and, for board and lodging, did duties in the evenings in the boarding establishment of the Holy Family Convent School.

Colin and Paul were then living in the house of Aileen Eccles, my aunt, while she and his parents were on sabbatical. They largely fended for themselves. Colin used to suggest that we share our sandwiches; his were doorstoppers with, usually, apricot jam in them while mine were delicately made at the Convent with a variety of fillings.

# 4

## ‘STUDYING THINGS EXACTLY’

Colin’s real interest was English literature. His parents felt that by emigrating to South Africa they had deprived him of the chance of going to Oxford or Cambridge, so determined to send him to Oxford. Colin found himself again on a Union Castle boat, this time retracing his steps:

One seems to have a wonderful, all-embracing view of things from here, on this fantastic big palace of a boat that just moves on and on, 450 miles a day, past Africa, past Africa. It is amazing, the power and patience of these boat engines.

He was returning to a world that was in many ways familiar to him, and many of his present friends were or would be travelling that journey too. Jess Brown, for example, had won an Emma Smith Scholarship; John Bishop was going to Cambridge; sailing on the same Union Castle boat was Roger Raab (Physics), also going to Oxford; Clive Wake going to France. Yet he was leaving behind family and friends and me. It was no longer a schoolboy travelling but a thoughtful student, with a far greater perception and awareness of the world around him. After he and Roger and some others had been given a tour of the bridge, Colin commented: ‘Having taken the clue from Hopkins’ journals, I make a point of studying things exactly – especially water-patterns and water-formations, 14,000 feet above the ground and 750 miles from the nearest land.’

There was plenty of time to read, think, meditate and pray. As his parents were financing him at great cost to themselves, he had to be very frugal. This did not prevent him from participating in planned activities. He and Roger went to the inevitable fancy dress party, Roger dressed as a Union Castle sandwich and Colin as a Neapolitan ice cream, winning second prize, which he shared with Roger. He lamented being knocked out of the deck tennis and table tennis tournaments (his father had been a very good table tennis player), though his cabin mate, John Ibison, a graduate of London University, won the singles table tennis competition. Colin made friends with a lone black student, Clifford Morejale, with honours in Botany and Maths, also travelling

to Oxford but to study Statistics. He came from Maseru and Colin had met him briefly during a work camp at the University of Roma in Lesotho.

The boat stopped at Las Palmas and Colin, and a teenager looked after by the Raabs wandered around the town, not joining the official tour which he thought too costly. He attended Mass at a church, not the cathedral in which Columbus had prayed as he set off on his voyage, but quite large, full of black-garbed women. A woman spat at the teenager sitting outside. The Bay of Biscay nearly flattened him, but not quite:

All day the boat has pitched and rolled. There is now no white foam whipping on and skimming off the surface, as there was yesterday; there is just a deep swell. And the boat is prey to it like a cork. It is not easy to live up against this determined rocking. It so easily steepens into one, making one unenthusiastic, lethargic, dead-to-the-world, selfish. Meals are dull and uninviting in this sea.

This was the normal way of travelling to England and it had its advantages over air travel: there was time to recover from the often-frantic days preparing to depart. But it was a strange world, on its own, far from anywhere, with contact with the rest of the world only when you hit land.

Then they arrived at Southampton, farewells to friends made on board, promises to meet, which probably never happened, the boat train and Herne Hill where his Aunt Kath and Uncle Pat Mahon and cousins, Sheila and Moira welcomed him, delighted to have one of the family back. For him it was a return to a life that was both familiar and strange.

He arrived at Oxford as autumn began. The rooms he shared in Wadham had a small two-bar electric heater or a small fire in the fireplace in the sitting room, which toasted the front of him but left his back exposed to the rigours of winter. He described plucking up courage to go into the unheated bedroom, the icy sheets on the bed. Football was then played only in the winter, so he also described playing for the Wadham team in freezing conditions. Luckily, he played on the right wing so running kept him moderately warm. He later moved into digs and joined the cyclists peddling in winter through freezing weather. Perhaps it was these experiences that made him always like to have a jersey nearby, so that he would not be caught by a sudden cold spell. (I could read and knit so knitted jerseys for him as I read bedtime stories to the little convent girls.) But it wasn't all winter:

Oxford is beautiful still. And days are long, and there is work.



Ian Hughes wrote: 'Colin and I often had lunch in one or other Greasy Spoon restaurant, in which the food would come up from the lower level on a pulley. Fish and chips was a regular feature. Colin also participated in groups run on Diego's principles and was fully involved in Catholic student movements.' His tutor was Mr Bamborough, and they discussed Colin's work in the study in Linacre House. Visiting him much later, Colin said:

He's a very relaxed informal person – indeed he was so in the mid-50s, long before informality had come to Oxford.

Colin followed a rather traditional course, including Old English. While at Oxford, he was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship. This relieved the financial burden on his parents and meant he could cease to live quite so frugally. At Oxford, in 1957, he began writing his thoughts, beliefs, challenges in exercise books labelled 'Notes and Queries'. They detail what he was studying and his responses, sometimes in the form of poetry. They were a different kind of diary, and there were many of them. He challenged his own ideas in the light of what he was studying, either for exams or later for lecturing. In the first of these books, he had a section devoted to poems that he had written in his student days; serious poems about the challenges of religion and humanism, poetry about nature and the world around him, observations of human behaviour, criticism of his own inadequacies and humorous poems including limericks. He also wrote prayers, and poems that were prayers. But most of the book dealt with the writers he was studying, writing appreciatively but also critically, quoting central passages or stanzas and commenting on them. The writings reveal an active, questioning student, certainly not one who simply writes notes and learns them. He wrote, in 1958, his first published article.

He made new friends, as one would expect: the critic and poet Bernard Bergonzi was one of those he got to know well; Jean Aries; and Andrew Hudson whom Colin (and Andrew's counsellor) encouraged to change his degree to Fine Arts and who went on to a career as a painter with exhibitions in galleries in New York and other places. He renewed his friendship with Clive



*Colin with Andrew Hudson,  
Oxford, 1956*

Wake (French), studying at the Sorbonne, and they hitch-hiked through France and Spain, among other things watching a bullfight. He went to pubs and parties and dances. Members of NCSF and students from the University of Natal were studying at various universities and occasionally they gathered at meetings and conferences and travelled around the country during the vacations.

He became a member of Pax Romana, an international Catholic organisation, and attended in Berlin a conference during the days of the Berlin Wall and the Cold War. It was important to catch the right train, one that did not stop in East Berlin. Some of his friends once caught the wrong one but were alerted by the people on the train (who gestured that their throats would be slit), so had a chance to perfect their story before they were hauled before the KGB. They were interrogated for some hours. One was a Canadian and for him it was particularly scary. Luckily, he did not have his passport with him, and he pretended to speak only French, so he somehow managed to appear part of the group and they were allowed to catch a train to West Berlin. But for all of them it was a very anxious time and tense for those who waited for them to arrive.

What were their main concerns? In 1952 the 22nd World Congress of Pax Romana was devoted to the university – its relations with the State, society, the international community and the Church. Later themes dealt with Christian professional formation and the university and the Apostolate. Colin kept annotated articles, questioning, nuancing or agreeing. In a letter to a mutual friend, after they had returned from Berlin, greatly influenced by Colin, someone who did not sign his name wrote: ‘I think that he begins with things more fundamental – his ideas of leadership and community begin with individual personal relationships.’ He added that Colin’s ‘particular phraseology and vocabulary’ needed to be translated ‘into the language of England and the language of Oxford’, not of South Africa.

Much of his holiday time was spent in Dulwich village with his uncle, aunt and cousins, who were introduced to his South African friends, with their less formal lifestyle. Colin succeeded in breaking three chairs, to the puzzlement of Uncle Pat. They were at first amazed at Colin’s way of suddenly deciding to go to, say, Rugby or Cambridge, and leave immediately, without elaborate preparations.

Meanwhile I completed my BA degree getting a first in English. I sent a telegram to Colin and received a letter:



My dear intellectual Meg, I am very glad that you got a first in English: perhaps you may at last believe the things I have been telling you about yourself for the last five years.

In his last months in England, Colin began to apply for lecturing jobs in South Africa. He was offered a post at the University of South Africa (UNISA), based in Pretoria and accepted it. As he entered the adult world of responsibilities, something he wrote about growing up in a war is relevant. He wrote first about the constant dangers surrounding him in his formative years and continued:

In the last analysis (and sometimes in the first analysis), personal hopes and wishes had to be subjected to the common good. It wasn't all a matter of everyday choice or whim: the enemy was a ruthless customer, and any indulgence in selfish or unthinking activities could cost lives... [he gave the blackout as an example, then went on to say] ... So to me as a child the difference between doing what was right and doing what was clearly wrong was always a matter of life and death. It was very important not to do the wrong thing. But it was equally important to do the right thing. If you didn't, the Germans would probably get you!

I think this way of thinking has probably affected the rest of my life. Issues of personal and social morality have always seemed very serious to me. No doubt my way of thinking and feeling has been influenced by innumerable factors, chief among which must surely be the example of my parents and (bound up with that) the religious beliefs that I grew up into. But somewhere in my mind the scenario has been the battlefield. To put it all in Miltonic terms, my natural psychic habitat seems to have been not the Garden of Eden, before or after the Fall, but the uncertain landscapes of the war in Heaven and the great fiery debates in Hell.

# 5

## ‘UNASSAILABLE PEAKS’

As he began the rest of his life, I should include what Eric Harber, a school and university friend of Colin’s, had to say: ‘I would find it too hard perhaps to summarise an impression of Colin, given the challenging diversity of his activities, except that I think he tried to – or was forced to – do too much on too many fronts, for that was what South Africa demanded of him. He was conscientious to a fault. His sanguine nature – and his health – took terrible punishment, though his temperament survived better than his health.’

‘If he had concentrated on one of the challenges of the three or four worlds he was expected to live in, the others might have suffered. The result was that he took them all on. It was perhaps more than he could sometimes cope with. I have just seen a TV programme on the Dolomites from the angle of a café next to a vast lake. Unassailable peaks all round – not just Cathedral Peak with a couple of chain ladders – was what apartheid seemed like to a decent liberal when he was at Natal University. He showed great courage; he fought the good fight, and later lived in some significant way – with an active role – to share in the triumph of its victory.’

‘He was someone for whom it might have been a reasonable temptation to stay in the security of the ivory tower and enjoy its rewards, and those alone, or to use South Africa as a stepping stone to comfortable positions in academe elsewhere. I have always thought there should be a stepping stone memorial somewhere in South Africa to those academics who went off to Oz or York or Canada. Where are the medals or monuments for such as he who did not – and did not bury their heads in the sand – when he might have done? They don’t exist; more’s the pity.’

Another peak that Eric did not mention was the family. Colin was deeply dedicated to his family; they absorbed a great deal of his time and attention and his love. He suffered as they suffered and quite intensely. He enjoyed as they enjoyed. He returned to face one of those peaks, an academic one, and quite difficult. UNISA was a correspondence university, centred in Pretoria,

which, in some ways was like a foreign country to someone with a largely English background. It was at the centre of the apartheid government, the city at the heart of Afrikaans politics, religion and culture. Here was the Voortrekker Monument, a solid building dominating the skyline. UNISA itself was peopled largely by dark-suited Afrikaans men, though there were some women; and then there was the English Department, among the mainly men, charcoal-suited with ties, short-haired, conventional, a pool of colour and informality (though Neville Denny, one of Colin's colleagues, once said, 'All Colin's clothes looked as if they have been dipped into a marsh').

But first he visited his parents in Bloemfontein, where his father was now professor at the University of the Free State in a similar somewhat alien environment, an Afrikaans city in language and in culture. Students were expected to conform, not to query lecturers or those in authority. A student once asked whether he could have 'permission to bunk'. W.H. told him to look up the meaning of the word in the dictionary. There was consternation when it was discovered, after his appointment, that he was a Roman Catholic, but he largely won them over. He learnt Afrikaans fairly easily with his skill at languages, and his warmth and humour endeared him to students and his fellow lecturers. An inscription in a book he was given suggests this. Author Gerard Beukes in his book *Kerse Teen die Wind* wrote: '*Aan my friend en kollega, W.H. Gardner, met opregte waardering vir sy vriendskap en belangstelling.*' ('To my friend and colleague, W.H. Gardner, with great appreciation for his friendship and interest.') Winnie, I suspect, found life more difficult, though she did have a group of faculty wives with whom she was friendly. She was at ease with people – and she played bridge.

Apart from visiting his parents, Colin wished to tell them that he wanted to get married, not that this would have come as a surprise to them. I had been in constant contact with them. Indeed, while Susan



*Colin and Mary, Valley of a Thousand Hills, 1958*

was at the Open Air School in Durban, I used to travel down by bus regularly once or twice a month to take her for an outing down to the beach. Susan in her callipers and with the wooden-boxed crystal radio, which one of their friends had made for her and from which she would not be parted, and the bag with her handkerchiefs, plastic bags, torches, combs and anything else that she imagined she might need, usually in triplicate!

I went up to Bloemfontein to his parents to be there when Colin arrived in September. Together we took the train to Natal, the one I had caught at Ladysmith, which arrived so early in the morning. We arranged to get formally engaged and celebrated this in my Aunt Aileen Eccles' new house with our friends and those members of CSU who were still around. He couldn't stay for long as he had to take up his position at UNISA, find somewhere to stay, and build a life for himself in Pretoria. But we did decide to get married in January, and I, with my new degree, began to apply for posts in secondary schools there.

We had decided to marry very soon after we had met, yet had spent almost seven years in different towns and different countries. We communicated mostly by letter – telephoning was too expensive – and we had a wealth of letters to prove it. Most were partly at least love letters and it has disturbed me that I cannot find most of those written during Colin's Oxford days, or the time when I was in Hattingspruit. They must have got lost in one of our moves. They were so much a record of our thoughts, experiences and ideas which we bounced off each other; sometimes disagreeing, often agreeing, and expanding and challenging.

During the Christmas holidays, Colin fulfilled an obligation he had made at a Pax Romana meeting. He and a group of 25 students of all races attended a conference and work camp in Ghana, meeting many of his friends from his Oxford days and from NCFS, among them Ian Hughes and Mark Boule:

A group of us were building roads with pickaxes in the midday sun.

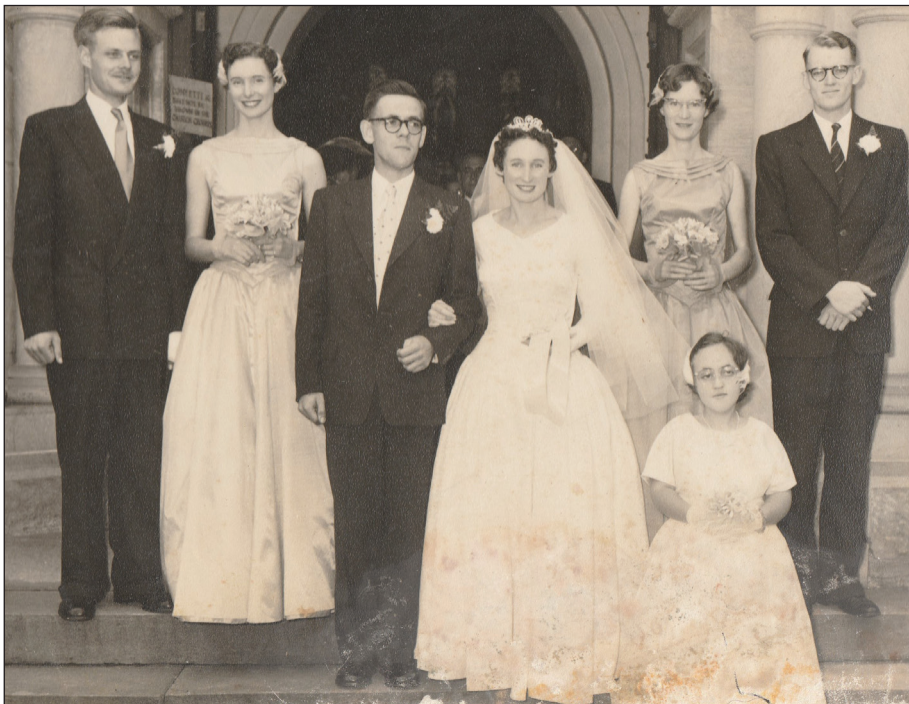
In some ways it was a tough experience: insects seemed huge and dangerous; illnesses developed with enormous speed and intensity; food was quite strange. Colin described chasing a huge spider round the upper walls of a bedroom: the spider moved with such speed that it jumped from one corner to the other. No one was prepared to go to bed until it was safely out of the room:

People kept going down with mysterious fevers – it happened to about fifteen of our group. They suddenly had this vastly high temperature,

would flake out, look as if they were dying and then get better, usually two days later.

They lived on yams, fruit, not much meat. They met President Kwame Nkrumah – it was only about six months after independence – who looked surprised when he heard that Colin was from South Africa. (Colin was on the steering committee, so he was the only South African introduced to Nkrumah.)

Colin arrived a week before our wedding. We were borrowing Aunt Aileen's car to go on honeymoon and he needed to pass his driving test. He had tried before he left in his brother Paul's Morris Minor but, during the test, it began raining, he stalled the car and had to get out and crank it, so he failed. This time he used the car from a driving school and passed – he did tell the inspector that he needed to drive away on his honeymoon! I can't say that he was much help in the wedding preparations. A contingent of his Johannesburg friends came down for the wedding and stayed in what had been Aunt Aileen's previous house, but was now let to Paul and Jane, and they filled the house so that Colin spent the night sleeping on two chairs.



*Colin and Mary's wedding, Pietermaritzburg, 1959, with Eric Harber, Catherine, Ann (Mary's sisters), John Deane and Susan*

Eric Harber remembered: 'I was best man at their wedding and rushed down from Johannesburg in the middle of the night before the day, with a vanload of guests, after Mary had sustained herself like Penelope while Colin was at Oxford by weaving a tapestry of memories and teaching.' Jane was astonished to find her living room full of people whom she had not met before. Robin Savory, a student of many years, took me down the aisle, as my father was riddled with arthritis, had had a leg amputated and was in a wheelchair. There were no mishaps. (At his brother's wedding Colin had dropped his top hat and it thundered down the aisle at a crucial moment in the ceremony.) It was a nuptial Mass at St Mary's, where my parents had married, my friend Gunnell Ljunquist sang, and it was very meaningful to both of us, and to many of those sharing this experience.

'Marital prayer'

I thank you, Lord,  
as I wake in the night,  
for this woman I have married,  
this woman you have given me,  
whose arm lies across my chest  
and whose leg presses on my leg.  
The intimacy of our shared life  
the holiness of this contact,  
has become the starting-point,  
the launching pad  
of my life in the world

'In sickness and health...' a week into our honeymoon, Colin fell victim to something he must have caught in Ghana, luckily only measles. So, he spent the rest of his time in bed, as he had it rather badly, while I tenderly wiped his brow and read *Mansfield Park* to him when he was sufficiently recovered to be able to concentrate.

We packed up our possessions, largely books, one bookcase, and an Olivetti typewriter (now used ornamentally in our present house) as we set out by train for Pretoria. We bought an iron and ironing board. We had no car and no money, but we were undaunted. We left for Pretoria in time for me to begin teaching at Pretoria Girls High – a school with a high reputation, with Mrs Nelson as principal. Mrs Nelson suggested that we rent the flat of the English teacher I was replacing who was on leave. She agreed, so we did and moved our meagre belongings to a rather charming block of flats in Sunnyside, with a park opposite.



# 6

## PRETORIA AND UNISA

### ‘Die Helpende Hand’

An ancien regime needs monuments,  
else what will the brave new men knock down?

So here, in its magnificence,  
above the benevolent dull town,  
we see the modern wonder stand:  
the new Bastille, the Helping Hand.

Before we were married, Colin had moved to Pretoria, to stay in a hotel, Eaton Hall, central and within easy distance of UNISA. The University was not yet in its current building that Colin wrote the poem about, describing it as, ‘the new Bastille’. It was not easy teaching (if teaching ever is) and lecturers’ contact with students was largely through marking and vacation courses. They followed a traditional English course; Colin, for example, lecturing on Old English, *Little Dorritt*, *London Book of English Verse*, Shakespeare... They spent time discussing each other’s written lectures, challenging each other. Many years later, a friend of mine, studying through UNISA, commented that many of Colin’s lecture notes were still being used. The English Department occasionally combined with the department of Afrikaans-Nederlands to present poetry readings from certain periods, together with relevant music.

In 1957, with his commitment to South Africa, Colin

went to the Union Buildings, to some official, and asked to become a South African citizen, told him my background, and he said that unfortunately I had been out of the country for more than one year—and that I had to wait six years before I could even apply.

When he was able to proceed, the National Party government had really begun to show its oppressive hand and Colin was advised not to apply, so it was only years later that he was able to become a South African citizen.

We began to enter into the life of Pretoria. There was not much contact with other disciplines at UNISA, so much of our social life was shared with the English Department – dinners, parties, plays, concerts. We decided to read Shakespeare's plays, one a month. We also met again friends from NCFS and joined church organisations, particularly those concerned with social justice, such as the Kolbe Society, a society Colin had belonged to in Pietermaritzburg, and with these the Liberal Party, which was small but active in Pretoria. The *verligte* movement, particularly among Afrikaans intellectuals, was beginning. On one memorable occasion, they organised for Chief Albert Luthuli to speak in the hall attached to the Anglican Cathedral:

Quite a large group of people came along: they were the Afrikaner dissenters, the bold ones, the intellectuals, but the English-speaking Liberal dissenting group came along too. Albert Luthuli found himself addressing quite a large body of people. The chairman was a young Afrikaner; the secretary was a woman, a young Afrikaner too. They were on the platform, quite high above as we sat in the body of the hall. As the meeting began, a group of men filed into the hall, encircling the audience. As the chairman continued to speak, one of the men got onto the stage, stood before the chairman and then put his hand into his pocket and took out a glove. We all watched, mesmerised. He took out this glove, put it on his right hand and then walked up to the chairman and punched him in the face, knocking him over on to his head, and we all gasped with astonishment. The men moved into the audience (Trevor Whittock's glasses were broken) and, in a matter-of-fact way, picked up empty chairs, or pushed people off and proceeded to hit people over the heads with them, a tremendous din. Albert Luthuli was kept under the table on the stage. The secretary – this was the nastiest moment – was picked up and thrown off the stage.

Then, quite quickly, the men left and after some time the meeting could resume. Colin meanwhile had been able to find a phone and ring the police, who arrived about ten minutes later and took statements. The men were from ISCOR (Iron and Steel Corporation) and the leader was prosecuted and fined. There was a corporate sense of white guilt and, when Luthuli stood up to speak, he was given a long standing ovation. There was the sense that the real anger was directed not at him, but at the Afrikaners who had arranged the meeting:



He then spoke – it was the kind of speech that you would have expected Albert Luthuli to give – very reasonable, very conciliatory, very understanding, yet at the same time making strongly the points that the ANC President would make. And he didn't mention the incident at all... It was a wonderful performance and he was rewarded for it by being banned by the government a week or so later, and confined to Groutville.

When we left the flat, we shared a house with Neville Denny, Colin's colleague from the English Department and his wife Shirley. I was then pregnant and they had a toddler, Stephen. Shirley's advice and help was useful. She taught me to cook, to housekeep, to look after babies. A friend, Gerard Moerdyk, was selling his car, a Morris Minor, and we were persuaded to buy it. Gerard was later a columnist in a Catholic (the *Southern Cross*) and other newspapers. (His uncle had been one of the architects who designed the Voortrekker Monument.) We wondered how we had managed without the car.

Small, beautiful Elizabeth (Libby) was born on 2 November 1958 in the Marifont Nursing Home. In those days, husbands were not expected to be present at the birth and Colin, distinctly squeamish, would have been horrified if it had been suggested. There was a woman in the ward who could speak only Italian and French. An appeal was made for someone who could speak either of those languages and English. Colin volunteered, though admitting to me that 'gynaecological language was not really part of my French vocabulary'. Still, he proved a blessing in the ward and we were invited to an Italian meal in gratitude.

With our slightly larger family we settled back into the routines of our lives, though examination marking and the simultaneous arrival of a baby put some extra pressures upon us. But we were still sharing a house with the Dennys and that eased the burden somewhat. There was something of a respite when we all went down to the South Coast in January to a house on my parents' property and enjoyed sun, sand and sea.

As we drove back to Pretoria, with pram and baby and paraphernalia on the back seat, we were stopped in Ladysmith by two nuns, Sisters of the Poor, who do not live in convents but among the poor in very simple lodgings. They said they knew we were Catholics and they were hitching to Pretoria and knew we would give them a lift. We agreed if they could squeeze themselves into the car. They did and we drove on with Elizabeth on my lap in the front seat, as almost all babies travelled in those unregulated days! (Our Morris Minor

was a wonder car – we transported four children and our well-built domestic worker, her son and all the paraphernalia associated with babies and beaches, from Pietermaritzburg down to the coast some years later.)

We settled back into Pretoria life, now becoming familiar to us, with routines and patterns. In town we were surrounded by Afrikaans speakers, even by-and-large the domestic workers. The main ethos was National Party and one was always aware of this, but we lived in a rather English part of the town as we were in the vicinity of both Pretoria Girls High and Pretoria Boys High. Entry to a school was very strictly based on proximity, so parents would make sure they bought houses in the right suburbs so that their children would be accepted into schools that encouraged debate and questioning. There was also a fairly strong cosmopolitan element as many embassies were based in Pretoria. Colin was involved both politically and in church organisations, though still finding his feet. Among the Pretoria liberals was Peter Hain whose parents were later banned. It was at a Liberal Party meeting that Colin met Peter Brown for the first time and he became more and more committed to what the party was doing:

Most of the Catholic organisations that I belonged to had people who were forward-thinking, and who were beginning to see more and more clearly the implications of Christianity for the socio-political situation of South Africa.

A close friend, Colin Collins, was a priest, then secretary of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference and he was moving more and more to the left. He was later involved with the Student Christian Movement, was hunted by the police and left the country. Colin, though, felt that he himself did nothing that was in any way particularly daring or momentous.

# 7

## ONCE MORE PIETERMARITZBURG

In 1959 Colin was invited by Professor Geoffrey Durrant to take up a lectureship in Pietermaritzburg. We thought deeply for some time about this, especially as Neville Denny had applied, but decided to accept it: it was the difference between a distance-learning university and one where one interacted immediately with students. Colin had been strongly influenced by Durrant and Christina van Heyningen, followers of F.R. Leavis, with their belief in the moral and political relevance of the study of literature, and close reading of texts. Of Durrant, he later said:

There are some people whom it is an honour – a privilege, a part of one’s profound and independent dignity, a part of one’s glory of self – to work under.

He had been impressed by the ethos of this strong, influential English Department, which like others, still followed the traditional subjects, so he found himself teaching Old and Middle English, Shakespeare, sixteenth-, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature, and some twentieth-century. He later taught Poetics. There was quite an emphasis on tutorials and all lecturers took part in them. They still lectured formally in gowns and with ties. The campus was smallish, almost all white, and lecturers in different disciplines met in the one common room and, with his wide reading and interests, he enjoyed this. Colin regularly attended the Wednesday lecture in the Science lecture theatre which covered a wide variety of subjects – no other lectures took place at this time, so that all could attend.

There was no Drama Department so the Dramatic Society used to produce plays and many lecturers acted in them. I sometimes made costumes (for Olivia in Jacques’ production of *Twelfth Night* and for Peter Hey’s *The Boyfriend*). They took place in the Old Main Hall and were very well supported.

Accepting this position meant that we now had to find a house and to have at least some furniture when we moved down. Neville and Colin had made an enormous Masonite wardrobe, rather hideous, which we could almost

have used as a pantechnicon, and Colin went to a sale of household furniture from which he returned with a rather lovely ceramic Italian breadboard and a framed Van Gogh print. It didn't seem wise to pursue that route, so a friend recommended someone who made a table, and we went and bought two very elegant armchairs, four dining room chairs and a sort of bed in a wooden base and felt we could venture forth. We dismantled the wardrobe and brought it down in pieces.

Once more Colin made a journey into what was both familiar and unfamiliar, but now with a wife and daughter, a car and furniture. Friends, Mike and Mellony Martin suggested that we move into the rented half house that they were now leaving as Mike was to study in Holland. It was owned by Mr Chesney-Jones, a Maritzburg College master. We agreed. They also suggested that we employ Teresa Dlungwane, who worked for them some days a week. We took her on, too, and found ourselves with more responsibilities. The house was on the right-angled turn of Burger Street, a panhandle, overlooking Alexandra Park, with a deck and willow tree. It was charming – a central little hall, with dining room, sitting room and kitchen off to one side and bedroom, enclosed veranda and bathroom to the other.

It was while we were in this house that Margie (1960) and David (1961) were born. Margie was a colicky baby. Many of our visitors rocked her as I cooked the meal. We stayed in the Chesney-Jones house for some time. Colin's parents went overseas and left Susan with us and that was quite difficult as she was in some ways like another child, and a very self-willed one. She was used to being the one child at home and found it difficult to be with babies whose needs often had to be considered before hers. She did not like to be parted from her radio and is the only person I know who would take her radio to the cinema and have it plugged into her ear throughout the film. Later she would do the same while watching TV and she would talk at the same time. She, Colin and his father shared a goon-show humour and he could always get her to laugh with some ridiculous comment or comparison or pun. 'Aw, Colin!' she would say.

What we did lack was a study for Colin. He became quite an absent husband and father, yet, paradoxically, a very committed and loving one. He worked in his office at university in the afternoons and over the weekends, but he also used the car as a study: that way he was isolated from us but near enough if there was a problem. He often looked after Libby there while I tried to put Margie to sleep. Colin could not work with noise – he could never play music while he worked, except when he was paying accounts or washing up.

It became obvious, though, that we would have to move so we began looking for houses to rent. We found one in Prestbury, 27 Hillside, across town from the university. The house was built at the top of a sloping garden and Colin's study and our bedroom overlooked the hedged garden tapering to a bridge where the roads on either side of the house joined. It was an old house with a veranda round three sides and a Wendy house near the kitchen, which became the children's playroom.

The car, or a series of cars, was very much part of Colin's life. He used them, of course, to get around (at speed), to ferry people to school, to university, to and from meetings (so that his car was often to be seen in Indian areas or townships), to mark in, as he waited for me or the children to finish school or sporting activities. But more than that: he had long discussions with those he gave lifts to, often quite intense, so I used to keep an eye on the road and the speedometer if I were in the car. I was a rather bad backseat driver, for whom he was occasionally grateful and of whom he was mostly quite tolerant. For quite a while I resisted the idea of a car radio as he was a very good whistler and I enjoyed listening to him, and we talked. Eventually we did get a radio and CD player and then Colin was in his element. He always had a variety of CDs in the car and played music even on short journeys. Long journeys gave him the opportunity to play symphonies or 'Cats' or the Beatles or 'Missa Luba' or, more recently, Freshly Ground and Parlotones, which Kathy had introduced us to. He would also play very modern music, like that of Malcolm Forsyth and Keith Volans, cousins from Pietermaritzburg, now overseas, in order to get to know, understand and appreciate it. Margie discovered Flanders and Swann in a Cape Town market and that joined our repertoire once more – the children had liked it so much that they played it to death. We had our first big party at this house. Colin was so afraid that I would under-cater that he went out at the last minute and bought six large chickens and we seemed to live on them for about the next three weeks. We had many visitors, among them the Dennys with their three little boys.

Richard was born in 1962. Ian Hughes was visiting us and he and Colin were sitting on our bed discussing some important concept when I decided that the new baby was arriving. The car wouldn't start, so Ian had to push it and accompany us. It was all a false alarm, though, so we came home and I made bacon and eggs at three in the morning, to the mystification of Teresa Dlungwane, whom we'd asked to sleep in the house and who had slept peacefully through it all. When Richard was finally born it was a very long labour and, this time, it was Colin who wiped my brow – well, rubbed my

back – and read *Mansfield Park* to me.

When we had four young children, all of whom woke up in the night from time to time, Mary and I decided to share our responsibilities: she would wake up for the two younger ones, David and Richard, and I would wake up for the older ones, Libby and Margie. Somehow – we are not sure how – we managed to turn this arrangement into a fine art: if the younger ones cried or called in the night, I simply didn't hear them, and if the older ones did so, Mary didn't hear them. In the morning we used to compare notes on the night's activities.

When he did not have to go out for some activity or social event, Colin told the children bedtime stories, though I don't think that his stories were as complicated as his father's. When he fell asleep, as often happened (he would lie on our bed with all the children there too), they would wake him up indignantly, remind him of what he had told them and make him finish. Years later, when our grandson, Gregory, was staying with us, he woke in the night and came into bed with us and Colin told him a story. He woke up next morning and kept asking me to 'read him the story in Grandpa's head'.

When the children were small, we packed up the back of the Morris Minor to act like a station wagon; the Peugeots, which were the next series of cars we drove, *were* station wagons. It was in the Peugeots that we later went to the drive-in, with a saucepan of curry and rice wrapped up in newspapers to keep it warm until we were safely ensconced. We then moved on to Toyota Corollas. Richard is still driving the one we bought in 2000. They were dull but reliable cars, none of the idiosyncrasies of the Peugeots.

Colin was always optimistic and convinced that the cars would get us to our destination; even after he had said, as we passed through Peddie on our way to Grahamstown, 'Isn't the car going beautifully!' and the engine promptly gave up, and we had to be fetched in Eric Harber's Morris Minor, which had great gaps in the floor, so that you saw the tarmac as you sped over it – unnerving if you had four small children. He spent the time in Grahamstown helping Eric, then lecturing there, to overhaul the engine. But intense discussions went on as they worked, too, with intervals of inactivity when the discussion became too intense. 'And it is strange,' said Colin once, 'how often trees grow up behind the car after I have parked it.' We also theorised that in another life he would have competed with racing car driver, Graham Hill. He disliked being at the back of a stream of cars or driving in the middle lane. And he continued to comment on how well the car was doing, which I felt challenged fate. He

was blissfully optimistic. He would drive to mid-town in mid-morning on a Saturday and say, 'I'll park outside the bank' and he would inevitably find a parking place, to my annoyance, as I never could.

The Morris Minor and the first Peugeot 404 were cars of personality. I remember them with much fondness, partly as we had them as the family was expanding and before it began to disperse, so they were cars to which and in which things happened. Here is Bill Bizley's memory: 'I think that, if you wanted to trace the amazingly complicated fugue of a typical Gardnerian day, you might well consult one of my favourite ghosts, the old 404 family station wagon. What an extraordinarily convoluted day that vehicle had to run, distributing the Gardner clan all round Maritzburg, running between meetings academic and secular, and, in days when Colin was dean on both campuses, winding up and down the road to Durban sometimes twice in a day. But, my clearest memory in those sombre seventies and eighties, parked of an evening outside some little church hall, where some protest was taking place against the latest enormities of legislation, I might say how reassured I always felt on those occasions to see Colin's car sitting in the parking lot.' The car had other idiosyncrasies: as we drove we could take out the key and the gear handle and wave them round in the air and the car kept going, a party trick our children enjoyed showing off to their friends.

When one of the cars did let us down, it was often spectacularly. We set out for Stellenbosch (in 1966) early in the morning. As we reached Richmond (Natal), the boys asked us if we had arrived. We spent the night in Grahamstown and next morning early stopped and bought bananas, fresh bread and butter and had a most memorable meal – I can still taste it. Late afternoon the exhaust broke as we left Riviersonderend (Cape) at 5.00 pm on Friday of a long weekend. We decided to battle on, bought tins and tins of oil and had to keep putting it in. We reached Stellenbosch at midnight. 'There's a gas stove,' said the Thompsons from whom we were renting the house, 'but the gas tap is so well concealed that the children will never find it.' We unpacked the car and then the girls came out and said, 'We want to go home. This house smells.' David had explored the house, found that there was something strange about the stove, located the gas tap and turned it on. We had to sit out in the cold until the smell had evaporated. And the next day send away for a part for the car and cope without it.

The other absolutely essential thing in Colin's life was his diary. Here is Bill Bizley's account: 'It was near the beginning of an academic term back in the early 80s that, whereas my little blue diary had in it, by that stage, only



one entry, Colin's diary, three months into the year, was already sagging with ink, bulging with all those little arrows and countermands and postscripts that suggest a crazily occupied life. The thought occurred to me that if I could only seize that sacred Gardnerian text, so hideously weighed with the evidence of otiose productivity, I might, too, plumb the secrets of the unfinished requiem, K626, which this divine songster so ostentatiously flashed before the world.'

'Well – the opportunity came. I was talking with my talented colleague in his office, when he was suddenly called away to a long telephone call, leaving the sacred treasure trove open on his desk. With greedy fingers I picked it up ... But I have to say that my great anticipation was rather let down. No buried requiem, no secreted texts in all that ballpoint scrawl ... But the time spent with the diary was not without a certain psychological interest. Up to that day, everything before was absolutely illegible, inked out, crossed away, slashed from mortal vision, as though COG had a sort of ideological war with the past tense. A vast amount of ink was employed on the task of eradication. So, when as Salieri, I slunk back to my room, I seized on my own diary, and, with brutal speed, inked out January, February and March, I can't tell you how much more productive my diary seemed after that.'

His diary was written in minute handwriting, and even then he had to add loose strips of paper to include everything. At times he would pore over it with a magnifying glass and sometimes have to call me in to read what he had written. Sometimes neither of us could decipher it. Friend and colleague Christopher Merrett commented: 'It would have been a security policeman's dream; or perhaps a nightmare because Colin could sometimes not decipher entries himself. At the end of the day he would literally obliterate all the entries: I was never sure whether this was simply a cunning form of security or some profound view of the march of time.' His diary had to be a size that fitted into his pocket (the university diary was perfect). I soon learned that most T-shirts, pocketless, were no good and judged every shirt by the size and position of its pockets. He wrote everything down – appointments, yes, and ideas, practical needs, references that he needed to look up, articles that he wanted to read, the family's appointments, anything that he thought he needed to remember. That way he kept his mind clear and was able to focus on the immediate moment and be open to new ideas, new requests, new challenges. He had a horror of losing his diary. Inevitably I came to rely on his diary more than my own. In his Notes and Queries he wrote:



Mary's life is exciting: she never diarises anything, so even long-pondered and pre-arranged events take her completely by surprise.

I now have to keep a diary; the difficulty I still have is in remembering to consult it every day. I still use Colin's for details of passwords, car registration, and other such matters. His mind was always active, analysing and questioning. His discussions, what he read, church services, meetings, all of them were reflected in his notebooks. So the volume contains details of conversations with his colleagues – particularly Bob Jones (discussions about Churchill) and Jacques Berthoud, Christina van Heyningen, Cake Manson – the latter both very critical, Cake in fact scathing, about Christianity – extracts from Ortega y Gasset and comments on them, comments on Shakespeare's tragedies, his responses to the readings in masses which he felt often provided a comment on or an answer to things which concerned him or to what he was feeling. His commentaries are studded with verses. So many of his discussions gave rise to quatrains in which he concentrated long passages and discussions.

'Reading Ortega by the Sea-Shore'

I hold my heart out open to the world  
Thus, intricate and full of clemency  
But heart must feel the stab of fiercest lust  
And know the slow commotion of the sea

'Othello'

A rich life hung upon a handkerchief.  
A whole life hung upon a deft design.  
Great man would move with royalty of soul,  
But trips on base realities of time.

'Lent'

Lent throws purple on the green,  
regulates love, puts rules on life,  
holds our human chaos in  
spring's flowers bloom in Lenten strife.

# 8

## A SECOND PEAK

Meanwhile Colin's university life continued and his participation in university, political and religious organisations grew. He talks about life in South Africa in Notes and Queries II and III (1960–1961):

Life in a semi-feudal, post-feudal kingdom. For the strain and tension of this existence – the need for politics, the need for every sort of extra-curricular worry, the need for unwearied sympathy and for living on every level – is the compensation that one has more time, because the society throws up, still, a fine and natural hierarchy; and so one has servants about the home. Instead of putting one's house in order – the call to many academics in England – one has hours to attempt to put one's country in order. There, are, of course, the disadvantages of living in a state of crisis, in compensation, there are the immense advantages of living in a state of crisis.'

We owed a great debt of gratitude particularly to Teresa Dlungwane, who kept house for us, and Joseph Shezi and later Gertie Maswidi, who kept our garden in order. This freed Colin to work on interests and concerns beyond the university. One of these was literacy and inter-race groups. He chaired a group discussing the needs of youth in communities. One of the speakers was an Indian woman, Myrtle Matthias whose husband, George, was principal of Marian School and later of Deccan Road School. We invited them to dinner and became friends. Our children were much of an age and they loved going to visit them at their house at the top of Trichy Road, with Pietermaritzburg spread out below them. (Although our families are now spread round the world, and our husbands have died, Myrtle and I remained great friends and I visited her in New Zealand in 2015.)

This group led us to collect discarded exercise books from white schools and make them into new books, which we took to Reverend Enos Sikhakhane at the Edendale Ecumenical Centre to be distributed to black schools, and to St Joan of Arc school, where we helped with a feeding scheme. During the long

Christmas holidays, our children, their friends, and anybody who came to visit us was roped in to assemble and staple books.

Peter Croeser remembered: ‘Colin also played an instrumental role in the National Youth Action tutoring programme during apartheid days in which the programme, sponsored by the *Daily News*, brought in lecturers to tutor over 800 matriculants of all races at the Lotus Hall in Langalibalele Street.’ It was there that he met Saths Cooper and Yunus Carrim, who became a close friend. After Colin had died, Yunus (he was by then national minister of communications) phoned from Burkina Faso: ‘I first met Colin in 1971 at a National Youth Action event. I was still at school and I shared a platform with him and Saths Cooper. He was a wonderful man, kind, loving with a deep commitment to fairness, justice and democracy.’ Colin often consulted Yunus when he was concerned about occurrences in the ANC. Later, in the 1980s the Campus Women’s Group organised lectures for matriculants and the English Department gave lectures; for example, in 1980 Colin on *Hamlet* and his colleague Marie Dyer on *Northanger Abbey*.

Getting into the full swing of university teaching, being challenged by colleagues and by his reading, are what Notes and Queries II and III concentrate on. In April 1961 he writes of himself:

I feel my mind now moving with a fiery urgency. The life before me is constantly melting and recreating itself into new exciting invaluable patterns.

But, earlier, he had written:

My writing is insufferably dull. If ever I burst through acknowledged knowledge and find something new – this is a process that hasn’t begun yet.

He was always fairly self-critical:

How incongruous.  
Quiet Bob’s words come  
while Colin the garrulous  
praises the dumb.

He disagreed with fellow academic, poet and playwright, Cae Manson about many things, but was supportive of his writing: for example, *The Festival* (1961) and *Manson’s Casserole* (1970) in *Theoria*, and he acted in *The Counsellor*. In 1972 *H.W.D Manson* was published, co-authored by Colin and Christina van Heyningen.

From 1960 to 1963 Colin wrote a weekly leading article for the *Natal Witness*:

Take, rather, a precise view of the particular situation and people. And attack it indirectly, ironically, grotesquely, gaily – with a bright flashing anger. Don't mouth and voice in funereal tones: tweak his nose, jerk off his moustache. Make it alive and human.

Some of the headings illustrate this: MR FORSTER FOISTS (bannings and warnings in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act, with no explanation or justification, on an elderly canon of the Anglican Church and two lecturers, members of the Liberal Party); MR PECKSNIFF PECKS (the pretence that the creation of bantustans is purely out of concern for Africans); THE UNMENTIONABLE NEWS (the fact that Sewsunker Sewgolum, who won the Natal Open Golf Championship, was not mentioned on the SABC's general or sports news); GLAB-TRAB (presenting the General Law Amendment Bill – Glab – and the feeble opposition to it). National Party politicians gave him much input for his articles; he simply had to analyse, criticise and satirise their words. In all his writing, satirical or more straightforwardly critical, he commented on current events and emphasised the horrors of the developing apartheid philosophy, its practical implementation and the suffering it imposed on most people living in the country. The writing was eloquent, sophisticated, with a width of knowledge, logical development of ideas, and humour through which sharp criticisms were often made. Yet the way in which people thought in the 1960s is to some degree different from the way in which they might think nowadays and many formulations would be different. It was aimed at a traditionally educated readership, which would have recognised the reference to Pecksniff. Here is part of a leader dated 21 February 1963. As a sop to English speakers, Verwoerd appointed Frank Waring, an English-speaking, ex-Springbok rugby player as a Cabinet minister to head the Department of Information. After several gaffes on the part of Waring, Colin wrote:

We feel bound to conclude, as someone in Parliament did a few weeks ago, that Mr Waring is no more than a gimmick. Too often (to change the image) has he evaded the half-backs of Reason, dodged the full-back of Common-sense and plunged triumphantly over the goal-line of the Absurd. And yet we don't wish to suggest that Mr Waring's play is completely unique. After all, the whole Cabinet team has a remarkable record in this game: the stout efforts of big-kicking Hertzog at full-back, and the ox-like scrummager De Wet Nel, and

the original winger Louw, and the architect fly-half Verwoerd, are not to be sneezed at!

After 1963, the editor asked him to write fortnightly as he himself wished to write, so Colin wrote mainly letters and statements until he went on sabbatical and ceased writing leading articles. He linked up with the Liberal Party: Pietermaritzburg was by then its home, the location of its national office. He came to know Alan Paton and Peter Brown very well:

In early 1960, there were the pass burnings, and Sharpeville, and the State of Emergency. Many people were detained. Three of these were Maritzburg Liberals – Peter Brown, one of the co-founders of the party, Hans Meidner, senior lecturer in Botany, and Derick Marsh, senior lecturer in English. I was myself probably a bit more involved in Liberal Party activities then than Derick Marsh who had been chairman of the local branch a year or two earlier but had withdrawn to quite a large extent because of his wife's illness. When he was detained the police first went to the wrong house (at 4 am), and then, when they got the right address, looked through his books prior to carting him off to jail. They were particularly suspicious of a play written by Racine in the late 17th century.

Colin wondered if he himself had not been arrested because their records were so out of date. In 1962 Colin became a member of the Natal executive of the Liberal Party:

The Liberal Party was non-racial from the first, though most of its leadership was white. In Natal, however, most of its membership was African, as it focused in a special way on the forced removal from what the Government called 'black spots'. In the weekend, Liberals from PMB used often to go up north to talk at meetings in various places: Peter Brown, Selby Msimang, John Aitchison, Heather Morkel, Christopher Tshabalala, Steve Hayes, Liz Tucker (now Gunner), myself and others would travel out to these areas in order to speak to and encourage the victims or the potential victims of the government's schemes. When we went up north, to Bergville or to Roosboom near Ladysmith, the police used to follow us – one of our games was to take a circuitous route, so that the police were left (we hoped) puzzled and anxious. Telephones were tapped, letters were opened – and at every meeting the representatives of the Special

Branch were present with their tape recorders. After meetings they followed our cars until we were well on the way to Pietermaritzburg.

They became the object of some of Colin's witty comments, which annoyed them as it gave people justification to laugh at them. They made no attempt to conceal their identity and intended intimidation:

I was speaking at a meeting to protest about Peter's banning ... [1964] when I absent-mindedly quoted something that Peter had said. It was of course illegal to quote a banned person, and the SB were always present at these meetings with their recording equipment. A few days later I was told that the police were visiting everyone who had been at the meeting (they always took the names) to question them about my statement. Apparently, people defended me gallantly, saying they had gone to the toilet or weren't paying attention, but the police obviously got enough evidence, and a few days later I was called in to the SB headquarters and told that I was to be charged under section something or other of the appropriate act. They were polite, and I told them my lawyer Simon Roberts had told me not to make a statement. Nothing happened for a while. Then Simon phoned me (we all knew that our phones were tapped) and said very loudly, 'I hope they don't drop this case, because they are going to make bloody fools of themselves.' They did drop the case, maybe because of Simon's threat! But in any case, by then they were beginning to go after bigger fish than me, and the government, especially in Natal, didn't like persecuting university people unless they could convince their white public that the people in question were a real threat to the state. Alas I was not. When Alan Paton was first raided an SB man walked into his study and said 'God! Die boeke!'

The Liberal Party published a magazine, *Reality*, and Colin was on the editorial board from its inception in 1968 until its demise in 1993:

In this period, I contributed to it articles and reviews, and poems written with the pseudonym Vortex.

He was one of the delegates to the Natal Convention in April 1961, an important meeting of many people and organisations opposed to apartheid that discussed alternatives. This was his view of the franchise then, formulated during that conference:

Franchise for all adults – maybe with a small transition period – maybe with a longer one. But what counts is not a policy – a scheme, a plan, a theory – but men. All will go greatly if there are great men in charge; all will be poor if poor men lead.

At this stage he admired Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

His religious commitments also continued. He joined the Kolbe Society and maintained his interest in CSU and NCSF, giving talks at times. But he also wrote at length in Notes and Queries about spirituality, and about reconciling religious beliefs and humanist attitudes. In 1962 he had published 'The Bible as literature' in *The Old Palace* (Oxford). He became an admirer of Archbishop Denis Hurley:

Throughout my life he has been an inspiration, a beacon of hope, a pointer in the direction of justice, reconciliation and love.

Hurley was a great supporter of Vatican II and the changes it brought about and this contributed to Colin's admiration for him.

Writing for the Schools' Radio Talks demanded a different style but he did that, too, in the years before 1964. It gave him experience in simplifying and expressing his ideas in such a way that even the weaker pupils could understand. His father had previously given some talks but had become head of department at the University of the Free State, had other commitments, and recommended that Colin took over from him, as he had lectured on *King Lear*, a current set work and had acted in a production of the play. He offered to supervise him, as Colin had not done work of this kind before. Two of his colleagues from UNISA were also presenters – Professor Eddie Davis and Ridley Beeton – and Fred Langman, who lectured me in Pietermaritzburg. Colin presented programmes on Shakespeare plays, novels and poetry but he did not deliver them. In a letter Rita Elferink who organised the programmes wrote, in 1962, 'I must indeed compliment you on the very interesting presentation of a discussion on Trollope's work *Barchester Towers*. It is a rare gift to make a set book really come alive for a class.' The more radical Colin, later, would not have done this, I suspect, as it was aimed at white pupils. But for many years he gave lectures to schoolchildren of all races on their current set works, finding venues in which they could all be present, travelling quite far afield.



# 9

## ACADEMIC AND FAMILY LIFE

The exodus of academics from the university had only just begun:

Such partings are inevitable. All my leaders have gone, one by one, David Thomas, John Bishop, Diego, David Mayne, Ian, Neville, now Durrant. I am too deeply rooted in South Africa to leave it – rooted even perhaps to death, though I hope not.

Of Geoffrey Durrant, Christina van Heyningen said, ‘No man ever made a wiser decision.’ But he wrote to her, ‘I feel like a person who has committed both murder and suicide.’ He wanted to write and felt that there were too many distracting responsibilities in South Africa. W.H Gardner became professor after Durrant. But there was a real community still here of young lecturers with children, of which we became part – Astrid and Jacques Berthoud, Bob and Elsie Jones, Colin (History) and Fleur Webb, Peter and Elizabeth Royle (both lecturing in French), Ray (Education) and Elizabeth Rutherford-Smith; later Douglas (Politics) and Colleen Irvine, and Dick (Fine Arts) and Leonora Leigh. (Our Kathy and Alanna Leigh took turns at being just in time or late to arrive at Girls High School.) We met at parties, children’s birthday parties, which often ended with sundowners, and entertained one another to dinners, sometimes coming home with the milk in the small hours of the morning. In spite of commitments, we seemed to have both time and money. I realise that so much money nowadays is spent on ever-changing technology that we have far less to spend on entertaining and buying books and pictures. We had more time, too, without e-mails and cellphones and with an excuse for procrastination.

The going of all these people made me realise that I could not justify simply being an academic in South Africa, I had to be part activist in some way.

Colin had co-edited with Jacques Berthoud *The Sole Function* in honour of Christina van Heyningen and his contribution was 'The double vision of tragedy: Brutus, and Antony's forum speech'.

In 1962 Colin became a senior lecturer:

I was presumably fit for such a promotion because I was simultaneously offered a senior lectureship at Rhodes. But I had a sense that I was moving into something of a vacuum, so many good academics, particularly in the Arts – particularly in a subject like English – had left the country.

Colin's first sabbatical came in July 1963. I had taken on a locum at St John's Diocesan School for Girls to generate some extra money and had enjoyed it. We asked various psychologist friends if it was all right for me to go to England for three months. Could we leave the children for so long? They agreed that it was fine as long as we made suitable arrangements. The girls stayed in Pietermaritzburg with Colin's parents on condition they went to a nursery school. We found one at Oribi and they loved it. Colin's father used to draw faces for them on porridge or instant pudding and they always remembered that. The two boys and Teresa Dlungwane went down to the South Coast to my mother. My sister Ann Edwards spoilt them and Catherine (librarian at University of Natal, Durban) and her friend John Lucas (lecturer in Psychology) saw that the children got together occasionally so that they did not forget each other. The children all seemed happy and settled. We sent each of them postcards almost every day, giving a good record of what we had done (we didn't own a camera), but tried for cards that would have some element of interest for them.

I wept all the way to the station to catch the Orange Express to Cape Town, but settled down and enjoyed everything from then on. We played chess on Bloemfontein station, in the early hours as carriages were shunted off. We joined Colin and Fleur Webb, also on sabbatical, and their son, Jonathan, on a Union Castle boat. We stayed with Paul and Jane and their daughters, Glyndwr, Judy and Philippa, now living in East Sheen, familiar ground to Colin and Paul. They had left South Africa in 1961 when no one was building and there was no demand for architects.

People say that London is an impossible urban growth; and yet my most vivid memories of my 'London' childhood are precisely of the peculiarly strong stern smell of earth and decaying foliage and cold and wet in Sheen Common on an autumn or early winter day. And

the mysterious woods, and the lady-like silver birch trees, and the call of the green space of the common, and the strange attractiveness of early Victorian country houses, and the old stone, low grey-brick walls, and wooden fences (sweetly smelling), and conkers and acorns and pine cones.

We visited friends all over England, among them Sigrid Tosswill, from whose house we went to Stratford to see four Shakespeare plays in two days – the *Wars of the Roses*, morning, afternoon and evening, with marvellous acting by Dame Peggy Ashcroft as a sixteen-year-old growing into an old woman, and *Twelfth Night* the evening before. We travelled to France and Italy with Margaret Evans, ex-wife of Cake Manson. Europe was new and wonderful, though with moments of familiarity. We revelled in Florence. For the journey from Florence to Rome we took a third-class compartment with wooden seats. We had to choose between standing in the corridor with the setting sun and the Lombardy poplars flashing past us, alternating bright light and deep shadow, or staying inside with an operatic argument about Italian politics and constant appeals to us to give our opinions.

Sigrid lent us a car for a while, so we were able to travel widely, going to Scotland for a few days, before leaving. We drove rather more like tourists up through England into Scotland, and Colin briefly detailed all the towns and villages we had passed through and places we had seen. This was just a kind of diary account, simply listing places, but it reminded me of unusual happenings, like the feather mattress which engulfed us in the B&B in Jedburgh; spending the night with Professor McQuarrie's family in Glasgow, where it struck us how much energy the Scots put into speaking – Aarrchi, they called Archie, their voices rising steeply; the lonely man who invited us to lunch in his caravan when we stopped at a lay-by – his wife had died and he wandered round the country getting companionship by sharing a meal with whoever stopped where he was parked. We drove through Eccles and Prestwich; I asked directions at Elland in Yorkshire and couldn't understand a word that was said to me; we had picnic meals by the side of the road or in parks, once at the seaside: 'stony, seaweedy, grassy, slimy shore before us, the Mamore Mountains behind us, and the Pap of Glencoe across the loch.' Colin described the countryside we went through and wrote a detailed account of the value of what he had achieved during the ten weeks that we spent there:

Freed from the responsibility of parenthood and from the constrictions of routine work, I was able to live seriously and fully in a way I have

perhaps never done before... My most specific academic purpose was to continue in loco my study of the modern English dramatic imagination – of modern English drama and modern English responses to and interpretations of Shakespeare.

He then listed all the plays he had been to and other sources that he had used such as journals, newspapers, seminars, and discussions with friends, mostly well-read graduates, in their homes, in pubs. In addition, he visited numerous English departments. He met eminent people, among them F.R. Leavis and his wife Queenie, C.V. Wedgewood, historian, Rupert Hart-Davis, the publisher, and Father D'Arcy, a Jesuit theologian, interested in Hopkins. He hoped to absorb England and indeed he did:

I spent hours and hours in London – in the streets, in the theatres, in the bookshops, in the galleries [he lists them] and closely observing the beauty of the churches, the Georgian houses, the squares, the parks. [He felt that everything he did was] enriching – I mean intellectually and culturally so, and thus inestimably important for my life, and I hope my value, as a lecturer in the Arts Faculty.

He recorded his responses to everything – conversations, books, galleries, buildings, countryside – analysing, comparing, appreciating, describing.

Colin devoted most of Notes and Queries VI and VII to these months, commenting but also writing a list of unusual names of towns in England, drawing a quick sketch of the Duomo in Florence, sketches of possible round churches of his own design, and of other buildings that interested him, accounts of the *son et lumière* [a sound and light show] that we attended at Notre Dame ('moving and authoritative') and at the Colosseum in Rome ('grotesque, ridiculous, contradictory, absurd'), a journal of our trip to Scotland. This present account is so prosaic compared with the richness of Colin's notes, but they are pages and pages long – comparisons between Paris and Rome, between England and Italy:

In the land of poetry: the weather forces you indoors and greys the face of things. In the land of painting: the weather forces you to look, gives things colour and form. Between England and Scotland: the lakes (in the Lake District) are quiet and calm and peaceful, rather than craggily terrifying, occupying the edge of the human mind, but not (especially since Wordsworth) beyond it. And yet not unfrightening. The Highlands of Scotland have a far greater

impact (but he is used to England): what magnificence, immensity, colour, form, power, incomprehensibility – what a craggy challenge. Highland moor colours – all shades of brown, yellow, orange, olive, fawn – but especially in the grass, bright singing yellow-orange.

Yet he wonders where the Highland poets equivalent to Wordsworth and Coleridge are. This was rather different from later sabbaticals. A month before we once more boarded a Union Castle boat on our return journey, he was surprised to find:

It is significant, strange, that the children disturb my dreams – that I miss them more, pray more deeply for them – now, two months after parting from them. Perhaps only now is the deepest heart, the furthest unconscious, fully enjoyed and aware.

Summing up his return, Colin wrote:

Staying in South Africa: A trip to Europe helps for this problem. One's perspectives are clearer: one sees more surely what it is that one might go away to: and when one comes back, one has a greater vision of what it is that remaining will mean an acceptance of. Perhaps the greatest moment in this great absence of 15 weeks will be the moment of return: the heat, and the newspapers, and the slow sadness of corruption; there they will all be. Or perhaps it won't be that that will strike one at all ... At any rate, observation must beware of relaxing, of getting out of harness, at the return home: then and there is where it will have its greatest feats to perform.

As we trundle through the Free State, Colin realises:

It is Mary's home. Mary's long memories, as East Sheen and fields green are mine ... After the sweetness of Clocolan, further north the kopjies, neks, kloofs, kranse: thoroughly South African scenery. Sand-colours and orange outcrops of rock – this land lacks Peguy's 'deux mille ans de labeur'; and 'mille ans de votre grâce'. It is not 'apprivoisé', not domesticated, not humanised, not tamed: and note all the ambiguities of that. Beyond our cosiness or formulations, is a tone of its own. And this is Mary's earth.

# 10

## THE CRUELLER COMPLEXITY OF POLITICAL LIFE

‘The agony of living’

What paradox heart must endure  
that must be fierce and must be pure!

What cataclysm in the soul  
that would be venturesome, and whole!

The children were very excited to see us again and David walked about with his eyes lit up like candles. Richard was perhaps too young to give David the companionship that Libby and Margie were able to give each other. Colin says of meeting the children:

No account can be given. Such richness of resource and personality and initiative and articulate loving? Children are God’s gift that grows daily and astonishingly richer. (The ideal and archetypal investment!)

The crueler complexity of political life Colin was constantly aware of. In 1965 he speaks of dispossession:

Dispossession of one’s house, dispossession of one’s unthinking trust of the S.A. hierarchy’s actions, the fate of so many Indians dispossessed by the Group Areas Act. And think of the now-going-smoothly-through Bantu Laws Amendment Bill. Remember the Great Schism – remember Piers the Plowman searching for Peter... [he was teaching Chaucer]

At times of heavy fear and suffering,  
remember those who’ve trudged the battlefield  
and faced, with all the courage they could wield,  
what time might bring.

In 1964 we had to move from Hillside because Mr Breedt, our landlord, needed to live in the house, as the area where he had his preferred house in Mountain Rise had been declared ‘Indian’ under the terrible Group Areas Act.

For the rest of the year, we lived in a university half-house in King Edward Avenue. It was the old Guy house, then owned by the university, with its lovely high ceilings, tall windows and a huge dark, wooden Gog Magog fireplace in the very large drawing room. It was due to be demolished to make place for Malherbe Residence, so we could only be there for about a year while we looked for somewhere else.

Meanwhile Colin became a member of the national executive of the Liberal Party. It was in this house that we first met Tony Voss, who was brought from Grahamstown by Eric Harber. Tony writes, 'Colin and Mary were living in one of the University Residences, across Durban Road from the main campus. They entertained us with characteristic friendliness and generosity. They were members of the Liberal Party and on that trip I met a number of other Liberals. These encounters gave me my first sense of a real political alternative for South Africa, and soon after our return to Grahamstown, I joined the party and was active in a small way, until I left for graduate study in the USA in 1964. The depth of Colin's commitment was admirable, but he was never, in my experience, showy or hectoring.'

'I had known of Colin before I met him. When I was a student at Rhodes in the 1950s the Pietermaritzburg English Department had a formidable reputation. My sense was that PMB, Leavisite and prac-crit orientated, was the department against which other English departments measured themselves: the department of Geoffrey Durrant, W.H. Gardner, and, in due course, C.O. Gardner.'

In 1964 Professor George Hunter came as visiting lecturer with his wife Shelagh and his daughter. He lectured widely, particularly on Shakespeare. We took them to Loteni Nature Reserve and to visit a local rural school where *The Merchant of Venice* was being taught. They were interested in the lesson, but appalled by the circumstances of the school. Such inequality between schools was inconceivable to them. Professor L.C. Knights and his wife, Elizabeth, also came as visiting lecturers. We hosted and entertained, visits that took place before the universities were boycotted by overseas lecturers. Colin took his third sabbatical in the second half of this year and we visited the Hunters.

In July 1964 the Holy Family Convent High School asked me to teach English to the whole of the school. (I had previously taught as a locum there.) I was pleased to do so and told Colin that it saved me from the danger of becoming a kind of cabbage.

One of the effects of living in South Africa that puzzled me for some time was our children's and their friends' fear of policemen. I had been brought up



with the idea of the friendly policeman: 'If you want to know the time, ask a policeman.' It dawned on me that their fear came directly from the domestic workers who looked after them, their attitude formed by the role of the police in the days of apartheid, in the days of the demand for a *dompas*, and the chance that one might disappear into jail on the slightest imagined or actual minor transgression.

Colin was feeling his return to South Africa and his involvements here:

I have been seduced by work, busyness, anxiety, administrative horror, every sort of earthliness and triviality (remember my picture to Margaret [Evans], of my being unable to find, amongst the very heaped-up papers on my desk, my soul). And so I have lacked relaxation, holiness, confidence, exploration, real discipline. Laughter, the Cross, play, prayer ... What is needed is a breaking out of a merely secular, merely and miserably utilitarian, hand-to-mouth, day-to-day, fact-to-fact shell ... A useful help in the task of opening oneself, of freshening and being prepared: the superb Gospel of Passion Sunday.

The university was ready to demolish the Guy house and the fireplace was removed and sent to Jeff Guy's family on the South Coast. We looked for somewhere to rent, but so did everyone else and there was nothing. Eventually we bought, but had to buy cheaply, an old Pietermaritzburg house, but small, not grand, built for the grandparents of the Tarbotons living in the grand house next door. The garden was wonderful and the price was right. So 24 Yalta Road, Prestbury, became our home. I am still here as I write this. Properties tended to be large in those days, so we had an acre of garden; originally the gardens had extended down to Zwartkop Road, but Yalta Road had been built so that there was a block of houses between us and Zwartkop Road, which made our property quieter.

The children found life exciting. Behind us was a small plantation of pines and undergrowth, wonderful for exploring. Life was safe then; we had no qualms about letting them roam among the trees without an adult present. The 'forest' was part of our garden – and it was the garden and the position which had sold us the house.

Colin was tolerant as long as children did not disturb him, particularly if he was on the telephone. The Berthoud children had fond memories of our home. Mireille Berthoud spoke of 'the feeling of freedom we had, knowing that our parents were locked in conversation, more interested in their own



*Colin and Mary's house at Yalta Road, Prestbury*

company and ideas than in keeping even half an eye on the brood. We were slightly wild, always barefoot in the garden or around the stoep. We played hiding games, sliding down from one terrace to the next on large palm leaves, we climbed trees, we collected snail shells and songololos.' I paid them one shilling a hundred for snails. They would bring a bucket saying, with conscious innocence, '500 snails!' They cleared our garden and, I suspect, the neighbourhood's.

Colin was a curious mix of the traditional and the radical. At home he tended to be traditional and had to be persuaded into changes. I bought a wonderful huge bookcase from the St Cross Home and Colin, seeing it in two pieces on the veranda, told me to send it straight back as it would destroy our living room; it made him feel positively ill! While he was at work, I installed it and it looked lovely and gave us 72 feet of bookshelf, which helped reconcile him. I did the same when I inherited an Art Deco glass-doored dresser from my mother. We re-arranged the TV room in his absence and it is now one of our most admired pieces of furniture. He, of course, became reconciled to both – and to other changes that I made. Part of him had a horror of possessions, although I had bought the bookcase cheaply, the ecclesiastical bookcase (well, that is what it looked like) which I bought at the same sale cost about R3. He

was delighted if we were able to give something away. This came from his strong awareness of the poor.

After the March provincial elections, in 1965, Colin wrote to a friend:

It looks as if Dr Verwoerd will get a one-party state on a platter... In the University Common Room, there is much dejection. Most people (myself included) feel that the situation is rapidly becoming one to which they are no longer relevant. And again: being still in South Africa, in 1965, when so many of one's friends have scattered overseas or are preparing to scatter, is like staying on the roundabout (and it is a roundabout which is going faster and faster) when everyone else has jumped off. And when you *do* jump off (and you have to, in the end) it is a hard fall, and it is painful to stand up again. And when you *do* manage to get to your feet, and look around, you find all your old friends have melted into the fairground crowd. And you walk around hopelessly, for an hour, looking and looking. At last you find an old friend: you can see him over there on the big wheel. (This is your last chance of finding anyone, for it is getting dark and the crowd is beginning to disperse.) You come closer to him; hail him; but – he doesn't recognise you.

His involvement in political structures began to increase. He became a member of the ecumenical and socially committed Christian Institute begun by Beyers Naudé. He found some of the Bible study discussions that began the meetings quite painful, slow and often basic, but recognised their value for many people.

Colin was not yet as heavily involved in university administration as he later became. This was just as well for I could not drive, we had only one car in any case, and the children and I had to be ferried to and from school. We often had to wait patiently when unexpected business kept Colin at the university.

In the sixties the great dispersal of Colin's friends took place. Towards the end of 1966 he listed all who had left – Neville Denny, Geoffrey Durrant, the Royles, Derek Attridge, Bob Jones, Eric, Ian, the Rutherford-Smiths, and then came the news that Jacques Berthoud had been appointed lecturer at Southampton, so they, too, would be leaving. At the same time, he had a letter rejected by *The Critical Quarterly*; and some quite harsh criticisms of his poetry from Eric, 'who judges them on Yeatsian standard' and, more mildly, from Jacques: 'You have not gone deeply into yourself. Your insights – and, my God, they are real insights – tend, when you begin to explore them *poetically*, to receive the seepage of habitual intellectual attitudes, your great

love of the English poets ... You should turn against them'.

Colin writes:

'On a poet whose longest poem is a sonnet'

Shakespeare is a transatlantic Boeing;  
Dante soars beyond all human sight;  
even the minor poets can get going.  
My Pegasus, alas, is Orville Wright.

Yet visiting lecturer Frank Prince liked Colin's quatrains and encouraged him to write them, though also to write longer poems. But it was quite a difficult year. Colin was bucking the trend, was pulled in two different directions: his academic friends encouraged him to leave, Archbishop Hurley and Reverend Manas Buthelezi encouraged him to stay, as long as he was prepared to become involved. And then there were Alan Paton, Peter Brown and Edgar Brookes. He was torn between Christian and humanist ideals and sought to reconcile them. He criticised himself quite strongly, as he did in the poem I have just quoted and in this aphorism: 'Be tough, incisive, memorable, articulate – all else, all dullness, is valueless.' Notes and Queries XII is full of poetry – sonnets, quatrains, shorter poems, longer poems. He writes less about discussions with people, more about books that he is reading – Gide, Baudelaire, Machiavelli, Castiglione, Sartre, James, Homer, readings from the Mass, Karl Rahner, and continually refers to literature, both English and French, writing often in French as he reads French writers. Fewer of his friends remained. As we said farewell to Jacques and Astrid Berthoud and their children, Mireille and Josephine, our children's friends, and Tristan, he wrote:

'Le voyage n'est plus'

Friend waves to friend as the great ship leaves the quay,  
and backs most solemnly towards the sea:  
the moment's grief is fixed – engraved and hard –  
until the first blue-winged air-letter card!

His discussions continued in air letters, often two or three sent off at the same time, and then much later, by e-mail. Astrid writes: 'a golden age of our history. This might seem an odd way of referring to the beleaguered years of the 1960s ... Throughout those years and subsequently, Mary and Colin have been the touchstone of information about the emerging democracy which is the new South Africa, [and] without that living connection, that personal tie,

our bonds with the land of our birth or our schooling would have become a mere formality. I value them more than I can say for this reason. But besides they are simply among our very best friends. We were young together, we had our children together, and we conversed together so to speak in the accent of South Africa.'

In 1967 our last child, Katherine, was born. The boys were really cross that she was a girl – they had two sisters, five girl cousins and one boy cousin and felt that this proportion was distinctly skewed. The girls were delighted – she was like a live doll for them – not that they were all that interested in dolls; they lived too much of an outdoor life.

# 11

## DEATH OF W.H. GARDNER

In 1968 Colin became acting national chairperson of the Liberal Party and it was now that the government forced it out of existence by banning non-racial participation in political parties.



*Final meeting of the national executive committee of the Liberal Party, Johannesburg, March 1968. Back row Ted Keen (N), Jack Unterhalter (T), Ken Hill (N), Colin (N), Jesmond Blumenfeld (N); Middle row Selby Msimang (N), Audrey Cobden (T), Drake Koka (T), Margaret Ballinger (C), Alan Paton (N), Reg Mayekiso (T), Marie Dyer (N), Jean van Riet (O), Maggie Rodger (C); Front Mike Mokhubela (T), Raymond Tucker (T)*



So, it was disbanded – a very sad moment, as friendships had developed (many remained) and good work had been done.

Colin's father was diagnosed with cancer of the liver and became visibly unwell; he had not long been retired and had looked forward to this period as a time of research. This was not only a shock and blow to us, but to so many people. He was working on a biography of Roy Campbell, but it became clear that he would not be able to finish it. He handed it over to Alan Paton, who gave it to Peter Alexander. He had so much that he wanted to do. He said once that he needed three lifetimes to accomplish all that he was interested in. He died early in 1969. He had such warmth. Someone once described him as 'The finest gentleman I have ever known'. Jacques Berthoud, writing to Colin, said, 'I have nothing but admiration and respect for his rare human qualities ... He showed me, in his very personal and unobtrusive way, the meaning of integrity in scholarship; but beyond that he opened my eyes to the meaning of human kindness, humour, and loyalty in a way that, as far as I know, no one else has done.'

We were on holiday in Stellenbosch. While we were away, Will deteriorated and was told he had to undergo treatment in Durban. We hurried back in time for Colin to visit his father before he died. Colin grieved deeply at his death and wrote about it in Notes and Queries:

'Meditation'

I remember especially, my father.  
 The day when we had been talking and joking  
 and I got out my records.  
 You were surprised to find how many I had;  
 and I played one after another –  
 Schubert and Bach and Mozart and Wagner  
 and of course your dear Beethoven –  
 and the house echoed with rich harmonies,  
 and our conversation and our lives and loves  
 were raised to a new pitch.  
 How warm you were, father  
 how open and relaxed and deeply, smilingly happy.  
 Now you are dead.  
 I mourn silently, numbly,  
 uncomprehending.



But in my mind  
 these fine free notes reawaken,  
 the music springs to life again,  
 and beauty and our intercourse return  
 and our deep joy.

And suddenly I remember what you used to say:  
 'The harmony of Mozart  
 Is the harmony of heaven.'

Your words echo through my mind, through the universe.

He wrote of his silence with his father:

Silent because, though we disagreed about many things  
 our deep harmonies were almost embarrassing,  
 between two men, between father and son.  
 Please let me speak to you now.

Many of the other entries referred to his father whom he praised for:

his discrimination, fineness of feeling, patiently-acquired habit of  
 thought and discernment, intuition, knowing, his emotions always  
 refined and important, strongly delicate.

What is apparent is the profound respect and love he had for his father. He cannot believe that he is no longer alive 'rotten and eaten in his grave' but that he is

stored up and collected up somewhere  
 still there, intricate, miraculous, achieved  
 somewhere ...

The rapport between them was great and I realise how much he learned from his father – many of his descriptions of his father could equally apply to him.

Colin did not have long to mourn, as he left on sabbatical at the beginning of April. I stayed to look after the children and to teach. The previous year my mother and aunt had paid for me to have driving lessons, so I now had a licence. Colin was a little hurt when I wrote to say how free I felt at being able to drive, but it was true as I did not have to consult with anybody if I needed to go to town quickly. With one car (now the Peugeot 404) and so many people with differing interests and timetables, planning one's normal day was rather like plotting a Napoleonic campaign.

Colin went to England via Greece and Venice, which he had not previously visited. His mind dwelt on the role of religion from Grecian times – the Madonna in the Renaissance, like Athene in Athens, and the Madonna in Botticelli in the fifth century – the same impulse that lay behind the Notre Dame de Chartres and the Parthenon. He was reminded of lectures by Professor Kitto and they filled his mind:

Maybe the Athens of the 5th Century sums up even more of the virtues I strive for and work for than 14th Century Florence. For in Athens we have religion and humanism brought together, and we have democracy and aristocracy.

He was in Athens for the great Orthodox Easter ceremonies, similar to the Catholic ones he had attended in Pietermaritzburg – Easter is often later in the Orthodox calendar. His mind was focused on death and tragedy and he wrote many ‘bits and scraps’ of poems. He was interested in the move from Medieval to Renaissance, the tension between fidelity and change, his father’s death and funeral, his memories of the South African countryside, his family, his relationship with God. In Greece and Venice he was alone, so had time for meditations and memories.

The full sweep of the mind’s immensity –  
Which strains to grip the ever-slipping world,  
To grasp the spin of life’s perplexity  
Some silence where truth’s chrysalis is unfurled –

In the dark impartial sky, sharp points of light  
Wait in the hollow vast of distance, watch  
With ice-like unemotion, and then turn  
Slowly and strangely, irresistibly  
Into their deep rotations ...

He moved on to Venice, into the world of the Renaissance (though travelling by noisy vaporetto) comparing it with the Athens he had left, then on to England, where he was caught up in conferences, meetings, discussions, with groups, with friends, with literary figures. It disturbed him, and many of those to whom he spoke, that England seemed to be going through a period of disenchantment, of cynicism and negativity, particularly among the young. There was a lack of respect for age, tradition, culture, for older literature – Shakespeare seemed undervalued and misunderstood, Wordsworth, too. Yet he was exhilarated to be in England, part of his life, meeting old friends and new people. But he

was also sharply criticised for staying in South Africa, challenged to leave. We only have his view of conversations, but he did describe many of the literary critics that he met as warm, friendly, prepared to engage with him. He travelled the breadth of England to meet people and ended his account by listing particularly idyllic memories in an attempt to hold it all:

It is wonderful to make the links, and to live in all these lives, and to have all these lives intermingling with one's own – wonderful to belong, to be no longer wholly exile, to reinstate one's English half and to make subtle and living and challenging and ironical patterns between English and South African, metropolitan and colonial, sophisticated and innocent, vigorous and decadent, wonderful to see that in many ways the whole world, and the whole intellectual world, and the whole of human life are one. [Though travelling to the more unfamiliar north, he wrote] As I travel from place to place, world to world, I am alone and lonely; and I miss those closest to me, and it is becoming something of a strain to meet, briefly, bits of life and bits of the academic world one will never properly know.

Returning to Pietermaritzburg:

It is wonderful to be back with Mary and with the children but before long one is confronted by the normalities, the routines, the unexcitement; adjusting to living on the other side of the great divide, isn't easy. The joy and beauty of the trip depended on the fact that it was only for 45 days. My relationships depended on this – brief, mysterious, intense, tragi-comically swift. I was alert, alive, open-eyed, in a way I couldn't have been if my stay had been much longer. In all these respects the visit was special, wonderful, untypical, and adjusting, therefore, more painful. I have to keep what I learnt alive, keep my weight solidly on the metropolitan and the colonial foot, avoid smugness and complacency.

In the 1960s Colin, in his writing and his teaching, concentrated on Shakespeare, writing articles on *Twelfth Night* and five Shakespearian tragedies, but also on poetry, on poems written by Yeats and Marvell. He wrote out most of his lectures; in fact, he wrote out the speeches he had to give. Jacques Berthoud, in a letter: 'I have now read your article on Brutus (in my own copy) and I consider it *extremely* good. It is a minor education in centrality, judgement, and truthfulness.' And Bob Jones, then at York, wrote: 'how much I like your

essay on the Yeats poem in *Critical Survey*. I've only had time for a hasty reading in a borrowed copy so far, but look forward to going through it at leisure.'

In 1970 Colin was elected to the board of management of the Christian Institute, which involved trips to Johannesburg and his getting to know Ilse Naudé, as he sometimes stayed with the Naudés, both of whom he looked up to and with whom he felt a warm friendship. He admired Beyers for being prepared to give up almost everything to fulfil his Christian ideals – his position (he had been at the top of the Dutch Reformed Church hierarchy), his friends, his admirers, his comfortable lifestyle, his freedom (he was banned) and his congregation, most of whom turned against him.

Colin writes: 'I used to spend the occasional half-weekend with you, and we used to eat together with an awareness that by sitting together at that table we were breaking the law of the land. In retrospect it seems like something out of Alice in Wonderland – though I am well aware that it was deadly serious, and that, though it was a strange experience for me (even though I have known and eaten with many banned people). It was a daily drudgery for both of you.' Beyers replies: 'both of us wish to thank you for the deep and lasting friendship which grew between us especially round the service in the Christian Institute.'

Life was not wholly easy for Colin. He commented praisingly on Bill Bizley's inaugural lecture and continued discussions by airmail with Jacques (about Joseph Conrad and Tolstoy) and Eric (about Gandhi and Gnosticism) and in person with Christina van Heyningen about Cake Manson's plays. But he was criticised by some of his colleagues and ex-students for his style of lecturing, his articles, his views, his Christianity. He recognised that he had to maintain his own integrity, while taking cognisance of criticisms and rigorously questioning his own beliefs – to walk a fine line between being too responsive to other people's ideas and firmly holding to what he believed.

In 1971 he gave a public lecture on students and universities, and, for a while was pleased with it, but some of his colleagues were critical, though not all. He accepted some of the criticisms – his use of the word 'truth' without sufficient analysis, for example. He put in for the post of associate professor at University of Cape Town (UCT) and was not chosen. Colin Webb was successful in his application. When David Gillham was chosen by UCT, he put in for the professorship in Pietermaritzburg but faced the fact that he might well be unsuccessful. Restless in the early hours of the morning, he listed all the things that counted against him:

single degree, Oxford supervisor's comments or lack thereof, not many publications and many of them local, scepticism that he might not manage postgraduate work, too many meetings.

It all seemed hopeless, yet he would not allow himself to be defeated but resigned himself to what might happen. He also recognised that life had been easy for him. He had been 'sitting pretty' but now he was 'sitting ugly'. He wrote also:

The burden of knowing one's existence as a white person to be *sullied by apartheid* – one's status, one's job, one's work, one's efforts, one's way-of-life, one's achievements.

It was in this state of mind that Colin presented a paper at the World Shakespeare Conference in Toronto. He felt that it had not been wholly successful, but he met interesting people, like Tony O'Brien. He co-chaired a seminar with Miranda Johnson-Haddad. She wrote to colleagues: 'Colin and I both felt that the seminar ('Heterogeneous classrooms') was an enormous success and we found the insights of our colleagues to be highly informative and illuminating.'

He went on from there to spend a few days in England, mainly catching up with family and friends, a kind of indulgence, a relief from the worries that beset him. Not wholly a relief, though, with the constant refrain, 'When are you going to leave South Africa? Why are you still there?' It was after his return that Cake Manson died tragically in a motorbike accident, leaving his second wife Laura and a small daughter.

In 1972 Colin was successful in his application and was appointed professor. His reaction (written some while after the event):

Surprise, gratitude, revaluations, prayer. Consider: a well-paid professorship at a whites-only institution. How can I live with it with integrity?

He was given advice by various academics and received warm congratulations from many and varied people. In response to questions from the student newspaper *NUX*, he said that he would not immediately make great changes; he would introduce:

A little more seminar work in English 3, and the introduction of a choice of subjects in the Honours course and of an extra optional course on contemporary literature for third and fourth year students. [Looking back, he said] We began to change the syllabus in the mid-seventies, bringing in African and South African works. And it

coincided with the fact that the amount of literature being written all over the world has exploded... Our sense of literature has changed, and literature itself has changed.

The following months and years were challenging. The Department of English had internal battles between those who were conservative and wanted to maintain the status quo and those who wanted everything changed, and on both sides there were those who were not prepared to compromise. Notes and Queries XVII and XVIII show the great anxiety that holding the department together entailed – sleepless nights, constant questioning and criticism of his own behaviour and attitudes, the sense that he had to maintain his core beliefs and make his own reassessments. He admired David Gillham for ‘his quiet, assured attitude’. He recognised that there were advantages in both theories – the passionate involvement in literature as a source of humane values, culture and tradition and a Marxist assessment of it in terms of social, historical and political movements. He laboured with the idea of authority and how to implement it justly. He had been accused of being too passionate, too pugnacious, too wordy. He admitted some truth in the accusations. Writing to Jacques:

Somehow one is overwhelmed by a sense of being universally unwanted. But it is possible that the task of the open-minded and (comparatively) committed white may be becoming crucial for almost the first time – in some sort of liaison with black consciousness, and the attempt to explain it, to make common sense of it, to the whites. Yet... I myself am becoming more radical: I look less and less for an acceptance of everyone in the present forms of society, more and more for the creation of a somewhat new structure for society – but note that cautious Gardnerian ‘somewhat’!

And what, in the midst of all this, is it like to find oneself ‘professor’ in an all-white university? I’ve not found my responsibilities negligible. This is partly because it can be at times a bit of a strain keeping a team of eleven individuals working harmoniously (memories of my days as a soccer captain!)... I find myself adopting a fairly liberal attitude to the tastes and tendencies of individual colleagues while at the same time attempting to maintain the Natal tradition of a direct response to the text. I’ve found myself putting rather more stress on historical perspectives and on wider reading... Let me add that I’ve quite enjoyed my first year in my new position.

From this time on, too, his political activities increased as the government became more ruthless. In the same year he became chairman of the board of management of the Christian Institute. He wrote: 'One of the things I can never forgive the Nationalists for: the need to attend political meetings.' Colin was questioning his role in South Africa, the value of liberalism, the rise of black consciousness, the attacks on the Christian Institute, the necessity for sacrifice as a white South African. During an interlude on the South Coast, he wrote:

‘A poem written on the beach’

As problems bear and batter on the mind –  
 problems of thought and politics and art –  
 so do the serried waves besiege the sand,  
 showing the world at war, as from the start.

He also wrote: 'If you don't want tension, strife, challenge, public discussion, etc., *why* did you apply for the professorship?' The problems remained unsolved, playing on his mind. Yet it was at this time, in 1974, that the Students Representative Council (SRC) informed him of a motion 'That this SRC express its gratitude to Professor Gardner for his assistance and support during its term of office' passed unanimously and with acclaim.

Family problems, too, were increasing: the two girls were entering their teenage years, David was diagnosed with severe dyslexia, Richard with what was only diagnosed years later, when he was forty, as Asperger's syndrome. Deciding whether to stay in South Africa or leave became increasingly urgent, as our family had outgrown our house. Colin and I slept on an enclosed veranda not much more than 3 metres wide with louver windows. We were observed by the monkeys on the wild fig tree outside and our feet got wet when it rained. Colin needed a study and one rather further from family activities than his present one. The house was filling with teenage children and friends, activities, music (loud!). The relief was that, as professor, he did have slightly more money.

So, we asked architect Gordon Small to add to the house. He came up with a brilliant plan to avoid extensive earth moving – building on the vegetable garden, a couple of metres above the level of the present house with a bridge linking the lower house with the upper, which also kept the beautiful ginkgo tree with its autumn buttercup-coloured leaves. The upper house had a study, bedroom, bathroom, landing big enough to serve as an extra bedroom. We had to install an intercom so that we could hear the children at night and spent



the first night listening to the pump in David's fish tank! But it was ideal for Colin, who, much later, could not even hear David's band practising in the room off the back veranda. Yet he was constantly aware of the irony of adding to the house as he was thinking of leaving, and of how much he had compared to the vast majority, so that his enjoyment was never wholehearted, almost soured: 'that hideous great annexe which looks me in the eye.' Architects had begun to use centimetres and metres in place of inches and feet, so we did not visualise the size of the addition and, when it was built, we were concerned to find it larger than we had envisaged. It looked bigger than it would have done had it simply been added to the house, adding to its value if we had to sell and distinctly to our comfort. The larger house has been wonderful, able to accommodate all kinds of visitors with ease, and with constant comments, still, about the ambience, the relaxed comfort.

Many, many visitors came over the years – family, frequently; colleagues and friends from overseas after the exodus; the Berthouds in different groupings, the Pecheyes, Bob Jones, Margaret Evans, Ian Hughes, Margaret and, once, their son Daniel, Elizabeth Jones (Royle), her daughters and her brother, Louis Proksch, Peter Royle; visiting lecturers; in the years before 1990 and immediately afterwards, black politicians and writers – Naledi Pandor, Mvuyo Tom, his wife, Nosipho and their daughter, Es'kia Mphahlele, Professor Rogoff Modise; Beyers Naudé. John Lucas did not come back after he had left, nor did the Rutherford-Smiths and Eric was not allowed to come until after 1994. We took ex-Pietermaritzburg friends on nostalgic trips; we showed overseas visitors the city and its surroundings, including Edendale, Imbali and the northern suburbs. We both enjoyed guests. We entertained with dinner and lunch parties.

Reading through letters that Colin kept, I have become aware of so many people who stayed with us whom I do not remember. I suppose I was so often preparing – rooms and dinners and children – that I did not have as much time to get to know them as Colin did. Their letters of thanks show how much they had enjoyed staying with us. Nisa Mvusi wrote: 'This is to thank you once again for a very memorable and delightful evening we had, Linda and I, on the opening of my late husband's exhibition. We couldn't have had a better person, Colin, to speak on and about Selby and his work building up about the paintings, the spirit of the times and the pieces you dwelt on, especially the fine (five?) 'urban' people.' So many letters with similar gratitude.

It was in the Yalta Road house that the tradition of Sunday lunches developed. Colin was a most welcoming host (though he often forgot to fill up glasses as

he became engrossed in conversations). He found people interesting and liked to find out what motivated them. Until they died, Christina van Heyningen and Aileen Eccles were regular Sunday visitors as were his parents and our bachelor next-door neighbour, Bill Peale. The children could invite their friends whose activities on the fringe changed as they grew older – there was a background of shouts from the garden or the forest, a constantly moving kaleidoscope of activity, of which we were aware but which only really interrupted us if there were tears or minor disasters. We all held our breath as a crash heralded ‘either tragedy or comedy and we all waited to see if the episode ended in tears or laughter. How narrow the line between them is.’ The dining room table could not accommodate all of us, so the younger members of the gathering took their plates either out on to the veranda and the lawn, or onto the stairs leading up to our bedroom wing, a favourite place to play and be photographed on.

My grandfather’s table was the scene of many, many stories, discussions, arguments – sometimes heated, serious, hilarious, witty. ‘Well, when *did* the Crimean War begin?’ Next to the table was a bookcase in which we kept books to consult in the event of a disagreement or the need to prove a point or ascertain a fact – reference books, dictionaries, companions to literature, *Roberts Book of Birds*, atlases, short histories, photograph albums... Big gatherings took place on the lawn, if the weather allowed. People could mingle, groups constantly changing as did topics, and neither politics nor religion was taboo. If it was not a formal gathering, Colin could escape to his study in our annexe and catch up with essential work – he could not afford a whole weekend of freedom. He would, though, sometimes join the football or cricket game on the lawn or watch children and teenagers slide down the mud slide which stretched from the top to the bottom of the garden, in which they had to dodge the barbed wire fence between our house and the next and the thorn tree in the middle of the slide.

# 12

## ‘STIMULATING COLLEAGUE AND TACTFUL HEAD OF DEPARTMENT’

In 1973 Tony Voss joined the department: ‘I had not anticipated that I would ever be a colleague of Colin’s, but in 1973, when I was teaching at what was then the University of Rhodesia, I applied for a senior lectureship in the Maritzburg department. I was offered the job and Jane and I and our children Lucy and Ben moved into a university house on King Edward Avenue.’

‘Colin was a generous and stimulating colleague and a tactful and persuasive head of department. There were certain rifts in the department, partly between young and old, partly between ideologies: practical criticism, structuralism, post-colonialism. I think there was a tendency to get at Colin from both sides because he would not lay down a line either way. He preferred the more difficult option of keeping the conversation going. Colin seemed always able to manage the department so that the best emerged from all parties. He was an innovative and encouraging administrator. In my first term in the department, I gave a lecture on Becket’s novels, part of a series instituted by Colin to allow colleagues to speak on their personal interests not reflected in the syllabus. He was a colleague from whom one was continually learning. I remember particularly how in his discussion of one poem “Stopping by woods on a snowy evening” he turned me from a sceptic into a fan of Robert Frost. Colin was an able chairman of our staff seminars, which were sometimes tense.’

In a letter after Colin’s death, Derek Attridge wrote: ‘It’s exactly fifty years since I was first taught by Colin, and my respect for him never dimmed. A great man, and a great loss.’ David Maughan Brown commented that he ‘managed to lead very effectively through the choppy waters of disputation about different approaches to literature during his long tenure as head of department.’ Bill Bizley, commenting on a lecture on ‘Tintern Abbey’: ‘What you are doing is not better done anywhere in the world.’

Students, too, remembered: Barbara Newmarch wrote ‘How highly I regarded Colin and what a profound influence he had on me when I was a young student of his in the sixties. He helped to shape my thinking and my world view and inspired me. Throughout the rest of my life I have valued the

support and friendship that he so generously gave me.’ Jenny Brann, whose father had been at Maritzburg College with Colin and had played soccer with him in the park, wrote: ‘Colin was my lecturer in English for two years and he supervised my special essay in third year. I found him a very inspiring teacher. I enjoyed his wonderful thought-provoking insights, his sense of humour and eloquent articulation of ideas. I so enjoyed Prof’s tutorials that I went on to complete an Honours in English.’

In an interview with *Nux* Colin described his vision of the ideal university student

the fully rounded man: thoughtful, hard-working, cultured, practical, flexible, sensitive to the needs of others, intelligently and actively concerned both about what Arnold called ‘the things of the mind’ and about every aspect of the life around him (nor, ultimately, are these apparently different matters unrelated). I think we should be unwise to abandon that ideal.

As autumn approached, Colin watched the migrating birds:

swirling clouds of birds, rippling and spreading, then clustering and wheeling, thickening and thinning and flowing about the sky like liquid. The birds getting commercialised, self-familiarised, before setting off on their migratory flight. Marvellous patterns and rhythms in the sky. Thousands and thousands of sparrows.

He was always very aware of the natural world around him, writing so often about trees and hills and the light.

Then, less dramatically, he left on sabbatical. I remained until the school year ended, then Libby, Margie and I joined Colin overseas. In England we took the girls to the usual tourist attractions, as we had to do again in 1979 and 1984 when we took David and Richard and then Kathy with us.

Colin concentrated on English universities, family and friends. More and more of our friends were located in England. It was a challenging time for him. He took in critical analysis of his writing and worked to keep up with the latest trends and ideas. Discussions ranged widely, and he took the opportunity to read as much as he could without the constraints of preparing lectures and the burden of marking, though he did present papers at various English departments. Notes and Queries XIX, with four supplementary smaller notebooks, were filled with poems, conversations, commentary, thoughts – poems to me before I arrived, accounts of people he met, places he went to and how he responded

to them. He needed to breathe in and absorb the sophistication, breadth and depth of the academic world in England and wrote:

England in its variety: its beauty, its variousness, its populousness, its urgency, its self-confidence, its self-absorption – has the effect of putting one's own life into perspective. So much is going on here, so many people are going on here, that the problem of a quaint colonial cannot be allowed to seem to bulk very large. And it's good – it's civilizing, it adds to one's subtlety and complexity – to be able to recognize this. Ultimately rather exhilarating.

We returned and in 1975 Colin was appointed deputy dean of the Faculty of Arts 'to enlarge the area of one's boredom' as he put it. In the following years he lectured at the Summer School in Cape Town: 'What I need to enlarge is not the circle of my acquaintance as the circle of my experience.' He enjoyed his stints there, getting to know Cape Town, its environment and its people, though he came to wonder whether it was a legitimate way of spending his time, given the other demands of the country: most people attending summer school were white. One of the interesting people he met was author Ellen Kuzwayo, staying in the same hotel.

In the same year close friends died – my aunt Aileen Eccles a feisty lady, member of the Black Sash, writer of letters to the *Natal Witness*, who had had the courage to stand up in the City Hall and confront Hendrik Verwoerd and a hostile audience with the school bill of her domestic worker's daughter when he spoke about education being free; Christina, a colleague and close friend, whose memorial he helped to arrange; Neville Denny, dying young of lung cancer, with whom he had had many conversations on his recent trip to England; Amon Dlungwane, husband of Teresa (Colin got hopelessly lost on his way to the funeral in a rural area); and also Bram Fischer.

Towards the end of the year there was again an exodus of friends and colleagues: Manas Buthelezi, a Lutheran bishop whom Colin admired and warmly valued, Marion and Brian Brown, a Methodist clergyman, Colin Webb, close friend, colleague and squash partner moving to the UCT History Department, Raymond van Niekerk, from Fine Arts to Cape Town, Pam Geldard from Epworth to become head of Herschel. Colin feared that the departure of Manas and Brian might bring about the collapse of the Christian Institute. He had learned so much from them. Manas was an exponent of black consciousness 'for, at the moment, Africans are apt to reject themselves, so start your own spiritual initiatives', though he later moved away from politics.

Apropos of the pros and cons of staying or leaving South Africa: ‘the floor of hell is paved with those with a feeling of superiority towards the imperfection of other people’s intentions.’

But life was not all gloomy. He wrote:

‘For Katherine’

Looking at the smile of my young daughter,  
 Suddenly I am sure  
 that God is good,  
 and that, even in the dark of death  
 laughter lives on,  
 light, airy, irrepressible.

Problems continued through the following few years. His commitments were heavy; he was under constant pressure to leave South Africa from most of his friends and acquaintances, here and abroad. He felt that he had not been sufficiently daring – he had not been banned or jailed or deported, as had happened to many of his friends; his own Christian convictions were horrified at the suffering in the black community and the relatively peaceful and comfortable life he lived and he admired the way in which so many of them coped with their difficult conditions:

‘A glimpse of rural life’

Out of the corrugated iron hovel,  
 out of the domestic confusion,  
 the old clothes, the ad hoc arrangements,  
 the shouting voices and the clucking fowls,  
 the two children emerge  
 each morning,  
 at quarter past seven,  
 in their neat school uniforms.

The next wave of people now left South Africa, among them Mark and Rose Prestwich, very close friends, and many other friends and acquaintances; Robert Sobukwe died, Rick Turner was assassinated and Steve Biko died in detention; the Christian Institute and other organisations were banned; and black consciousness seemed to make white activism irrelevant.

In October 1978 our family stood on the darkening station and very sadly waved goodbye to my sister Cath, her husband John Lucas and their family, as

they caught the train to Cape Town to board the ship to England. We returned dispirited at an emptiness that suddenly loomed in our lives. We had been very close to Cath and John, and the children had been friends.

Grief cuts into the heart,  
opening a still-raw wound:  
great waves invade this thin chill shore  
on which we are marooned.

For us, of course, leaving would mean abandoning Colin’s mother and sister without relatives in South Africa, or, the better option, taking them with us (though they might not have been allowed to stay); and leaving my sister Ann and her husband Jimmy Edwards at a time when builders all over South Africa were finding it difficult to get work.

But, in contrast to these experiences, in 1978, Peter Kerchhoff founded PACSA (Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness), which was intended to train white consciences, help white people to see the truth of the South African situation and do what they could. It was launched on 1 November and Colin was one of the founder members. Then he heard that he had won the 1977 Pringle Award for criticism for two literary articles. Yet, the following day, he applied for professorships at Waikato in New Zealand and at the Royal Military College in Canberra. He was still, though, torn. One day, meeting those who said that it was the right decision to leave and the next meeting equally thoughtful people who had themselves decided to remain and do what they could, or face what awaited them. Under P.W. Botha it seemed that the most probable outcome was greater repression, clamping down or even war.

Colin was, though, speaking to Indian, coloured and African matriculants about their set works – for example to 300 Indian matriculants about *The Winter’s Tale*. In the midst of all this turmoil he was asked to travel to Botswana to meet Norman Kingsbury to be interviewed in connection with the professorship at Waikato. He went, still with mixed feelings: ‘If I were turned down, I’d be sharply disappointed; if I were turned up, I’d be horrified.’ He liked Kingsbury and their discussion was wide-ranging. Kingsbury suggested that his life would probably be less interesting. Colin was offered the Waikato job. After long deliberation, he turned it down. He still felt a commitment to South Africa – we should stay and do what we could and face what might happen. He was saddened by the death of Edgar Brookes. Activist Tim Dunne made the point that Edgar showed in his life that one can be both a fighter



and gentle – something that was said of Colin. Later Marshal Walker wrote to Colin from Waikato, saying that it was very pleasant there but that Colin would have missed South Africa and his involvement (‘You would have been looking over your shoulder a good deal’). Someone whom Colin had not spoken to for fifteen years and whom he met in the bank said how grateful he and others were for what Colin ‘does for the underprivileged people’ and for his ‘courage’.

In 1979, as part of a symposium, Colin spoke to members of PACSA:

Christianity, Christian faith and life, I see as a very simple and very complex phenomenon. Based on the clear and straightforward twin commandments – love God and love your fellow-men – Christianity brings with it, brings into being, inevitably and rightly, a rich world which engages the whole man: prayer, contemplation, theology, biblical study, philosophical thought, Christian activity and commitment and living in every conceivable realm – the personal, the social, the political, the economic, the academic, the practical, the ecclesiastical, and so on ... You cannot Love God unless you love your neighbour ... Recognize the situation honestly and be deeply disturbed by it ... by the structure of our society.

He used the analogy of people chained to poles in the street and desperately thirsty. There were three responses: complacently ignoring; distress and desire to give help, to give water; determination to find out why people are chained in the first place. He stressed the importance of the third alternative.

# 13

## FAMILY TROUBLES AND A SABBATICAL

During the later 1970s and early 1980s Colin, in addition to all his other concerns, had major worries at home. He deeply loved and was concerned about his children. Libby began nursing but remained a difficult teenager. She was, of course, the first to become a teenager and, as the eldest daughter, I know that people are more accepting when the second and third reach that stage. Margie at university used sometimes to come home in the small hours and I had to remind Colin that if she had gone to another university, we would not have known what time she came home, but we did lie awake and imagine dreadful accidents. Meanwhile the boys were also proving a worry. David had been correctly diagnosed at twelve as having dyslexia. It was only when 'we were fortunate to be referred to a brilliant educator, Hannah Ballin, that a real breakthrough occurred.' She told him that, although twelve with an IQ of fourteen, he could easily go to university, but that he had a reading age of seven and a spelling age of six:

Her way of doing things was to teach the mothers what to do and to receive reports from them on how the child was progressing. Mary taught David every weekday evening and then on Saturday morning drove down to Durban to see Mrs Ballin, with Elaine Hudson, mother of David's friend, Craig, also dyslexic.

Colin became responsible for looking after the other children and their homework when he had not gone to a meeting. Richard was not so fortunate as he was not diagnosed. He puzzled psychologists, although they were able to give us some help in coping with him. It was thought at one time that he might have epilepsy, or a form of schizophrenia and he was on tablets, which soon lost their efficacy. We had to decide which school to send David to – Maritzburg College or St Charles – and decided on the latter, a smaller school, with mixed ability classes. We feared that at Maritzburg College he would have been in the weakest class on the strength of his Prestbury results.

David coped better than Richard: he was more socially confident and was good at sports, particularly rugby (like his grandfather) and running: he had taught himself to play the piano, the guitar and the drums, and he had leadership qualities. But it seemed unlikely that either boy would have the option of a university career and would therefore face military conscription as soon as school ended:

Lying awake at night, worrying about work to be done (I have a bigger build-up than ever before) about the present S.A. situation and what Mary and I will do, and about children, etc., I realised that this is a real trial, a real test (perhaps for the first time) of my patience, mettle, prayerfulness and flexibility. Regard this crisis as a challenge, a privilege, an opportunity for developing courage, calmness and flexibility at a time of painful crisis. And learn directly from the precise, spiritual reaction of Hermione: 'This action I now go on/ Is for my better grace.' Life calls for constant flexibility, courage, humour, honesty, prayer and work. Outer and inner awareness.

Staying or going, he continued to write literary articles, still largely on Shakespeare and English poetry – *King Lear* (1971, *Theoria*); Shakespeare's sonnets (1974, *Theoria*); *Othello* (1977, *English Studies in Africa*); Beatrice and Benedick (1977); *Henry V*; on T.S. Eliot's 'Burnt Norton'; but moving into more general topics – a review of *A Dictionary of English Language Usage in Southern Africa* (1978, *Modern Language Review*) and a review of the AUETSA Conference 'University English Evolves' (1979) and other articles. He also edited Alan Paton's *Knocking on the Door: Shorter Writings* (1975).

In 1979 with Colin's next sabbatical, we decided that the boys and I would leave when school ended and join Colin. Libby and Margie were independent and Kathy would stay with my sister, Ann at Port Shepstone. Colin spent a last week mowing the lawn, preparing the household for his departure and 'preparing (in my briefcase) the basis of my intellectual life in the next three months.'

He must have found it a relief to be in England, away from the immediacy of departmental, political and family pressures. He had arranged to give talks, largely on African poetry at various universities. Professor Christopher Heywood at Sheffield wrote to him, 'Thank you for a truly most masterful presentation of truly fascinating poems. We were delighted and impressed – it was a moving afternoon.' And Jacques Berthoud at York, told me that a number of people – mostly from the politics department – who had not spoken

at your seminar had been extremely interested, and that one of them had even confessed that it had shown him for the first time what literature was all about. Another had asked if they could have another evening when they could discuss black poetry.' These comments would have boosted his confidence.

We spent much of December with family and close friends in London and Bristol. The boys did not shed all their problems and were at times refractory. In addition to the usual tourist places Colin took them, with great pleasure, to football matches and to the Natural History Museum. We took the boys to *Zulu Dawn*, in which David, during his July holidays, had acted as a red-coated British soldier.

We went to Southampton for Mireille Berthoud's wedding, at which there were many academics, many ex-South Africans, all of them praising Jacques, saying that Southampton would not be the same without him (he had been selected as head of department at York, to which Colin had also applied). Colin had long conversations with most of them and with Jacques about heading a department, about the books they were teaching and those they were reading. It was to Jacques that he said: 'My ideas about Shakespeare are a) right, b) irrelevant.' Both Margie and David were expecting results, Margie from university. David gained a condoned matric pass, having failed Afrikaans, which was then a compulsory subject. If he passed a supplementary exam, he could go to university, delaying the decision about military service. The boys and I left at the end of the school holidays.

Colin had two more months in England, months in which he could focus on academic discussions, reading and thinking. He felt how different, in some ways, his thinking was from when he had previously been there on sabbatical, though he had adjusted and expanded rather than transformed. He moved around the country to universities, in some giving talks, largely on black writing, particularly poetry, but listening and questioning and trying out his own ideas. And he met, for example Sigrid Tosswill, now divorced, and had wide-ranging discussions with her. In his notebooks, he commented fully on his reading and his conversations, detailing them in pages and pages of hurried writing. He was still challenged to leave South Africa, but not as forcefully as he had been in the past. He had, in any case given up the idea of an academic career in England. He met again Trevor Whittock and with pleasure his wife, Pat, a dancer, and was gripped by Trevor's interest in the aesthetics of dance. Pat said, after his death, 'Trevor always said to me – "You would love Colin and Mary" – and I did.'

Leaving England was a gloomy moment as he recognised, he was returning to all the problems he had left behind, almost all unresolved, and was aware that more would appear. Yet he also realised that the idyllic time was largely because it was an interlude, it could not have gone on for much longer. People had had time to entertain and converse because it was university vacation, and in the English winter one spends much time indoors. He travelled round saying goodbyes.

# 14

## ‘CATAPULTED BACK INTO SOUTH AFRICAN LIFE’

Colin wrote of his return:

I find myself catapulted back into South African life. I am still reeling under the contrast between life here and life in the UK. I remember particularly and constantly my three British homes: 52 Bishop Road; 66 East Sheen Avenue; 29B Main Street. I yearn, with obvious reservations – for my English homes. This emphasises that my 3 months in Britain were, partly, a holiday – new places, different old and new people, no immediate responsibilities, short-term but no long-term objectives, the glamour of continual interest-and-novelty. My homecoming is partly that end-of-holiday realism; and yet, also, my 3 months could only have been possible, in their happy and successful form, if they were followed (as they are) by my return to Mary, to my normality, to the institution which has funded it all ... What I was in Britain I am still – and must still be – here; what I have been in Britain and am here must be harnessed to the creation of my future and the future of my family and of my society. Many of the prayers I have written in the last 3 months have stressed this continuity, this need to hammer things into a unit, here.

And later:

Though it is a great pleasure to be with Mary and the children, I enjoyed myself too much to be able to settle down easily into daily routines and into the moral painfulness of life in South Africa.

He wrote of going to a Black Sash meeting with Sheena Duncan present. He listed his present non-university committees: PACSA, Dependants’ Conference, *Reality*, South African Institute of International Relations, Pietermaritzburg Study Centre Trust, Justice and Peace Commission, among others. He was depressed by a big swing to the right among the students.

Family crises, too, were coming to a head. Richard was refusing to attend school; David despairing about his first year at university; Libby aimless and unhappy; Margie had broken up with Murray Booysen; and Kathy was beginning to be affected by the unhappiness. Colin had frequent nightmares and woke early, morning after morning. He wrote:

‘Meditation’

Now I can only stagnate.  
I feel that my life is finished – as I can never be  
happy or fulfilled or meaningful or myself again.  
I am crushed by circumstances.  
I have died at the age of 45.

But our relationship survived.

He had long faced the fact that if the boys did not pass university, it meant the army and neither of them wanted to be conscripted into it. How would they cope overseas, which was an option for them? David was practical and an entrepreneur, so we had fewer fears for him. Even as a primary school boy he had treated Colin’s practical knowledge with a kind of amused superiority. He was enterprising. He belonged to a band, The Sett – may well have been the prime mover – which practised in our back room, but with the drums stuffed with pillows and not after 9.30 pm, for the sake of the neighbours. Colin, tolerant, worked in his study and was undisturbed by the noise. David was involved with setting up NUTS Radio at university and the band was well-known on campus. He decided to try a B.Sc. and spent time on a course in Chemistry before the term began. After some months, he decided that he could not cope and would try a BA in 1981, so he spent the rest of the year working at various jobs.

Back at university Colin was working on *Voorslag*. In April he left for Johannesburg for a meeting of the English Academy and stayed with Beyers and Ilse Naudé, which always lifted his spirit and emboldened him, and he spent an afternoon talking to David Gillham from the University of Cape Town English Department. He was aware of contrasts:

Jacques chairs a meeting of Amnesty in the Strand; I sit at a committee meeting by lamplight in a small house on the edge of Edendale.

There was an interlude of peace in a beach cottage with the Schreiners, fishing and swimming and talking. We came back to reality with the news of the tragic



death of the son of a friend, Patrick Hindle, on the border. One morning at 4.00 am we waved goodbye to Margie, in her blue Beetle, with her head barely above the dashboard, driving to Cape Town to register for her Education diploma there, picking up friends on the way. We found ourselves devastated by her departure as we went back to bed, unable to sleep. Cape Town was like another continent. She and some fellow students came back to do their prac teaching at Umbumbulu, boarding at Adam's College.

David's new band, called Tass, was successful. Other members of the band were Terence Fannin, Philip Dexter (who later became an ANC MP and then joined the Congress of the People (COPE) and is now once again with the ANC) and Darryl Enfield, who died, painfully, in 1983 from a brain tumour. They composed, among others, anti-apartheid songs.

In 1981 Richard had scraped a matric exemption, and registered for a BA, as did David, so Colin winced at the thought of his sons studying English. But they did:

At least the emotional life of the Gardner family cannot be described  
as boring. So many violent and frightening ups and downs!

The years 1981 and 1982 were difficult and more than one Notes and Queries were devoted to these painful times.

'Piece: D and R'

The passions of my sons –  
their failures and frustrations,  
their agonies, the agonies they produce –  
are gnawing at me.  
eating away my flesh:  
I feel myself becoming  
the skeleton in their cupboards.

His friend and colleague Anton van der Hoven, said that this personal, more 'tortured' Colin was not the one outsiders knew: 'Part of his strength of character was his ability to keep his personal crises personal and not to allow them visibly to affect his university or public life.'

David passed first year but in his second year he decided at Easter that he was too impossibly tense, so left and found jobs again. He played the guitar for *Godspell* and for school and university productions. Richard just failed all subjects but said that he would try to repeat the year. Margie, David, Richard

and Kathy worked at the races on Saturdays while they were at university. David spent some time playing with Chris Mann's band, Zabalala, while Chris was working at Valley Trust in the Valley of a Thousand Hills.

In these years, whatever Colin was involved in at university or politically, he had the boys in the back of his mind, particularly Richard. We were both disturbed by the thought that we had somehow failed our children. Against my advice, Colin allowed Richard to repeat his first year – he had been close to passing. He failed again; and we would lose both boys to England in 1983.

Colin arrived home to David's accusation that the children had been:

intimidated by me, overwhelmed, because I hadn't had any ordinary contact with them – I hadn't sailed or fished, or spent time with them. (What comes before me now is the horror of my hard-working, endlessly working Sundays.) David said, 'Now don't let this keep you awake!' What burdens upon me suddenly! The JASA thing, and now this other sudden sense that there is a cause of our children's problems – and the cause is me!

This was not wholly true. Though Colin's hard work was certainly an underlying feature of our lives, we had spent weekends at Parks Board game reserves, many vacations at the beach; and Colin was always ready to listen to the children's anxieties. He faced also in 1981 and 1982 the deaths of many friends, including Neil Aggett in detention and Selby Msimang from Edendale, of whom Colin said:

For all trials and horrors of the South African political system he maintained for over 70 years (he was 95 when he died), in an unembittered way, firm belief that all people must and can be free and self-respecting members of open society.

Christopher, Teresa Dlungwane's son, also died and we helped arrange his funeral. Colin, who had quite a strong feeling for tradition, felt that death somehow had to be publicly acknowledged, so was often involved in arranging memorials for those who might not otherwise have had a formal funeral service. He would suggest readings, was prepared to give eulogies and he was often called upon to do so. Beyers Naudé was again banned and Colin defended him against a letter which suggested that, if he were innocent, he would have appealed against the banning.

In 1982, too, there was the appalling raid on Maseru and other atrocities; tear gassing and police brutalities at a Sobantu funeral. He attended the Catholic Synod in Durban called by Archbishop Hurley and made a speech at a crucial moment, which Hurley described as 'out of this world' and which, Hurley felt, affected the outcome of a particular debate. On another occasion he lamented that 'Colin Gardner's golden voice was lacking'.

I shared Colin's anxieties, and the constant pressure. How did we survive? How did our marriage survive? Colin's religious belief and his sense of the appalling sufferings of others helped. Our relationship, apart from occasional disagreements, was also strong.

The University faced other happenings that affected Colin: Magnus Henderson, dean and University orator died very suddenly from a heart attack. Colin had to take over both responsibilities. The university had to find a way of reacting to the arrest of lecturer, Ahmed Bawa, with opposing views from radical and conservative academics. Colin suggested tough action but was quite strongly opposed. Inevitably home anxieties had an effect on his reactions. He felt that he was sometimes irrationally or unnecessarily angry and criticised himself for over-reacting at department meetings or on committees. Yet he was asked to continue as head of department for the next seven years under the new rotating headship. 'Colin was always an excellent role model when it came to caring for the staff and students under his charge,' said colleague David Maughan Brown.

In December he joined Liberal Party friends Alan Paton, Peter Brown, Pat McKenzie, John Mitchell, Anton Davies, John Morrison and Sam Chetty at Peter's cottage in the Berg for what became for him an annual event, the old Dingaans' Day weekend. Wives, I'm afraid, played the usual wifely role of providing provisions – the liquor they bought themselves. They talked and joked and walked and swam:

A long walk through the hills, all of us except Alan. We dodged and ducked among the proteas coming upon trace of eland, porcupines, baboons. Drink and meal and talk on the veranda (it was amazingly mild) and in the room. Earlier we watched the new moon with the old moon in her arms move down the sky and set. A rich delightful evening.

Colin washed up – he could not cook. They threw beer cans at targets on the lawn. Though I was left with the family, I could not begrudge Colin this weekend of escape from constant commitments; in fact, I felt pleased.

He wrote eighteen self-searching poems; he wondered if his Notes and Queries were self-indulgent and his entries began to be briefer: ‘Why do I record so much? I’m trying to jot down – rapidly, roughly – the inscrutable movements of providence.’ Writing about his emotions, criticisms, fears, hopes and happiness perhaps meant that he could carry on life normally – lecture on comedies, for example, after sleepless nights.

‘Piece’

What a set of dreams –  
an anthology of nightmares,  
a variety of vignettes,  
illustrating vividly  
the subversion of my complacency.

At Port Shepstone at Christmas, he became fascinated by a book on shells that I had given him – their beauty, symbolism, history and importance through the ages. He also commented on a South African television dramatisation of the Garden of Eden dedicated to ‘the boys on the border’:

Adam looked as if he were about to get the ball out of the scrum; Eve looked as if she had been brought up on liquifruit; and God sounded as if he were about to read the 8 o’clock news.

People (except the children) were tolerant that Colin spent much of his time marking, reading, writing, in his room or in the car as he took the children to the beach (‘eventually!’ they would say). He enjoyed the beach, swimming, just watching the changing moods of the sea.

In the last few days of 1982, we flew to England on an idyllic second honeymoon, largely funded by a generous Sigrid Tosswill. This was not academic at all, at least only incidentally with friends. We spent time with Sigrid, who had been ill, though capable of lively, interesting and challenging conversation. She suffered from neuralgia and long bouts of depression, which we discussed with her children, Ros and Dickie. We could really only offer her friendship and try to lift her mood. We spent time in our homes from homes – Bristol, London, York and St Alban’s. Our visit was not long, as I had to be back for the school term and Colin had many commitments, some new as a result of Magnus Henderson’s death.

'Early morning pieces'

1

We are in Sheen again:  
a plane glides overhead  
with a quiet, expanding roar  
like a wave slowly breaking  
on the mind's still shore

8

I am trying to hold a whole  
supermarket of experience  
in the string-bag  
of my mind.

# 15

## ‘LIFTED HIS MORTARBOARD AND BOWED COURTEOUSLY’

Colin’s duties increased. He lifted his mortarboard, bowed courteously towards the figure in the central chair wearing a wonderfully embroidered red robe, and said:

And it is for this reason, therefore, Mr Chancellor, that I have the honour to request you to confer the degree of Doctor of Economics, honoris causa, on Christopher James Saunders.

Thus, in 1982, Colin began what became a long commitment to university life – University orator on the Pietermaritzburg campus. It was demanding and many would consider it a burden over and above a heavy administrative and lecturing load. He often had three, sometimes four, laudations to prepare at the same time. As with all that he did, he took this role seriously. He found it stimulating, as he was required to do a certain amount of research into the recipients, often in disciplines in which his knowledge was decidedly limited. Among the honorary graduands were botanists, bishops, businessmen, conservationists, economists, educationalists, historians, judges, lawyers, politicians, publishers, scientists, singers, storytellers, theologians, those who had made a mark in their chosen fields. Among those he spoke about were Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Gcina Mhlophe, Albertina Sisulu, Ian Player, Bishop Michael Nuttall, Beyers Naudé, Edwin Cameron and Peter Booyesen. Some became friends, some had already been friends, some he had no further meetings with.

Either because he was so good at it, or because there were few takers, he was asked to continue, even after retirement. He was aware, especially as the university became open to all, that there would be people in the ‘congregation’ who would know very little about the interests of the honorary graduands, so he kept them in mind as he spoke. Reading out the accomplishments of people who have achieved numerous honours can be rather dry, so he often infused humour into what he said:

One associates Christopher Saunders especially with the South African sugar industry; and it must be conceded that, unlike those tycoons who started from scratch, he can be said to have been born with a sugar spoon in his mouth. He is a scion of one of Natal's great sugar families.

I think the last laudation was for Professor Bernth Lindfors, the great expert on African literature, whose collection, bought by the university, became the basis for the Centre for African Literary Studies (CALS). Less time was allowed for laudations: Saunders was allowed six pages, Lindfors about four. This was largely because the lists of graduands had become much longer, so constraints of time affected the laudations. There was eventually not much space for anything but the CV of the honorary graduand, although Colin always did try to incorporate a wider view. In thanking him after he had retired, Professor Terry King, chairperson of the Academic Ceremonials Committee, wrote: 'over the years the awards of scores of honorary degrees have been enhanced by your accounts of the recipient's credentials. We will miss your voice and your presence on the platform.' The responses were varied both in style and content. Colonel Jack Vincent (conservation), over 80, was sufficiently confident to do something unprecedented: he did not have a prepared speech, he spoke without a single note. Gcina Mhlophe sang and praised storytelling. In recommending Ian Player (conservation), Colin quoted from Hopkins:

What would the world be, once bereft  
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,  
O let them be left, wildness and wet;  
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.

Ian said afterwards that Hopkins was his favourite poet and this passage from a favourite poem. Later we spent one afternoon a month at Phuzamoya (Drink the wind or spirit), the Player house in the Karkloof, enjoying discussions about Jung with a varied group of people.

Colin also spoke at the installation of chancellors and vice-chancellors. Justice Ramon Leon was the first of these. He described Justice Leon as:

a most distinguished son of this University, who has proved to be an outstandingly learned, humane and just judge, and who has been profoundly involved in the continuing life of this University ... Clear-sightedness, impartiality, learnedness, integrity – these are the

qualities which we like to be able to associate with both the bench and the lecturer's podium or the researcher's desk.

The next installation was that of James Vincent Leatt as vice-chancellor and principal:

He has fought against apartheid alongside parishioners in communities facing eviction from their homes. He has taught students theology in a society where not even religion could escape the polarising influence of political and ideological struggles. He has counselled businessmen on how to respond to the ethical demands of a changing society.

A laudation that Colin must have delighted in presenting was that for Archbishop Denis Hurley as fifth chancellor, who had so inspired him and whom he regarded as a great friend. Hurley's reputation is so well-known that I shall not repeat any of the praises that Colin heaped upon him, but quote the last paragraph:

as he solemnly walks in the academic procession in the company of people many of whom are in red robes, and as the rest of the gathering intently watches his tall figure, he must strenuously resist the long-held habit of bestowing, by the sign of the cross made in the air, a benevolent blessing. I do not say that many of the kinds of people who come together at an academic ceremony may not be in need of such a blessing, or indeed of any kind of blessing – but, well, somehow it wouldn't be quite appropriate.

Justice Pius Langa, the sixth chancellor, he described as having:

the ability to be deeply committed to a cause or to an idea, and yet at the same time to be open-minded and fair – to press a case that is felt to be valid and true and significant, but always within the rules of reason and humanity.

He was sorry not to have spoken at the installation of Vice-Chancellor Brenda Gourley, but the Durban orator spoke then.

Most important for those concerned, Colin had to read out the list of Arts graduates, and those achieving master's degrees and doctorates; he was careful to find out how to pronounce Zulu and Afrikaans names and those of other nationalities, and to read well subjects of doctorates written in Afrikaans – he



felt that he owed graduates that courtesy. We used to have a last practice in the car as we drove – I was fluent in Afrikaans; Colin had done a course in Zulu.

Colin's skill at speaking meant that he was often called upon to introduce visiting speakers (Tom Sharpe, for example, and Nadine Gordimer) or to give votes of thanks, to speak at weddings (Fleur Webb's sister Rae and Charles Simkins) and at funerals (Christina van Heyningen), at arrivals and farewells (Reggie Hadebe), at art exhibitions (Welcome Koboka, Valerie Leigh, Juliet Armstrong) and book launches (Christopher Merrett) though not often at speech days – he was too radical for that. He did get asked occasionally, for example by Carter High, by Buhle Bayeza School near Greytown, by Raisethorpe High; in 1972 by Girls Collegiate in Port Elizabeth and by Epworth, at a fortnight's notice, when Archbishop Hurley had suddenly to fly to Rome:

to a meeting of presumably aged clerics, instead of confronting the bright faces of the girls of Epworth, is just one more example of the fallibility of the Catholic Church!

He went on to stress the importance of thinking and questioning. The mother of one of the pupils came afterwards and said that, looking at his long hair, she had expected nothing from the speech and had come to congratulate him on a most inspiring speech, which, among other things had taught her a lesson about stereotyping. He had already given the speech in Port Elizabeth. He was invited to workshops and other occasions at schools – an English workshop at New Horizon School for the Blind; as guest of honour at a Parents' Day at Orient Heights School; a talk on South African English at Alexandra High; to judge speech competitions... If the occasion permitted, he was pleased to be able to combine humour with seriousness. His humour was mostly gently witty



*Colin at his study window, Yalta Road,  
Prestbury in the 1980s*

so that the audience laughed *with* not *at* the subject of it. Humour has to be carefully considered, especially in a multicultural situation. I hope Colin never overstepped the mark and do not think he did. He could be sharp but he tended to reserve that for political opponents or, rather, the manifestation of what they did or thought. As with his laudations, he spoke about a great variety of people, beyond academia and the Arts. He spent time thinking about the person or event he was speaking about, so that he never needed to mouth platitudes, as can easily happen on such occasions.

Patricia Lucas, his niece, wrote: 'One of the most remarkable things about Colin was that, despite his great erudition, he never condescended. He always took my views and feelings seriously, even as a child. Like so many others, my children have in turn shared that lucky experience. To talk to Colin was to be heard, and his listening ear was lent to the political, the poetic, the pickneys, and the pedestrians alike.' The university, organisations, friends, all called on him and he always gave them his full attention.

He had a great capacity for enjoyment and humour, not studied or calculated; it burst out again and again when he was speaking, in his ordinary life, in meetings, in conversations. He laughed a lot and wholeheartedly and could entertain adults and children. He could at times simply enjoy – *Fawlty Towers*, *Open at All Hours*, the incongruities in *Mr Bean*, *Blackadder*, *Bob Newhart*, James Bond films, through which he chuckled, as Kathy reminded me, revelling in the incongruities – Bond skiing down a snowy slope on a cello case, for example. He also enjoyed more sophisticated forms of humour. Yet he was not indiscriminate and he read slowly. He could never read detective stories; I got him to try once, but he did not reach far into the book. He read with discernment and critically. Colin always annotated, at least in his mind, but he often wrote notes on any bit of paper available. As I sort through his books in attempting to downsize, so many, many have articles and his own analytical commentaries, often bulging out the cover page, I am afraid.

# 16

## INCREASED POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

He needed his sense of humour as, after our almost idyllic honeymoon period in England at the end of 1982 and the beginning of 1983, we began one of the most momentous years of our lives. It was momentous on all fronts – political, academic and personal. Colin regarded it as a watershed year. I turned 50 and we had our silver wedding anniversary but these passed almost unnoticed among all the other significant events. Indeed, we arrived back from England on the day and simply went home. To our pleasure Libby and Richard Dodd got engaged shortly after we had returned.

In mid-1983 there was a huge protest march down Church Street, opposing the Universities Amendment Bill and the Quota Bill (later shelved) followed by a meeting in a full city hall, addressed ‘superbly’ by Alan Paton. Colin wrote a statement for the *Sunday Times* opposing the Bill. ‘He was someone who could always be relied on when it came to taking an informed, principled and highly articulate stand in the face of the varied viciousnesses of the apartheid government at the national level; and the less vicious but sometimes no less wrong-headed vagaries of university management in the 1970s and 1980s,’ remembers David Maughan Brown. He was concerned about the NUSAS referendum, and the need to vote ‘No’ in the government referendum of 1983. On 2 November 1983, the government held a referendum to gauge white opinion on the new constitution and tricameral parliament system that would allow coloureds and Indians to have limited representation in their own assemblies. Africans were excluded.

In writing statements and letters to the papers, organising meetings and discussions, responding to pamphlets by the South African Defence Force (SADF), Colin represented usually the more radical attitudes. This led to clashes with conservative colleagues (some of whom probably *did* wish that he would be detained) and some tensions with the university authorities. Then at a large meeting of JASA (Joint Academic Staff Association), affiliation to the UDF was agreed to by a two-thirds majority but led to some resignations. Colin was praised for his role as chairman. The UDF was becoming more



*University of Natal march to Pietermaritzburg City Hall, June 1983.  
The front row from the left comprises Peter Booysen, Alan Paton,  
Desmond Clarence and Deneys Schreiner. Colin was many rows further back.*

high profile and a large meeting was addressed in Cape Town by Helen Joseph, who later gave the Academic Freedom Lecture at University of Natal. The *Natal Witness* published a long JASA statement condemning the new proposed constitution. The first UDF/Inkatha violence, manifested itself at the University of Zululand, and led to deaths. A Detainees Day vigil in March, was organised by the Detainees Support Committee (DESCOM).

‘Descom’

I am dogged by a sense  
that my compassion  
cannot pierce to the root.  
For all my concern and involvement  
as chairman, as co-ordinator –

I am on the sidelines  
of the arena of human suffering.  
Though I am there, I am not there;  
though I mean, I cannot feel;  
though I feel, I cannot touch  
the really real.  
I pray, against my will,  
for some eventuality  
to force me to reality.

Yet with all this political commitment, Colin received the E.H. Burchell Award for helping students above the call of duty. An oppidani student remembered years later 'He was so kind to me personally, when I was an Honours student... even to the extent of repeating a lecture to me, alone, in the quiet of his office, after I had missed it when the appointed time had been changed.' He was phoned by an invigilator once and told that a postgraduate English student had torn up his paper and walked out of the examination room. Colin fished the paper out of the wastepaper basket, taped it together, marked it, went round to the student's digs and dropped a letter into the postbox saying that he had marked what had been written, and encouraged him to continue to complete his exams; which he did, later becoming an English lecturer. Pietermaritzburg was a caring campus. Something similar happened to David later. He walked out of his exam and, before Colin knew this, he was phoned by Owen Williams, professor of Geography, who had marked the paper, said that David had scored a pass, his long essay had achieved an A and David must carry on writing his exams.

After seven years, largely working with witty Mobbs (Margery) Moberly, Colin handed over as University Press chair to John Benyon. He was elected JASA chairman in his absence and was immediately plunged into problems: a threatened strike, mixed residences. He understood the half-ironical congratulations he had received. He was elected as Senate Executive Committee (Senex) representative on nine selection committees. David Maughan Brown wrote: 'He always showed himself to be a very astute thinker and tactician when it came to finding ways of supporting the interests of staff at the university and upholding liberal principles, sometimes in the face of surprisingly illiberal instincts on the part of senior managers.'

In June we prepared for Richard's departure to England. The family held a final party, Margie returning from Cape Town. David's band, at that time



called Youth 'n Asia, played. It was a sad journey home, with anxiety about how Richard would cope.

Before we, Margie, Kath and her friend Tanya Allison, set off for the Grahamstown Festival, the family celebrated my 50th birthday. It was an interesting festival week, dominated by gatherings of friends and new friends, new ideas, new perspectives. We went to plays, talks, musical items and fringe shows. Colin presented a paper at the Association of University English Teachers of South Africa (AUETSA) Conference, as did Jacques Berthoud, out from England. A festschrift was presented to Guy Butler and Colin was 'interested and pleased' to find himself in the book. In response to a letter from Colin, Guy Butler wrote: 'We *did* enjoy what little we saw of you; and many members of AUETSA say thank God for Colin Gardner who keeps his head when all about him have lost theirs.' But would he have been considered conservative?

We enjoyed the Zabalala band and our son David's drumming – he had been praised for his innovativeness. He noticed jackets made from Sotho blankets and I arrived home to find him at my machine making them to sell at university. But, returning from Grahamstown before us, he phoned to say that he had left his job with the gas company and was preparing to leave for England in October.

Jacques came from Grahamstown to renew old friendships and to observe how things had altered. Colin was challenged by him:

The presence and conversation of Jacques – which includes matters political and literary – has of course the effect of making me go through revaluations – of my stances, my position, my way of spending my time.

Yet Jacques, writing on his return to England, felt 'I am now convinced that the moral, as well as the social and literary, life of the place would flounder were you ever persuaded to leave. I hope you won't feel embarrassed when I say (and I speak for Astrid too) that we value your friendship as one of the great goods of life.'

Colin, with fellow academic John Aitchison and Deanne Lawrence from the Institute of Race Relations as well as poets, Mafika Gwala, Nkathaza Meyya and Ben Dikobe Martins, set up a combined lecture series:

Extension lecture 1: with Dikobe and Nkathaza (Mafika being sick with ulcers). A good mixed gathering, of about 50 people – a good

cross-section. I discussed background and Mtshali; then the poets contributed, interestingly, handsomely, and the rule was a fair amount of participation from the floor.



*Mafika Gwala, Ben Dikobe Martins, Colin and Nkathaza Meya, African Arts Centre, Pietermaritzburg, 1982*

In contrast to this, a large bomb was exploded in Pretoria by the ANC, with loss of life. Then there was the retaliatory Maputo raid in a spiral of violence.

He did not neglect his academic responsibilities. After an agonising night he had to lecture on comedy and said, 'It seemed to go quite well.' Lecturing on *King Lear*, he felt that he could identify with Lear – his agony, his despair, his loss of confidence in his own ability to handle home and professional responsibilities.

The year continued eventfully: Colin, elected to a committee dealing with the role of deans, asked 'Was I right to allow myself to be elected to such a purely administrative committee?' Colin Webb became vice-principal in Durban. Colin was appalled by the murder of Neil Alcock, an activist, who farmed among warring factions near Tugela Ferry in Msinga. We learned of the suffering of the imprisoned Catherine Hunter, of Roland and of their parents, Peter and Lucienne. Peter was an old student friend of Colin's from their NCFS days. Catherine was freed later in the year, but Roland was charged with

treason. Colin, Andrew Boraine and Zac Yacoob spoke at a student protest meeting.

Two daughters of activist Methodist priest, Reverend Simon Gqubule, were arrested – I had taught the girls at Epworth. I was wryly amused when Thandeka, in an essay written when she was in Standard 7, wrote in brackets, after mention of a party, ‘not political’. (She has recently written a book, *Speaking Truth to Power* about Thuli Madonsela, the Public Protector who revealed the state capture by the Gupta family. Thandeka first met Thuli when they were both in jail in Johannesburg.)

The Sunday papers were full of the Angola crisis and we were glad that our sons were not involved as conscripts in the SADF. They would of course not be here for the wedding but Margie flew in from Cape Town. Libby and Richard were married at St Mary’s, where we and my parents had been married and the reception was in our garden.

The wedding went off well, once the heavy rain had stopped at 3.00 pm and we had bailed out the marquee. Kathy’s boyfriend Mark McFarlane was a groomsman, very elegant in top hat and tails. Colin made the speech and described Libby as the ‘Zola Budd of the spoken word’. Richard’s father had provided curry and rice for a late-night snack, so people lingered and this became the plan for future weddings.



David phoned us to say that Day One, as they had named their band in England, had won the Battle of the Bands in Bournemouth and they were to be given a BBC slot to present a programme. They were allotted a director, Steve Connolly, and a large sum of money. Suddenly the newspapers were full of Day One. *Rocking the Botha* was anti-apartheid, as we had known it would be, and rock South Africa it did. 'It spoke about apartheid very strongly, acted out things that happened and listed firms that had dealings with South Africa. Articles on it appeared in the *Natal Witness* and in most of the mainline papers, including *Rapport*: 'BBC smeer SA vuiler as voorheen' [BBC smears South Africa dirtier than before]. Some reports were fairly factual, some faintly approving, some denunciatory. The SABC had a three-minute denunciation. In contrast to this a letter from London gave an account of the film and ended: 'they were likeable young men with talents and the right ideas about South Africa... A great pity such right-minded young people feel compelled to leave their country. A loss for South Africa that they can never return.' There were repercussions. The BBC was told that its representatives were no longer welcome in South Africa until they had apologised. Colin was phoned for comment, and was, as one might expect, praising. The police confiscated one copy and showed it in army camps – with very varied responses, especially in Natal. We organised a number of gatherings to show it to people. It was not perfect, but it was strong. We received anonymous letters and phone calls, but not many.

Colin was able to recommend Peter and Joan Kerchhoff very strongly for a grant from the Christian Fellowship Trust that would enable them to travel overseas. They were successful and travelled in 1985. He was thanked by Ilse Naudé for his recommendation in a letter which informed him that Beyers had been awarded the Franklin Roosevelt Freedom Foundation Medal in 1984. Later, in 2000, he recommended Peter Alexander for the distinguished title of Scientia Professor. He was always ready to recommend for various honours those he considered worthy.

Academically Colin finished his work shared with Michael Chapman preparing a facsimile edition of volumes 1–3 of the South African periodical *Voorslag* and it was published in 1985. There were frequent meetings of the English Department focusing on the syllabus, with quite deep divisions. Colin and Anton van der Hoven had a long discussion about their respective attitudes towards literary criticism. This was part of ongoing consultation and argument. Lectures were held at which different views were given. Professor Ron Nicolson wrote after Colin's death: 'Colin was a model academic leader – always scholarly, always very well read, but always benign towards and tolerant of the views of younger and more opinionated colleagues – of whom the English department at the university had its fair share. He meticulously listened to everyone and allowed everyone their share in the spotlight, with no need to impose his own views even when others were being patronising.'

Politically, police brutality was increasing and DESCOM was having to deal with many more cases:

A longish gathering – Mrs Maphumulo had seen her son Mlungisi today, but he had burst into tears; and she wept as she told us. A shattering experience for her, for all of us.

The treason trial of Duma Gqubule and Ben Dikobe Martins and others began; Colin had known Ben well and spent some time among the crowd at the beginning of the trial. They were both convicted, Dikobe of terrorism and Duma of aiding and abetting the ANC. Later Roland Hunter was convicted of treason and jailed for five years. He was found guilty of passing on military information to the ANC. At the same time Derek and Patricia Hanekom were also jailed.

Ben Langa was mysteriously shot and killed as he sat studying in his house. Colin had known Ben as a poet, but also from DESCOM members as a suspected spy. He wondered, with horror, if anything he might have said could have influenced those who killed him. The ANC later publicly apologised for the death of Langa, stating that his assassination by ANC operatives was as the result of misinformation spread by the apartheid state, labelling him a spy.

Colin was shocked by the death of Professor Jimmy Stewart and his wife Joan killed by a drunk driver between Roma and Maseru. They had seen the erratic driving and had pulled to the side of the road to avoid the driver. Jimmy had lectured at universities overseas and in Africa, but he and Joan were running a transformation centre housing documentation on change in southern Africa. A memorial was held for them in Durban. Later, in November 1993, their daughter Clare was murdered in Northern Natal. She was an agricultural

extension officer in Northern Zululand and suffered a brutal death. She and her small son had stayed with us while she was studying. She had recently given birth to a daughter. We attended her large funeral at Mariannhill. Dreadful news came of the murder of ANC operative, Jeanette Schoon (Curtis) and her daughter Katryn by a parcel bomb in Angola.

In 1984 on 28 September my mother died. Colin had put off his departure to England on sabbatical by a month, as I had broken my wrist playing tennis, for which we were thankful, as he was here for my mother's funeral. During this time, Teresa's mother's house in Sobantu burned down and her daughter Sylvia got married. Colin wrote:

A beautiful ceremony plus fascinating solid-chat sermon in Zulu and English. I drove one of three cars to the Botanic Gardens for photographs. Then we drove home through Imbali, hooting and evoking the greetings and claps and cheers of everyone: marvellous, spontaneous community feeling. Back at Phahla Place, meal and talk, and again spontaneous dancing of the community – so different from what the white community is capable of.

I discovered to my amazement that the father of Topsy's two children – Vincent (Tabane) whom I was talking to and Lucas (Nhlanhla) who was killed in 1980 – is poet Mafika (Pascal) Gwala! – whom I know so well, and on whom I've been working for the last week or so! Astonishing! like some odd conclusion of a Dickens' novel. [Topsy Sithole was Teresa Dlungwane's sister.]



*Sylvia Dlungwane's wedding, Imbali, 1984.  
Colin and Mary are visible in the second row*

There were tensions in JASA, with resignations and fierce meetings. Colin wrote a general letter in an attempt to cool things. He was re-elected chairman, something of a two-edged sword. Colleague, Francis Antonie said he'd been criticised, from both left and right, for leaving the chair and offering his views on the referendum in the meeting. 'I didn't do this at last night's meeting; but I must remember this for future occasions.' JASA continued to bother him.

He consulted Christopher Merrett and David Maughan Brown and it was decided to shelve the referendum on differentiated salaries. He was cheered by an excellent letter from our son, David, about military service. He participated in a PACSA workshop about poverty, both factual and visionary. He was delighted by the unexplained unbanning of Beyers Naudé and asked 'Why?' Surprisingly, Beyers was interviewed on SABC news and spoke 'excellently'. Later, in October, the news came that Desmond Tutu had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Academically he was working with Mike Chapman on their South African literature guide and enjoying again Yeats, as he read Valerie Leigh's Ph.D. thesis, but frivolously wrote: 'I read Yeats thoughtfully, when – Wham!/ Mosquitoes like Stukas on Rotterdam.' Colin was delighted that the publication of Ben Dikobe Martin's poetry anthology was allowed by the government. He prepared and gave his paper on catharsis at AUETSA:

My paper on catharsis was greeted by quite a bit of silence in many quarters, though some – both the predictable ones and the less expected ones – said they liked it. I became aware of the unity of view among certain younger critics – to the group of Derek Attridge and Anton van der Hoven, I must now add David Schalkwyk. Alan Brimer described my paper as 'courageous'. I have been to more AUETSA conferences than anyone else. Am I absurd? How should I respond? Not give a paper next year? I've tried to say no – but it's in Margie's Cape Town next year. Talk about something specific, not theoretical?

He kept up a steady barrage of letters to the editor of the *Natal Witness*, pointing out inconsistencies, pleading the cause of those suffering from government policies, trying to explain points of view. Here is one that he wrote in August 1984:

Recently Minister Pik Botha told a meeting of his supporters on the Bluff that forced removals do not take place in South Africa.

What is one to make of such a statement? One is reminded of course (for all his fierce faces on the screen) that he is regarded in his own circles as something of a humourist. Could it be that he felt that such an assertion was reasonable, and would not be quoted ‘out of context’, as it was made at a part of Durban called ‘the Bluff’? Or could he have been punning wittily on his own nickname by showing the way in which he selects those parts of the truth which suit his own case – that his attitude towards facts is rather like that of a person approaching, bowl in hand, the ‘pick ‘n mix’ selection at a sweet counter.

But no: Mr Botha’s statement carries us far beyond the realms of comedy into something quite different. What it suggests is the mind of a person whose party has been in power for so long and has been manipulating news and opinions for so long, that he believes, maybe in all honesty and sincerity, that (God-like) he can create reality. That if he chooses to assert that forced removals do not take place then THEY DO NOT TAKE PLACE (even though we all know that they do, and that Mr Botha’s party orders them).

This is after all George Orwell’s year, 1984.

A friend, Shantee Manjoo had asked him to read *Classrooms in the Shade* which she intended to publish (and did). It was an interesting account of her experiences as a teacher of English under the apartheid government. She had known Colin for some time.

He was asked to moderate the English exam papers and scripts for the University of Zululand. He had to spend some time in hospital for an operation, a new experience for him as he had last been to hospital for the appendix operation obligatory when he was a teenager. It seemed to him momentous, the beginning of old age.

A DESCOM conference was planned – it took some planning – at the Ecumenical Lay Centre in Edendale and there was also a large public meeting at the Cathedral of the Holy Nativity. There were many and varied speakers and the quite large audience participated fully. Colin said earlier: ‘trying to see what concessions can be gone for, asked for. We do what we can; but how much is it?’ Another Detainees’ Day meeting was held at the Methodist Metro Hall for those had up for treason.

# 18

## A COLD ENGLAND AND FRANCE

In November 1984 Colin left for his sabbatical in England. Kathy and I were to join him after schools had closed. He spent the first few days in London. He was, though, going to spend most of his time until I arrived with the Berthouds in York:

Today in the rain, elegant, grey, bleak, gauntly austere – lovely to the eyes of a South African who had suffered from too much blinding sunlight and baking heat, I walked along the banks of the Ouse in the rain.

He became part of academic life in York, attending seminars and giving them (comparing students of different years with those in South Africa), always interested, considering, posing his own opinions and opening them to disagreement and criticism. He met a great number of people – he listed them, among them poet and academic, Landeg White and political scientist, Tom Lodge. He described his visit as ‘a life of considerable stimulus and interest’. Reading *Great Expectations*: ‘The wind howls round my high room, and I read “The dismal wind was muttering round the house”’. He continues: ‘I drink in, I soak in, the English scene: the chill, the wind, the rapidly changing weather (clouds are blown in and out of the skies), the low sun (it’s only a little above the roofs at midday, the freshness, the briskness, the bracingness: I *am* English in so many ways.’

In December he returned to London to meet Kathy and me. David announced that he had bought us a second-hand car, a bright orange Cortina, cheaper than hiring and so easy to spot in parking lots! Faulty heating, though – I used a ‘pig’ hot water bottle but Colin as the driver had to rely on multiple pairs of socks.

We were both plagued by bad head colds, debilitating, as we began to prepare for our visit to Paris. We arrived in snowy, bitterly cold Paris and the tour driver offered us a lift part of the way to our charming Hotel Navarin et d’Angleterre:

Paris beautiful, but a result of the revolutionary design by Napoleon (?) and Haussmann, as opposed to London, with its clinging to the ways of the Middle Ages – its old winding streets, its lack of boulevard space. What is one to say? Is Burke, right?

Paris was cold. We had to duck down to the metro or into cafes just to keep ourselves from freezing misery. (The metros were left open all night to help the homeless.)

Elegance – a composed work of art; humanity – the large and eyeable? Metro stations; spirituality – the good Mass in Notre Dame, tourists or no, with the booming microphone; human elegance – a better clothes sense than in London; physical coldness – below freezing all day (-6, we discovered); the ring of history in some of the names of the Metro stations: Burbes-Rochechouart, Porte-de-Chignancourt, Reamin-Sebastapol, etc.

We travelled home through snowy northern France, crossed on the smooth hovercraft (it had been rocky when we came to France and we all got seasick), then through snowy Dover back to London.

Our trip to northern England and Scotland was in the coldest winter for some years. We drove behind the snowploughs to stay with cousins Chris and David Eccles and explore Norfolk, especially Silfield village and the estate where my grandmother Emmeline Skoulding-Cann had lived.

We were delighted to arrive in York with the Berthouds after a beautiful drive past broads, dykes, fens and marshes. We celebrated our 27th anniversary, with special champagne selected by Jacques (Colin learned a great deal about the art of wine making and wine appreciation, which Jacques had acquired in his months at Bordeaux) and we drank Beaumes de Venise, a superb muscatel to accompany Astrid's delicious meal. But Colin broke a tooth on a 'fisherman's friend' I'd persuaded him to take to help with his cold.

Jacques and Colin resumed their discussions – of *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Winter's Tale*, Marxist history, Desmond Morris' *The Soccer Tribe*. In Lancaster, which we reached via Harrogate and the Fells of Bowland, we stayed with Colin's ex-colleagues, Malcolm and Judy McKenzie. Colin went to Glasgow to meet Derek Attridge and Suzanne. They spoke of the attitudes of various departments to different theories of literature.



Returning to the Berthouds for one more evening:

We walked in quite deep snow, the six of us, to the house of Peter and Ann Hollendale, nearby. A very pleasant evening: we discussed a variety of matter, including Kipling and children's literature (upon which he has written a book).

Then home to pack for an early start to Sheffield, where Colin was to deliver a paper and we were to meet John Bishop. The university was on a steep hill and there was black ice, so Kathy and I had to try to find something with which to jam the wheels. Colin remained to meet Christopher Heywood, to deliver his paper, and to meet interesting university people and discuss in particular black consciousness poets.

In the next couple of days, Colin read Wittgenstein and had his tooth sorted out before we left for Oxford, London and South Africa. He wrote to the Berthouds:

It is very sad to be preparing to leave Britain – so many close friends, so much life, such a society (for all its problems) – in order to step back into the purgatorial fires of South Africa. [In Oxford we visited Mark Prestwich in hospital]: he was sometimes incoherent, sometimes very coherent. We fed him his supper (the little he ate and drank), spoke, and then the farewell created by him: 'Well, my children, it is time to say goodbye ... I can't tell you how pleased I have been to have you as friends and colleagues.' A most moving moment, clearly and (I hope) valuably constructed. Mary was in tears.

# 19

## THE UNIMAGINABLE HAPPENS

Back in South Africa in 1985 we went to Peter and Lucienne Hunter and then caught the train to Pietermaritzburg. Colin read of Desmond Tutu's inauguration as Bishop of Johannesburg attended by the Hunters, Peter and Joan Kerchhoff and Ruth Lundie. 'At five the next morning we were up to watch Maritzburg in the sunrise as the train came down the hill.' The day was spent on reunions – Teresa, the household, and phone calls. I went to school, Colin to university to be briefed by Betty Paterson that things had mostly gone well. Then he went to PACSA to be briefed there. He picked me up from Epworth and we drove to Hillcrest to Libby and Richard's but left fairly early. Two things reinforced the reality that we were back: the eight o'clock news and anonymous phone calls in the early hours of the following morning – someone had been keeping an eye on our goings and comings. Shortly after our return, Nelson Mandela was offered his freedom but refused until the ANC was unbanned.

One of Colin's first duties was a pleasant luncheon for staff and honours students but there were also their essays to be marked, meetings, discussions, updating, talks to Anton, Betty about the English Department, and to Christopher Merrett about JASA. 'Back to the old routine, but not unhappily,' Colin said. He also went to Port Shepstone to see Susan and his recently ill mother. She was better, but there was concern about how much longer she would be able to stay by herself and look after Susan. She agreed to consult the doctor and he told her that she had a heart condition but could drive as long as she was careful. We left for Pietermaritzburg, hoping we were wise, travelling via Ixopo. It was raining very heavily, with floods and bridges down. It took nearly seven hours to get home.

Kathy was attending the university Bridging the Gap course and had decided to do English as one of her courses. She described Colin's address to them as a little solemn. The two men accused of the murder of Ben Langa were convicted and condemned to death. This disturbed Colin, partly as he was against the death penalty and partly because he felt that the judge had

not fully understood the circumstances. DESCOM also faced the grief of the mothers of the two men.

University life resumed and Colin was involved in complicated department business, theses to evaluate, marking, his own writing, tutorials (which not all members of the English Department participated in) and a full lecturing schedule. He wrote wryly: 'How did your lecture go? Oh, I think I covered the subject so well that they'll never be able to find it.' For many of those who worked with Colin, this wry deprecation was a key element of his persona and his way of interacting with the people around him.

Computers were making their appearance on campus, which would lead to changes in communication. One of the first uses Colin's computer was put to was to e-mail to Margie the recipe she had forgotten for a cake she was halfway through making! Colin's academic life spread beyond the University of Natal. He was external examiner, for theses and examinations, for a fair number of South African universities, sat on selection committees at six universities and participated in review panels at two universities, apart from his involvement in national university committees. He also gave lectures and participated in conferences and workshops.

In June 1984 there was an attack on the English Department by some students in the new *Artefact*. Colin's colleague, Anton van der Hoven described them as, 'a vocal minority of white students who felt that the English department as a whole espoused what they saw as a "radical" political (including feminist) position which determined both its selection of texts and its interpretative approach.' Reverberations from this article dominated Colin's mind:

At times all unity, all life, seems gone.  
but still the contraption trundles on.

The Arts Student Council agreed that all members of the English Department could contribute pieces to *Artefact*, partly as a result of accusations of bias. Colin spent hours consulting with individual members of staff. He described it as 'Quite a fascinating but wearing time.' There were discussions with third year students:

Renaissance discussion with all the lecturers there. It was a bit of a failure, and therefore depressing. Not much asked. And one of the more vocal students even suggested that they wanted options in this area too. This is quite a huge cultural problem (existing, no doubt, all over SA, over the world even). How can one again get students

absorbed in *Paradise Lost*, excited by the Metaphysicals, drunk with those golden words? I must test it too tomorrow with *Tamburlaine*.

David Maughan Brown had written an excellent suggested curriculum, but there was still disagreement as there was about marking the final examinations. Colin was accused of being intemperate at times. He was always prepared to accept criticism, and, if he felt he had acted wrongly, was ready to apologise; yet he often acted as mediator. Not everything was resolved by the time the vacation arrived.

The vice-principal, Deneys Schreiner and the English Department disagreed about the use of a grant from BP. The department wanted it to be used for the part-time BA (PTBA) but Schreiner said that there could be no deviation from its original purpose. PTBA proved quite successful and the department was allowed another lecturer to cope with the extra demands.

As a backdrop to all these activities Libby's baby was due. When Gregory James was born in Parklands in Durban and we drove down to see him, we found a most distressed Libby – we were not allowed to see Gregory as he was suffering from respiratory problems and was in an incubator. He recovered slowly. Meanwhile our son Richard's life was falling apart in England. At first there was disagreement as to whether he should have one last try at making it in England, but eventually all agreed that he should return.

We paid for a ticket for Richard's return. He regarded a return to South Africa as the solution to all his problems, while we knew it would by no means be so. A dreadful irony was that his psychologist thought that going into the army might be the best solution, as it would get him out of the house and his familiar environment and he would be sternly disciplined. And here we were, strongly supporting the ECC (End Conscription Campaign). There was no choice, as he could not go back to university. We arranged for him to see a psychologist, which he agreed to do, undergoing further tests and later passing well an accounting course at tech. Still, the army loomed ahead and the worse the situation in the country became, the more appalling this option seemed, particularly when white soldiers were moved into the townships.

In January 1986 the unimaginable happened – Colin took Richard to the Drill Hall to join the army. His first phone call was reassuring – there were a number of English-speaking conscripts in his battalion and life was not too bad. Then we heard that he was in hospital and that he was to be discharged from the army; he had refused to co-operate and was aggressive. Psychologically the army felt that they could not keep him. What should we do on his return?

We agreed that we would have to be much tougher. He was unlikely to get a job as a result of an interview. Luckily university was still on vacation, so some of the pressures were off Colin, who was losing weight, not feeling or sleeping well; his health was an anxiety.

We heard of Mark Prestwich's death and, though we had been expecting it, it was sad. Colin and Deneys Schreiner spoke at his memorial here and Jacques at his funeral in England. Colin wrote an obituary for *Natalia* and the editor, Jack Frost, described it as 'an exceptionally fine and sensitive piece'. Colin had also spoken, earlier, at Mark's farewell. We heard that a friend, Robin Savory had died in an accident near Balgowan.

Meanwhile the country was in turmoil, spreading to the rural areas; there was disturbing news of the Uitenhage massacre of seventeen people: 'We're back exactly where we were 25 years ago'. UDF members were had up for treason in a trial that took place in Pietermaritzburg. The government described what was happening as a civil war. A DESCOM meeting took place and Colin wrote a letter to the *Natal Witness*, which he thought a lawyer should look at before it was published. He went through a period of being 'racked by metaphysical and psychic doubt':

The country in turmoil. Now over 1 000 arrested – and great pressure on the country (thank God) from France, USA, UN Security Council. Maybe the greatest pressure ever: are things at last moving towards a climax?

The challenge of the achievement of others – Jonathan Crewe, Derek Attridge, Jacques, etc. What has my life added up to? What has it been? Is this combination of different factors a sum which adds up to very little? Have I justified my existence, fulfilled whatever promise I might have had?

But also: How does point 2 sit beside point 1?

He returned to a cheerful family gathering, with Jenny Edwards, and Margie's friend Shirley Wells, and we all played tennis, which Colin and I had recently taken up for physical relaxation and enjoyment. Chris Mann had asked Colin to read his new poems. Meetings in opposition to the government were well-attended. We enjoyed a round of social activities. But then there was the news of the brutal murder of lawyer and activist, Victoria Mxenge, and the likelihood that the State of Emergency would come to Natal. There was an outcry; but the government was used to that, and largely unfazed by it. Molly Blackburn, Ivan Toms and Laurie Nathan spoke about army brutality in the townships at a

crowded meeting at the University. The vice-chancellor, Peter Booysen asked Colin to speak at a meeting on the Durban campus. The Government was cracking down brutally; there were meetings and illegal protests everywhere.

Colin and I had an on-going argument for some time in which he accused me of being too moderate and appeasing, and I accused him of being too biased and fanatical. We agreed that there was some point in both perceptions. Colin thought that I had not been as involved in political meetings as he had. I pointed out that I partly enabled him to be so involved – someone had to be at home. David Maughan Brown was elected deputy dean and to Senex. Colin was replaced as chairperson of JASA but remained on many university and political committees.

One of the annual events on our calendar was a trip to King's School speech day, every year since Colin had been invited to be guest speaker. Not only did it have interesting guest speakers, but the school produced a play, usually Shakespeare, and usually with input from Walter Saunders, who later produced school versions of many of the plays, not changing much but simplifying the text. This year it was *Romeo and Juliet*, no mean feat for a primary school, though they later did *King Lear*, with a black girl as Lear. We went up with Pessa and Leslie Weinberg (Colin and Leslie were on the board together). On this occasion Colin's colleague, Tony Voss, was the guest speaker and his speech was admirable, as was that of the headmaster, John Carlyle Mitchell. On another occasion the play was *Macbeth*, Macbeth played by Ben Voss, and the guest speaker was the poet, Douglas Livingstone, who described King's: 'This is the strangest, most interesting and most beautiful school I have ever seen.' Alan Paton said, 'If you want to see what a South African school can be like, go to King's'. We met old friends the Shuttleworths, who were among those who began the Midlands Meander. Their woven rugs decorate our house.

We came back to the news that Sigrid Tosswill had taken her own life. Although we were not wholly surprised, it was a shock.

We also heard of the tragic death of political activists Molly Blackburn and Brian Bishop in a car accident. Molly's funeral was reported on SABC. It was huge, with more than 20 000 mourners, the majority of whom were black South Africans.

Colin was helping Mlungisi, a local poet, with his poems, which Mlungisi was hoping to publish under the title *Hheyhhash*. He later signed a contract with Ad Donker for a 16 June anthology. Mrs Harber died – we had often visited her at Sunnyside Retirement Home – and Eric, her son, who had been banned by the apartheid government, was not allowed back into the country

to see her before she died, a source of great anguish and bitterness to him and cruel pettiness on the part of the apartheid government.

Politically the later 1980s were characterised by increasing brutality by the government of P.W. Botha. In the last throes of the National Party government everything was done to prevent its downfall, though more prescient people could see that it was inevitable. The government became ruthless and intransigent – the State of Emergency, Vlakplaas and Eugene de Kock, assassinations, bannings and imprisonment. Verligtes were pressing the government and blacks, scenting possible victory, pushed from their side. Colin was plunged into this turmoil. New groups were being formed; others banned. Colin's life was dominated by capital letters: JASA, UDUSA, LDA, UDF, SAIRR, ECC, PACSA, FFF, DESCOM... He was on the committees of many of these, and chairperson of some. He was not a reluctant participant, as he was deeply concerned, and hoped to help people to understand the issues clearly, and make a difference, however small, though his ideas were often the subject of controversy.

The University called on Colin for help in its political confrontations. Events like the academic boycott and the erosion of the freedoms that university academics, most of them, took for granted, led to political confrontation. In June 1983 the principal Professor Desmond Clarence inserted a strong statement, written by Colin, in the *Sunday Times*. There were meetings and marches. There was a large meeting in response to the State of Emergency called by JASA, ECC, AZASO (Azanian Students Organisation) and the SRC which was addressed by Colin, David Maughan Brown and James Lund, professor of Law.

He was, though, writing a paper on the poet, Roy Campbell. Liz Gunner, an academic whose interest was in South African literature and culture, spent time with us and discussed black poetry and writing in general. Colin would fall asleep early and wake, often very early, with his mind whirling with anxieties and guilt at what he ought to have done. He was also suffering abdominal problems. He always had been an early riser: at crucial marking times, when our pressures coincided, we joked that we bowed as we met in the bedroom doorway as he got up and I (a late worker) went to bed!

Towards the end of 1985 the Kairos Document – an examination of how the Church should be responding to the political crisis in South Africa – had been produced. In December the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was launched. Fifty Christians, in response to the challenges in the Kairos Document, sent 'their message of solidarity and congratulations



to all those present at the founding of COSATU.' The Kairos Document had occasioned much discussion and disagreement between liberal and more radical members of church organisations.

Colin described 1986 as 'one of the most fluid, tricky years in the history of South Africa. I still think it on the whole a potentially creative though bitter and painful necessity. We're on the road to the future at last.' The State of Emergency was declared on 12 June. Peter Kerchhoff, Gay Spiller, Jacqui Boule, A.S. Chetty and others were detained, later released, though Peter and A.S. Chetty remained in detention until September. At one stage there was a call from the police security branch telling Joan that Peter was in hospital with a major heart attack. She rushed there only to discover that it was a hoax. Eventually the family's lawyer, Leslie Weinberg, was permitted to visit Peter, finding him in solitary confinement. Joan brought a court case on Peter's behalf, buoyed by a judgment in Durban. Colin wrote:

At 10 am judgment in the Kerchhoff case, and the three judges chucked out everything. Then – worse – they went on to overturn the judgment in the Durban case. An extraordinary business, not only with one set of judges fighting the other (Paddy Kearney to me: 'The battle among the Natal Judges is now out in the open') but the second set deliberately delaying in order to get in last and get precedence. Also, there's the miserable and suspicious fact of Nienaber's having phoned Justice Kriek yesterday. So, disaster for all, for Joan and Mrs Chetty and the others.

On Peter's birthday Joan was allowed a short visit and he told her he was being 'hammered'.

The day following the Kerchhoff judgment a University Assembly was held with meetings at Durban, Wits, UCT, Rhodes and UWC simultaneously. Deneys Schreiner spoke and read out a statement, calling on the government to put an end to the State of Emergency and 'address the problems of black education'. Colin also spoke at this event. He received a letter from the NUSAS president, Bruce Robertson, thanking him for his significant support during the referendum campaign and stating that, for the first time in ten years, all five English campuses had been affiliated together.

This was followed by a Right to Speak public meeting at the Anglican Cathedral, very well attended, chaired by James Lund and addressed by Pierre Cronjé (PFP MP), Paula Hathorn (ECC), Fatima Meer and Denis Hurley. Colin flew to Pretoria with George Dale for an HSRC meeting and returned

with Simon Gqubule, just back from Norway. Paddy Kearney was arrested. Every minute of Colin's day was packed – lectures, speeches, political letters, DESCOM, administration, travelling between Pietermaritzburg and Durban, Inchanga, Edendale ... Some of his most valuable discussions took place as he drove or was driven to these places. He could discuss at length with Deneys Schreiner, Christopher Merrett, Gordon Hunnings, David Maughan Brown, Peter Kerchhoff, Douglas Irvine and others.

There was strong condemnation of Minister of Education F.W. de Klerk's proposed regulations limiting the freedom of universities. One of the regulations was for a quota system to limit the number of black students at white universities. Colin wrote a piece for the *Sunday Tribune* in which he criticised the government for maintaining that they were 'upholding traditional University values', which should allow:

In debates and discussions, the whole spectrum of opinions on any issue – from left to right, from top to bottom ... The members of the universities who are most acutely conscious of the Government's hypocrisy in relation to true freedom of speech are those who know that the views that they themselves espouse can often not be aired: Black students ... let the world see clearly who it is that is throwing a spanner into the works of truly free speech and debate.

With Christopher Merrett he attended the UTASA (University Teachers Association of South Africa) meeting at the University of Durban-Westville (UDW) with 45 people present, more than they had expected, though they were disappointed that the Afrikaans-medium universities did not make it. Naledi Pandor was elected to the chair and

she held the meeting together wonderfully, pressed it forward efficiently, and managed to get through things which no white could have managed. And yet the scheme which emerged – began to emerge – was substantially what UTASA and the Natal Steering Committee had been working for.

The University held a procession followed by an Assembly protesting against the proposed regulations. Colin wrote the JASA statement:

The university is not an institution without discipline. But its essential discipline stems from a complex commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and to an exploration of more humane ways of organizing human life and society. This commitment brings with it a subtle set of

human relationships – relationships of co-operation and intellectual leadership and trust. This whole rich world of the university is undermined if university teachers and administrators are suddenly required to become informers and police agents. The situation is made even worse (if that is possible) when this undermining is carried out in the name of a political policy which is already doomed, and when the penalty for not conforming is impoverishment. The Joint Academic Staff Association pledges its whole-hearted support for the stand taken by the five universities and calls upon all other South African universities to recognise their intellectual and social responsibilities.


A new organisation was formed, the Staff Student Support Development Advisory Committee: ‘good work and good ideas.’

# 20

## MEETINGS AND SPECIAL BRANCH ACTIVITIES

During the State of Emergency, a stayaway had been planned. The Security Branch (SB) retaliated. I received a call asking if I had noticed the huge crowds of Africans outside my house. Puzzled I looked out and said that there was a man cutting the hedge next door. It turned out that they had issued pamphlets saying that those who stayed away and wanted to be paid for the day should contact ... and it gave the addresses of Peter Kerchhoff, Christopher Merrett, Colin Gardner, Martin Wittenberg and Sandy Jocelyn. As these were distributed by mellow yellows (police vans) they were simply ignored. That was not too threatening; it left egg on the faces of the SB. Colin and Christopher Merrett were visited at home and asked about their passports in an attempt to intimidate them. It was suggested by Deneys Schreiner that both should cross the border to a neighbouring country, but they rejected this idea as impractical. The SB had access to some foul-smelling substance they injected into cars, on one occasion into a house where a party for Bishop Desmond Tutu was to be held. Our car was injected while we were at church. For weeks we had to drive with the windows open, even in rainstorms and on icy days. This was very mild, of course, compared to the Vlakplaas horrors. Frank Chikane was targeted by poison on a trip to America.

Colin complained to Judge Sandy Milne about the obviously bogus COSATU-UDF pamphlet. Milne promised to look into things and Major Smit of the CID went through the motions of an investigation. Colin wondered, again, why he was not detained, and criticised himself for not doing enough. He compared his life to that of those who had been arrested and treated brutally, to those killed in the internecine warfare; it was partly this sense that spurred him to greater and greater efforts. He not only wrote and spoke. He was involved in visiting people in jail when permitted, supplying food and clothing, consulting lawyers, meeting the SB in an attempt to mitigate suffering, consoling relatives, putting up refugees and driving people. His car was even more often to be seen in areas other than white. Yet it was not vandalised.



**UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT**

P.O. Box 48060  
Qualbert 4078  
Telephones 32-7860  
63280

**UDF  
COSATU**

16 JUNE

The executives of the UDF and COSATU have reached consensus at national level to pay all Comrades who stay away from work without pay.

STAY AWAY! - WE PAY

We will pay R10 to R40 per day, depending on your job and wage. Just bring your payslip and we pay. All UDF and COSATU offices will do pay-outs the whole of today.

The following people will have your money ready. Just go to their addresses today.

<p>MR M.W. WITTENBERG 421 BURGER STREET. PIETERMARITZBURG</p>	<p>MR C.O. GARDNER 24 YALTA ROAD PIETERMARITZBURG</p>
<p>MR &amp; MRS P.C. KERTSHHOFF 307 BULWER STREET PIETERMARITZBURG</p>	<p>MR S.C. JOCELYN 12A INSTITUTE ROAD PIETERMARITZBURG</p>
<p>MR C. MERRET 23 SPILSBY AVENUE LINCOLNMEAD PIETERMARITZBURG</p>	

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COMRADES UNITE - WE WILL LOOK AFTER YOU!

FORWARD WITH OUR LIBERATION STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM!

*Bogus UDF/COSATU pamphlet, almost certainly produced by the police security branch, naming Colin and others, 16 June 1986 (Note the spelling and other errors)*



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...ngaat.  
...maritz-

## in Soweto our by newsmen

The group of 20 newsmen had been flown to Protea Police Station in two Puma helicopters from Swartkop Air Base near Pretoria.

The tour included Rockville, Diepkloof, Orlando, Orlando West, Dube, Mofolo Village — an area of shacks — and White City.

TV crews shot the stark difference in appearance between the brownish Soweto and the lush northern suburbs of Johannesburg as the helicopters flew over these areas. — (Sapa)

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phone. Sponsorships or donations can be given by telephoning either Ernie Nightingale at 446555 or Simon Osler at 741010. Together here are: Mr Osler, 21, Roger Hitchcock, 17, Mr Nightingale, Brian Bridle, 16, Clive Hitchcock, 16, and Craig Holmwood, 18.

## McIntosh stuns House with long list of names

Mercury, 18 June 1985

Ormande Pollok  
Political Correspondent

CAPE TOWN—Mr Graham McIntosh, Progressive Federal Party MP for Pietermaritzburg North, surprised Parliament yesterday by reading out the

names of a list of people and asking if they had been detained in the past five days.

The people had been 'missing' and included Mr Nabel Swart and Mr Khalieb Desai of the Alexander Sinton School

(Durban) he said.

Mr Adrian Vlok, Deputy Minister of Law and Order, had just replied to a question by Mr Ken Andrews, PFP MP for Gardens, who had wanted to know whether any people under the age of 29 had been arrested on charges of public violence in the Western Cape in the first six months of last year.

Mr McIntosh rose and said: 'Mr Speaker, arising from the Deputy Minister's reply relating to people arrested for public violence, I wonder whether he could tell us whether Mr Bantu Julius Fuzile, Mr Nabel Swart of the Alexander Sinton School, Mr Khalieb Desai of the Alexander Sinton School, Mr Eric Applegreen, Miss Janet Applegreen, Mr Peter Kershoff, Mr Martin Wittenberg, Mr C Merret, Mr S C Jocelyn, Prof Colin Gardner, a number of people from Mpolweni, Mr Moses Mkhize, Edna Mkhize, Nora Mkhize, Nkosinathi Mkhize, Swart Mkhize, Nkululeko Mkhize, Mondli Ndlovu, Simo Bhengu and Xoli Mgadi ...'

### Explained

Mr Vlok: 'Mr Speaker, on a point of order ...'

Mr McIntosh: 'Mr Speaker, I have nearly finished. Have all these people who have gone missing during the last five days been arrested on charges of public violence?'

Mr Vlok took another point of order and explained he had replied to a question relating to the period January 1 to June 30 last year. Mr McIntosh was dealing with people who, according to him, had been detained in the past five days.

Mr McIntosh said his aim was to find out who had been arrested on charges of public violence.

'That is the question. The dates are not important. The question is whether these people, in view of the fact that they are missing, have been arrested on charges of public violence.'

The exchange ended amid loud interjections.

## Two capital clerics ordered to quit S A

Pietermaritzburg  
Bureau

TWO Pietermaritzburg clerics were among four foreigners who were told to leave the country by midnight last night in terms of an order issued yesterday by the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Stoffel Botha.

They are Prof Theobald Kneifel and Br Heinz Alex Bernhard Ernst, both West Germans.

Fr Kneifel was a lecturer at St Joseph's Oblate Scholasticate at Cedara near here and also served as chaplain to the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg.

He had been lecturing at Cedara for about 10 years.

according to a spokesman for the scholasticate, who added that both deportees were due to fly to Rome late yesterday.

Br Ernst had been studying for the priesthood.

Sapa quoted Mr Botha as saying all four deportees were in custody in terms of the emergency regulations.

The other two men are Mr Walter Hattig, a tourist, and Mr Eckhard Krallmann, a Johannesburg teacher.

None of the four is a South African citizen.

Following the refusal by Mr Botha to reverse the deportation order on the Dutch television journalist, Mr Wim de Vos, this brings the total deportations thus far to five.

## Drugs case woman given 'last chance'

Court Reporter

A 23-YEAR-OLD woman convicted of being in possession of dagga and Mandrax, was ordered by a Durban magistrate yesterday to attend a drug rehabilitation centre and told it was her 'last chance'.

Michelle Santilian was sentenced to three years' imprisonment suspended for five years after being found at the Asoka Hotel in possession of 10 gm of dagga and one-and-a-half Mandrax tablets on March 23 last year.

Passing sentence, Mr B J Brummer said it was obvious from her two previous convictions for possession of dagga that Santilian was not motivated to rehabilitate herself.

She also admitted two previous convictions for soliciting, as well as for entering a restricted area of the harbour and escaping from custody.

could motivate herself to rehabilitate.

Mr Brummer ordered that she be detained in custody until she was sent to the rehabilitation centre.

Mr J E House appeared for the State and Mr L Naidoo for the defence.

### Guard shot

CAPE TOWN—A 21-year-old Navy guard, William Coser, was shot by an unknown motorist while standing watch at the Simonstown lighthouse. He was hit in the side but returned the fire. — (Sapa)

### 40 laid off

HARARE—Forty people have been laid off by a local paint company because of a shortage of raw materials. — (Sapa)

### Drought aid

GABORONE—Britain has

South Coast for occupation.

This follows re by Natal colour white-owned a Umkomaas, to b mixed residential

Mr Morris Fyoured leader and behind moves to area rezoned, according to a letter Director of Con Development and the board's reactions were to be erred.

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## Two to go to a

Court Rep

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He had taken int eration both had guilty, been honest Court and had no convictions.

'I am in no d committed the cri spur of the momen applying your min

## Radio and TV magaz to revert to its old na

Mercury Reporter

Colin and others featuring on the bogus pamphlet are named in Parliament by Graham McIntosh, PFP MP for Pietermaritzburg North, 17 June 1986

SUID-AFRIKAANSE POLISIE



SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE

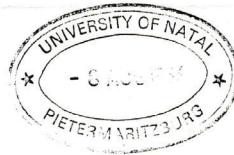
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Verw./Ref.: 4/7/2 (5) 86  
 Navrae/Enq: BRIG. KOTZE  
 TEL: 0331 24081

THE OFFICE OF THE  
 DIVISIONAL COMMISSIONER  
 PIETERMARTIZBURG : NATAL  
 3200

1986.08.06

The Acting Principal  
 University of Natal  
 P.O. Box 375  
 Scottsville  
 PIETERMARTITZBURG  
 3200



Dear Mr Schreiner

PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION OF A BOGUS PAMPHLET:

Further to my letter dated 20th June 1986 I wish to report that statements have been obtained from all the persons whose names appear on the pamphlet in question except from M. Wittenberg who cannot be traced.

All the deponents deny any knowledge of the origin of the pamphlet and are all of the opinion that it was compiled and distributed by a person or group who wish to discredit them individually, or as a group.

There is no indication or clue as to who was responsible for the pamphlet and investigation in this direction proved fruitless.

Yours faithfully

*[Signature]*  
 DIVISIONAL COMMISSIONER BRIG.  
 J. KOTZE.

jk/rdp

*Mr. Com,*  
*Please copy to Prof. Joubert*  
*and Mr. Marshall*  
*[Signature]*  
*27.8.86.*

SAP reaction to the bogus pamphlet, 6 August 1986



As the Inkatha/UDF warfare increased, Colin was disturbed to notice a desire for vengeance. We housed two refugees and when it was time for them to return, I said, 'Are you happy to be going back to school?' 'Yes,' they said, 'but only after we have had our revenge.' Colin could not condone this attitude and we did not have them back. We did have other refugees, though, over the years, including members of Teresa's family. Colin was no longer able to support the UDF wholeheartedly and did not attend some meetings. He could understand the desire for revenge but felt that it would escalate the conflict.

In September 1986 I accompanied Colin to Johannesburg where we stayed with the Hunters. He moved among three bodies he was involved with – the English Academy, UTASA and JASA:

a rich day at two conferences in the West Campus...Academy opening, a rich subtle address by Njabulo Ndebele. Switch to UTASA; reception...Lunch with Christopher; history of JASA. Back to Academy conference. I chaired a session in teaching South African Literature...back to Hunters and to UTASA conference dinner...home to bed. Friday: Almost all day at UTASA, my paper coming first, other papers, then workshops. I chaired one...lunch at Academy conference and report back...then a session chaired by me – lively possibilities for universities and transition...back to JASA – the future and the unfolding possibilities...back to Academy last part of AGM. The long and elaborate – too elaborate and long – readings of writers [he lists some of them]. Saturday UTASA Council meeting. I became new chairman... Ideas of new status, new constitution – for UTASA and (later in the day) for the English Academy.

He was continuing with his academic life, offering papers and reviews and gave a talk on black poetry at Maritzburg College. Penny Howcraft asked him to write contributions for the *South African Encyclopaedia* on Alan Paton and Ciskei. Her comment on his entry for Paton: 'The article is excellent... I wouldn't change a word of it'.

Colin was subjected to anonymous phone calls – threatening, abusive, just plain nasty, usually at some ungodly hour of the night, disturbing his sleep. He developed methods of responding: 'Speak up so that the tape-recorder can record what you are saying', leaving the phone off the hook and going back to bed, or reading for a while and then replacing the receiver. We suspected that many of the calls came from police stations or houses of SB members. When Colin was away, I fielded the calls. Once I put the receiver on to the desk,

picked up Tom Sharpe's *Wilt* and made myself comfortable. The caller would have heard me convulsed with laughter. I regaled the staff with an account of it and a number of my colleagues headed to the bookshop to buy the book – anonymous phone calls can have unpredictable results! Later Richard received an anonymous call offering him a job if he would give information about Colin. These calls disturbed our children as they sometimes threatened death, not a threat to be taken lightly.

There was sadness too: the coronary of Gordon Hunnings, professor of Philosophy at Natal University, resulting in his death and the distress of his wife; the murder of Oliver Davies, retired professor of Classics, alone in his Scottsville home; the death of novelist and poet, Uys Krige, whom we had got to know through Christina van Heyningen; the bomb in the Amanzimtoti shopping centre and the later execution of Andrew Zondo, the bomber; the mysterious death of Samora Machel.

There were pleasures: we often had our charming grandson, Gregory to stay; Libby was pregnant again, so we looked forward to another grandchild; Colin Webb would probably become vice-principal in Pietermaritzburg (as he did), which would mean more contact with the Webbs; Wole Soyinka received the Nobel Prize for Literature; and our David had a new job, which he found more fulfilling. We held the traditional annual staff and honours student party at our house, which was enjoyable and relaxed. Later there was a farewell for Colin's colleague, Betty Paterson, who was retiring, and she gave an excellent farewell speech at the University formal farewell. Colin praised her 'for devotion and dedication, care for students, "traditional literary values". Marking, teaching, preparation: long works.' Betty replied by mentioning 'tolerance of the old books, practical criticism: Gospel according to Lawrence, now, Gospel according to Marx.' She ended her talk by praising the quality of the Pietermaritzburg students.

The Liberal Democratic Association (LDA) was launched at Peter Brown's house and we joined it. Colin published an article in *Obiter Scripta* about the State of Emergency.

To interview people for the position of vice-principal, he flew to Mmabatho where he met old friends, among them Naledi Pandor, whom he to some extent favoured. He gave a talk on 'Shakespeare's women' to the Women's Midlands Forum. He criticised himself for being too passionate, too intemperate in speech at times 'not cool and strong like Colin Webb'.

Margie was arranging to leave for England on the *Achille Lauro* and we were altering our house for the arrival of Colin's mother and sister. They

moved in on the day on which Kath wrote her final exam in 1987. We added a room for Teresa as her children had left home and she was able to live in. Our front veranda and television room filled up with their possessions. It rained and rained: 'total and amiable chaos'. But it was slowly ironed out and they settled in. The Revenue Office decided to employ Richard but this was vetoed by Pretoria. We visited our granddaughter, Joanna Lucy, born in July, without any complications. Later we had news of our friend Eric Harber's approaching wedding to Mary.

Colin was suffering from pressures and work. He wrote:

I haven't been working well. Partly a heavy cold; partly I'm overworked and under-exercised, anxious about workload and about the politics of SA and of UK... (privatisation – 'Britain leads the world', alas) and about Rich and Kath. And everything has begun to get very blurred: waking and sleeping, loving and not-loving, and so on... But this morning, while praying, I made a resolution to try to snap out of my overworked doldrums, and try to be bright, and clear, and brisk, and hopeful.

A diary entry for 18 June 1987 gives some impression of his working life:

Admin, essay marking.

10.00 Took Richard to dentist.

Various admin, including photocopies re AUETSA and travel.

1.10–1.30: I ran a service at the cathedral – with poetry, litany, and three Brutus poems – 'On the Island', 'It is not uncommon to talk of God' and 'In the dove-grey dusk'.

?0pm: discussion with Claire Frost (*NW*) and Peter K. on DESCOM and MASA.

I wrote a brief reply to Chris Mann.

4.00–6.00 DMB ran a good workshop on staff evaluation – by colleagues, by students and by self...

Evening: LDA meeting: GDLS [Deneys Schreiner], James Lund and Crispin Hemson on the P.E. IDASA launch conference. The great divide between 'UDF' and 'liberals'. I spoke about the need to break down the divide, to see the UDF struggle and ultimate liberal principles as being compatible. A person who seemed to agree with me was (it seems) Heribert Adam. Another – in the next morning's *NW* – was Allister Sparks, who said to liberals: 'Get in there and make contrasts'.

20 January 1987

Dear Christine, Christopher, David, Jill, Marie and Terry,

Yesterday morning I heard from Paul Maylam that Jo Beall has been transferred to St Augustine's Hospital, as she is suffering from depression. (I heard later that the news had been on Capital Radio.) She is in room 5 of Ward A, and is under armed guard; she cannot be seen, but she has been allowed to receive gifts of flowers.

As it happened, I was going down to Durban yesterday afternoon, with Peter and Joan Kerchhoff, to a meeting at Diakonia. We took some chrysanthemums to St Augustine's. On the card that accompanied them I wrote, "love and support from all of us: we think of you a lot"; and I then wrote down the first names (I'm sure you won't mind) of the Maritzburg members of the JASA executive. The staff nurse we spoke to seemed sympathetic. She said that the constable would have to read the message before it was handed to her. We waited while she went into the room. She came out after a while with - to our surprise - a return message: "Thanks very much, and keep up the good work". The nurse told us that Jo seemed better, more cheerful, than she had been when she arrived.

I gather from Paul that the legal team are at the moment trying to frame an interdict on behalf of Jo.

Yours,


P.S. The following appeared in Friday's Weekly Mail:

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### UNIVERSITY OF NATAL DETENTIONS WITHOUT TRIAL

The University of Natal is firmly committed to the principle that no one should suffer punishment at the hands of the State unless charged and proved guilty of an offence by means of a fair trial in a properly constituted court of law.

We, members of the University community, therefore declare our abhorrence of acts of arbitrary detentions, and our concern for the victims, including the following members of our own community, Josephine Beall and Nomgcobo Sangweni, who have been imprisoned since the first half of December without charge, and without access to legal counsel, or to the courts.

G. C. Cox  
Chairman of Council  
C. de B. Webb  
Acting Principal

P. R. Maylam  
Chairperson, Joint Academic Staff Association

*Issued by the University of Natal, King George V Avenue, Durban.*

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*Letter from Colin to UNP JASA executive committee members regarding the detention of JASA secretary Jo Beall, 20 January 1987*

At the end of the day: quite a bit achieved, but I'm still drastically and dramatically behind in my essay marking.

He drove on 15 August to QwaQwa with colleagues, Christopher Merrett and Robert Morrell for a two-hour meeting he described as lively and more creative than meetings at UNIBO and UNIZUL (universities of Bophuthatswana and Zululand); on 17 August he flew to Jan Smuts airport for an HSRC meeting in Pretoria, where he met again Elize Botha, his UNISA colleague. A few days later he flew to Johannesburg to the FFF (Five Freedoms Forum) conference, where he found political analyst, Frederik van Zyl Slabbert 'especially good with his probing questions – setting the tone for a tactical decision.' It was a long conference, three full days with Colin a speaker at one of the forums, 'Learning and teaching under apartheid'. He caught the plane home in pouring rain, the beginning of the dreadful 1987 floods, during which bridges were closed and the Msunduzi River cut off half of Pietermaritzburg from the other half, so that Colin and I had enforced holidays, giving him time to mark and to think seriously about the FFF conference and the points made there and write an article for the *Natal Witness*.

Two decisions that particularly interested him were that international and national professional bodies should support alternative professional bodies in South Africa, those that did not support apartheid, and boycott others, and that unity of all democratic and anti-racist forces had to be guarded 'like the apple of our eye. They were controversial, with strong objections.' Colin was cheered that the Pietermaritzburg students decided to stay affiliated to NUSAS. He was not left long in this mood, though, as DESCOM premises were searched by the SB to discover if DESCOM had broken the fundraising law.

In September we were shocked to hear of the arrest of Jenny Schreiner under section 29 of the Internal Security Act and named as part of an active ANC cell. We phoned our sympathy to Deneys and Else, involved in creating Thembelethu, a community education centre at the old Collegiate School. Colin ended Notes and Queries LXIX with a summary of a week of meetings and urgent discussions, some academic, some political:

Monday 12.10: W/O Payne; and JASA

Tuesday 13.10: Karodia-GDLS; Classics post; *Reality*; PDA-FFF

Wednesday 14.10: Descom discussion; Dept growth plan; Ac Freedom –? Letter

Thursday 15.10: *Theoria* discussion with Betty; UDF discussion of township violence

Friday 16.10: *Theoria* discussion – COG, EHP, Irvine and Webb

Saturday 17.10: UDF-Cosatu discussion with Chamber of Commerce

An interlude: Mike Chapman and Colin were judges for the Standard 10 Alan Paton Literary Competition in Port Shepstone, sponsored by Surface Blasting. Colin, in a relaxed moment, wrote:

As man and writer, Paton's lasted,  
Though his face's surface has been sand-blasted.

On Sunday 1 November, a Prayer for Peace meeting was organised by the Pietermaritzburg Council of Churches at the Edendale Lay Centre. Three important church leaders were there: Archbishop Denis Hurley, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Reverend Dr Khoza Mgojo of the Methodist Church. There were about 1 000 people including many whites: 'Desmond spoke superbly. Hurley and Mgojo were good too. But perhaps – as I'd feared, and the *Natal Witness* confirmed it next day – it was rather too much of a UDF rally.' Inkatha boycotted it. A few days later, UDF-COSATU negotiations with the Chamber of Commerce began, largely in an attempt to get the police to arrest known murderers, those against whom affidavits had been lodged. A number of influential people were there: Peter Kerchhoff, Pierre Cronjé, Skhumbuzo Ngwenya Mbatha, Alex Irwin, Jay Naidoo, A.S. Chetty, Yunus Carrim. Meetings were held over the next few weeks, yet, five days later, although Govan Mbeki was released, troops were sent into the townships and there were ongoing detentions and raids, one of them on PACSA.

A peace initiative to solve the township violence was planned – a meeting between UDF-COSATU and Inkatha. An initial meeting at the Marian Hall of the UDF negotiating team, when peace negotiations had reached a crucial and sensitive stage, was raided by the police, who arrested Skhumbuzo and Martin Wittenberg. Rob Pater of the Chamber of Commerce phoned his colleague, Paul van Uytrecht, and described himself as sickened. He also phoned the mayor, Major Beukes of the SB, Danie Schutte, National Party MP and the Association of Chambers of Commerce (ASSOCOM). At a later meeting with the Chamber of Commerce, it was pointed out that the negotiations could not take place unless those arrested were released.

And then – dramatically – during the meeting news came through of further detentions, including those of Robbie Mkhize and Kenneth Dladla, that began to make everything seem impossible ... then I went with COSATU people and Yunus [Carrim] and produced a statement

condemning strongly the arrests, particularly the arrest of 38 people in the COSATU office, key people in the peace process, instead of the warlords against whom affidavits had been produced.

Later in December there was a large UDF-COSATU rally at Wadley Stadium – Colin estimated 5 000 people, the *Natal Witness* 10 000 in the hot sun. It was an important gathering with two or three marring incidents. Colin met many friends, among them Thami Mseleku. There was a report in the *Natal Witness* the following day ‘and some bad remarks by Chief Buthelezi’. Following this was an article on Inkatha by historian, John Wright and sociologist, Simon Burton giving the non-Inkatha view of the violence, showing the performance of the warlords and Inkatha’s desire to get rid of the township COSATU leaders.

In the University there were meetings on many issues, one in Durban on choosing the new vice-principal, a tense department meeting about standards of marking, a meeting about UNIZUL marking and syllabuses. Under pressure of work, Colin regretfully said that he could not go on the annual Berg weekend with his Liberal Party friends. He felt the burden of being behindhand, and there were decisions to be made and disagreements to be resolved.

The other six are gathering – at King’s, and off to the Berg. I am the deserter – through the need to work. So I am at home, the first time for many years.



# 21

## COURT CASES AND AN EXPANDING FAMILY


The year 1988 began with urgent calls and questions about township violence – 30 people had been killed since Christmas. Denis Hurley was in touch with Colin; the business community called for peace and Colin and Peter Kerchhoff met Paul van Uytrecht of the Chamber of Commerce, discussing with him the role that the police played in the violence, in the townships, in the arrests, and their treatment of those in prison. Paul felt that things might be better under the new head of the SB, Jac Buchner. He added that Pretoria was embarrassed by the violence and the international outcry and was determined to stamp things out on an equitable non-political basis. Peter and Colin decided, sceptically, to watch events. Later Simphiwe Gwala asked him to attend a funeral of UDF dead, as he thought that Colin's presence might lessen the chance of police violence. He, Marie Dyer and Monika Wittenberg went:

Very hot. An interesting, fascinating event: a mixture of emotions – grief, anger, exuberance, boredom. Heard for the first time the Freedom Charter Song.

The violence and killings continued. Monika told of Inkatha attacks in the Slangspruit area and Bambi Ogram of her domestic worker's five children being beaten up by the police in Sweetwaters. In contrast a pleasant DESCOM tea party was held at the Colenso Hall at the Cathedral, at which Ilan Lax spoke. But then there was a summons to Colin in his capacity as chairman, Christopher Merrett as vice-chairman and Gaye Spiller of DESCOM to appear in the Magistrate's Court on charges of illegal fundraising resulting from an investigation in mid-1987. Many letters supported DESCOM in the *Natal Witness*. In February many organisations were restricted under the Emergency, among them the UDF, and people were detained, among them Simon Gqubule. JASA issued a statement: 'JASA totally condemns the Government's recent acts of foolish desperation. At a time when any sensible government would try to move forward into the era of openness, negotiation and a creative transformation of South African society, the Nationalist Cabinet has retreated

to the naked and naïve repression of the nineteen-sixties and seventies. Does Pretoria seriously think that a government that represents a small minority can silence the valid expectations and the determination of four-fifths of the population?’

The court case involving DESCOM came up and they refused to agree to an admission of guilt plea. The case was remanded and remanded but Gay Spiller was let off, which was useful as she was leaving for Cape Town, so they were able to have a farewell for her, at which there was an excellent crowd and Colin praised her ‘for her silence, her spirituality, her wisdom’. The court case was later withdrawn. Had it been intimidation rather than a genuine charge? Or was


DEPARTEMENT VAN NASIONALE GEZONDHEID EN BEVOLKINGSONTWIKKELING		DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL HEALTH POPULATION DEVELOPMENT
Republiek van Suid-Afrika		Republic of South Africa
Telegramadres: Telegraphic address: "SAGWEP" Teleks: 321320 Telex: Telefoon: 323 9311 Telephone:	Privaatsak X63 Private Bag 0001 Pretoria	Navrae/Enquiries: Verwysing/Reference: B11/11/49

LETTER OF APPOINTMENT

DANIEL FREDERICK CALITZ, identity number 3007275036004, is hereby appointed as inspector in terms of section 30 of the Fund-raising Act, 1978 (Act 107 of 1978), and with the approval of the Minister of National Health and Population Development to investigate the affairs of the PIETERMARITZBURG DETAINEES SUPPORT COMMITTEE, in order to determine whether the said organisation is subject to the provisions of the Act.

The Minister of National Health and Population Development has approved that the inspector may at any time and without prior notice enter any premises of the said organisation and, without a warrant, search such premises for money, securities, records, accounts or documents and demand the delivery to him of any or all of the securities, records, accounts or documents of such organisation.

Thus done and signed at PRETORIA, this 30th day of June 1987.

  
 DIRECTOR OF FUND-RAISING

*Case brought against DESCOM under the Fund Raising Act, July 1987*

there some anxiety at facing Wim Trengove, the advocate who was defending them?

Academically Colin was dealing with anger about the decision concerning the editor of *Theoria*, although it was the decision of a committee. He was writing his report on Francois Hugo's thesis and meeting Colin Webb on his first day as vice-principal. He was reading with great interest Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* and writing copious notes about it. He particularly emphasised, 'we continue to see in the Renaissance the shaping of crucial aspects of our sense of self and society and the natural world, but we have become uneasy about our whole way of constituting reality. Above all, perhaps, we sense that the culture to which we are as properly attached as our face is to our skull is nevertheless a construct, a thing made, as temporary, time-conditioned, and contingent as those vast European empires from whom Freud drew his image of repression.' This led to some soul-searching on Colin's part:

Do I spend my time well? Am I wasting myself, my talents? Mary feels especially strongly about meetings 'repetitive meetings'. I feel that I have had to maintain a particular position: establishment-left wing, action-academic, religious-secular; and that this means work in many different areas and modes. But should I have written more? And done more? Am I caught, both in my intellectual life and in my 'political' life, in a stance of naivety, 'hope', activity without sufficient analysis? Both as (say) UDF member, and as 'practical' critic? At all events, I perhaps have to face up to the fact that there's a particular experience of impotence, failure, tragedy, sacrifice (it has different modalities) for anyone working in what is at the moment the no-win society of South Africa. So yes: the Edgar Brookes sadness: potentiality which circumstances don't allow – can't allow – to blossom. Even, perhaps, the mute inglorious Milton Syndrome... But these are questions that have to be asked, problems that have to be worried at. And I've been a bit affected, these last days, at reading the brilliant interpretive grasp of Stephen Greenblatt. Is *everything* open, provisional, up-for-grabs? So: think, worry, work, pray.

The university was faced by 25% subsidy cuts:

The university will be impoverished; fees will go up; blacks won't be able to afford to come (UZ and UDW likely to be unaffected) – so that the flow will be reversed and Dr Verwoerd will triumph after all.

Kathy graduated and on 19 April she left for England. Before leaving, she went with us to Delia Matthias' wedding to Karthi Govindasamy – a wonderful Christian-Hindu service at which Catholic priest Father Garth Michelson and a Hindu priest officiated. We had become accustomed to Margie's departures as she had come back so often. We found Kathy's more painful: 'Tearful farewells. Grief, grief.' Neither Kathy nor Margie left with the intention of staying away but both found Australian partners and ended up living there.

Political happenings continued: Jenny Schreiner and nine others were charged with high treason, which carried a severe punishment. A Toward Democracy Conference 'with good talks and a good response and discussion' took place with a real mix of people. There were talks and workshops, one of which was chaired by Colin. He also went to a FEDSEM awards ceremony

with a lively speech by Winnie Mandela. Queenlike, impressive, yet relaxed and good-humoured. She said some fine things – e.g. 'The very fact of my standing here purifies me'; to the new graduates 'Run the last mile of our relay race and cut the tape of freedom'.

We heard that Alan Paton was dying: he no longer recognised people but he was going peacefully. Colin wrote after his death:

'Alan'

So, Alan, you have gone  
over the jagged mountain range  
into the dark cool valley beyond.

You take with you  
our affections, our memories  
and your indomitable power of the word.

He wrote a tribute to Alan for the *Natal Witness* of which only the final statement was used: 'Alan Paton was a great man – humane, wise, and superbly articulate.'

Then he went on to Johannesburg for a conference at the Funda Centre. The decisions were unanimous and the new national university staff association was named UDUSA (Union of Democratic University Staff Associations). There was a long JASA executive meeting, with discussions of the 'short-term plan' and tough negotiations. Colin later faxed the JASA resolutions to Peter Booysen, but also distributed Political Science lecturer Raphael de Kadt's critique to other committee members. A Senate meeting was to be held, where Colin had to present JASA views, which he suspected might lead him

on a collision course with Peter Booysen and Colin Webb. There was strong arguing but eventually Pete came round to the viewpoint of the protesters, so success.

The only blot was, in my view, *my performance*. I created sour notes by (a) speaking fiercely, heatedly, and (b) saying harsh insulting things about the report: I called it 'intellectually disreputable' and 'no credit to this university?' Now though this isn't untrue, it may have been unnecessarily undiplomatic and hurtful ... So again, that sudden passion in me, that desire to say fierce, hurtful, personal things that Glenn criticised me for recently.

The plan and the result were fully covered in the local press.

In the department the discussions on curriculum went off pretty smoothly but Colin and Anton van der Hoven were involved in a long discussion about literary theory. It was partly about older theories, which seemed to be discredited and should no longer be used (Anton's view).

Colin: I believed in different approaches, not in a sceptical or resigned or anything goes way, but in the belief 'that each new wave, though it seems to contradict the previous one, throws up something of real value on to the shore'. Thus, said I, I read both Greenblatt and Leavis.

Later, reading John Wright on teaching History, John was clearly in agreement with Anton, but Colin continued to believe in the intrinsic quality of a particular work of art, as well as its position in history and society. But he speaks of himself as 'maverick me'. He sees that their view comes from a secular belief, his from a religious. He completed a report on Ethics and sent it to ethics scholar, Martin Prozesky. He went with Colin Webb and Joicelyn Leslie-Smith to Anne Paton to discuss collecting Paton books and memorabilia, which resulted in the founding of the Alan Paton Centre at the University of Natal. There were reviews of the Speech and Drama and English departments.

There had been fears, but I think it went well enough. We made it clear that we wouldn't allow ourselves to be eaten for the sake of the faculty as a whole.

We had Naledi Pandor to supper after she had given an excellent university lecture, then took her to the airport. We were shocked by the death of poet Mlungisi Mkhize from asthma. Colin tried to get hold of Piwe, who wrote a poem about his brother's death. There were tributes and poems in *Echo*.



Colin went for medical tests and they were clear to his relief. He went to university hoping to clear his desk, but had long conversations with David Maughan Brown and colleague, Donald Beale, about department tensions. These disturbed Colin for some days, yet the curriculum development meeting went quite smoothly. In June 1988 the State of Emergency was re-imposed and Martin Wittenberg and Skhumbuzo Mbatha Ngwenya were released and then immediately rearrested under more severe provisions. Martin's parents, Monika and Gunther, were deeply distressed.

An unexpected phone call came from Guy Butler: Colin was expected in Grahamstown, so quick decisions, applications for subsidy, accommodation. We set off and, driving through Transkei, we hit a sheep: 'polite sensitive negotiations; it bounded out across the road in front of us as if it were competing in the Durban July handicap!' R20 to pay for the sheep, but the headlight had to be taped on – by a teacher who had sellotape. We would have to get it fixed in Grahamstown. Colin's only comment about his paper was: 'Some interesting debate'. (His Notes and Queries entries became much briefer, probably as he had less time.)

The day after our return from Grahamstown, the UDUSA launch took place in Durban with 35 delegates and observers. Some universities held back – UNISA, UNIZUL, UNIBO, MEDUNSA. The constitution was decided on within one day. Mala Singh, who, like Colin, had had stints as chairperson of the UDW staff association, was elected chairperson; and Colin was not on the committee. He returned to find that Martin Wittenberg had been released, though with restrictions. Back at university, Colin continued on the committee to review faculties. To Colin's pleasure, David Maughan Brown had been promoted – *ad hominem* professor 'Well deserved!' Colin met a number of poets for dinner and discussion at Louis Botha Airport as some of them waited for their planes: Chris Mann, Douglas Livingstone, Peter and Gertrud Strauss, Michel Deguy (French academic and poet) and Joelle Strike.

Back home, 'we had a call from our son, David in which he said, "I am off to Scotland tomorrow to give a presentation to Scottish educationalists." We were pretty dumbfounded, considering his academic record.' He had a new job, with Microsoft as an account manager. (I have to admit that we took it fairly lightly, not having any real knowledge of Microsoft – we were just pleased that it was a job!) Over the years, David proved his worth there, moving to the 'campus' in Seattle, as he had worked out a method of selling effectively. The last thing we had expected David to be was a successful businessman, yet this

is what he proved to be. He argued often with Colin – capitalism versus liberal socialism.

Colin opened the ‘superb’ John Muafangejo exhibition at the Tatham Art Gallery. At the end of July, he gave the annual Natal Society lecture on Alan Paton. Some evenings later there was a celebratory dinner at Els Amics. It was to have been at the Victoria Club but they had just blackballed Kay Makan, because of his race, so the society decided to change the venue.

Richard was offered a job at the Natal Archives, subject to Pretoria’s approval. But Pretoria turned him down, a terrible disappointment for Richard and the second time it had happened. We often had our grandchildren, Greg and Joanna to stay on their own, once for about a week as Libby was in hospital with suspected meningitis; luckily not so, but very ill. Colin enjoyed their presence, though they were a bit disruptive at times, but mostly they were very charming, and it was good to have young things around, with their fairly uncomplicated lives.

‘Piece’

Joanna was miserable.  
She wanted her bottle,  
then she rejected it  
and grizzled aimlessly.  
But when Greg opened the front door  
she followed him  
quickly but cautiously  
down the steps  
and on to the sunny grass,  
and there she ran around –  
waddling charmingly, her arms raised –  
and screeched with joy.  
She saw the grass, the trees, the birds,  
and she wanted to hold them all.  
She cooed and called in ecstasy.  
Teach us, Lord,  
to pray to you  
with the same fervour.

Brenda Gourley was elected the new vice-chancellor and we went to her installation (Colin would have liked to be the orator but it was the Durban



orator, Pieter Scholtz, who read the citation.) At about the same time Colin went to the launch of Fatima Meer's book *Higher than Hope*; Winnie Mandela was there and many old friends. It was an impressive occasion, with speeches, a protest by Phambili School and a play.

Then there were university disagreements about lecturer Peter Green's request to be allowed to stand for the City Council. Of the latter Colin wrote: 'Endlessly, endlessly complex: a spider-web, a game of chess, an insoluble problem'. There was a deputation from fellow academics, Rob Haswell and John Laband, about this, fearing political motives.

# 22

## BERG VISITS AND THE LOSS OF ALAN PATON

Colin was prone to heavy colds and flu and was suffering from back pain. He was

feeling unconfident about my poems, disgruntled with them, bored by them; but maybe my feelings will change; the tide may turn.

Visits from friends and letters from the children and other friends abroad, kept us going. There were also dinner parties, the staff honours party and watching soccer or rugby with Richard at his best; and then, wonderfully, my sister Cath arrived from London. It is not too surprising that Colin occasionally got angry. He was under constant pressure: politically, at university, at home, academically, creatively as he began to question his poetry. As a boost to his confidence, he was asked to chair the Mandela Reception Committee, a momentous event, a sign of easing up after the brutality of the Botha regime. Yet he was woken by the telephone – a wolf howl, also made to the Wittenbergs and Peter and Joan Kerchhoff. The Wit Wolwe perhaps. Then came news of the terrible Trust Feed killings, a group of people at a prayer meeting gunned down by the police, in collaboration with Inkatha as it later turned out. There were killings on both sides, though.

It was time for the traditional Berg trip and, although he would miss Cath's last days and her departure, I encouraged him to go. Pat McKenzie drove Colin and Sam Chetty up, meeting at King's School. But even at the Berg he was very concerned about our disagreements as to how to respond to Richard. And he felt again the sense of how badly he had handled certain things over the previous months, how any sense of complacency had been shattered by a sense of guilt and inadequacy. They all missed Alan deeply, and Harold Strachan could not be there either, so the party was depleted.

Six are very different from seven – and always the brooding sense of Alan's absence; but we agreed over drinks, in front of the great blaze of the fire, that Alan had made a good end – peaceful, public, revered, noble, famous, holy, acceptable.

Alan knew and loved  
 the earth on which he lived:  
 not just, trees, plants and flowers  
     or birds and insects,  
     but the soil itself:  
 its grasses and its textures  
 and its many undulations  
     its valleys and its hills  
     and Tabanhlope,  
 the white-tipped mountain.

And it was to this soil  
     not inappropriately  
 that his body was consigned.

It rained much of the time at the Berg, so there was more reading and conversation and less walking. He returned and attended the PMBCC (Pietermaritzburg Council of Churches) prayer meeting for political prisoner and local ANC stalwart, Harry Gwala, and his fellow inmates on Robben Island.

A rich and varied cultural performance at the Lay Ecumenical Centre. Prayers, hymns, freedom songs. A play, a poem, speeches. Many different emotions and testimonials.

Our Christmas trip to the coast followed a familiar pattern. He continued to read Bataille but was also reading Albert Nolan's *Hope in an Age of Despair* and wrote 'How to bring the great religio-moral energies together'

These are things I must link or bust  
     Bataille's cataclysmic thrust,  
     Nolan's move from hate to trust.

He was still contemplating writing a book in which he hoped to achieve a synthesis:

If I do get Bataille and Nolan together, it may be partly – to some extent – along the 'Clod and Pebble' lines of my *Othello* article, which is perhaps one of my original pieces.

Politically it was a significant moment as P.W. Botha stepped down, F.W. de Klerk became president and the Democratic Party (DP) was launched. Naledi Pandor came to a meeting of the English departments from all four campuses

in the province. She spoke then, and at a public meeting later, about the need for more black academics and that the number of students should more closely mirror the demographics of the population. This led to a discussion about accommodating disadvantaged students, catering in some appropriate way for them. Naledi spent the night with us and we held a dinner party in her honour. Colin took her challenge very seriously and spoke to Colin Webb and Jenny Clarence about it.

Led by PACSA, many organisations throughout the country decided to act in solidarity with the hunger strike by detainees in prisons. Twenty-three organisations issued a statement in the *Natal Witness* agreeing to join the strike for 48 hours, culminating in an inter-faith service. Colin joined in spite of parties and braais that he attended in an official capacity. So too did Pete Booysen and Colin Webb, the SRC presidents from Pietermaritzburg (Volker Wedekind), Durban, UCT, Wits and Rhodes, and NUSAS. As the strike continued, civic organisations and people joined in; in Pietermaritzburg from the Chamber of Commerce: Kay Makan, Rob Pater, Mike Tarr, Rob Haswell, while the mayor, Mark Cornell, was in consultation with Brigadier Buchner. Colin felt that things were looking hopeful. Later some of the detainees were released among them Skhumbuzo Mbatha Ngwenya.

Colin hosted an English Academy function and presented the Olive Schreiner prize to John Conyngham, the *Natal Witness* editor, for his novel, *Arrowing of the Cane*. Functions continued as Colin gave the laudation for Methodist minister Khoza Mgojo, who was awarded an honorary doctorate at graduation. This was followed by a party at the Webbs. Jurist Sydney Kentridge was also awarded an honorary doctorate in 1989. Colin commented that he spoke superbly. There was a dinner at the Victoria Club. Also present was Justice John Didcott recently elected chancellor of UWC. Colin was asked to make his Milton-Marvell paper the keynote at the AUETSA conference.

The assassination of academic and anti-apartheid activist David Webster on 1 May 1989 shocked the country and beyond. Protests and memorial services were held, one at St Mary's Church in Pietermaritzburg and at the university. Colin received an anonymous call: 'Rick Turner, David Webster, Colin Gardner'. He left the phone off the hook and went back to bed.

He was to have spoken at a Library Day with Yunus Carrim but Yunus was in India, so he spoke alone: 'The library as a community centre, in PMB culturally integrated'. In contrast, in the interview with the English Department Review Committee, Colin

found it all rather disturbing – sad that my colleagues, some of them, had spoken so bitterly ... Tough; much stress on Dept strife; though kind remarks about my diplomacy. But: Leadership? The reputation of the Dept? And how to account for the fact that students enjoy our courses? [He discussed things with Anton van der Hoven as he felt that he could not intervene]: anything I said would look like self-justification. [And he added, in a letter to Anton]: I'm consoled by the thought that I won't be head of the department for much longer! Yet the following department meeting went pretty smoothly, none of the worries of the previous day.

A day later he rushed to Durban where the UDUSA national executive meeting was taking place. On the same day there was the soccer tragedy at Hillsborough in Sheffield:

The Hillsborough crush and trample-tragedy has affected us all – given us a terrible sense of the vulnerability of human life, of human happiness.

The Alan Paton Centre was opened, with Anne Paton, Jonathan Paton and many others there. Colin Webb made the speech. It was hardly surprising, in view of his many activities, that Colin found to his horror that he had not put in properly for the subsidy for the department's published articles and had lost it R2 500. If he could not retrieve it he felt that we should pay it. (His was not the only department to have made this mistake.) He was later reprimanded harshly, justly, by Peter Booysen for his omission. Asked if he would continue as head of department, Colin gave a clear answer – No. He acted as chair for David Maughan Brown's 'excellent University lecture analysing the hidden or half-hidden right-wing politics of Wilbur Smith's appalling book *Rage*.'

# 23

## LUSAKA VISITS AND ELECTIONS

Predictably, in June 1989 the State of Emergency was re-imposed. Shortly after this Colin set off for Lusaka to meet the ANC, together with representatives from eighteen other universities. There were long meetings analysing the academic boycott and the situation overall and at each university. Colin spoke to Wally Serote, Jeremy Cronin, Oliver Tambo, Thabo Mbeki and others. The evenings were for socialising and chatting. On the last day there was some space for sightseeing and a bus tour. He arrived in Durban on Friday evening and was met by Libby, me and the children. (Libby's house was nicely half-way so that we could combine visits to them with meeting people at the airport.) On Saturday there was a ten-year congress of PACSA then we went to a Bond film for light relief but Colin found 'it rather crude, indeed, disappointing.' On Wednesday Colin and John Aitchison went for a discussion of current peace talks and the issuing of a joint COSATU/UDF/Inkatha press statement on Natal violence, with photographs of some of the negotiators. Colin later reported back on the Lusaka meetings – to the department, to Senex, to JASA, to Booysen, Webb and the Durban campus Vice-Principal, Christopher Cresswell. That night political activist, Dr Mvuyo Tom, his wife Nosipho and their daughter stayed with us. On 2 July Colin set off for Pretoria for the AUETSA conference at which his paper on Milton-Marvell was to be the keynote address. On the way he got a speeding fine of R200 (his Graham Hill tendency!). His comments on his paper:

I pleased some (many) of the radicals because it turned literary history to a political and S.A. purpose; and it made an impact on the older school because it talked about and argued solidly from the 17th Century.

He and Annette Combrink from Potchefstroom University gave a report back on the Lusaka meeting which 'generated great interest'. He wrote to John and Cath:

My trip to Lusaka, for example. It was indeed creative and illuminating – but so many delegations are passing to Lusaka, Harare, London, and back, that talking to the ANC has become – wonderfully – a commonplace experience. The political situation is looking more hopeful at the moment than it has for ages, but we’ve all become quite expert – after the heady ups and downs of 1983 to 1988 – at being neither too optimistic nor too pessimistic. The overall attitude of the ANC is certainly, as Denys Turner says, superbly wise, moderate and generous – the top five ANC people are talented in every sense – but their attitudes have been changing a great deal in the last year or two (they’ve learned quite as much from the delegates from ‘home’ as the latter have learned from them) and I don’t think it is unkind or unfair or unappreciative to say they are under very great pressure from Russia, the USA, the Frontline States and Europe to negotiate, and that their decision to move – cautiously, yet quite swiftly – in that direction is based on a rational awareness that, given the continuing power of the Pretoria regime (for all its manifold weaknesses), only a relatively moderate – or shall we say not too radical – negotiating stance would make any practical sense... It’s going to be most interesting to see what is going to happen in the next few months.

After the conference had ended, Colin drove to attend the UDUSA conference on rationalisation. His

snappy and half amusing paper seemed to go down quite well. Mala Singh spoke very well and there were long but lively discussions all day.

The following morning, he went to Johannesburg Prison where he met Dikobe Martins:

A fascinating experience. And a most interesting and inspiring conversation with Dikobe about ANC, negotiation, and the ordered life of political prisoners.

It was at this time that Colin began Zulu lessons. He found them ‘full of pleasure and interest; but I haven’t really time to do it justice’. A memorable moment occurred one afternoon in September 1989, the day before the whites-only general election:



The nationalist government was weakening and wavering, and was obviously being shaken by the hostility of world opinion; and protests sprang up everywhere. There was a large meeting on the campus, of students and a fair sprinkling of staff members. The police made it clear that the demonstration was to be confined to the university campus, but most people at the meeting decided to march down into King Edward Avenue in the direction of – I’m not sure (or can’t remember) where. Maybe the Alexandra Road police station. They didn’t get far (I was one of them). They were picked up by a string of police trucks and taken to a makeshift detention centre on the Edendale Road. It was a strange and amusing occasion. The mainly student crowd in the detention centre were jovial rather than cowed, and as each new truck load arrived they were greeted by cheers and claps. The police people were completely outnumbered and didn’t know how to quieten these unruly though unthreatening people. In the end I was asked to address them! Through a loudspeaker I suggested that the students should calm down, as the government had lost heart and was obviously losing the battle to defend its policies. So, I found



*March from the Pietermaritzburg campus, 7 September 1989.  
In the front row among others are James Lund, Volker Wedekind and Sam Yeowart.  
In the second row among those visible are Paul van Uytrecht, Yunus Carrim,  
James Cochrane, Colin, Jill Arnott, Jonathan Draper and Marie Odendaal*

myself delivering an anti-government political speech in a makeshift police station! ... We were all kept there, without any food as far as I can remember, until we appeared, truck load by truck load, in the magistrate's court and were granted bail (thanks to the foresight of Professor Colin Webb, the then campus vice-principal). I got home at about 2 am. We were all told to report back to the magistrate's court in one month's time; but of course the charges, whatever they were, were dropped.

There was an exchange of letters between activist and researcher Wendy Leeb and the chief magistrate, Cecil Dicks, about the filth and obscenity of the holding cells. Dicks said that he had already been notified and had put measures in place to get things rectified. In October all the Rivonia trialists were released except Mandela. Colin, at a UDUSA meeting in Pretoria met Jay Naidoo and Murphy Morobe of the UDF at the airport on the day of the release.

We watched the elections together with Richard and were pleased at the inroads the Democratic Party (DP) had made in the big cities. Colin congratulated those who had won seats in Pietermaritzburg, feeling it important to have a strong opposition. Then he flew to Pretoria for a Hopkins seminar at which he was speaking. He was fetched by Sister Marie Henry, a Dominican nun. As an academic in the Department of Systematic Theology at UNISA, Sister Henry was known by her professional name, Dr H.A.C. Keane. She became a friend whose energy, liveliness and challenge we admired. Of the seminar, Colin wrote:

Interesting discussions: despair (Sr Henry); the spiritual exercises; the linguistics view; the whole question of rhythm and metre; is Hopkins's God too 19th Century brutal?

Sister Henry took him back to the airport, talking about her feminist and theological interests including Hildegard of Bingen. He attended a seminar on Rosemary Reuther on 'Gender and Religion' and was challenged by it, with many pages of his diary quoting and commenting. (Our children described him as a chauvinist/feminist, when, for example, he asked me to dish up for him or give him a second helping.) On his return Colin caught flu rather badly and had to cancel many engagements including the Peace March through town and the rally, which was given a permit without asking for it. But I went: a vast crowd, hugely varied, racially and in every other way. Our car was slightly



Shortly after this he was once more off to Johannesburg for a UDUSA meeting – ‘long and interesting’. Two days later he presented a paper to a UNP Critical Studies Group seminar, which resulted in what he felt were valid criticisms; and in the evening he attended a PACSA planning meeting: ‘Where do we stand in relation to “the middle ground”? Is the middle ground at the moment fluid, and running towards us?’ As an interlude from politics and marking, Colin gave a talk to Raisethorpe High School matriculants. It was partly socio-political and there was ‘pleasant praise for it from the school radicals’. The following day he was off to Cape Town to UWC where he was appointed to the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC) with, among others, Pius Langa and Jakes Gerwel.

There was to be a big rally at Soweto on Sunday 29 October. A second meeting of the Mandela Reception Committee was

greatly prolonged by Cosatu discussions of precedent: people were strangled by their own democratic impulses. I was one of those chosen to go to Soweto, flying with Peter Kerchhoff, Khoza Mgojo and the Indian group.

The gathering was remarkable. A huge crowd (in the new soccer stadium); superb discipline and control and wisdom. All this exercised by the leading figures, with their superb PA system, which allowed one to hear every word, every nuance. (PA is the key to public nuance ...) It was all momentous and exhilarating. And so were the speeches – especially those by Tambo, Sisulu and Kathrada.

Many of the speeches focused on *history*: it was an educative rally, a telling truly of the oppressed history, from the wars of dispossession onwards. And many of the young people there were not born when these people were imprisoned. Also the intelligence of the speakers – all this wit and intellect locked away from us for 26 years.

Sisulu particularly added a superb international, global flavour – the fight against apartheid is the battle of the whole of humanity: hence the international concern. The interdependence of S Africans and those in the rest of the world – (The amazing negotiation collusion of Pretoria and the ANC. Both wanted a peaceful rally, and so discipline from the comrades and a low profile from the police.) \*Note too: overall discipline was aided by the fact that, for the first time, the govt was beginning to concede. (But: what will happen next?)



Peter and I took Mrs Mabhida (widow of Moses Mabhida, general-secretary of the South African Communist Party, who died in exile in 1986) back to Slangspruit but the car battery had gone down at the airport, and, in the rain, in the shamefully primitive Slangspruit, Peter and I searched for her house. I was home at 12.15 am.

On the Monday there was a full meeting at the Lotus Hall – Indian, coloured, some African, a few whites – against the City Council's rates increases, which had particularly hit the Indian community. Colin felt that this rally was less disciplined, more rowdy and chaotic. The PA system was poor, the loudspeakers largely inaudible. Commenting on the subsequent march against the rates increase:

Yunus was too young and Chota Motala too old... At the portico of the City Hall, it was at times like being either in the crowd in *Julius Caesar* or in *M. Hulot's Holiday*! Tragi-comic stuff. I'd like to chat to Yunus about the dynamics of it.



*Protest organised by the Pietermaritzburg Combined Residents and Ratepayers Association outside the City Hall, Pietermaritzburg, October 1989*

Soon after this UDF activist Dr Jerry Coovadia's house in Durban was bombed – a right-wing backlash.

It was at this time that Colin got into a disagreement with the former editor of the *Sunday Times*, Ken Owen, and his attitude towards the ANC. Both were supported by letter writers; journalist Khaba Mkhize phoned Colin to say that the townships agreed with him. But he was criticised by, among others Peter Brown, for suggesting that the *Natal Witness* should not have invited Ken to write a column. It was later proved that a document purportedly issued by the ANC was a fake – they were not taking a pure Marxist line – so Colin felt that he had been partly justified.

He was aware that I was finding life quite difficult: he was leading a varied, interesting life while I was rather stuck at home with Susan, Richard and Winnie. Our vacations often did not quite coincide: he would be busy with meetings, marking, while I was free, and I would be back at school when he was free.

‘Mary’

We've lived out the image of Donne's compasses  
far more than we should:  
your sitting, my moving, your homing, my roaming

The end of 1989 was largely given over to marking, meetings about marks, and occasional forays into political life. We held the traditional honours and staff party and then went to Hillcrest to babysit Greg and Joanna and their friends Adrian and Alicia while both sets of parents went to a Christmas party. Colin was so exhausted that he slept all evening and until 8.30 the following morning. It was King's School Speech Day, so we collected the Weinbergs and headed into the hills, to listen to Walter Saunders speaking well on freedom and liberation, and to watch a lively *Twelfth Night*.

As Colin's marking came to an end, so his meetings began again; a conference in Durban on grant funding for Ph.D. students at which Naledi Pandor was present, followed by an UDUSA Natal executive meeting, a cocktail party, then home. A day later he and Peter Kerchhoff set off to attend the Conference for a Democratic Future (CDF) at Wits, sleeping at Ladysmith and waking to two flat tyres:

Many, many people there. A historic occasion. BC groups attempted to swing things, but, on the whole failed. It was an amazing motley gathering; but creative, vibrant. The moving moment of the communal



*Colin and Mary with Pessa and Leslie Weinberg at an undated function. Also in this picture are Margaret Lenta, Fidela Fouché and John van Wyngaard*

lunch. And the historic compromises in relation to negotiation ... [He woke with flu but attended the conference]: Still not finalised but getting there.

With continuing flu, Colin wondered if he should go to the Berg, but, encouraged by me, he decided to. What made him hesitate was that Margie would arrive while he was away, but he went:

A vigorous evening's discussion, in which Pat gave me many alcoholic cures (athol brose, hot toddies) and I slept quite well.

But he did not do much walking and stayed behind reading. He returned, still with flu, to find a very full house, Margie 'Full of exuberance and life and her own special quality'. The next day Colin, with relief, sent an announcement to the members of the department:

I was told yesterday that (after many bureaucratic delays) David has been appointed Head of the Department. The letter of appointment has not yet been sent to him, but I phoned him last night to tell him and



to ask him if he had any objection to my making the announcement in this way. He had none. I offer Dave my warm congratulations, while recognising that it's a fairly burdensome task that I'm handing over. He will take over when he returns from leave in July. I'd like to say that, though we have all experienced moments of tension, I have felt it to be a privilege and a pleasure to be Head of such an animated department.

During the year he had continued to write, still about Shakespeare: *Winter's Tale*, recent critical approaches to Shakespeare. But he was writing far more about South African poetry and individual poets such as Dennis Brutus, Mafika Gwala, Alan Paton and Guy Butler; talking to Natal English department teachers and working on an article on teaching Shakespeare in southern African universities; and writing more generally about black poetry. In his writing, his literary and political interests were more obviously coming together.

# 24

## ‘WHAT OF *LORD OF THE FLIES*?’

Early in 1990 Colin and I had a tense day. It was hot and the burdens of the household always seem greater in the heat. Occasionally the extent of his commitments caused me some frustration. Later, though, we met Richard at the races:

A pleasant and rich experience – and Richard was a good and illuminating (and partly profitable) host. (And it was good to get involved in his enthusiasm.) Betting. The scene and facilities, the horses, the rising passion of the run, the atmosphere, the variety of people, the mix of attitudes and tones.

Libby, Richard and the children came to spend the night: ‘Mary and I had rather a disturbed night with the children, attending between bed and landing.’ The landing was quite large and often doubled as a spare room. Next morning, I was ill with a viral infection, so perhaps this partly caused my gloomy mood. I had not been wholly fair to Colin: I had, after all, my own pretty successful career; we had spent an afternoon clearing the back garden after a complaint from Nora Lewis, whose garden backed on ours; our relationship was strong. The lovely plantation into which our garden led, the source of so much enjoyment when our children were younger, had been replaced by Lester Park, a suburb of new houses and small gardens, almost three along our back fence, so our wilderness garden had had to be tamed – not very successfully compared to the manicured gardens with neat lawns and garden beds, and in which, gradually, most trees were chopped down: ‘The leaves make such a mess.’ During the year we had spent many hours clearing fallen branches of big trees and carting them to the dump. Colin also became an expert washer of dishes during stayaways and Teresa’s illnesses; he whistled as he did so – his whistling resounded through the house – anything – *Porgy and Bess*, the Beetles, Juluka, hymns, snatches of Handel, Beethoven, whatever was in his mind. It is one of the things that our son-in-law, Vince, remembers vividly about him.

Before an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) meeting Colin ‘raced back to get the radio-tape player’ and drove to Durban ‘playing tapes of a Mozart piano concerto and Bruckner Symphony no. 9, which is superb’ and wrote a piece about Bruckner.

Every new artist  
opens up  
new areas of the psyche.  
Fresh, strange territories streaked  
with pain and vision.

Bruckner’s music  
sends sheets of sounds  
like vast rain clouds  
marching across the landscape.

Some of the melodies  
are so intricate,  
so intimately spider-probing  
that the beetle heart  
loses its shell.

A new piece of music  
touches parts of oneself  
that haven’t been probed before.

P.S. Quite a shock to find that Bruckner died in 1896; but he was influenced, musically, by Wagner who was moving in a chromatic atonal direction.

Francis Antonie asked Colin his views on the political situation since September:

## 2. ANC attitudes

- Open for all to see
- Conflict and difficulty
- Scaling down of armed struggle (which helps the Govt in its propaganda to whites)
- Delicate balance is needed – but clear move to negotiation
- Strong position – politically, morally, internationality
- But difficulties – e.g., some COSATU people feel that the ANC is moving too swiftly and softly towards negotiations.

### 3. Other points

- Natal violence is continuing and getting worse – this is the police in pre-F.W. mode
- Cricket-tour demonstration repression: can this prevent Thatcher from coming?

Colin went to the funeral of Gert Landman, a Lutheran priest, who had been murdered by a white hitchhiker. He was particularly impressed by Gunther Wittenberg’s eulogy which ended with the words of a sermon Gert had once preached on a sudden death: ‘Death and life are a part of each other, take the marriage yesterday and the funeral tomorrow. One brings life to its peak, the other brings its crowning achievement. Life is like a river; death is like the ocean, in which the river eventually loses itself.’ On the last day of January

Finally cleared my desk at Room 27. Two days later I got Mary, and we went to Francis Antonie’s new house, where we heard *the* speech. Remarkable, and bold: unbanning the ANC, freeing of some political prisoners, unbanning of all organisations, etc. etc. Truly a momentous moment in S.A. history.

We had numerous calls from overseas family and friends:

David phoned. We phoned back. He was very excited and elated. He said never – not even with the fall of the Berlin Wall – had one item so dominated the news. He was amazed at the rejoicing (Church bells all over the UK) and the respect and love shown to Mandela. I then discovered that I have five honorary degree laudations to do: Radebe, Thompson, Dugard, Egeland, Codd. Wow! Got to work at once on preliminary thoughts.

In the midst of all the political euphoria, though, Colin remembered that as far back as 1961 he had felt some apprehension. One perceptive question after listening to a talk by Alan Paton and Edgar Brookes: ‘We must not in our hearts fear liberation and emancipation ... But what if it is not only this? What of *Lord of the Flies*? (I had always felt that it should be prescribed reading for future politicians.) Colin might have added ‘What of *Animal Farm*?’

The Natal violence had escalated terribly. Colin thought it was clearly Inkatha envy of ANC success, which would inevitably have the effect of sidelining Inkatha, a Zulu-based party. Inkatha had the advantage as it was largely supported by warlords and by the South African Police, both blatantly

and covertly. PACSA was heavily involved in monitoring the violence, where 15–20 people died each day. Some whites stayed with UDF families that were under threat – John van Wyngaard, arrested by the police, Monika Wittenberg and Margie Inglis; while John Aitchison, of the Centre for Adult Education, collected statistics. They had a wealth of evidence against Inkatha warlords but the police ignored it. Many white families had domestic workers and members of their family staying with them; the churches were inundated with people fleeing from violence. We had Teresa's extended family staying with us for a while and her daughter:

Sylvia (Thoko) hounded out of Imbali by Daniel, her husband, urging on Inkatha. Teresa: 'Good news. Daniel was shot this morning.' A ghastly way of getting rid of a marital problem; but he had become murderous. The effects on society.

In February Colin, James Lund and Wendy Leeb, as special guests, attended the great Mandela rally in King's Park, Durban:

then Mandela, who was excellent: strong, gentle, wise, with an emphasis on peace. Just as de Klerk did a de Gaulle on his supporters, so Madiba partly did one on some of *his*: his tale of Buthelezi and Inkatha was not popular with part of the crowd; but he was firm, and right. His speech was perfect: masterly, calculated, pleasant, totally humane. His emphasis was on *peace* and *tolerance*. Youth: 'Discipline like the armies of Shaka ... Neither side is right or wrong ... The enemy is lack of housing, removals, lack of resources (including water), rising unemployment ... People of Imbali, of tragic KwaMashu, etc., join hands.' Then dispersed. All seemed peaceful and natural. We were home by 3.45. Some days later, though, in Sweden he speaks out very strongly; break off diplomatic ties; bring the change-over closer ... Is Mandela wise? Does he know what he's doing? Or is he miscalculating (as with nationalisation?) Do the pressures from the left necessitate this stand? But is he in some danger of humiliating De Klerk, and thus making his negotiating position impossible? Or simply being ignored, written off? The difficulties of being involved with the ANC, of becoming an ANC member.

Colin, after a University Lecture by Catholic priest and activist, Father Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, was aware of the great difficulties that lay ahead. Francis was distressed by Mkhathshwa's hard line. And in Edendale and other

areas the appalling civil war continued, 'still, as ever, the police acting in collusion with Inkatha'. Colin wrote a letter to the *Natal Witness* suggesting that there should be a judicial commission of inquiry about the behaviour of the police. Teresa Dlungwane's family was terrified. They would have liked to stay at our house but could not leave Imbali.

At a meeting of the Crisis Committee:

Report from John Aitchison. SHOCK. Accounts of dead bodies dragged into bushes and being eaten – now – by dogs. Also, a place to store bodies since the morgue is full. The terrible scandal of police partisanship and inactivity. [Two days later a call came from Harry Gwala for Colin to meet him]: I went, through dangerous Edendale. With Jane Worsnip. Gwala's: inside – Madiba himself, also Siboniso Ngubane, Mike [Worsnip], Harry Gwala, (Phepheta) Ben Msimbi. We discussed the Edendale situation – Madiba was shocked – and more general political concerns: he spoke of his 3 years of meetings with Coetzee and Viljoen, and the opposition to FW of Vlok and others. We talked of various recent concerns. All very momentous, exciting. Terrible. Considering the Imbali burnings and deaths of the night before.

Teresa was able to bring to our house her mother, her grandson and a friend. Richard moved out of his bedroom to accommodate them. Colin was filled with a kind of horror: 'the police are sponsoring massacres 10 kms away from where white people are playing golf.' Many of our friends, though, had domestic workers and their families or refugees with them. John Morrison and Floss Mitchell had many living on their premises. The main churches had refugees too. St Mary's had about one hundred and Maureen Wright, Pat Dunne, Jenny McKenzie and I helped with them. We spent days during the Easter vacation coping with problems. The refugees were very afraid when the army moved into the old sanatorium next door and we tried to reassure them, though a little anxious ourselves.

Later Madiba had a press conference at the Cathedral, which was featured *very* fully on the SABC in the evening and he openly and powerfully attacked Vlok.

The *Natal Witness* became stronger, more open about the violence, detailing attacks and emphasising the role of the police. In all this Colin attended meeting after meeting trying to see that some justice was done. He was obsessed by the

way in which ordinary white lives, our own included, appeared to continue as usual so close to dreadful suffering:

‘Pieces: Edendale’

8

I hold you in my arms,  
I cradle your head.  
People down the road  
are holding their dead.

12

Either way it’s bodies:  
bodies making love.  
bodies going to death,  
bodies breathing swiftly or  
surrendering breath.

15

It’s a nice day for a journey:  
enjoy the blessed sun.  
We’re off for a visit to the morgue  
to try to find our son.

There was a crisis meeting at Fedsem. Then: walk into Imbali: Methodist Church (but locked – Inkatha officials?) and then the Catholic Church: a service, hymn singing, then the walk to the site of a house burning. Prayers, a shrine made, an inspection. Then back to the Catholic Church; then walk back to Fedsem. The following day I went out with Greg (Physics Dept) and Mervyn [Dirks] to pick up Elphas Sibiya at the house of Mr Ntombela, 196 Mnsinsi Rd. He told me that his house was being looted by Inkatha and the police, that he’d tried to get there this morning but he’d been told that he’d be shot... We went to his house, found a police truck... and a neighbour was warning by signs that people were crouching down in the house waiting to shoot. So, we went away, back to the DP office. There Elphas made a statement.

On a more peaceful note, Colin’s graduation laudations went well:



I quite enjoyed doing them, and they *are* a sort of poetry – making patterns, images, meanings out of people’s lives, projects...I was congratulated and thanked by Radebe and Codd, Dugard and Thompson. The last called my piece ‘subtle and sensitive’, thought Colin Webb had written it...The only person who adopted a jocular attitude was Leif Egeland but he later wrote to me in a very complimentary way. Being an orator means, I suppose, displaying a sort of art to the university community.

He was still writing. This included reviews of Colleen Ryan’s *Beyers Naudé: Pilgrimage of Faith for Reality* and of *Footsteps along the Way: A Tribute to Es’kia Mphahlele*. An editor wrote: ‘I appreciate your having been so prompt in getting it to us in time for our deadline and admire your ability to produce such a beautifully crafted piece in so short a time’; and Zeke Mphahlele ‘It is gracious of you to do the kind of positive review that has resulted. “Gracious” in the best sense of the word rather than conscious magnanimity.’

Colin, with Mike Sutcliffe, flew to Johannesburg for a meeting of the trustees and co-ordinating committee on the new proposed constitution, chaired by Dullah Omar. The group then flew to Lusaka:

Broadly we discussed CDS, SASPRO and the ANC... The next morning about registration and integration. I picked up quite a lot – in conversation with Bulelani [Ngcuka] and Dullah on Saturday, and with Mike Sutcliffe on Sunday – about recent tensions – the Natal cabal, which Mike Sutcliffe and Pius Langa have tried to investigate (the tendency of NIC people – YM [Yunus Mahomed], [Ismail] Meer, [Billy] Nair, etc. – to take the lead; and more particularly the (innocently?) undemocratic procedures in PMB: the actions of AS [Chetty], Martin Wittenberg, Skhumbuzo Ngwenya, Faizel Ismail. Seen as undemocratic and manipulative. Thus, the tough intervention of Harry Gwala – never welcomed by the local UDF – and the restructuring committee: Harry, Cassius [Lubisi], Denis Sithole, etc... So, this is the complex and difficult situation which has shut up Martin W. and Skhumbuzo Ngwenya and leads Bulelani to say that ‘the UDF doesn’t exist in Natal.’

Family life had to continue. Household affairs needed to be attended to:

I worked at accounts – and in some cases three months of accounts – to the accompaniment of Wagner’s *Gotterdammerung*. A marathon performance. At the end of it I was musically richer, and I felt as if I’d been to confession.

At University, he continued as head of department until David Maughan Brown returned in July, though David sent him thoughts about the way he wanted things done.

Urgent spiky tasks  
flood across my desk  
like the dark jagged waves  
which battered Durban beach  
after Cyclone Cassandra.

There was a black student demonstration against Admin and accommodation. Lively, colourful, fascinating: people's politics, people's culture. Well handled by students and by Admin.

Colin, who had been promoted to level-7 professor rather to his surprise, wrote a long letter to Pete Booysen: 'I am unhappy about the university's decision to give a 5% salary increase to post level-6 professors and an extra 10% to post level-7 professors.' He argued that the university world is different from the business world and lamented that the business ethos was entering it. He did not argue against salary increases and incentives as such, but felt that they should be flatter – many innovative ideas and equally hard work often came from the younger lecturers.

Politics continued to dominate, with rapid changes, the need to take them on board, the ever-larger presence of the ANC, which opened an office in the heart of Pietermaritzburg, and the need to spread democracy. This all meant that Colin's life was, to some extent again dominated by initials, the increasing initials of political organisations and of university organisations. ('PSR agreed that the TNF should be subsidised by RLH and seen broadly in terms of HRS's QZH of the OPL!') The appalling situation in the Natal Midlands meant more and more committees *trying* to cope. Anglican priest Victor Africander was assassinated in Imbali in 1990 and there was huge memorial service at the Cathedral of the Holy Nativity, at which Colin was part of the large crowd not able to get into the church. Local Inkatha councillor Jerome Mncwabe was murdered and the UDF celebrated. The English for Academic Purposes (EAP) group appealed to him to persuade Thabo Mbeki to come to Pietermaritzburg. In a letter to Jacques, Colin wrote:

At the moment, as you can imagine, many of my concerns are socio-political rather than literary, but of course I still maintain a web of literary interests and themes. One of the subjects that I've worked on and continue to work on is precisely the area of interplay between the socio-political and the literary (I recently published an article, written from a contemporary S.A. point of view, on Milton and Marvell as

poets of the English revolution); and in S.A. new possibilities and complexities in this field unfold every month. I'm also interested in recent S.A. poetry, in some aspects of contemporary literary and social theory, and (a big difficult theme this) some of the subtle relationships between catharsis, politics and sexuality. I've also got some Shakespeare things on the back burner, but these need to be rethought to some extent in terms of current theoretical insights and preoccupations. Sorry: that sounds like an extract from an application for a job! I said those things, I think, because I didn't want to present myself to you as primarily an activist.

The ANC met a delegation of French doctors, which involved the National Medical and Dental Association (NAMDA):

My meeting yesterday with the French has reawakened my interest in France and the French – that was at its height in my student days, with Peguy and Verlaine and Racine and Congar (on whom I read something recently) and de Lubac.

Colin gave Reggie Hadebe a lift back to his car and was praised by him as the activist academic who was yet so rounded and 'balanced', the orator who gave such good speeches, the academic who couldn't be faulted! Yet Colin had this thought, reading a review of Gandhi:

Gandhi was naïve – it seems – not to realise that Hindus and Moslems wouldn't be able to combine, that Moslems could have no deep allegiance to a fundamentally Hindu-orientated India... Am I similarly naïve in some of my ANC thoughts and hopes?

This may have been influenced by some of Harry Gwala's tough speeches.

He was running the department, communicating with David Maughan Brown, judging a literary competition. The extraordinary busyness of his life is reflected in Notes and Queries LXIX in the brevity of many of his entries and his writing, which is becoming more and more illegible! He was also clearing his room in preparation for David's return. There was a farewell party for Colin. He was thanked for his lifelong contribution to the department. Bill Bizley gave the speech (and made much of Colin's habit of scribbling out with relish, once they were over, the daily entries in his pocket diaries). The gift the department gave to Colin was an Ardmore ceramic sculpture of St Francis – a figure that was felt would not only resonate with his Catholic faith but also provide him with a reminder of the pastoral role he had played in the

department. Almost all the department were there: 'It was extremely pleasant.' Local poet, Mlungisi Mkhize wrote a poem dedicated to him:

'Beyond your physical body'  
(dedicated to Professor Colin Gardner)

Beyond that skin of yours  
Beyond your academic achievements  
Beneath your gentle face and smiles  
Beyond your accused racial affiliation  
Down in the inner chambers of your soul  
There is a sweet immortal scent  
Of goodwill for mankind  
Deep in the sediments of your heart  
Lagoon.

Colin also wrote reviews of Paddy Kearney's book on Archbishop Hurley *Guardian of the Light* and a book of Es'kia Mphahlele's and an article on *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Tempest*.

Liz Gunner arrived, and they discussed the seminar he was to give at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London:

Liz suggests something on Nkothuse, Mlungisi Mkhize and Dikobe [Ben Martins], relating it to social-historical developments. But moi: shouldn't I also say something about *white* poets – given the Thabo Mbeki all-inclusive vision? Chris Mann (whose *Kites* poems arrived today), Kelwyn Sole, Cronin, etc. – this is an issue and a problem that I must think about and write to her about. She seemed not too happy. Has SOAS functioned on the view that S.A. writers are (on the whole) black writers? Should I try to modify that a bit, challenge it? But is this the role that Liz invited me to SOAS for? One must be courteous to one's host.

Colin attended an English Academy meeting. He arrived home to news of Margie's engagement to Vince Pulham – the first of our children to be lost to Australia. In October:

Fascinating day. ANC offices, Mandela, Alfred Nzo, etc. Then to tea with Mayor (Pat Rainier) and Haswells. Interesting and high farce(?) Then in fast motorcade to Wadley Stadium [in Edendale], speeches by Gertrude Hlophe and Nelson Mandela. Tough but very

good: emphasis upon police involvement in killings – and especially Military Intelligence, NIS and CCB: affidavits to show it.

A couple of days later the ANC PMB Central launch took place:

The City Hall was full: I in the chair, Harry Gwala and Thabo Mbeki. A fascinating meeting, with an interesting and valid interplay between the angry, lively, scathing warrior Gwala and the gentle, liberal, diplomatic Mbeki. Question time interesting too. All in all a thoroughly successful and enjoyable experience.

# 26

## ENGLAND ONCE MORE AND THE GULF WAR

On 12 October Colin left for England. As he flew through the sky and wrote poems, I looked after Greg and Joanna (and the extended family).

‘To Mary’

Derrida stresses the ‘provisional’.  
Bakhtin too shuns ‘resolutions’.  
But there’s nothing provisional at all  
About my love for you,  
Except in special senses:  
It provides me  
With a framework for living:  
It provisions me  
For the voyage of life.

He caught up with Dave and Kathy and their friends and with Paul and Jane and their extended family. Colin suggested to Kath and David that they go to a soccer game. It was a bit disappointing – things kept going wrong, and it ended 0-0 after a few near misses. ‘But it was good to be there – after 45 years! – and Kath and I loved the expressions of disgust and indignation from bits of the crowd, and the pronunciations (‘kiboard’ = come on; ‘Cheoosea’; ‘Wubbish’).’

He spent some time with Eric Harber and family, taking up conversations from his previous visit and from ongoing letters. Eric spoke quite fully about his views on Shakespeare’s plays. They also discussed South African politics and Eric’s view that Colin was Panglossian – an excessively optimistic person. He met, too, former colleague and anti-apartheid activist, Graham Pechey, his wife, Nola and daughter, Laura. He found that Nola had become an Anglican, partly as a result of her interest in icons, which she now painted. Graham, too, was more sympathetic. They discussed Graham’s views on Bakhtin and other literary theories, disagreeing at times amicably. Colin gave a talk at Hatfield



Polytechnic, which Eric liked, but not many attended, though it seemed to go well with those that were there and led to lively discussion. The following day he set off for SOAS and gave his paper. He wrote to me about it:

Well, I gave my paper yesterday afternoon and it seemed to go down pretty well, but it also proved controversial and led to a lot of lively discussion. I had thought that it might be challenging/partly unacceptable to some SOAS people, but the person who voiced her disagreement with me (on some points) was Liz [Gunner] herself. I was arguing a sort of Thabo Mbeki line: recognise the rather special importance of poetry associated directly with the liberation struggle line; but at the same time accept and appreciate and find a proper place for every valid artistic and cultural entity. So, in my paper I examined, and appreciated, Mafika Gwala (who was there) and Dikobe Martins and Douglas Livingstone and Nise Malange, the trade union poet. Now Liz (I hope I'm not doing an injustice to her point of view: we're going to discuss the matter further today) has over the years, what with her work on *izibongo*, become very wedded to 'popular culture' and a result of this is that she has come to see 'high culture', always favoured in official circles, as somehow 'the enemy'. So she felt that one couldn't just like Livingstone and Malange; she seems to think that a poet like Livingstone needs to be marginalised. (She thought my position 'utopian'.) [They later had a long chat which culminated in lunch together]: It was pleasant, and I think we clarified a good deal, and each has a lot to learn from the other (though, inevitably, I feel myself to be the more right).

He then met Sarah Nuttall – Bishop Michael Nuttall's niece who was studying at Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship. He also met Mary Jay of the ABC (African Books Collective), to whom he spoke about the South African political situation, the University of Natal, University of Natal Press and UDUSA. Mary Jay warned that it would not be easy to join ABC:

They mustn't grow too quickly and in a First World direction and there's still a residual doubt about South African companies. I'll have to write at length to Mobbs about it all [Mobbs Moberly of University of Natal Press had asked him to make contacts].

He went to York where Colin was to spend some weeks with Jacques and Astrid Berthoud. He saw this as the academic part of his trip, as he was able to

interact with the York English Department with its high reputation. He attended seminars, discussions, met people, observed Jacques as head of department – he had just completed ten years in this position and was congratulated and given presents by his colleagues – visited second-hand bookshops with Jacques and bought books. His interest in art led to conversations with Astrid, who was now teaching art. Her thesis had been on Munch, and Colin read it and discussed it with her. (Crossing the Channel, she had left the book on her deckchair while she went below; she returned in time to hear someone say ‘What an extraordinary title for a cookery book!’) He spent time studying Matisse and Picasso.

He walked along the banks of the Ouse, to York Minster for Evensong, sightseeing, meeting John Birtwhistle, Mireille’s husband, a poet, whose poems Colin now read with appreciation. Colin and Jacques spent a few days at Cambridge, which he explored with delight, while Jacques worked. Back in York, he heard the disturbing news that Colin Webb had cancer of the vertebrae; Jacques told him that it was incurable but containable. David Maughan Brown also told him of the honorary doctorates and he chose to be on three of the four committees for the Arts Faculty; and he began reading the 160-page document of Eric Harber’s



*Colin with Jacques Berthoud, York, date unknown*

latest writing on Shakespeare. He and Jacques discussed Angela Carter and Margaret Attwood and books written by Nick Carter.

In the middle of all this discussion he had a rejection slip from *English in Africa*, the tone of which angered him and rather horrified Jacques. He penned

an immediate angry reply but decided to put it on the back burner. Jacques thought: 'Maybe too much *provisionality* – the 'perhaps' syndrome. If you use it too much, it loses its efficiency when you *really* need it.' And this is a point that I have often made.

Celia and Bob Jones (a colleague of his in his early Pietermaritzburg days) took Colin to their cottage in the Yorkshire Dales. It snowed, the electricity failed, the gas cylinder was empty, so they all stayed in bed until well into the morning and then:

a dramatic walk – into snow. Through the village, up into the countryside (Jacques' boots, 5 pairs of socks, waterproof trousers, vest, shirt, 2 jerseys, thick overcoat, scarf, hat, hood, gloves. (Poor Mary! How she would have loved this!) [I wonder how he could walk in all that – packing for Colin always meant many pairs of socks, and shirts and jerseys. He had bought the coat for 10p from an Oxfam shop.] Then it became a blizzard and we turned back. [There was still no electricity so they had a pub meal and returned to bed.] I write this at 4.06 pm, in the little wooden window seat of my bedroom: I feel as if I'm in a scene from *Wuthering Heights* ... A sudden slip back into the Middle Ages. We had at the house no electricity, no gas, no TV, no radio; we learned again to appreciate food, heat, dryness, shelter.

It was time for me to arrive, so Colin left Jacques and Astrid's. David took Colin to Heathrow to meet me. We visited friends, did lots of sightseeing and shopping as Christmas was upon us. We were greatly worried by the sudden news that Richard had been stabbed and his subsequent long stay in hospital. Colin felt that, if things worked out well:

The whole thing could give him a salutary fright, and improve his ways.

I agreed as he needed to develop independence.

Kath, Colin and I drove (Eric had very generously lent us his car) to Leonard Stanley in Gloucestershire to visit Bunty Biggs, now quite old but lively and alert. Bunty was a former Pietermaritzburg resident and veteran Black Sash member who had worked tirelessly to take care of the families of political prisoners. She felt that we should be sympathetic towards Winnie Mandela, who had had to put up with so much. Colin read an article by Anton Harber which set out excellently the problems faced by the ANC – the tensions between exiles and UDF, old and young, top-down and democratic,

etc., etc. These were eventful days in South Africa, England and in Europe. In England Margaret Thatcher was challenged and resigned; in South Africa the Rustenburg Conference took place and the Dutch Reformed Church withdrew from it; the horror of the Natal civil war seemed to be in danger of moving to the Transvaal, with Boipatong being attacked and people thrown out of trains. In Poland Lech Wałęsa won the election. In Iraq Saddam Hussein began to release hostages; the possibility of a Gulf War was becoming a probability. But we were geographically far from these problems and spent a day exploring Wales, the part where Colin had spent time as a child during the war.

Our family were meeting at a farmhouse in Devon for a weekend together, so we spun past Bristol to the farmhouse. Surprisingly, we found ourselves observing a deer hunt in icy weather, sleet like needles hitting our cheeks. The family left and Colin and I remained for one more day at the farmhouse and then went driving about Cornwall. We drove and explored in spite of rain, mist and bitter cold. We could identify with the prayer we found on a card on the lovely Morvah church rocked by the wind: 'O Lord,/be good/to me,/to all:/the sea/is so wide,/my boat/so small.'

We returned to Bristol to find the Gulf crisis coming to a head.

But can the madness of Saddam Hussein cause, in 1991, a world conflagration? Wouldn't that be mad? Isn't it a kind of sick joke? (Isn't Benn right... we can't solve difficulties this way nowadays.) More cheerfully there was news of an all-party congress proposed by the ANC but probably agreed to beforehand by the Government. Hurrah and Deo gratias.

Then it was time to say farewell to Bristol – a sad moment. We chatted and packed, said goodbye and headed for Oxford and Rose Prestwich. We visited Mark's grave in St Mary's lovely peaceful churchyard in Kidlington. Farewells and then to Reading to the Gunners – Liz was not there, but her family – Mike, Imogen and Tom were there as well as a visitor from South Africa, Phule, who was studying journalism. Colin had previously met him at an Edendale DESCOM conference. Colin was very appreciative of people. He commented on his Uncle Pat, now 91, whom we went to see:

warm, full of life, natural piety and feeling. He talked of his life, his family, his neighbours, his past – his brother killed in 1914. He kissed pictures of our grandchildren, cast his eye up to the ceiling and wept 'Kath, I wish you could see this!' to which Mary said, 'I'm sure she does'.

Colin left for South Africa and I, feeling rather bereft, went with the others back to Sunbury-on-Thames. Colin was body-searched twice at Heathrow, probably because of the approaching Gulf War. Back home, he was picked up by Libby and then phoned by Richard, who had an appointment with his doctor, where Colin met him. There were further tests and Richard was sent back to hospital. Colin was struck by the intensity of the heat, which he came to from breaking ice on puddles as he walked in London. He describes himself: 'I struggle with household tasks/awkward and stumbling', so he relied very much on Teresa Dlungwane. Richard phoned wanting the *Natal Witness* and a razor and told Colin that the Gulf War had begun. Colin described it:

War on TV. How to judge it? This is the first TV war – war as entertainment (as DMB put it). TV war games with a continuous running commentary. Like the Comrades Marathon. And one of the US pilots described it as a ball game: butterflies before, then once the game starts it's better, but one mustn't get too comfortable! 'You can score the first points and still lose 6-38.'

Then news that Libby was in hospital, and Richard (son) struggling with pain and sleeplessness. Colin and I, in our different continents, watched the news and the debate in the House of Commons. Colin wrote:

The coverage of the Gulf War has, both here and with CNN, a logo and a signature tune! Just like the World Cup. And advertising. It used to be God who went on forever through thick and thin. Or love, or love. But now it's advertising. After scenes of agony, the breakfast cereal pops up jauntily: the ever-rolling wheels of commerce.

Colin wrote bitter satirical pieces:

'Two further Gulf War bits'

2

Throughout my military training  
I had one single aim:  
To perform my heroic task before  
The toothpaste advert came.

## 3

Just as you die could you kindly try  
 To show your fine white teeth:  
 that flash might add to the toothpaste ad  
 Which comes just underneath.

In my absence, Colin had had to cope with both Richard and Libby in hospital, with household tasks, though Teresa was very good and thoughtful, but she did need time off, and he had to look after his mother and Susan too. He was re-arranging his far smaller room at University and at home, and meeting colleagues, though the responsibility of headship was no longer his. He had a long conversation with Colin Webb.

Colin spoke straight and movingly about his cancer. He said things he'd only said to Fleur. He'd experienced so much, and so much human care and kindness. The cancer was now in several places. He said he'd fight, carry on with a reduced timetable, and retire if he couldn't cope.

So much of what he said stirred Colin profoundly. He admired Colin Webb's courage and his generosity. Colin felt his own sufferings were mild compared to those of others. In contrast, Richard was back at work and Libby was out of hospital.

To me he wrote of his own health about which he worried, the resurgence of ANC/Inkatha violence, and of aspects of the ANC that were disturbing. He spoke of Harry Gwala:

a complex figure: he is brave, intelligent, witty, flexible, capable of saying the right thing on the right occasion, but in danger of playing up to the youth when he should be playing his part in educating them...but Harry has shown his old-fashioned authoritarian side in many ways...in generally ruling the roost.

Colin mentions people of different factions: critics, the detached, and ardent supporters, and continues:

So there we are. The complexity of political actuality, as real power becomes available for the first time. And how easily the ANC could go for either way – towards the genuine democracy of its documents, or the dictatorship and authoritarianism that lurks behind all big political upheavals. And what should I do? Remain quiet, fairly

detached, grateful for the three months absence; and try talking to people; among them Patsy Seethal, J.J [John Jeffery] and others; but also Blade Nzimande, Reggie Hadebe, Mike Worsnip, Ahmed Bawa.



# 27

## WARS AND DEATHS – WITH INTERLUDES

I came home to a grand meal made by Teresa, and all the family there. We saw rather more of Libby and the children as her husband, Richard, had flown to Mombasa. I arrived back very tired and a bit ill but soon recovered. Colin attended the inauguration of the United Seminary, at which Beyers Naudé spoke. Beyers later received an honorary doctorate from the University of Natal at the same ceremony at which Wally Serote and Ellison Kahn received theirs, Colin giving the laudations. Beyers spoke well about the role of the Church in the new dispensation. Later Colin attended an ANC workshop on strategy and tactics, led by Martin Wittenberg:

A good turnout, including Dennis Sithole, Reggie Hadebe, Ina Cronjé, etc ... The following day came the news of the assassination of Chief [Mhlabunzima] Maphumulo, at his home, 95 Havelock Road. Hope and then anger. So many good men assassinated, though certainly not all good. In contrast, Jenny Schreiner and those arrested with her were given indemnity.

Government schools were voting on whether to become model C schools which opened their gates to all races. Colin was delighted that Maritzburg College, Girls High and Carter voted overwhelmingly to open schools, with voting percentages in the high 80s and 90s. Carter, under Howard Timm (my colleague and friend Jean's husband), voted 97% in favour. (Private schools had been integrated since 1976.)

Colin attended with great interest a conference of black writers at the Emmanuel Cathedral Centre, Durban:

Ngugi impressive, large head, generous manner, good sense of humour – though large streaks of raw Marxism ... But he's broadly optimistic. There was long discussion of the satirical moral fable *Matigani*. Writers need to ask awkward questions, to learn from the failures and partial successes in Africa. They may have to choose

exile; being an artist means opening up, destroying inhibiting human structures.

Listening later to Professor James Maxwell on nationalism, Colin wrote:

If the unitary state doesn't work, nationalisms of one sort or another are likely to emerge ... these things aren't simple (as Francis Antonie has always said), and I must recognise that, with nationalism there and also lurking in the wings, there are no grounds for simple optimism or for feeling that the future of S.A. won't be exceedingly complex and difficult.

‘Politics’

As the liberation movement  
powers upward from its blast,  
we who have added bits of thrust  
can't hope our names will last:  
we are but booster-rockets,  
fading, fading fast.

We attended Thami Mseleku's wedding at the Catholic Church at Machibisa and the reception at the Lay Ecumenical Centre, as we had earlier attended Skhumbuzo Mbatha Ngwenya's.

As 1991 approached its end, Colin's marking load increased, including UDW scripts. He once more became acting head of department during David Maughan Brown's absence, and in 1992 when David became vice-principal on the Maritzburg campus Colin had an increased administrative load, and anxiety about funding new staff. He met UNISA students whom the English Department had promised to help. During the year he had published a variety of letters, contributions to encyclopaedias, reviews, literary and political articles. There were problems in JASA and he was again made acting chairperson for a while. He went to a meeting of the LDA at Peter Brown's – he remained an active member. He was also approaching retiring age and was wondering about a job after retirement. Colin met with pleasure his retired French professor, Marie-Louise Tricaud, now living in France, visiting the French Department. There was criticism of Vice-Chancellor James Leatt's management style and administration of the University. Black students were toyi-toying about a lack of accommodation at residences and this was not being handled diplomatically. Colin Webb, worryingly, told him that his cancer had come back, partly the result of tensions at work.

Colin was fighting a lasting bronchial cough and was on debilitating antibiotics. The Berg weekend found him still coughing and with backache, so he did not do much walking but stayed at the cottage and read. There were political arguments between him and Harold Strachan, very much more radical than he was. He drove to Durban for a gruelling Scholarship Committee meeting. The next day he drove to Johannesburg to fetch Margie, Vince and Kathy from the airport, where he met old friends from the Christian Institute days, returning from exile.

The civil war in Pietermaritzburg was continuing, and it flared up dramatically in February 1992. There was an attempted assassination of local Inkatha leader, Abdul Awetha; he escaped but three children in his car were killed; and then Skhumbuzo Mbatha Ngwenya was assassinated. Colin had known Skhumbuzo Mbatha Ngwenya well and was one of seventeen speakers at his memorial service. He commented in his diary:

Dreadful. The hit-squads again, a professional job. So many implications, and the tragic martyrdom of a self-sacrificing person.

Under apartheid, Colin's efforts to apply for South African citizenship had been denied. He applied in the new South Africa and was accepted. He was elected chairperson of the Central Areas branch of the ANC. Peter Mokaba, from the Youth League spoke very militantly, which put him in the Harry Gwala camp and against the national executive committee. In spite of this, Rob Haswell, Pierre Cronjé, Jan van Eck, Jannie Momberg and Dave Dalling joined the ANC. Colin chaired a meeting in the City Hall at which Cyril Ramaphosa said he saw three stages in transition: shock, denial and retreat; acknowledgement of loss and acceptance; commitment and adaptation, creativity and risk-taking. Tensions resulted in strikes. Philip Dexter, back from England and now general secretary of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU), confessed that they had been taken unawares by the hospital strike. In Maritzburg nurses abandoned wards, operating theatres, nurseries, administration. Doctors called on people to take abandoned babies, left at Edendale Hospital, until nurses were back at work; many white families did so, and some of them adopted them. It was not uncommon in our local supermarket (admittedly in a middle-class area) to see white women shopping with black babies. In the Transvaal, there was the horrifying massacre at Boipatong, and attempts to shed blame. Colin, correctly, suspected a third force but government denied this.

On 22 March Colin Webb died. He and Colin had been great friends, colleagues, partners at squash, and we had shared many meals and parties at each other's homes. (On the same day we had news of the death of Uncle Pat in England.) The University closed for Colin Webb's memorial service:

Colin's great funeral in the Cathedral (of the Holy Nativity). Charles Simkins (husband of Fleur's sister Rae) and I read. The Oration was done by Pete Booysen and me ... A great send-off but still very sad.

To Fleur:

Colin's death darkens the world for us and for many others, for Colin was a kind of sun: in his overarching concern for people and his total humanity (which includes intellect, emotions, sensitivity and alertness) he was a constant presence, a constant reminder of life's goodness and of its possibilities. Several people have said to me, focussing specifically on his role in the University: 'Will the University ever be the same again?' And of course, it won't. Nor will any of us. But at the same time Colin does still stand before us as an example, a pointer, even (I feel) a guiding influence.

In April Erica Langman came to visit us from Australia and Graham, Nola and Laura Pechey from England. Visitors challenged us and stirred our thinking.

Colin pleaded for some concessions for Durban law student and SRC member, Knowledge Mdlalose, who was excluded from university for failing to meet required academic standards. Fellow black students protested as they felt he was victimised. Colin argued that he be allowed back in, but Senate voted 90% against this. (I am not at all sure that he was right.) After two proposals he had made at Senate were rejected, Colin wrote a dialogue:

COG: People in the Senate don't think.

Answer: What you mean is: they don't think like you.

COG: I'm amazed at what people think and say.

Answer: But we're quite as attached to our views as you are to yours.

There was further drama on the Maritzburg campus when Tony Tarr came in as vice-principal and resigned three days later. David Maughan Brown took his place, so Colin once again acted as head of the English Department. During this time, he wrote a number of satirical pieces for *Reality* under the pen-name Vortex.

# 28

## NO MORE DIARIES: DEATHS OF WINNIE AND ROSE

I turned the page in Notes and Queries LXXVII and found that Colin had written this:

At this point, I stopped keeping a day-by-day diary. Why? Weariness, a sense that it would never be read, that it had become embarrassing ... See Larkin's poem 'Forget what we did'. From now on – at least for a while – I record poems, etc., and special events – magazine style.

How did I react to this? I had shared Colin's life in retrospect with nostalgia, his joys, fears, happiness and sorrow, our ups and our downs. It was difficult but enriching. As in our life together, I was delighted, was saddened, approved, disapproved, supported, was critical; I was overwhelmed by his love for me and the many ways in which he expressed this.

What caused this weariness? Perhaps one of the main reasons was his empathy. He suffered with people who were suffering, felt for the problems in their lives. There were other reasons: he had been deeply distressed by the latest rejections of his work, sometimes by the tone of the rejection – a tone he would never have used in marking essays.

He was concerned about the developing tensions in the ANC between the militant Harry Gwala and the reconciliatory stance of Nelson Mandela towards Inkatha; the on-going civil war in Edendale and the Midlands; the feeling that his role in the ANC was inevitability over:

black people had won the fight for freedom, and those who had helped them were no longer of importance.

There was the fact that none of our children seemed to be experiencing fulfilling and happy lives, all seemed to be facing times of depression. Reading 'and Jesus wept over Jerusalem', he thought:

I want all my children near me, within my arms.

His own health proved a challenge – constant colds and bronchial flu; endless, interminable meetings and frustration at people who did not turn up; his own efficiency, which took up so much of his time, and his sense that perhaps he no longer had the spirit to write the book that he had for so long planned. Yet he had earlier said:

Again, one of the uses of a diary: trying to bring some finish to otherwise unfinished business.

I opened the next book, renamed and renumbered – and encompassing not a few months of the year but the years from 1992–1997 and found it mostly full of poems. So, let me begin with 1992: Post Diary I, which begins with letters to the *Natal Witness*, political letters, asking for thoughtfulness, understanding, avoidance of a too easily judgemental point of view. There are only six of them. What follows are 28 pages of poems, the first one puzzling:

‘Speak to me, Colin, speak to me,  
You behave as if I didn’t exist.’  
The voice came swirling through my mind,  
Muffled but clear through my psychic mist.

He wrote about friends who were dying – Dick Leigh, Tony Mathews, Rose Prestwich and Nola Pechey and of those who had died in the past year – Colin Webb, Dulcie Somers-Vine, Bernard Emmerich, Skhumbuzo Mbatha Ngwenya and Reggie Hadebe.

In December the Old Main Hall on the Pietermaritzburg campus, which had been elegantly refurbished, was named the Colin Webb Hall; just along the corridor was the Gardner Reading Room. Colin gave the speech, which was later published in *Natalia* 22.

An important event at the very end of 1992 was the death of Helen Joseph. Colin went to Johannesburg for her funeral and, seeing Joe Slovo attending the long Anglican funeral respectfully, made him think about the role of the churches:

During the 1970s and 1980s, more and more church people, particularly leaders, became aware of the political situation from a religious point of view. People like Archbishop Hurley, who had been issuing anti-Apartheid statements from the 1950s, gradually took a more radical stance. His movement was rather similar to that of Reverend Beyers Naudé and they were great friends. Desmond Tutu’s influence was also great so that many members in the chief



The old main hall on the local university campus was renamed in honour of Colin de B. Webb. At the ceremony were: university orator Professor Colin Gardner, Jonathan Webb, Fleur Webb and vice principal Professor David Maughan Brown.

*Naming of the Colin Webb Hall, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg,  
February 1992*

churches – Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Lutheran particularly – were aware of the fact that fighting against Apartheid was really quite as important a task as any other that the church had.

He gave as an example the fact that the Catholic Bishops' Conference paid for the *New Nation*, a mouthpiece of the liberation movement in South Africa. Older exiles had known the churches in their more passive days but the younger ones knew the role they had played more recently:

So the older exiles came to the idea that the Church had in fact been a very important comrade within the anti-Apartheid struggle in the 1980s... The Church had to some extent taken over the political reins... Desmond Tutu had been almost a leading politician at times. And then suddenly the politicians were back.

Colin agreed with a leading Catholic thinker, Albert Nolan: 'The role of politicians is to get things done and to be pragmatic... the role of the Church is to remind people of the ideal solutions... It's been important for me as a



person involved in political life to recognise – that still, now that the main area of Apartheid study is over, still the church has an important part to play; we can't fall back and become a merely spiritual institution.'

I left for England in March 1993, partly to visit Rose Prestwich, who had cancer of the throat, partly to visit our son David at his new house in Sunbury-on-Thames, my sister and other friends. Colin remained. I was away for three weeks, and returned, after a sad farewell to Rose. We had walked through the fields at Kidlington, spent time at Mark's grave and talked over meals which she or I cooked. Rose had such dignity and courage and, wherever she went, created a wonderful home, marrying artistically things as widely different as old French and new Zulu artefacts.

While I was away Richard had an operation and Colin had to cope. Colin was a little apprehensive about Richard's mood:

As I have next week the heaviest lecturing load I've ever had  
(including 4 hours of teaching the coursework MA class.) I trust that  
the worst of his pain will have started to lessen. Don't worry: we'll  
cope...

Shortly after I returned, Colin set off to give papers at a conference of the African Literature Association in Guadeloupe and a conference of the European Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies in Graz in Austria, with a visit to England between the two conferences. He was fascinated by Guadeloupe and interested by the way in which they coped with a colonial past:

'Guadeloupe'  
Here in Guadeloupe  
at the monument to Columbus  
one faces  
the sins of the past,  
le peché du passé.

The old monuments remained, but beneath the original inscription there was another giving the newly recognised history; which seemed to Colin a common-sense compromise.

He arrived back in Sheen on 25 April, leaving for Bristol on 28 April. An hour after he had arrived in Bristol, his mother died peacefully in her sleep; she had tired of life and was looking forward to death. Life had become something of a burden – she was lonely, as many of her friends had died, left or were

housebound; Susan was demanding; Colin and I were both very busy; she retained her English dislike of rain. She once woke to find Susan, with her crutch crashing down on her, complaining vociferously that SABC was getting rid of Springbok Radio.

Please mourn for me,  
Colin;  
please give my death  
meaning and significance.  
If you don't do so,  
if you don't tell the story  
and bring out the point of it –  
the human richness – I die anonymous.  
I die  
as if I'd never lived.

He sat in St James's Park in Bristol and meditated on her death, remembering the home she had created and her unending care of Susan. He would return for the funeral, a cremation, as she had wanted, with her ashes interred in Will's grave in Mountain Rise. She remembered as a child being taken to visit graves of relatives in numbingly icy weather.

Before he left, he was taken to Normandy by Margie, David and Kathy where he wrote comments in French. He was seeing the French area of operations in the war he had known so well. He remembered the long lines of marching soldiers that had prevented his crossing the Richmond Road. There were their graves, from both wars, their white crosses, so many of them, and most so young.

From many deaths he returned to one. The funeral took place in St Mary's and Colin delivered the eulogy, creating his mother's personality for the congregation. We chose the text 'I lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help' she often quoted as she sat on the front veranda with Susan, looking out at the hills of Clarendon and World's View. Colin arrived early for the cremation and wandered round the deserted crematorium. 'There's nobody here,' he said to the man sweeping the steps. 'I am here,' said the man. The conversation was repeated and Colin ended the poem: 'Shortly afterwards/a cock crew.'

Back in England, he had enjoyed both conferences, not only the papers, conversations, ideas generated, but the people that he met, the history of the places, the vibe in the streets.

He co-edited *Perspectives of South African Literature* with Michael Chapman and Es'kia Mphahlele, published by Ad Donker. He wrote a paper for AUETSA, 'Shaka and Shakespeare: some issues facing teachers of literature in English', which was published in *Literature, Nature and the Land: Collected AUETSA Papers and Reviews*; 'Sharing shades, freeing forms' in *Aspects of Commonwealth Literature: Collected Seminar Papers* volume 4 (SOAS); and four entries in *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*, edited by Ian Ousby (CUP); and, as always, poems. Among the poems, there is a mild criticism of me:

Her slight tendency to confuse things/to forget things, to lose things/  
is a part of her virtue... If she were always efficient,/finicky/she  
would be far less virtuous,/far less Mary.

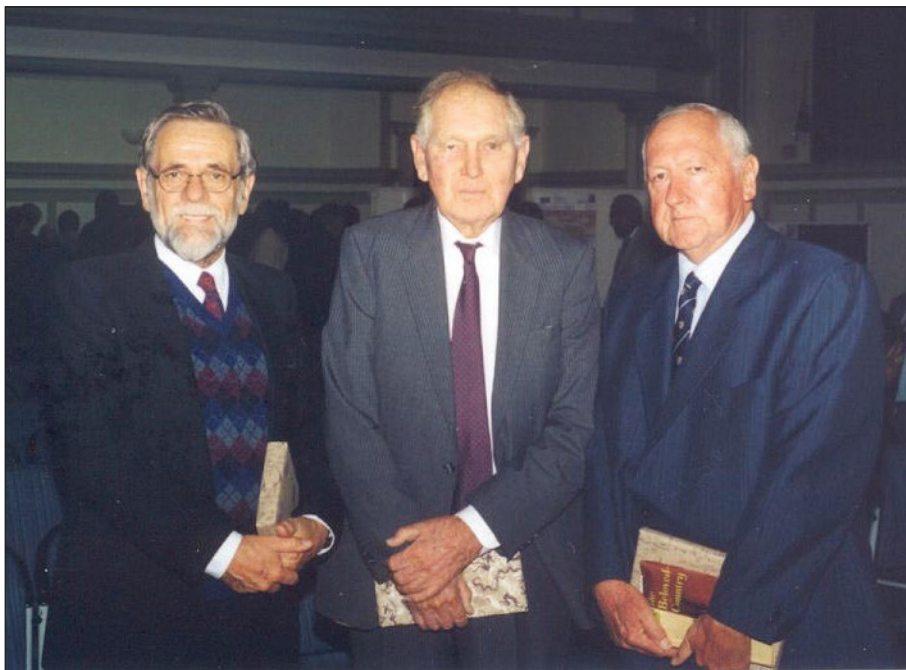
In 1993 he was elected to the Scholarship Committee and a small committee set up by the vice-chancellor. In June, he attended a conference on Gandhi, whom he had always admired, though with some reservations. In September, David Willers asked Colin to write a fortnightly column for the *Natal Witness*, partly to give readers an account of the ANC – he had become a member in 1990 – to help them understand the ANC policy and point of view.

At the beginning of 1994 Colin, as orator, was delighted to present to the chancellor Pete Booysen who had completed a Ph.D. He had retired as vice-chancellor of the University in 1991. We were pleased to meet both him and Beulah again.

In this year the general election took place:

I had three children overseas – one in Australia and two in England  
– and they all voted: they voted before I got a chance to vote, the day  
before, and voted ANC, I am sure.

His old friend, Ian Hughes and his wife Margaret came to vote personally, as did many others. It was an exciting time for most people, though some had to eat baked beans by candlelight for months afterwards, having stockpiled in case of trouble. But among us and our friends of all races it was a time of hope and fulfilment with a tremendous sense of relief. Had the years of bannings, imprisonment, ninety-day detentions and boycotts passed? We could invite Myrtle Matthias to join us for coffee as I did once in Maritzburg; she would not have to say to us 'We are not in England. Where can we go?' (We had been in England at the same time, had met by chance in Petticoat Lane and gone back to their nearby hotel for tea.)



*Colin, Peter Brown and Jonathan Paton at the launch of  
Peter Alexander's Paton biography, 1994*

In July we took a brief break at Injasuthi, just the two of us. We were called back, as we set off for a long walk, to be told that Rose Prestwich had died peacefully. Colin wrote to the family:

What human richness, what generous energy, what scrupulous honesty ... Mary and I feel privileged to have known her.

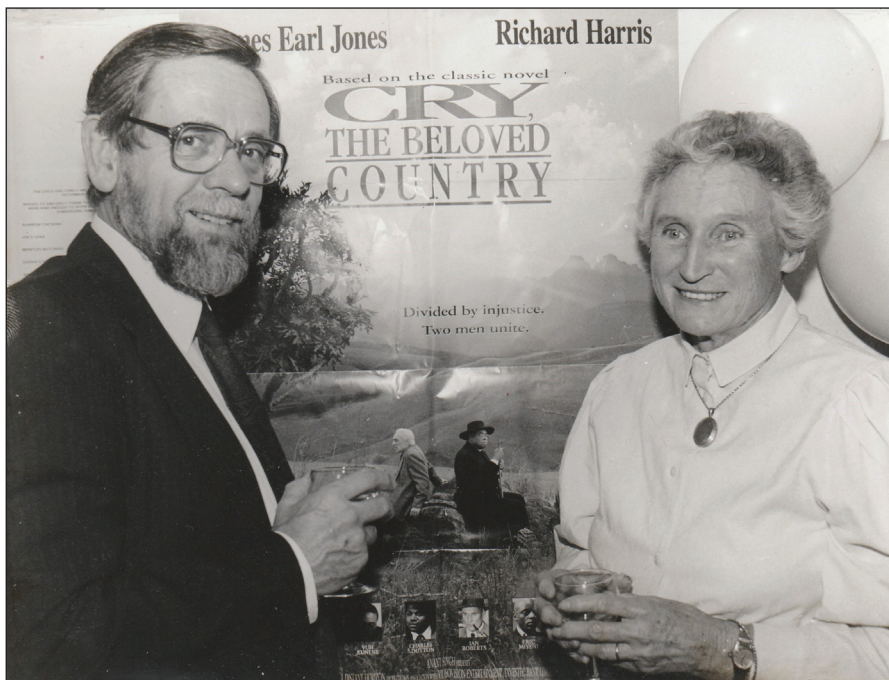
In June I went to Australia for Margie's wedding but Colin could not, partly because he was presenting a paper at the AUETSA conference, and partly to look after Susan. Sadly Colin appears in almost none of the group wedding photos at either Margie or Kathy's weddings. In December, Colin spoke at Peter Brown's 70th birthday. We drove up to their newish house at Karkloof, where there was a wonderful gathering of friends and fellow liberals on a clear, sunny, tranquil day – blue sky, drifting clouds, a still dam and the green hills.

Colin remained on many University committees, but no longer had to travel quite so much between Maritzburg and Durban. The nature of his political involvement had changed, too, with the release of Nelson Mandela. He did not write as much as he had written earlier. He had, though, presented a paper

at the 1993 AUETSA conference, 'Contemporary South Africa: a momentous though momentary convergence of political struggle and literary striving?' which was published in *Collected AUETSA Papers* volume 2; and three entries in *Encyclopaedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*, edited by E. Benson and L.W. Connolly (Routledge); 'Transition and Transformation: Shakespeare, Dickens, Serote', *English Studies in Africa* 37(2), 1994; "'But season's come to pass": *The Winter's Tale* in South Africa', *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 7 (1996).

In October 1995 Colin was guest speaker at the premiere of the film of Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* with James Earl Jones and Richard Harris. He described the book as Paton's masterpiece, which had taken the world by storm, changing the attitudes of many South Africans and Americans, indeed of many in the English-speaking world and beyond.

In spite of his political involvement and the numerous University committees he was on, he was congratulated that 'his research output and mentorship of students over the past few years has allowed you to better your evaluation status'.



Colin and Mary at a showing of *Cry the Beloved Country*,  
Pietermaritzburg, October 1995

Again, we experienced the loss of a friend, and colleague, Marie Dyer. Kathy and Marie's daughter, Dorothy, had been to the same pre-school, run by Diane Scogings, and Kathy had spent many afternoons at the Dyer house waiting for me to end school or Colin to stop lecturing. Marie had cancer and watched from her bed the marriage of her younger son in their garden. She had been an inspiration to so many people with her lecturing and her dedication to the Black Sash. She and I stood at many Black Sash protests together and Colin made a point of driving past and hooting in sympathy. He gave the obituary at her funeral in December.

At the end of her illness  
but tired now, very tired,  
Marie moves, as ever quietly,  
from a soberly radiant life  
to a doughty death.

Colin wrote 'A rediscovery of the ordinary: a reading of three recent poems by Chris Mann', which was published in *The English Academy Review*, volume 12. In 1996 Professor Rogoff Modise from Botswana visited the University and stayed with us. He wrote to thank us for 'allowing me to stay and share your hospitality which is now embedded in my memory as the *Pietermaritzburg Magic*'. It was in this year, too, at the time of the local government elections that Colin was asked if he would be on the ANC proportional list for the City Council:

I said yes, I would. I had discussed the matter with the University – with David Maughan Brown and with my head of Department, by then Anton van der Hoven, and they had no objection. I didn't think I was very likely to get on as I was low down on the list. To my surprise (I) found myself on June 26th, my birthday, my sixty-second birthday, becoming a member of the Pietermaritzburg/Msunduzi Transitional Local Council ... For the year and a half in which I continued to teach it was very tough going, being a councillor as well as professor of English.



# 29

## COMRADE PROFESSOR COUNCILLOR GARDNER

So, says Christopher Merrett, 'He became Professor Councillor Gardner.' He heard the news when he was in Johannesburg at a meeting. He faced a difficult weekend as there was some time-consuming and immediately important work that had to be done that weekend for the English Department and he was told that there was an essential workshop for the new councillors the same weekend. He returned to Maritzburg and, by dint of sleeping very little and working non-stop, he managed to attend the workshop and do all that he had to do. The Council workshop was a fascinating experience: almost none of the new black councillors had cars and few had cellphones or home phones. For some years he transported councillors to various parts of the city and outlying areas after meetings. Those he had lectured called him Comrade Professor.



*Msunduzi Council in the late 1990s. Colin is second from left in the middle row*



Before he retired, he was asked by Bernth Lindfors to spend a semester in Texas, at Austin University. As he was close to retiring age, he said that he thought the offer should be made to someone who had more years as a lecturer, as he/she would benefit more, as would the University. He would have benefited greatly and would have communicated this widely, whereas the person chosen to go in his place did not enjoy the experience, either academically or socially. Anton van der Hoven commented: 'This was typical of Colin's selfless generosity – a key virtue of his.' (It was, however, also a quality that could be frustrating or counterproductive as this example shows.)

In spite of his busy life, Colin managed to do some writing; 'Unparalleled', a poem about Cleopatra and Hermione, was accepted. 'I like it very much,' said Laurence Wright, editor of *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* in which it appeared.

'Unparalleled'

Cleopatra was  
all motion, all flow,  
infinite variety;  
but in the end,  
loving Antony,  
she played her part –  
became firm,  
marble constant,  
and died composed,  
a work of art.

Hermione too  
flowed easily  
with a wife's grace:  
but was blocked, frozen,  
made into sculpture  
by the winter of Leontes' jealousy.  
But love shone again,  
All things thawed,  
And she moved back  
From marble to mobility.

In 1997 we had to face the departure of Libby and Richard, Greg and Joanna to Australia. Colin compares this to the sawing off of a great branch from a tree:

All this is an image of me: I stand lopped and silent/as my children depart.

It was only in June that they departed, but we prepared practically and psychologically for this all year. England was accessible, familiar; Australia so far, so far...

At the end of 1997, Colin retired, though not completely as he was to continue with some lecturing. Interestingly, there was an assessment by second- and third-year students of Colin's (twentieth-century poetry) and of his and other lecturers (Renaissance): 'Generally, these respondents appeared highly satisfied with this course (poetry)...stimulating and interesting (100%)...deepen and improve and extend their knowledge of literature and culture (100%) and extend critical thinking skills. Some...considered the course load to be rather high and would have preferred to cover less work in more detail.' In individual comments, Colin was praised for being 'well-organised, kind, considerate and humorous'; a couple of students considered him 'brilliant'; while one student added 'give him a promotion!' There were some criticisms – the workload too much and the pace too fast, but this did not seem to be the general feeling. Mostly Colin was regarded as 'interesting' and 'stimulating'. Justly, students felt that he had prepared his lectures and tutorials well as he did spend much time on them. He was hard-working, but he was also enthusiastic and was able to convey this to the students. He makes one comment about his retirement in a poem:



*University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg farewell for Colin, 1997, with (from left) Deney's Schreiner and Bill Bizley*



*University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg farewell for Colin, 1997, with (from left) Bambi Ogram, Cees Binnendyk, Peter Strauss and Marjorie Moberly*

They need to appoint consistently/people who've been less lucky than me./I must bow to the inevitable forces –/left at last to my own resources.

Bill Bizley made the speech in his honour – a brilliant, witty evocation of Colin. In his reply, Colin spoke about his divided allegiance to the university and to his concern for the good of the country. He had encouraged the appointment of a black lecturer in his place. He did not lose his link with the University as he became an emeritus professor in 1998 and remained University orator. He looked back on his years there. In reply to a question by Ruth Lundie, as she interviewed him, he said:

But from 1983 onwards, when the university was allowed to open its doors to every race, a transformation of the student body – a transformation of the intellectual life of the institution began. Have standards dropped? In some respects, yes: in written language standards have dropped a little, or they have dropped in the sense that we allow certain roughnesses of language which we wouldn't normally have accepted twenty or thirty years ago. But ... further up the hierarchy of marks – when you get to second class, upper second,

first class – there has been no change in standards at all. In the 1960s one could often predict the kinds of views that you would get from a group of students, whereas I found in the 1980s I was often taken completely by surprise by some of the things that students would say ... And some were interesting in significant ways. The University has grown from the change. It is all part of the interesting, fascinating challenge of South African life in the mid-1990s.

After Colin's mother had died, it was recommended that we put Susan into a home, Sunnyside, just up the road from our house, where she would have constant attention. We could walk up to visit her. Infuriating as she was at times, Susan had great perseverance and courage, and, in frail care, they appreciated her ability to enjoy things as she entertained them in a room of silent people. Sadly, she died in March 1998. She had sometimes been to hospital with severe vomiting. When the matron phoned us late one evening, we asked if she could wait till the following morning. The previous time she had been sent to Edendale, we had gone with her, and she had lain in the echoing cold passages until she was admitted after 3 am. We felt that she was at least warm and comfortable at Sunnyside. We had assumed that she would recover as she previously had done. At about midnight they phoned to say that she had died, and we went up and sat by her bed. We buried her from St Mary's, where Colin spoke, bringing her to life with all her quirks, oddities and qualities. Kathy and the Lucas family reminisced about her: 'her childlike enthusiasms, her interest in and affection for children; her amazing memory; her plastic bags; her tears when someone helped her; yards of flex, earplugs; John and his screwdrivers; her ability to talk, listen to the radio and watch TV simultaneously ...'

Colin, meanwhile, was continuing with his work as a city councillor, confronting all kinds of things about which he had had very little experience – landfill sites, waste management, fire services, town planning ... He was nominated to a municipality/University committee discussing common interests as David Maughan Brown had hoped. Margie's husband, Vince Pulham, said of him: 'Colin exemplified to me the most amazing ability to be completely at ease in the company of people of different backgrounds, cultures and religions. This was underpinned by the innate respect that he held for everyone.' This would have helped him as a councillor. He was not always interested in what happened at meetings, though, being able to grasp the gist quite quickly and keep his finger on the pulse of what was being discussed and

decided. He sometimes whiled away time by drawing water jugs or glasses, planning things or writing poems:

‘At a TLC meeting’  
 What I admire about you,  
 Mr —  
 what I find almost scintillating  
 is the way in which —  
 by the content of what you say,  
 by your language,  
 by the very timbre of your voice —  
 you unfailingly generate  
 boredom.

Some things about the ANC Colin found disturbing.

Coming across *The Beautiful Ones are not Yet Born* again just as I am worrying about corruption is as striking – as providential? – as re-reading *The Spanish Tragedy* at the height of the Edendale violence.

He was also considering the criteria for poetry:

merely to be articulately oneself isn’t at all enough. One has to have things to say about people in general, about issues, about problems and depths. Come back to Coleridge and Aristotle then: at most give a fuller, richer, deeper sense of life and of ourselves.

In these years, Colin wrote far fewer quatrains, and fewer poems with rhymes. He agonised over his poetry, his life, his role in society. He felt things very deeply. He wrote poems about his spiritual beliefs, his frustrations, about death, commenting on what was happening or what he was reading or doing. Although he participated fully in the life of the City Council, and took an active part in meetings, he sometimes found them dull. Colin kept in contact with university life, with colleagues, with visiting lecturers, such as Derrida, whose visit he enjoyed, describing him, in a letter to Graham:

Not only were his lecture (on forgiveness) and his seminar (on Abraham and Isaac) in various ways probing and revelatory, but as a person, as a visitor, he was remarkably serious, thoughtful, a good listener, very alert to everything about him, good-humoured.

This gives us some insight into what he regarded as important.

In the election, although he supported the ANC, he was pleased that it did not get a two-thirds majority. On election day he spent a lot of time in his car transporting party voting agents to and from voting stations (many ANC people did not have their own transport). Also in his boot was curry and rice and cool drinks – food for the party's election officials.

In 1998 we planned to visit our son David in Seattle where he was implementing, at the Microsoft campus, a new system of marketing that he had devised. We were to stay with Tony O'Brien and his wife Barbara in New York. A mysterious phone call one Saturday morning quizzed me on my family, my parents and their history – I began to feel uneasy. It was a private detective, instructed by my cousin Ward Macauley, son of Jimmy, who, when my father had come to South Africa, had gone to New York. They had lost touch when my father died, and, apart from his sister, June, and his immediate family, we were the only relatives Ward had. We arranged to see them in La Jolla on the same trip. We flew to New York, staying for two days with the O'Briens in Upper West Side, where we walked and talked and explored. On our way to Chinatown for an evening meal, bearded Colin was invited to join a Jewish prayer group which lacked the required number of people. New York won us – Central Park, the Museum of Modern Art, allotments, people in the street till late, variety and friendliness, art and activities. We hoped to return there. We spent four days in Seattle with David. We flew to La Jolla, to meet Ward, Lydia and June. Ward and I had a strong family resemblance. We liked them and had much in common. Lydia's father had been a Shakespeare scholar and lecturer and her grandfather had created Quaker Oats (they were Quakers); Ward had been a bombardier during the war and had three DFCs. We were saluted as we drove into the air force base. It was an amazing experience, quite unexpected.

Our next stop was Melbourne, Australia, to visit Richard and Libby in the Dandenongs (rather like the Midlands Meander). We all met, including David, who had decided to take a holiday, at Mossy Point on the coast. We drove to Sydney and stayed with Margie and Vince, Kathy and Tony Davis, getting to know Sydney.

As he was now a city councillor, in addition to his academic interests Colin made notes on the workings of the cities he visited. He concentrated on ways in which things could be improved in South Africa. In Australia he noticed the lack of litter, the respect for city by-laws and traffic regulations, the ease of transport. He was interested in the demerit system (now introduced in South Africa). The public buildings were well-maintained and accessible. He noted that in Australia:



Things are done in an educated, relaxed, tolerant and reasonable way. Local councillors are not paid for their work and most local government is not party-oriented. Huge exploitation of tourist possibilities.

One of the things that struck him most about America was the

whole donor-patron-sponsor-advertiser thing. Statues erected by X, rooms in museums named after Y, scholarships – Fulbright, Carnegie...and so on. New York is so much enriched in everything by benevolent private money...But it suggests to blacks ‘Look: we have or had the money to donate things; we own the show...’



*Colin and Mary with Vince Pulham and Joanna, Spioenkop Dam, date unknown*

As he looked at Seattle and San Diego, he imagined how people would like to live in places where things work:

So why not emigrate? – because SA is at the cutting edge of the world: it's the future? of the world. The great advantage of PMB is that it is confronting – attempting to confront – the first world/third world gap. Question: is it to be a confrontation, or a sort of conversation and invigoration? Both? Only time will tell.

We returned to our duties in South Africa, breathless but invigorated physically and mentally. Colin prepared his speech for the installation of Judge Pius Langa as chancellor, and his work at the City Council. He wrote in October:

We are making progress in a number of directions but frustratingly slowly. As I sit in the Maritzburg Council Chamber doing the things



that councillors do, I am conscious of similar things happening elsewhere – Bristol, London, New York, Seattle, San Diego, Melbourne, Sydney, and in little places like Sheen and Kirkland and Belgrave – and I’m overwhelmed by a sense of simultaneous activity, of people in numerous places performing innumerable tasks, of energies and ambitions and creativities and wisdoms, and I have difficulty in finding my place in all this, any special geographical socio-political uniqueness. Like a balloonist who has floated and floated, I find I no longer know how to land.

In November his reviews of Paton, Serote, Cronin and Mann were published in *EAR* 14. He had time to read widely – South African writing, literary criticism, biographies, and Randolph Vigne’s *Liberals against Apartheid*. He read about spirituality and faith – he lists most of them at the end of what has replaced Notes and Queries, Retirement Notebook I.

# 30

## PETER KERCHHOFF'S DEATH

In July 1999 we experienced the terrible shock of Peter Kerchhoff's death. The *Natal Witness*, next to his photograph, wrote, 'Peter Kerchhoff... PACSA's bold and humble founder died on Saturday of injuries sustained in a car accident.' There were many tributes from people of all races and all social standings and from overseas as well as South Africa. Colin and many others spoke at his funeral in the Cathedral of the Holy Nativity, where he had been an ordained priest. Joan, Peter's wife, in a letter to Colin wrote 'Peter always knew he could depend on you, no matter who else came & went in PACSA (& on a personal level), and he was right to do so. I found your last tribute to Peter as moving, if not more so, than the others and will treasure your words and inspiration.' Colin wrote about Peter's death:

Death is not so different,  
after all,  
for all the dreadful finality  
of unchangeable absence,  
Peter is still there,  
still himself,  
in our minds,  
and in the mind, the world.  
The every-where heaven  
of God.  
Communication with Peter  
is more difficult, more subtle –  
no loud answers come –  
but he is still there,  
still part of our community,  
still a major and living contributor –  
indeed a greater one than ever before –  
to the love and the meaning of our lives.

On a rare occasion our working lives suddenly combined: we went to Roosboom near Ladysmith, a flourishing Anglican community before the National Party government had declared it a 'black spot' and had moved everyone hundreds of miles away. Many Liberal Party meetings had taken place there. Colin remembered Elliot Mngadi, one of the leading people, whom he had liked and much admired. Now there was an attempt to revive it. Some of the beautiful stone buildings had survived, the church was still standing, though without a roof and gutted. Colin quickly sketched it. Bishop Makhaye, Peter Brown, John Aitchison and the Reverends Rob and Jean Smith were there, as I was in my capacity as archivist who had researched the area. It was a heartwarming day, though the devastation of what had been a worthwhile community was appalling. The service was symbolic as a preparation for reviving the community. It was good for Colin and me to be working together.

Colin was to some extent dissatisfied with his life, which had become too practical:

Public events flow over me: meetings, celebrations, openings, deliberations, discussions, workshops, pilot projects. The constant push for social improvement. The danger of a lack of inward movement.

He spent time at home reading, with his current interest Richard Dawkins' ideas and the ideas of those countering or agreeing with him, with many e-mail exchanges between him and John Bishop and Ray Rutherford-Smith. He was reading, too, theologians such as Karl Rahner, and philosophers such as Karl Marx. He watched a film about Abraham Lincoln and was moved to tears by his Gettysburg address. He had the sense of life going by him and death approaching with nothing particularly to show for his life, to leave behind him. This was partly caused by recent deaths, and now there was a new one – Barbara Durrant, a former Liberal Party and Black Sash member, who with her husband Geoff, left South Africa during the State of Emergency in 1960. Geoff who was head of the English Department at the University of Natal at the time, left without resigning and only sent his resignation letter when he was out of the country. Geoff, who was living in Canada had, unusually, written an obituary on his wife in the death notices in the *Natal Witness* and Colin responded to it. Later in the same year Margie Inglis died and Colin was reminded of all that she had done through the Science Foundation Programme to help poor black students, who were second-language speakers, to prepare for their academic courses.

Council involvements were becoming more complicated. Colin details a week:

Wednesday – Social Indaba meeting; article on Maritzburg: much involvement with Economic Development Indaba (chats to Bassett, Ganie, Gengan)

Thursday – on behalf of City Hall Task Team, spoke at the Engineering Services Indaba; met with Mervyn Dirks and Anton Krone with the people of Napierville: the office of the Urbanisation & Housing Indaba.

Later he attended a health legislation workshop at Mooi River and was, in an official capacity, at the opening of a craft bazaar. He was certainly getting exposure to a world he had not known much about.

# 31

## JAPAN, AMERICA, AUSTRALIA, ITALY, FRANCE

At the end of 1999, we had a treat in store. David had been appointed by Microsoft to try to prevent piracy from Delhi to Tokyo and he was living in Tokyo with a girl he had met there, Michiko Hirohata. She was half Japanese and half French, brought up in France, and had gone to Tokyo to work for the World Cup Organisation in order to get into touch with her Japanese roots. David had accumulated many air miles and he proposed that we join him there and then go on to Australia to spend Christmas with our Australian daughters and their families. So, we were off in mid-December, via Singapore. We welcomed the chance and Colin thought it would be interesting to get to know the way of life in an Eastern country, to compare the way things were run and the way they worked with Western and South African.

David lived near a tube station which carried over three million passengers a day. It made Colin realise the importance of swift and cheap transport to carry people distances to work. David told us that he once left his keys in the outside of his front door absentmindedly as he set off for a weekend away and came back to find them still there and everything intact. And, his house faced the street with just a strip of garden. Japan was exciting and different, and having Michiko to explain and interpret was illuminating.

We spent only a week in Tokyo but saw an amazing amount and learnt so much. Colin wrote an article for the *Natal Witness*, as he did whenever we were away. The week came to an end and we were all four going to Australia but on different flights. We caught the train to the airport (an hour by fast train), sat to have coffee together. David and Michiko left before us and we wandered round and suddenly realised that we were about to miss the plane – and we had to join the one queue for all flights. A kindly Japanese lady came to our help, got us to the front of the queue and we caught the plane by running full tilt to the boarding gate.

We were met by Margie and Vince, who were both now teachers, and taken to their home in Elderslie, a village on the outskirts of Sydney. Kathy (then

programme manager for IBM) and Tony (in charge of computers for two schools) came from their house in Sydney. They had met David and Michiko at the airport and brought them out to Margie's. We talked and toured and learnt Sydney until we all left for Melbourne for Christmas with Libby and Richard and their children, Greg and Joanna. Kathy and Tony, Dave and Michiko went back to Sydney for the spectacular Old Year fireworks, and Dave and Michiko got engaged; later we celebrated our wedding anniversary. On 26 January 2000 we left for South Africa.

We arrived in Durban and caught the coach to Maritzburg, bracing ourselves to resume our anxieties (never very far from us), our duties, our hard work and involvement. Colin wrote:

Returning to South Africa, returning to earth, and to a difficult land?  
And problems and anxieties.

In February he was heartened by a comment in the *Times Literary Supplement* on his review of Ted Hughes in *EAR* 15: 'Colin Gardner writes about Ted Hughes's *Tales from Ovid* and *Birthday Letters* with a balance which few of his English counterparts even wanted to achieve' (pp. 28–29).

He presided at the function at which the English Academy of Southern Africa awards were bestowed on Moira Lovell, the 1999 Olive Schreiner Prize for Drama for her play *Bedtime Stories*, and on Alexander Sudheim, the 1999 FNB Vita Thomas Pringle Award for a number of reviews published in the *Mail and Guardian* in 1998.

By this time Colin was growing increasingly concerned about President Thabo Mbeki's HIV/AIDS denialism and his uncritical stance towards Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe. He wrote:

Today's *Independent on Sunday* headline 'Mbeki backs Mugabe' and he utters no word of criticism of Mugabe's performance. This may be the beginning of a moment of decision for me. Can I continue to be an ANC columnist? Should I stand again in the local government elections? ... What I feel beginning to erode, to lose its potency, is my patriotism. If the views of people like myself are irrelevant, does it make sense for me to stay?

And from a letter to the family:

(Mbeki) has taken upon himself to trust that those (mavericks) who claim that there is no clear connection between HIV and AIDS should be given a 'fair hearing'. People have pointed out ... that he shouldn't

take the internet too seriously, and it wastes time to discuss exploded theories.

Colin was plagued by anxieties of this kind:

recent events make me wonder whether the old ANC Freedom Charter vision and dream of blacks and whites coexisting amiably in Africa isn't perhaps an illusion ...

At the same time, he was critical of the Catholic Church (his instincts were always ecumenical):

In both RCC and ANC there are questions of wrong decisions and wrong authoritarianism ... In both institutions, then, there are tensions, injustices, mistakes, and individuals are in danger of suffering. Later institutions go wrong or get into difficulties, but the faithful go on.

Other events were a breakfast meeting on feminist theology, and the visit of Elizabeth Jones and her brother Louis Proksch, generous and warm people, whose visits we always found stimulating and rewarding, leaving us with new ideas and rich memories. Unfortunately, Colin suffered from bronchitis while they were here.

At home there was a scare about our son Richard's wife, Michelle's pregnancy but it proved false. Richard, though, was suffering from extreme psoriasis. He went to Durban for an assessment by a team of doctors. And Alina Johnson, Michelle's mother, was diagnosed with cancer of the throat. This was a great problem for us as Eric and Mary had invited us to join them in Tuscany for a holiday, and we were to take the opportunity to travel to Tours and meet Michiko's mother and grandparents and Paris to meet her father, but it looked as if we would be unable to get away. They and all the family, including Michelle and Richard, insisted that we go and so we did, flying first to Rome where we spent a couple of days.

It was a Youth Jubilee, so Rome was packed with pilgrims, so many that they had abandoned charging on the underground and everyone travelled free. It was hot, hot, with long sunny days. Everything was full – of largely young people. We were impressed by their dedication. We joined the crowd in the piazza with prayers, voices, music in the church.

Later Colin made the point:

The youth came to show their world solidarity, their willingness to build bridges while others are creating new barriers, but, in fact, with



their flags and their groups and their songs, they produced a genial version of the World Cup.

But he was appalled at many of the things being sold by entrepreneurs.

The house we were staying in at Cenno looked over the valley to Castel del Piano – Colin and I both sketched the view from our window. We were ageing: Colin with a bad head cold and me with swollen and aching legs. We travelled to villages, towns and cities. We were breathless and greedy to see and enjoy everything that we could, churches and palaces, piazzas and narrow streets, small trattorias, the hot springs and the sea, and always the countryside. Colin wrote:

I didn't need any converting to the wonders of the Renaissance, but I did gather a number of new impressions. What with the Santa Croce in Florence and the double cathedral at Assisi and the work of Cimabue, Duccio and Giotto, we all became acutely conscious of the influence of St Francis. This was re-enforced by reading Andrew Graham-Dixon's 'Renaissance' (there is a good little library at Cenno), in which he offers the (surely controversial) view that St Francis was central to the early Renaissance: his emphasis on the suffering Christ, the Christ of the cross, rather than the solemnly authoritative Pantocrator got people focussing on human nature, and this played a significant role in that unfolding dramatic humanism which makes someone like Giotto so significant ... St Francis interests me in other ways too: his lovely 'Cantico delle creature' [which Colin wrote out in full in Italian] and his universal charity – and his marvellous act of renunciation of worldly goods ... Such a pity that by the time Chaucer came to write his Prologue many of the friars had become corrupt.

In Paris we were met by David and Michiko in a hired car and they drove us down to Montoire-sur-le-Loir where her mother, Michèle Ferrière, and her sister, Yuriko, were waiting for us, in an attractively decorated farmhouse. Here we became part of French country life, going to a farm to buy goat milk cheeses, eating delicious vegetables grown by Grandmère and Grandpère, both 80 or very close to 80, vigorous and largely self-sufficient, who cycled 15 kilometres to go fishing.

We went back to Paris to meet Michiko's father, Teruji Hirohata, working for a Japanese press agency. He was a Francophile, or at least a Parisianophile, and took us round his favourite places and gave us the benefit of his

knowledge. We enjoyed meeting him, with his courteous Japanese hospitality. We caught the train back to England, to Colin's delight, our first experience on one of the very fast French trains, which left cars standing on the highway, ducked under the Channel, and came eventually to London, where we hired a car and travelled round England, renewing friendships and catching up with relatives, and their ever-extending families.

We returned to South Africa and gradually settled back into life in Maritzburg, sorting out problems, renewing our e-mail contacts, contacting friends and family. Colin made up time at the Council while I went back to the Diocesan Archives.

In a letter to Eric Harber, in response to one from him 'loaded with anger and scorn', Colin wrote:

Somehow your life has been more intense than mine. It quite worries me. I sometimes feel that the adjectives that apply to me are mild, reasonable, insipid, moderate, modest, middling, middle-of-the-road. I admit that most of my views would count as PC. They are so, however, because I believe in them, not (so far as I know) because I am trying to conform to someone else's standards. My views on the value of religious belief and married and family life are not especially PC at the moment, however.

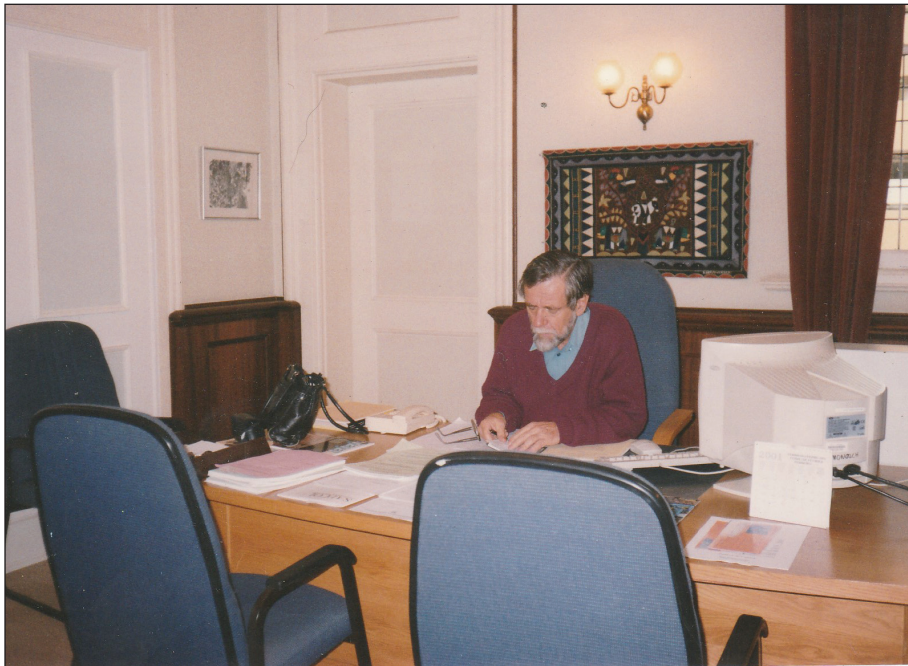
David, Michiko and Yuriko came to spend Christmas with us, as did Gregory and Joanna, arriving at different times – Yuriko on Christmas Day. Colin, Yuriko and I swam peacefully at midnight on New Year's Eve, while David and Michiko were living it up in Durban with Dave's friends.

In 2000 Colin was asked to be the first Speaker of the Msunduzi Municipality. With advice from others, he had to create the boundaries of the job. How did he see his role? In an article he wrote:

One of the many functions of the Speaker, besides the most obvious one of presiding as fairly as possible over meetings of the full council, is to represent ordinary (that is, non-executive) members of the Council in a situation in which the executive has been granted greater power than it has ever had before.

He had to exercise discipline, not only over debates but in ensuring that councillors attended meetings of Council and of committees. Members soon learnt that being a member of the ANC did not mean that one could speak out of turn in the debates or skip committee meetings. He was involved in ever more committees. He sometimes had to deputise for the mayor. Rather to his horror on one occasion, it proved to be a 'graduation' ceremony:

But still it was a shock to be in the midst of a ceremony (and I was in the middle: I found that I had been assigned the task of putting hoods – or sashes as they called them – over the students’ heads) at which ‘graduation’ was the culmination of one year’s work, and where the ‘sash’ had a bright ribbon with ICESA-CITY CAMPUS printed on it – an ingenious combination of a graduation hood and an advertisement. As I put these gaudy adverts gently over the students’ heads something within me (maybe because I had recently read Robin Hallett’s article on the Congo Free State) cried out ‘the horror, the horror’... There were charming aspects of the evening, however. One of them was that music played gently as the students walked across the stage: I listened to Vivaldi and Simon and Garfunkel. And then there was the ‘motivational address’ by a man – a fascinating cross between Dale Carnegie and Billy Graham. He assured us that with a little effort of the right kind we could all be great people – as presumably he was. But at least he didn’t try ‘motivating’ us to walk over red coals – which the programme assures us, is what he did in Durban.



*Colin as Speaker of Msunduzi Council in his office, date unknown*



*Colin as Speaker of Msunduzi Council with Mayor Hloni Zondi, date unknown*

In a letter to Eric, Colin described what he had done in the previous week:

I have been to several executive meetings. I have chaired meetings of the Local Agenda 21 committee (on mainly environmental matters), the steering committee which is generating workshops (funded by the Development Bank of Southern Africa) for municipal officials on the new environmental legislation, and the Grants-in-Aid committee, attended the portfolio committee on Housing and Human Development, been to a meeting on wage negotiations in Durban and a workshop on the new housing legislation in Westville (two trips down within three days, one in a kombi with seven others), besides carrying out various responsibilities as Speaker and attending various other functions. I mention these things not in order to brag (a lot of it is everyday run-of-the-mill stuff) but to show that there is an ongoing socio-political life here which doesn't get much into the things I talk about in e-mails. [On another occasion he said]: We constantly make the mistake of forgetting the connection – in etymology and in fact – between executive and executioner.

Alina, Richard's mother-in-law, died in June 2001 after a long battle with cancer. We all attended the Christian service after her death, and the Hindu ritual, with symbolism and chanting.

Earlier Archbishop Denis Hurley, now 86, delivered the Alan Paton Memorial Lecture impressively. He spoke about poverty as the big issue in the world; he felt that all religions (all serious religion involves altruism) together with all humanitarians, would represent a formidable number and, if they worked together, could make a change to the 'acquisitive consciousness' that caused such problems. Colin, warmly and approvingly, gave the vote of thanks.

It was ironic that, at this time, the City Council announced salary increases, large ones for officials. At one level we were pleased as our expenses had grown. Richard was boarded from the library and we decided we had to pay into his pension fund and support him. Then it was found that Alina owed rates, though she had not lived in the house she had shared with her husband, but under community of property she had to pay half the overdue rates, leaving her almost nothing to leave to Michelle and her son. We had employed the Dlungwane family since 1959 and felt an obligation to continue employing them. David was getting married in July in France and we were to go to the wedding. Would we be broke overseas? As these thoughts whirled in Colin's mind he received to 'my mixed horror and delight (given current money worries) a large back-pay cheque'. The following day this letter appeared in the *Natal Witness*: 'Colin Gardner and many of his colleagues on the MLC (Msunduzi Local Council) are greedy. End of story. How ironic. He has always professed to feel for the underprivileged. Furthermore, all his mumbo-jumbo excuses remind me of the saying that he who excuses himself accuses himself.'

With regard to this letter, Colin wrote out a list of his anxieties, first family ones, then ones in connection with the Council:

After yesterday's conversation with Rob Haswell, a feeling that perhaps those who criticise the salaries of councillors under the new dispensation are right: the ANC system does tend to screw ratepayers. There is not going to be financial help for PMB from national government, or not soon. Another anxiety. The ward councillors want an urgent meeting with us, and they may be in a vindictive mood. Who led them to believe that things were going OK? Was it not me, the chairman of the WC (Working Committee)? (I with my



inexperience in these matters – as appeared? to the highly critical and legislative DBSA people.) How to handle this one?

He then moved on to other anxieties. He had, though, when he joined Council, decided not to pay in to the pension fund, so that the municipality would not have to pay their contribution for him. He also was often asked by councillors and others to sponsor businesses that they were hoping to get going – for example a driving school, an arts centre. I discovered in a drawer full of letters the following to Dr Jogessar, Senior Medical Superintendent, Fort Napier Hospital, in response to an appeal by Siphso (Colin did not write down his surname) appealing for help:

This is to certify that I am prepared to pay the amount of R1040-00, plus other requisite extra sums of money, for Siphso ... to acquire from Damelin College the materials that he will need in order to study three subjects for the Senior Certificate examination.

And there was a letter thanking Colin for helping to support the writer's family while he was unemployed. As the Msunduzi Council Speaker, Colin used his own car and did not have a PA for many months. The Speaker now has both, the car a luxury one.

David and Michiko had hired the Chateau de Chissay for the weekend wedding, as so many people were coming from different parts of the world. Fleur Webb happened to be in England and David asked if she would be translator, as some people could not speak English, among others Michiko's Grandmère and Grandpère.

It was a year of lows and highs. Colin received a letter from David Attwell: 'I am writing to let you know that we have decided the improvement prize will carry your name and will be known, therefore, as the Gardner Prize.' Colin felt pleased and truly honoured, and responded: 'I should like to think that at least a few older people might think of it as also honouring my father...'

We began to prepare to fly to David's wedding. Richard was still in hospital and we were not sure whether he and Michelle would be able to go, but we did arrange passports and visas for them, and shortly before Colin and I were due to go, Richard came out of hospital and things looked up for them. We spent some time in England, when we arrived, visiting Colin's brother, Paul, in Charing Cross Hospital, where he suffered from peritonitis and other illnesses, but remained cheerful and lively. It was clear that he would not be able to



attend the wedding but his wife Jane and daughter Philippa were able to get away.

Chateau de Chissay was a thirteenth-century chateau in the cave district of the Loire Valley, so the kitchen area was a series of caves. It was very beautiful. Charles de Gaulle had stayed there while he waited to go to England during World War II. What a motley and international gathering of people! North, South, East, West. The actual ceremony took place in the afternoon, conducted by a young magistrate whose baby was looked after in reception. Fleur translated Colin and David's speeches.

We left for South Africa later than the others and were met by Michelle. Driving back to Maritzburg, Colin received a phone call saying that the Deputy Speaker, Babu Baijoo, had had a heart attack (luckily, he recovered) and Colin was to chair a council meeting in his place that afternoon. So, he had a dramatic resumption of his duties.

August began with an eventful weekend – a farewell dinner for Roger Gravil, a friend and colleague of Colin's, a memorial service for Alina, a friend Pat McKenzie's surprise 70th birthday party in the courtyard of the Chemistry Department, and a funeral at Bhekizizwe School for Aubrey Makhathini, with a mix of ANC and IFP members. But it also began with a moment of horror for Colin:



*Colin with Babu Baijoo, Yalta Road, Prestbury, date unknown*

‘The guilt of possessions’

Thou hast it now: pool, e-mail, DSTV, all  
As the weird women promised, and I fear  
Thou playedst most foully for’t ...

Three days after he had written that, the Twin Towers disaster happened and he wrote to Tony O’Brien, living in New York, about it, horrified but adding:

(President) Bush’s arrogant contempt for world opinion on many matters forms an uneasy context for this tragedy.

But the lowest, most appalling moment was when Richard’s wife Michelle committed suicide on 24 October. At 3.15 pm Philani, staying with us during the week, arrived home from school, phoned Colin and he raced home, phoning me as he drove. He arrived first and rushed her to hospital, where they worked hard on her for some hours and then said that we should turn off the life-support system. Richard was in despair and we were too. We had to arrange the funeral, let our appalled family know, cope with Richard’s grief and ours, and that of Michelle’s family and friends. We thought that Richard might die too; he wasted away, could not eat, and was in deep depression. David, with marvellous generosity, flew out from Seattle, with Michiko’s blessing, though it was the night when she told him she was pregnant. He supported Richard and suggested that he fly to Seattle to spend some time with them in March 2002. My sister, Cath, came out from England to be with us. She and Ann were very supportive. The funeral was Christian, at which our old friend, Father John Patterson, officiated; with a Hindu ceremony at her grandmother’s house and the traditional setting her ashes to sail down the river, with only men present.

# 33

## THE GARDNER READING ROOM

Council duties continued – we enjoyed art exhibitions and music recitals, fashion shows, Alliance Française events, formal functions, among others. Colin was photographed at events: an exhibition at the Tatham Art Gallery, a film at the Alexandra Park Oval prior to an upgrade, planting a tree, meeting a Chinese delegation, a visit by the Indian Consul. We gained from delegation visits – a beautiful Chinese tablecloth, a lovely book of the Chinese Three Gorges, accompanying Three Gorges stamps, Indian prints from the Indian Consul, paintings from those whose exhibitions he had opened. We celebrated with functions in all areas and with all races.

He began 2002 with a conference in Stellenbosch, connected to his Council work and a similar one in Pretoria. He wrote:

2

Words for passion, words for poems:  
I accept their realm, their role.  
But words for bureaucratic crap  
antagonise my soul.

In March 2002 Richard flew to David's in Seattle. It was there that he was finally diagnosed as having Asperger's syndrome: David sent back videos and information booklets – if only we had had them years before. He was somewhat better when he returned, but still felt his life purposeless and empty. He was an underlying theme to many of Colin's poems and was in his consciousness most of the time.

In August we were invited to the opening of the Gardner Library at the University, in the room to the left of the front entrance of the Old Main Hall, which had first been the principal's room and had then become the room for the head of the English Department, which Colin 'occupied for most of the years of his headship.' We were also conscious that in the late 1960s, his father occupied this space in the same capacity.

Head of the English Department, David Attwell, remarked on this occasion: 'But of course it is not just Colin's longevity of tenure that we wanted to acknowledge and celebrate. Rather, it is his influence on the discipline of English, and not just in Pmb, but nationally.' He went on to say: 'I am conscious of Colin's stature and influence from the early 1980s, 1981 to be exact, when I began teaching in Cape Town. Colin was one of the founder members of AUETSA and at the annual AUETSA conference, he frequently gave the keynote lecture. What I remember most clearly about those lectures was their clarity, their meditative seriousness, and their attempt to situate their concerns – whether they were on lyric poetry, Shakespeare or Milton – in South Africa. Colin's influence was felt in many other ways too: in his writing, his editorship, his leadership in the affairs of AUETSA, the Shakespeare Society and the English Academy, and his external examining.'

'Arguably, though, the most important part of Colin's legacy is the effect he has had on students. Frequently, from people around the country who are prominent academics, teachers, journalists and publishers, I hear testimony of Colin's influence. One of his past students is Julia Martin, now teaching at the University of the Western Cape. Julia has written to me as follows: "I remember almost nothing of what he said about literature in lectures, and yet it's that age you know, late teens, when a good teacher can influence one for the rest of one's life. Colin wasn't just a good teacher; he was for many of us a wonderful teacher. In the dark years after '76, he showed us how an intelligent person can be brave and relentless in the long work of justice and freedom. We knew he cared about important things, but he also had a gorgeous sense of the ridiculous. He cared about students too, seemed to take us seriously, and the comments he wrote on our essays were always thoughtful and provocative. But most of all, I remember his voice. In lectures it seemed he'd rather read poetry to us than tell us what to think about it. So, we listened to Shakespeare and John Donne, and the music of the words as he read them is still with me, and the gentleness and conviction of his reading remains an unforgettable teaching.'"

Attwell went on to say: 'One of Colin's gifts, touched on here by Julia, is to keep alive the connections between the study of literature, and the rest of one's life – personal, social and spiritual. As a discipline, English, like many other things, is in a state of transition, possibly a creative confusion. We are reminded that it is an adjective in search of a noun. The connectedness, however, of Colin's work, recalls the best of the attributes of English. At times,

it is, and can be, a complete discipline, in the myriad of theories it links textual analysis with history, and a social and ethical consciousness.'

'As for a procedure by which to name a room, well, we have to invent one. In a sense this is a launch, but I would not suggest that we apply a bottle of champagne to the walls – as you may notice, we have had the room refurbished.'

Colin wrote many poems about death; he was becoming more aware of his own mortality and we seemed to be surrounded by death. He was distressed by the death of a friend, George Candy, a week after they had chatted together:

And now today/I find that he is dead/So he carries our conversation/  
to the world beyond the grave/And once again I feel/my kinship with  
so many absent friends.

Death and new life are often close. We heard of the birth of the first of our second group of grandchildren, Singrid Francoise, born to David and Michiko in Seattle. On the same day in the *Natal Witness* there was a notice of the birth of a granddaughter to Joan Kerchhoff. Shortly afterwards there was a memorial gathering for anti-apartheid activist Ken Hill at Howard College in Durban, and later the death of Tony Barrett, fellow academic, neighbour and friend, of whom Gwen, his wife said, 'Whatever else he forgot, he never forgot to be kind.' Attending Mass on All Saints Day led Colin to ponder on people he considered saints – Archbishop Denis Hurley and Peter Kerchhoff, particularly, and, although not dead, Archbishop Desmond Tutu.



*Ninth Alan Paton Lecture, 2002: Colin hands a gift to Desmond Tutu*

He became interested in Jung's theories, encouraged by Ian Player and psychologist, Sheila Berry, reading *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* and *Psychotherapists or Clergy*, both written in 1933, and again taking notes; in response to Karen Armstrong's *Islam, A Short History*, he wrote a *Natal Witness* article:

The US and Europe should, it seems to me, be treating Islam with caution and respect, encouraging and helping it to modernise while allowing it to choose its own slightly varied political destinies. Instead, we find the bullying tone and actions of George W. Bush, Vladimir Putin and US-backed Israel. Aggression from the stronger party begets despair and counter aggression in the weaker party. If only Bush and the others knew and understood a little more of the age-old historical drama in which they are enmeshed.

David was such a proud father that he decided to take Singrid round the world to show her off to his siblings and friends. Michiko had to get accustomed to some things. In Pietermaritzburg, Teresa, with the African interest in babies, whisked her off on her back, and did the housework as Singrid happily surveyed her surroundings. In October we all travelled to Cape Town. Unfortunately, Colin was very unwell. He valiantly travelled round with us, even up to Table Mountain but it turned out later that he had had pneumonia, so he spent much time in his room and I had to wring out his soaking sheets and try to make him comfortable – not easy in a hotel room.

On a lighter note, in 2003, Colin wrote this about his role in Council:

‘C.O.G’

I'm a small cog  
In a wheel that is itself  
a small cog in  
a wheel that is itself a small  
cog in a far larger wheel.

Yet his role was important:

rapped councillors over their knuckles for their reluctance to attend full council meetings which take place only once a month...A string of requests for applications for leave and to leave a meeting early...Reports of poor attendance of courses organised for the training of councillors in various fields...put their names down and do not show up...costs are incurred in setting up the training.



Councillors hit back saying they do not bother to show up because the courses are so poorly organised and inappropriate to their needs.

He read, and discussed with Yunus Carrim, Patrick Bond's *Unsustainable South Africa*. He was becoming increasingly critical of ANC policies but recognised how difficult it was to act simply and truly. He was attacked by Eric Harber for hypocrisy, for leading a cushy life in the midst of poverty. The exchanges between them were often quite harsh and hostile, but Colin felt there was justification for Eric's view. Part of him did not enjoy our house and garden. Yet he received a letter from Bheki Nene (municipal manager): 'May I sincerely thank you for your leadership, your guidance and support. I feel honoured to have served under your leadership, filled with a sense of humour.' He had decided to retire from Council after the elections. But he thought:

If I retire and become an almost wholly private individual, will I run the personal psychological risk of losing my 'occupation', my sense of worth?; be in danger, as a Christian intellectual, of hiding my lamp under a tub? (today's Gospel).

In 2003 we travelled again to England and briefly to France in July, spending some time in Paris and then to Michèle's lovely house in Montoire for a couple of days. On the way we visited Chartres, which I had not previously visited. Colin quoted long passages from Péguy about Chartres.

Among all his other commitments Colin was suddenly asked to write about *Cry, the Beloved Country*, to give background and critical analysis and to set questions and points for discussion to the Oprah Winfrey Book Club. The Oprah Winfrey Company was compiling a website on Paton, South Africa and South African literature. He was praised by the editor as she had not had to make a single correction to the text.

Next year, 2004, began with the deaths in February of two people whom Colin had known well and had admired – Denis Hurley and Pete Booyen, former vice-chancellor of the University of Natal. Pete was buried in the Cape but there was a memorial at Epworth on 27 February at which his wife, Beulah, was present. Archbishop Hurley's funeral was on 28 February at the ABSA stadium in Durban. We went with Ian Hughes who was visiting us:

A great occasion: much that was beautiful and memorable, though there were a few Napieristic narrownesses. A series of wonderful tributes read out, from people of all sorts from all over the world.

The reference to 'Napieristic narrowness' refers to Cardinal Wilfrid Napier,



who was considered a conservative compared to Hurley. Colin went on to mention some of the tributes: 'Heaven will be enriched by the Archbishop's presence there'; 'the Nelson Mandela of the Church'; 'We are sure that he is in Heaven now, engaged in discussion with Thomas Aquinas, and with anyone else who cares to join in, including God.'

Later Beyers Naudé died and we went to a memorial for him held in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) of the Vow in Maritzburg. It was interesting to see how the DRC attitude towards him had changed, but also general changes. The clergyman spoke of how the church was moving towards a more ecumenical attitude. The afternoon before Peter Brown died, we visited him and were looking at the photograph of the last meeting of the Liberal Party before it closed. His was, too, a large funeral, with people from all over the country. Colin was distressed at the number of people he had known at Council who had died, three from AIDS. He received letters from Andrew Hudson of Oxford days, now a recognised artist and a Buddhist, whom he had contacted. There were long exchanges as they caught up with their lives and their beliefs. To Andrew he wrote:

I must recognise that I have chosen to be Kent in *King Lear*, the one who stays on and hangs around and avoids centre-stage ... we have travelled in different boats, in different seas. Yet I hope we can speak to each other – I the Catholic, he the Buddhist looking to 'the Universe'.

Very sadly our daughter, Libby phoned us to say that she and Richard had decided to separate. We worried about them and about Gregory and Joanna, and all the confusions that lay ahead. We liked Richard and had such happy memories of their family in South Africa and in Australia.

In January, we celebrated our 48th wedding anniversary lunch with Kathy. Later, on Election Day, when Colin no longer had any duties, we had a relaxed day. It was Ash Wednesday, so church in the morning, a leisurely lunch, swim, the short trip to vote, then to tea with my friend Marygold Harman, at Yellowwood in Howick.

In August we had visits from David and Jo Mayne; then Eric, Mary and Rosalind and Dave, Frances and Richard Gosling, for whom we organised a luncheon of friends whom they had known – Peter and Gertrud Strauss, Kay Galloway, David Newmarch and others. Later the Birtwhistles spent a weekend with us, Mireille remembering the fun in the garden. We found these visits exhilarating, challenging, reassuring, a wonderful way of maintaining friendships.

# 34

## FAMILY EVENTS – HAPPY AND UNHAPPY

We were looking forward to our youngest daughter, Kathy, and Tony's wedding in our garden in July 2005 and were once more preparing the garden. I was reluctant to cut back ruthlessly, so I winced as I saw a shorn bush, until it sprouted vigorous new growth and 'I told you so!' said Marygold, a keen gardening friend of mine. Colin sympathised with her. When he did venture into the garden, not to admire and write poems about it but to do some gardening, he tended to wield the clippers and the panga. Before the wedding we had the sadness of our friend Fidela Fouché's quick death. She spent three weeks paralysed in hospital and then died. Colin spoke at her memorial in the Plane Tree Avenue in the Botanic Gardens where her ashes were scattered. In May, David and Michiko's second daughter Lou-Anne Mary was born and was to come out to the wedding.

The whole family, Tony's parents, who stayed with us, and his sister and her family came out. The wedding day was planned by David on a spreadsheet, but he left nothing for me to do. The inevitable happened – the sewerage blocked and I spent the morning trying to get a plumber to come to sort it out. The plumbers left minutes before the first guests arrived. The ceremony, conducted by a magistrate, took place on the veranda while guests gathered on the lawn, with the garden looking splendid. The house did too after being recently painted. I read a prayer which Colin had written. Tony presented the traditional blanket to Precious Dlungwane, who ululated with glee. Colin, who had not been feeling well, gave the speech and then went to bed.

Guests were from England, Australia and Germany and our Christmas letter noted: 'A truly international event! And essentially it all went very well, in spite of a few mishaps – Colin falling ill just after he had delivered his little speech, and Tony, at midnight, leaning against a veranda wall, with both Tony and the wall disappearing into space and Tony fracturing his wrist. It set off the alarm, which rang in our bedroom and Colin in bed and asleep jerked awake. There was sheep-on-the-spit for lunch, Jane Sebastian's biriyani, and pumpkin soup for supper (for which many people stayed). Twenty children enjoyed

the jumping castle and Singrid's toys, a couple of the older boys making a lucrative thing of bringing drinks to people. It was a wonderful occasion: serious, traditional, casual – a real family and friends event.'

Sadly, Colin became delirious the following night and we had to rush him to hospital. He was suffering from septicaemia and needed to recuperate before he had his prostate operation at the end of July, when Kathy and Tony left. Colin did not recover quickly from the operation, suffering from fatigue and anaemia. He continued his duties on the Council but arrived home exhausted. He also suffered from a persistent cough, which he found debilitating and annoying. He went to Dr Hugh Watson, our doctor, who advised him to see Dr Sergio Diaz a specialist physician. As he waited for a CAT scan he wrote:

The arrogance of the healthy  
the confidence of the always fit:  
now I feel the sting of reality  
and the questioning that goes with it.



*Thirteenth Alan Paton Lecture, 2006: from the left Ahmed Bawa, Jewel Koopman, Melissa Stobie, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela (speaker), Mike Cowling and Colin*

In September 2006 came the very sad news of the death of Colin's brother Paul, just two months after he and Jane had celebrated their Golden Wedding. Paul, an architect by profession and still working, was a wonderful person – generous, lively, humorous and imaginative. Fortunately, Paul and Jane's three daughters and their families all lived fairly close by in south-west London, so Jane had a strong support system. It was sudden at the end. He had gone out to mow the lawn; Jane, noticing that the lawn mower was silent and yet he had not come in, went to speak to him and found him dead. Colin decided that he would go to England for the funeral and I encouraged him. David picked him up at Heathrow and took him home to Sunbury, where he found Michiko and the two girls:

Lou-Anne now lively, alert, beaming, Singrid full of whimsical vitality.

They drove to Sheen, where the whole family was congregated at the funeral parlour, then home, where they reminisced about Paul well into the night. It was a good family experience.

In October Colin saw the specialist physician, Dr Diaz, who told him that he had multiple myeloma, bone marrow cancer. It was incurable except with a transplant (transplants were rare and were for much younger people) but that it could be controlled. He wanted to start Colin on chemotherapy immediately and referred him to an oncologist, Dr Ziad Seedat.

It was devastating news to have to take in and respond to. Later he wrote:

Otherwise, life is carrying on normally. So far, my council work hasn't been affected, and I shall now no longer have my 12.30 appointment at the radiotherapy department (in St Anne's Hospital, very close to the City Hall).

We had to be regular about breakfasts as his pill-taking depended on regularity. As he remained anaemic, he suffered from fatigue though he continued to work hard at the Council. Dr Seedat suggested a blood transfusion. We had fetched Kathy from the airport to spend some time with us. The oncologist was a little concerned, but not deeply, about the safety of the blood supplies, and this was solved by Kathy, who immediately offered to be a donor, and my sister Ann, who, surprisingly, was still a blood donor in spite of her age, and our son-in-law, Richard Dodd's sister, Denise. Colin wrote:

Transfusions show  
that love transcends:  
the colour in my cheeks  
belongs to my friends.

Our son, Richard, was once more going through a very patchy time. David suggested that he go to him in England for a while, possibly to find a job there and be helped by Bill Goodyear, who dealt specifically with Asperger's. We accepted this offer with relief. Colin did not need any more stress and we were also facing a great drop in income and would find it difficult to cope with the monetary demands that inevitably occurred. Richard arrived in England on 12 December, and it was a relief no longer to lie awake at night wondering what the night would hold for us. But we missed his Jekyll company, when he was witty and friendly and a good and helpful companion.

As we faced our new life, Colin wrote in the Christmas letter:

Perhaps a few words about living in South Africa. We are here because this is our home and because we have an allegiance to the new society. But a new democracy like this one is rather fragile and bumpy, and there are various causes of anxiety. But there are also distinct areas of progress and happiness.

Richard's time in England did not work out, so he returned to South Africa. He came home to a strict regime. We had to agree to tough love, for our sakes and for Richard's. Singrid wept as he left England; Precious wept that he did not come and stay at home. He was to stay at Dolly's, his new girlfriend, until we had got him into Jan Richter, a boarding establishment, and he was to live on a strict allowance, with no handouts. I don't know who found this most difficult! We joined a tough love group and learnt the difference between enabling (not good) and empowering (good):

Loving someone/is not giving to them;/it is making them/responsible.

In May the ANC made a decision on Jacob Zuma, giving him the support to stand as a candidate for the presidency. Colin was not happy: he felt that Zuma was a tribalist, authoritarian, a womaniser and of questionable honesty. He wondered if he could still remain an ANC member, albeit a very critical one. Colin woke in the small hours tormented by anxieties:

The poor – is the ANC government pursuing a viable policy in relation to them?

Mary – all her responsibilities in the next four days; Ma (Michelle's Gran) – we must visit her at last and take her some avos

My pain (for which I'm taking antibiotics) doesn't seem to be receding as I'd thought

Kathy – anxious about the huge challenge of suddenly going to India on Saturday

Libby – travelling in England, often feeling lonely.

# 35

## NO LONGER SPEAKER

It was clear that Colin would not be re-elected Speaker after the elections, nor did he wish to remain. Rob Haswell, strategic executive manager for Economic Development and Growth, wrote about his years on the Council in a local newspaper, the *Mirror*: 'This is one instance where a person is irreplaceable. Gardner has chaired council meetings both efficiently and equitably, and with his mastery of the English Language, as well as his sense of humour, he has been an important contributing factor to the fact that the council gets its business done, no matter how the political parties differ. He has always striven to promote consensus decision-taking – a vital approach in South African Councils. He will be sorely missed. Long may his pen continue to write.'

Later, just after our Golden Wedding, Rob wrote: 'His task was considerable, for not only was it a newly elected council, but the position of Speaker was new to local government ... Not even MP Yunus Carrim, who piloted the legislation through parliament, could define the role of the Speaker.' Colin had taught many of the councillors; many of them treated him with a certain deference. Some he had problems with, they thinking that as the dominant party they could break the rules over such matters as waiting one's turn before speaking, and not absenting oneself from important meetings without an explanation and justified reason.

'In short, Colin had to chart a course through new territory in local government terms, and he did so in a humane and understated manner. He was always there to assist councillors and to remind them firmly, yet politely, of their duties. He succeeded admirably and to such an extent that a relaxed, almost convivial atmosphere prevailed at most council meetings. As a result, consensus rather than divisive voting became the order of the day. Colin also served as the first chair of council's LA21 Committee [This committee focused on sustainable development and care of the environment].'

'Colin was also the moving force behind the awarding of Civic Honours to a broad range of worthy recipients from different communities. The balance achieved in that exercise was carried through to the renaming of our streets



in our central area. Of course, it was controversial, but our city's passage was eminently less so than in many other cities – notably Durban. We can all be proud of our street names, and for that Colin deserves lasting recognition.'

He worked with a committee led by Mayor Hloni Zondi. They made some mistakes, such as Chapel Street, a name they should perhaps have kept as more in keeping with the nature of the street. The street-naming was controversial and he received much flak, some from close friends: Fleur Webb was very angry, Leslie Weinberg wrote an angry letter to the paper, Adrian Koopman wrote a detailed document criticising the renaming. Their main argument was that there were plenty of unnamed streets in Imbali and Edendale, but Colin felt that people coming in to the centre of the city needed to feel that it belonged to them too, and most of the renamed streets had ordinary names – Commercial Road, Loop Street, Berg Street. They did not change streets named after people, except Duncan McKenzie and they changed that to the name of a relative Peter McKenzie Brown. (Duncan McKenzie earned a reputation for brutality during the Bhambatha Rebellion in 1906, whereas in contrast his relative Peter Brown was a founder of the Liberal Party and an advocate for non-racialism.)

Later, remarking on the street renaming process in an obituary after the death of ANC stalwart, Chota Motala, Colin said:

We are delighted to have been able to rename the Old Greytown Road after Chota Motala. That busy road that winds its way up through the northern areas will now forever be associated with Chota. And how blessed we are, now, to have Rabia (his wife) still here in our midst. He would have felt the same as he drove along many of the roads they had named after significant people of all races.

In June he travelled to Wits to an English Academy meeting to hear Kenneth Parker on *Colonialism in Reverse* – and to receive a gold medal (for distinguished service to English). In his acceptance speech, Colin spoke about the importance of English:

there is much that is notable in the areas of freedom and imaginative enrichment...but many oppressive decisions have been framed in English...and an enormous amount of utter rubbish... we must beware of what one might call English triumphalism... of unilingualism... I want to conclude by saying what a wonderful language English is – English in its central consistency and (at the same time) in all its varieties of pronunciation and intonation – and what a wonderful

literature, or what wonderful literatures ... from Beowulf to Chaucer to Seamus Heaney and Toni Morrison and J.M. Coetzee and Zakes Mda ... And I'd like to say that reading and exploring and teaching and writing about this literature, these literatures, has been for me a unique privilege.

Dr Seedat gave Colin a fairly cheerful bill of health and we decided that we could travel to England in August and Australia in October. Colin always planned our overseas trips in great detail, so we knew where we were on any given date. One reason why we were able to travel so often, now that Colin no longer had sabbaticals, was because we did not at any point have to pay for board and lodging, or even often for travel, as people regarded our money as 'Mickey Mouse' money, as someone once described it, so would not let us spend it and sometimes gave us free flying points.

We flew Virgin Airways to England and were blessed with a glorious panoramic view of Paris in morning sunshine as we flew over it, and were met by David and a lively Singrid, who ran and threw herself into my arms. We had our first large family gathering at Cath and John's daughter Helen and Jezz Farr's house, where we walked to a park, all fifteen of us. Colin wrote a *Witness* article.

On an evening in London, we attended the second of our large family gatherings with Paul's family. We spent Sunday at Brighton – the remarkable and zany Royal Pavilion with a band – green-clad – in the parched Pavilion gardens. A sight-seeing week before we left for Bristol, meeting people, visiting the Cotswolds and Oxford. Part of staying with Cath and John was walking Thurber, their beloved dog. 'It's not the dog that's the problem; it's the owners!' Thurber has rituals and activities that have to be acceded to at all times. His capacity to catch a thrown ball exhausts all but the most energetic children! But it does get Cath and John out walking every day – a discipline which we really need.

Colin met his old friend Brian Bush. We hoped to watch the annual balloon display, but the wind was wrong. We returned to London for a couple of days, visiting Jo and Dave Mayne, Graham Pechey, Eric and Mary, before hiring a car and driving to Manchester. There we visited Rob Lucas (our nephew) and Edmund Prestwich before driving on up to York to spend a couple of days with the Berthouds:

Jacques, Mary and I went for a walk along the river, both sides, and over the Millennium Bridge, talking about among other things, Derrida. Evening: drinks and meal; and discussion of paintings (inc. the Auden portrait) and books (the amazing Berthoud collection) and world economics and politics (China, and global warming, and Blair and Bush) and SA politics. This is the real conversation, the real reason – almost – of my coming to Britain.

They had arranged a party for us of ex-South Africans. While Astrid prepared, Jacques, Colin and I went to Castle Howard, where *A Room with a View* had been filmed. The guides were informative, the paintings good. Then all our plans fell apart. Colin's foot became very painful so he waited in the grounds while Jacques and I walked around them. In the evening we had a congenial dinner, reminiscing with Dave Maughan Brown, Joan Attwell, Derek and Sue Attridge. Colin participated well. But he had a sleepless night with a terrible pain in his foot. The next day he was put on to anti-inflammatories and painkillers by a doctor thinking it was gout but that night he was unable to sleep, in agony from neck pains. We decided to hand back the hired car and Jacques and Astrid drove us to John Bishop in Sheffield, where we had high tea, then he drove us to Islingbury where David met us, drove us to Eric's where I had left my wallet, then home. Colin was chatty but in pain.

I was woken at 6 am by Colin's groaning – he was delirious, so I woke David, who phoned an ambulance. It arrived very quickly and paramedics were concerned to bring his temperature down. I travelled with them to St Peter's hospital, Chertsey. There was immediate action from four or five doctors, including the registrar, and a woman doctor who had in-laws in Howick. Everything was in place (no demand for money), Colin was so ill – rigours, unconscious but not passive, fighting. But the treatment was excellent – blood tests, blood cultures, ECG. He was moved into a high dependency ward and I was allowed to stay with him. He kept trying to remove the drips, but his eyes were blank; he did not recognise anyone. He looked at the lights but as a baby would – his attention caught but no understanding. David said there was some reaction on the monitor when I spoke to him. Just before we were sent home, he obeyed an instruction to lift his leg, which the nurse said was a good sign, so I went home feeling slightly better.

I spent all Friday at the hospital. At first Colin was still uncomprehending but by the evening he was able to recognise David and me but was still trying to get rid of the monitor and the drip. I was able to soothe him to a slight degree. Fearing the worst, David had sent for Cath. By Saturday Colin's temperature

was down. I spent most of the following two weeks at his side and was able to observe the very good nursing. Never did nurses move from one patient to another without washing their hands; before they gave Colin tablets, they asked for his date of birth so that there could be no confusion. I have to say, though, that the nurses came from all over the world, not many were English. I spoke to the local priest about visiting Colin but he said there were such strict rules about confidentiality that hospitals were not allowed to contact churches or ministers. But we were able to arrange for a priest to visit him and a nun, Sister Mellitis.

David and Michiko were very good at fielding the many, many phone calls, and Michiko packed a picnic lunch for me every day. Colin gradually improved, at first not wishing to read or write and only converse a bit. Later he was able to see visitors, so John Bishop came and there was a very pleasant wide-ranging discussion and joking. Michèle was over from France and was able to visit him. We had to delay our return by a week. The hospital took our details, but the first time they asked for payment was long after we had arrived home. (We thought how different it would have been here. About the most memorable thing that the South African minister of health at the time, Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang – she of garlic, beetroot notoriety as a cure for AIDS – said was that in private hospitals they checked your purse before your pulse.) Luckily, we had taken out good insurance so we had to pay only R2 000 out of R100 000.

We came home on 12 September and were due to leave for Australia on 5 October, so we had less than a month for Colin to recover his strength and for us to get our lives together. In a letter to Eric, he wrote:

You talk about the worlds you thread in and out of. My experiences over the last month have been quite gruelling, and I have found myself facing various spiritual realities more starkly than ever before – including of course the fact of maybe fairly imminent death. The doctors told me that the septicaemia which took me by ambulance into hospital had been ‘life-threatening’, and I had had septicaemia once before, just after Kath’s wedding...I had been reminded of Emily Dickenson’s opening line: ‘My life closed twice before its close’, but her poem is about human love and parting...I have to revise all my suppositions.

But, shortly before we left for Australia, he wrote:

For weeks my identity has been subdued.  
 I've not known who I am, or what I'm living for.  
 but now at last I find there's a lifting of my mood.  
 At last I'm part of life, and ask for more.

We were careful to take out enhanced travel insurance; and arrived in Australia on 5 October, Colin coping with the long journey quite well, to be met by concerned daughters. They had arranged for all of us to go to Kiama Beach for almost a week, so that Colin could enjoy sun and sea and sand idly, and really recover from the journey.

On our return to Sydney, we had lunch with Colin Collins, a former Catholic priest and anti-apartheid activist who founded the non-racial University Christian Movement (and baptised Libby). He had fled South Africa due to security police harassment and was now married and living in Australia.

We seemed to know people wherever we went, so we visited Marxist (when we first met him) Saul Bastomsky, another ex-colleague, now, to our amazement, the head of a girls' convent school, and his family; Derick Marsh and his second wife, remembering the time when he had been arrested in Pietermaritzburg, and discussing literary theories; Peter Kerchhoff's daughter Sue and her family, again reminiscing and finding out about their lives in Melbourne.

Colin wrote brief comments, more like a simple diary of events. Travelling and meeting people must have been taxing, though he criticises himself:

The conversation was animated/but my part in it was far too great...

Though with old friends and colleagues we simply sat round dining-room tables or leaned back in armchairs and spoke as if there had been very little time since we had last seen them. Some of the conversation was gossip, wanting to know all the news. Colin with his interest in the various ways of speaking English was also fascinated by the Australian accent. He wrote:

My days of playing football  
 are long since left behind,  
 but still my pulsing blood brings forth  
 the football of my mind.

Our farewells were sad; we did not know if we would all meet again. We faced the long trip back (it always seems longer than the trip there) and the possibly harsh reality that would hit us at home.

# 36

## RETIREMENT: 'EASE AND ENTERTAINMENT?'

As Colin had retired from the Council, would he now live a life of ease and entertainment? In a letter to Kathy:

I (Dad) have had a busy time this week, and feel at the moment that I am getting sucked (not unwillingly) into some local activities. On Monday, a meeting of the Environment Forum of the Council – a forum which I used to chair. I am now a member of the forum as an ordinary citizen. On Tuesday, a workshop, at the Witness building, on the handling of children in the media, given by a spokesman for the Joburg Media Monitoring Project. Then today two meetings – one, at the University, to discuss a new initiative on children that is to be sponsored by a joint Municipality, University and Chamber of Business committee which I have been asked to remain on. Then late this afternoon a meeting, in their newly acquired office, of the Exco of the Community Chest...

He was also involved in a discussion in the *Natal Witness* about Richard Dawkins with Robert Crass – a local resident, conservationist and an authority on freshwater fish. Colin compared Dawkins' views with those of Joseph Conrad, seeing those of Conrad as much more powerful than those of the over-polemical Dawkins. He ended with a quotation from Jacques' chapter on *The Nigger of the Narcissus*.

Looking back over the year, he realised how many parties we had given or hosted. It was certainly our busiest year from this point of view. We had had so many visitors both local and overseas – Pat Whittock, John Laband, the Tonkyns (both families), the Tosswill children and their families, Brian and Ann Bush, Ian Hughes, Jimmy Corrigan, Julia Mann, Libby, and niece Jenny and her children, who had looked after the house while we were away. He had also written a couple of reviews.

We slid back into our usual activities, but spending Christmas with Ann's daughter, Susan van den Hagen, and her family, now living in Kloof, where

Ann and Jimmy and the rest of the family joined us. It was only a day's outing, no longer the lazy days at the beach.

In early January, Colin wrote to Pat Whittock:

At the moment life is being kind to us and in return we are trying in our way to be kind to it.

But very soon after that he wrote: 'Shortly after this I got a heavy cold!'

Life was not being kind to Peter Hunter, who died on 21 January. Peter had written a leading article on the 'Meaning of Christmas', the first leading article not written by a priest in the Catholic newspaper the *Southern Cross*. He spoke of human suffering and how much more aware the world was of the extent of human suffering and of its redemptive power, ideas with which Colin agreed. We decided that we would drive up to Johannesburg for his funeral, staying with Douglas and Colleen Irvine. Kathy, though, insisted that we fly and bought our tickets. We hired a car and kept getting lost. (Why will men not stop and ask for directions?) We met again, at the Irvines, Francis Antonie, whom we had known so well in Pietermaritzburg. He was now working in Johannesburg and no longer an academic. Our lunch was relaxed, pleasant.

At the funeral and the gathering afterwards, we met so many old friends from NCFS days, many of whom we had not seen for years – Lucienne, of course, and the Hunter children, and so many and such varied people from different backgrounds. Colin found it quite sobering. But the funeral was a celebration. Colin gave one of the tributes, describing Peter as 'an elder brother figure... generous, thoughtful, loyal, critical, deeply serious, full of good humour. He and Peter had both been reading Albert Nolan's book *Jesus Today: A Spirituality of Radical Freedom* and exchanging e-mails about it. Nolan was one of the co-celebrants at the Requiem Mass.

Deaths reminded him of the approach of his own. Helen Shuttleworth had introduced him to Simonton's book *Getting Well Again* dealing with the importance of dealing psychologically with cancer, similar to Nolan's description of dealing with stress. 'We cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of pursuing both physical treatment and emotional intervention' (Simonton) and 'tension also affects our behaviour and peace-of-mind' (Nolan). Both recommended exercise among other things. He took copious notes and determined to put suggestions into practice.

Colin was involved in a long e-mail discussion with John Bishop about Christianity, and with Eric about Marxism and was also involved in committees – the Partnership Management Committee at Chamber House and also a



Dawkins seminar at the KZN Museum. He was conscious of how his situation had changed:

‘Scribbled during an LA 21 meeting’

I’m in the City Hall  
 where once I had authority,  
 quite close to the University  
 where once I held some sway.  
 Now no-one asks my advice.  
 or seeks permission from me.  
 Power gets suddenly spigoted by time.

In March, he gives an account of a day:

A Snippet of my life: of carrying branches, lugging logs of wood. And, also, on the same day, e-mails to and from Bill Goodyear about Richard’s current situation and David’s visit, an e-mail to David, the appearance of my *Witness* article on ‘Those Speeding Cavalcades’, e-mails to Margie, Kath and Libby (who’d written to Richard Dodd), a visit from Richard, whose stove has broken down, e-mails to and from Paddy Kearney about Hurley and the Water Convention, a beautiful Follow Me meeting (written about in a letter to Eric), a birthday phone-call to Kathy at 10 pm our time, and watching the moving film Country of my Skull. Also, I’d forgotten, a failed visit to Deanne, to see one of her films, and a meeting of the Edendale Hospital Board. [Colin lists the committees he is on]: English Academy Council, Local Agenda 21 Environment Forum, Community Chest Council and Exec., APC and SI Advisory Board, Management Partnership Committee (and Midi), Edendale Hospital Interim Board, PACSA Council, King’s School Board of Trustees, Municipal Stakeholders Forum. Also: Tough Love, Follow Me.

He continued to write his fortnightly *Witness* article. (It puzzled me when former South African Airways Board chairperson, Dudu Myeni, appeared before the Zondo Commission and, while pleading poverty, apparently said she had received R4 million as payment for sitting on boards – I am not sure that Colin ever earned anything but occasional meals and possibly petrol money.)

We were expecting a visit from David and Michiko with pleasure but also with some apprehension. Michiko was pregnant and the rather long journey on a French airline – longer than normal – had not been good for her. We left

for Hluhluwe for a peaceful interlude at the game reserve, with Singrid greatly enjoying the animals. They left earlier than we had expected. Michiko later admitted that this third pregnancy had been particularly difficult and she had not been herself.

After they had left, we began to settle down and exchanged e-mails pleasantly. In May, Colin was asked to write the funeral oration for John de Villiers, who was being buried in Cape Town and was glad to do so for he was a most interesting person, a professor in the Agriculture Faculty who, once he had retired, did a degree in English and became involved in Fine Arts. Colin described him as an example of sheer innate goodness. Colin spent some time in the Faculty of Agriculture researching De Villiers' background. In May, Christopher Merrett tossed out to Colin a question which he found very disturbing: 'Are you writing anything? What are you going to write?' I had asked him something similar. Colin had always wanted to write, but found it difficult to decide what form his writing was to take. He was not mainstream, could not easily seize upon a topical theory and write about that. In responding to Christopher, he said: 'What shall I write about? There is so much, but everything keeps changing.' He had been reading Martin Prozesky's latest book *Conscience: Ethical Intelligence for Global Well-Being* and he wondered if he could:

write a book – pacy, lucid and short (like Albert Nolan's book) –  
bringing in, as he does, a range of topics – ethics, religion, history,  
society, politics, literature ... work on this.

It seemed to me that it was the old problem, the Dolomite Peaks: his interests were so varied and all so important to him. While walking in the Botanic Gardens he had further thoughts:

'Question'

Can I lift myself up  
At this point in time  
From the depths of the drear  
To the ranks of the prime?

This is a notebook in which Colin is certainly not ebullient, but questioning and very self-critical at times; and often dreary and almost squashed. There were many reasons for this: his state of health and the deaths of so many people his age or younger, his agony at Richard's agony. He was not by nature a tough love person – he had too much empathy for the person who was suffering.

He had had his father's example – Susan was often given into because she was so disruptive of his work; I was also critical of him, having been brought up by a rather stoical mother and much older and strict father. So, for the whole of that year Colin suffered, and this almost certainly battered his health, his immune system. It was difficult to be cheerful and positive (as Simonton suggested) when your whole life seemed to be falling apart. The thing about Richard was that he was, in many ways, very like Colin, with a very soft heart; but unlike Colin, with so little confidence to back it up. So he was often a victim, exploited by people who purported to be his friends; though he had good friends too but they could not always protect him or prevent him from harm. Richard at his best was charming and concerned, but at his worst... we were constantly swung from one to another, never knowing what to expect. And yet, in a letter to Bill Goodyear, Colin wrote that

Richard goes regularly to SANCA and works as a volunteer one morning a week at the Hospice second-hand bookshop... he has been to see a woman who specialises in helping people to get going ...

What enabled Colin to cope at all? The knowledge that, however angry our children might be, it was always out of concern for our welfare. He also knew that our relationship was still strong – arguments were temporary not devastating. He had many friends and supporters and people who admired him. His strong spiritual belief also sustained him. At this time, he was reading many books on spirituality – though also attackers like Dawkins – with different views: Courette and King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*; and earlier Dick Tracey, *The Spirituality Revolution*; Richard Harries (subject of an e-mail discussion with Ray Rutherford-Smith); Denis Hurley on Teilhard de Chardin; and Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitan Ethics in a World of Strangers*. We attended an Alpha course on Christianity and the meaning of life, agreeing and disagreeing with what was taught.

But the year was certainly not all introspection and uncertainty. We had many visitors, who challenged and set us thinking in so many different directions. First of them were Brian and Marion Brown from England, with whom we had been friends since Christian Institute days. Then Biddy Partridge and Rachel Stewart came and we were reminded of the terrible murder of Rachel's sister, Clare, and we had news of her two children, whom Rachel had adopted. My sister Cath and her friend Molly were visitors with whom we could completely relax – in our swimming pool – where I tried to teach them the exercises I did,

eating our avos (huge and creamy), reading and laughing and chatting and driving further afield.

Kathy, was one of our most regular visitors – we thought that she liked to check up on us, see that we were still coping as we aged – she had much to tell us about training people in Bangalore in India and Shenzhen in China for IBM, the company she was working for; Julia Martin came from Cape Town with her charming twins, Sophie and Sky, and her interest in exploring her mother's life in Pietermaritzburg, but also telling us about her exploration of early pre-historic life in the Cape; Katherine Prestwich from the Isle of Skye, where she taught the flute, with news of the English members of her family; and Kevin and Delia Matthias from New Zealand, whom we were so pleased to see and to catch up with.

One of the off-shoots of Colin's years in Council meant that we were often invited to functions: art exhibitions, book launches, AGMs, Council events and celebratory functions in all communities. We chose to go to plays and music. Colin had for years been on the Tatham Art Gallery committee and responded to a request to comment on some of the paintings. He chose to comment on Matisse's painting of a young girl:

Matisse was a tireless experimenter and a sophisticated theoretician, but he always believed in the power of the artist's feelings and intuitions... This capacity is vividly illustrated in his wonderfully alive portrait of a young woman. With a few daring strokes he had created for us, and for all time, a person who is lovely, warm, alert and good-humoured... For all the stark simplicity of the artist's execution. She has been endowed with a glowing inwardness ...

He was, too, on the Natal Society Library committee and remained when the library was taken over by the municipality. He was delighted at the Carnegie Corporation's decision to put money into upgrading it. He may have been partly responsible for having it named the Bessie Head Library, after the writer who lived in Botswana but had been born in Maritzburg to a white mother and black father. Her mother's family placed her in foster care and only acknowledged her years later.

The new wing was opened on 12 July 2007. Colin was interested in the architect's decision to use much glass (unusual in traditional libraries), so that people walking past would see people reading, researching, and might feel inclined to follow their example.



*Natal Society Library Council, probably 1997. From left to right back row Bill Guest, Tony Barrett, Andrew Kaniki; middle row Colin, Pat Stabbins, Thuli Radebe, Zinhle Sokhela, Anand Singh, Joan Rosenberg, John Conyngham; front row Andrew Burnett, Alan Norman, Simon Roberts, Michael Daly, Shona Wallis, Jack Frost, John Morrison; absent John Deane*

He was aware of the ANC's big Polokwane elective conference and was very doubtful about the decision to choose Jacob Zuma as president. There was great interest in rugby as the World Cup final between England and South Africa was due to take place shortly. Colin remembered:

A few years ago, the Sharks scored a wonderful try. They were on the attack, and their opposition had a tough and wily defence. The ball was passing quickly along the back line, as they moved towards the left-hand corner of the field. It was an aggressive move, likely to produce a try, but before the ball could reach the wing, André Joubert (the greatest of all full backs) came into the line at tremendous speed and at a completely different oblique angle, and he simply cut through the surprised defence and touched down under the posts. It was exhilarating, a remarkable moment!

A triumph of subtle speedy rhythm./And brilliant geometry!/My hair stood on end,/I wept like a child./It was so beautiful,/so wild.

He could lose himself watching soccer and rugby. Cricket, he watched intermittently. Richard had to call him for the replay of a marvellous stroke or catch. As the year moved towards its end, Colin summed up something of what he was feeling:

‘Now’

At times I feel profoundly old  
and yet my blood has not run cold.  
I’m worn down by toil, by strife,  
but I’m shot through by passionate life.  
I’m in touch with the world that’s through and above.  
And I give myself to immediate love.

The next year began with a bang and we celebrated our Golden Wedding on 19 January 2008. Our children and their families had come out for Christmas. The family celebration took place on 2 January at Yellowwood Café, in Howick out in the garden, where Richard suddenly noticed a puff adder inches from his leg; the Australian husbands were fascinated.

Then on the day after our 50th anniversary, we had an all-day 'at home': the weather was perfect, the catering was well done by professionals (a friend, Penny Hattingh), during the day about 100 people came and chatted and ate and drank in various parts of our big house and in the shade of the trees of our big garden. There was an unexpected but most welcome guest: Eric Harber, who had been our best man, arrived from England without advance notice. We had not planned a large ceremony, but our children insisted, so a day of celebration was organised at two weeks' notice, and, inevitably, we left out some people we would have liked to invite. Once more we asked John Cameron to do the flowers. People came and went. Unfortunately, many of our Indian friends could only come early in the morning as they were going to a large funeral in Durban. It was a lovely day, sunny but not too hot, so people spread out in the house, on the veranda and on the lawn. Rob Haswell wrote about it: 'remarkable attendance of so many of our city's liberal fraternity. What a joy it was to see Phoebe Brown, Fleur Webb, Pat McKenzie, Leslie Weinberg, Norman Bromberger, Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg and many others.' He then proceeded to give a potted history of both of us. He described it as 'A quite remarkable gathering' and spoke about Colin's years on the Council.

The year progressed with the death of Dorothea Meihuizen and then Cees Binnendyk, both friends whom we had known for many years; with the fourth anniversary of Archbishop Hurley's death, for which we travelled to Durban to the Emmanuel Cathedral. It was an ecumenical occasion with people of many different faiths. Colin commented:



Bishop Kevin Dowling spoke powerfully on Jeremiah, Denis and the need for the prophetic within the Church. The worship was a bit marred – for an ecumenical and inter-faith congregation – by Benediction and hymns in Latin.

In April Deneys Schreiner died. Colin wrote to Else:

Deneys displayed so many qualities that are going to be important if South Africa is to make it as a successful nation: complete integrity, intellectual rigour, and the willingness to question anything and everything, hard work and alertness, and a good sense of humour – all those grafted on a deep, though often deliberately understated, warm humanity and compassion.

We went to Mobbs Moberly's funeral – Colin and Mobbs had worked together on the University of Natal Press committee – and in our Christmas letter Colin described her funeral:

held on a farm on the Dargle, under a vast marvellous oak tree, with a stunning view of the surrounding countryside. Mobbs was generally a person of great seriousness, wisdom, humour and integrity, and the ceremony was within a Christian ambit but without being very specific, and involved – besides tributes, poems, psalms, reminiscences and a hymn – a religious-ecological meditation ... And I am left worrying about the relative predictability and inflexibility of the Requiem Mass. [He is reminded too of] Peter Hunter's funeral – in two parts – the Mass in the Church ... and then the ceremony in their garden ... a bit more intellectual and emotional.

In April we went to King's School to celebrate John Carlyle Mitchell's 80th birthday. People from all over the world were there – past pupils, teachers, friends, supporters. Later we attended the Alan Paton lecture. These were always pleasant functions as we met so many friends – and many of them were now distant, and, in any case, most of us did not entertain as much as we had previously done. At one of them we met Jean van Riet, the only Liberal Party member in the Orange Free State; he had stayed with us once, an occasion we thoroughly enjoyed.

In July we went again to England, sponsored partly by air miles given to us. It was quite a family gathering, rather like musical chairs: Libby on holiday from Saudi Arabia where she was nursing, Greg and his girlfriend Cameron

working in London, and Joanna, returning from a university course in Italy, were all there when we arrived; Margie and Vince, on long leave, arrived from eastern Europe. We stayed in Sunbury, then down to Bristol; Joanna celebrated her 21st; back to Sunbury, Kathy arrived; Margie and Vince went to Scotland; Michèle arrived from France; Libby left for Saudi Arabia. It was a much shorter trip, less than a month long. On the first day, Colin found himself accompanying the family, excepting baby Elya, whom I was looking after, to *Kung-Fu Panda* – rather to his surprise – as it was Lou-Anne’s birthday treat and David and Michiko thought that they might need help with a group of excited small children.

This was very much of a family holiday, getting to know the grandchildren, catching up with the extended family, nieces and nephews – Michiko organised two large lunch parties in their lovely garden. We also went on the boat a couple of times. Colin spent time catching up with English papers and news and he wrote a *Witness* article. We moved between Sunbury and Bristol and revisited well-remembered places. It was so good for us all to be together.

Back in South Africa, Colin had more time for reading, and he read books related to his experiences on council committees, and attended lectures, such as those arranged by the South African Institute of International Affairs. He read Julia Martin’s *A Millimetre of Dust* and meshed it with what Ian McCullum, author of *Ecological Intelligence* said. Both stressed the importance of where we came from, of our physical background, in how we responded to life. Colin wrote warmly to Julia:

Your writing drew us with it into the many places that you evoke and the many thoughts that you articulate and arouse. We also liked very much the way you had woven Michael and the twins into it. Maybe not total alignment between us however! In one or two places a few philosophical doubts or disagreements stirred a little as we read...

Reading Patrick Bond *Looting Africa*, he summed up:

This needs to be taken seriously and pondered, but (it) seems to me to show an unrealistic isolationism. Can one throw off the chains of the world economy? And would it be good to do so? What I believe one needs to do is to reform—reform the world economy (the current troubles may help) and do all one can in an equality-direction – and in politics, in economics – and at home.

I deal with politics and history  
I've forgotten the art of poetry.  
I've a strong grasp of current affairs  
But not of trees or lives or chairs

At the end of November John Carlyle Mitchell died. Colin said of him, when interviewed by *The Witness* journalist, Stephen Coan:

He was a Christian gentleman – humane, serious, relaxed, open-minded. The wonderfully lively and warm ethos of King's School was in many ways moulded by him and by his wife Mary.

We had a quiet Christmas. Colin had had a gallstones operation on 15 December, from which he recovered well.

In February 2009 Pat Dunne, a member of Black Sash, died peacefully in Pretoria where she had moved to be with her daughter, Janine. We had known the family in many different ways—ourselves, our children: Richard and Richard Dunne had been friends, and Maryanne, a great friend of Kathy's, was now living in Germany, married to a doctor who had done his internship at Edendale Hospital.

Julius Malema was creating some stir on the political scene. Colin wrote to Babu Baijoo about him. The ANC, it was suggested, used Malema to say things which they themselves did not quite want to say, as a way of activating youth. Colin felt that activating youth by telling lies about opposition party members like Helen Zille and Joe Seremane was a dangerous game. He ended by saying

I see in today's *Witness* that Malema has said that (Jacob) Zuma's guilt should be decided not by "elite" people like the members of the Judiciary and by the media, but by the voters! In other words, sweep away all the provisions of the law and the constitution. Is the ANC happy to have these things said, in order to bring in the youth vote?

He wrote in March a *Witness* article headed "Dissenting ANC supporter", in which he suggested that, for the sake of the ANC, some should vote for an opposition party, as he feared the danger of too much power. He was phoned at about 7.00 the next morning by a disappointed Zweli Mkhize. The ANC was then not used to dissenting supporters – now they might be. He was also experiencing the frustration of being on committees:

‘After a Midi meeting’

Our municipal council

Sure had clout:

Its stamp of approval

stamps things out.

We heard of the deaths of David Philip, publisher, whom we had admired, and Don Maclellan, a poet living in Grahamstown, who with his wife had spent a holiday looking after our house while we were at the coast.

Colin was engaged in a long email discussion with Jim Phelps, who like him was a retired university lecturer, in response to a letter Phelps wrote in reply to an article by Ron Nicolson: ‘Nicolson praises Darwin while clinging to his supernaturalist beliefs, isn’t that like trying to have your cake and eat it?’ As Colin thought in many ways like Ron Nicolson, he wrote challengingly, but privately to Jim, and there was a long correspondence. He strongly agreed with Dom Bede Griffiths when Bede wrote “Wordsworth taught me to find in nature the presence of a power which pervades the universe and the (human mind) ... Keats had set before me the values of the holiness of the heart’s affections and the truth of the imagination.” He copied out an interview with Seamus Heaney “Hopkins, Catholicism and W.H. Gardner” from *Stepping Stones; interviews with Seamus Heaney* by Denis O’Driscott in which Heaney speaks about his sense that “there was value in selfless endurance”.

Colin was feeling that his life was going to come to an end, although not immediately as the cancer treatment was working. But he did face things and was now facing and trying to prepare for this. This is why his reading was so often philosophical and spiritual. During the day he was involved in practical things but in moments of meditation his mind moved naturally in this direction. He quoted from what he was reading: Gabriel Marcel (in French), an article by Martin Prozesky ‘Finding an anchor for moral values’, J.M. Coetzee ‘Evolution and God’, Ron Rolheiser ‘Spirituality, vulnerability, and religion’.

We were invited to the Gandhi Awards dinner in Durban and decided to go. We had been asked by Herbie Govinden to take Ian and Ann Player to an English Academy event in Durban and renewed our friendship with them; we began to attend the meetings they held at Phuzamoya, their home in Karkloof. Apart from the lovely drive, we met new people, mostly followers of Jung, and were introduced to the importance of dreams, to more books, videos, interesting speakers.

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## A NOSTALGIC TRIP

In October my sister Cath came out to visit us. Colin and I had taken Margie and Kathy previously to visit the farm on which I had grown up near Bethlehem, and the boarding school we had attended in Kroonstad. We decided that I would take my sisters Cath and Ann on the same trip. We would end with a weekend near Golden Gate. We enjoyed our stay there. Ann and I decided that we would one day return with Jimmy and Colin. We spent a couple of nights at the Parks Board reserve near Golden Gate, remembering how beautiful the Free State was. It was a wonderful experience – one of the few times when we three sisters were together without our husbands; we reminisced and reminisced.

The Sunday before Cath was due to leave, we had lunch at our house with our extended families (Ann, the lucky one as all children were still in South Africa). We were all a little worried about Jimmy, who could no longer build and found himself at a loose end. I remember Ann standing in the kitchen as we prepared lunch and her daughters saying to her that she could not die before Jimmy as he would be so lost without her. They went home at about six and by half past nine Ann was dead – she had suffered a pulmonary embolism. We were silenced and devastated. She died in the ambulance and Jimmy with his ambulance experience could see that she was dying. Cath had to alter her flight. Ann's funeral was in Port Shepstone, where she had lived and worked for so long and where she had been very well-known and liked. We held a memorial in our house for her Maritzburg friends. Jimmy, although supported by his children and their husbands, lost the will to live and died just over a year after her from heart failure. Colin gave the eulogies for both Ann and Jimmy and spoke about her warmth and courage, reading tributes from our children who had always loved her and had such good memories of the holidays they spent at her house. He commented on Jimmy's dedication to his work, to his voluntary Red Cross ambulance duties, his impish sense of humour and the readiness of both of them to help anyone in difficulties.

Christmas, without Ann, was sombre, but celebrated for the sake of the grandchildren. In memory of Ann, Jimmy and his brother Arthur Edwards installed an electric gate for us, as he said that Ann had always worried about the farm gate which we padlocked each night. I have been grateful ever since, as I can garden when I am alone without suddenly being confronted by a beggar. They come to the gate still. I remember Jimmy Stewart saying, 'You must always have bread and marge handy so that you can feed people.' We also kept polony and peanut butter.

A conference on Alan had been organised in Pietermaritzburg by the Alan Paton Centre and Colin wrote 'Paton and Whitman: exploring a relationship', which was later published in *EAR* 27(2), 2010. Many people commented afterwards how beautifully he read the poems. He also had published in *Concord* 12 'Alan Paton: his continuing importance' and a review of Alan Paton's letters. At the same time, he was working on a contribution for the book, *Journeying for Justice: Stories of an On-Going Faith-Based Struggle*, an account of PACSA. He had far more time for reading, too, and, where in earlier Notes and Queries he had had one or maybe two pages listing books read and films seen, there were now fourteen pages, admittedly for two years.

Colin was tiring; the battle against ill health was fairly constant. So, his last two post-retirement notebooks say almost nothing about his activities or about family activities, but consist largely of poems, meditations, correspondence with friends, and quotations from books that he has been reading. (It suddenly occurred to me – and why did it take me so long? – that Colin did not write a diary as he wrote e-mails, so I began to read through hundreds and hundreds of them.) One regular event that he wrote to John Bishop about was our visits to Phuzamoya, the Players' house:

Just before I slip into bed, it has occurred to me that – in view of the interesting discussions that you go to I should mention ... that Mary and I go, every month or two (when we are free) to a gathering of Jungians held at the farm of Ian Player, a notable conservationist and environment man (incidentally the brother of the golfer Gary Player), in the beautiful Karkloof valley. We enjoy the journey there and back. But Jung is a most interesting guy, though I don't really go along with all of his ideas. He is very good on symbols, and in this respect has influenced literary critics and some writers. We watch videos on Jung and some of his friends and admirers, or meet local Jungian therapists, and discuss dreams – a great emphasis on dreams.

It's fascinating stuff – maybe at times a bit like the Quaker meetings that you attend or used to attend. The people who come along are pleasant, gentle, thoughtful, spiritual, too ... Our most recent visit to the Karkloof valley was this last Saturday.

He took notes and pondered, though he retained a certain scepticism about some aspects. We made new friends there, especially with Sheila Berry, a clinical psychologist. Colin was interested in the similarities between Wordsworth's view of nature and Jung's and offered to give a paper on the subject. He began working on it but was not able to give it before he died.

We became members of the Botanic Gardens, as did our dogs. I would run along the avenue of plane trees, while Colin sat and waited for me to return, and then we would walk further, Colin again waiting as I took the dogs along the stream, and we would walk as far as the bench in memory of Deney Schreiner, and Colin would sit there and meditate, while I went further up the path. Sometimes we sat on the bench in memory of Fidela Fouché and at the table and chairs in memory of Peter Brown. He'd sometimes go by himself while I was at work. Together we met people at concerts or in the Botanical Gardens or in the supermarket or the Tatham Art Gallery, and now, more than ever, at funerals. In the Christmas letter, he commented on South Africa:

Difficult to say. Those who thought (all of us to some extent) that 1994 was launching us on a triumphant path of rectitude and sensible progress have been deeply disappointed. Some areas of the government's operation have been fairly successful, but there has been a great deal of blundering and mismanagement and corruption too. Looking back on it all, one realises that a young democracy functioning in a tense and divided country could hardly have expected to go smoothly.

In January he wrote to friends:

We had a double wedding in our garden: Richard and Dolly and Charleen (Dolly's eldest daughter) and Shaun Perumal. A lively and colourful occasion. As Charleen and Shaun have children, Richard is now a step-grandfather and we are step-great-grandparents! We felt the absence of Mary's sister, Ann, very much on this as on so many other occasions. Jenny Edwards took her mother's place in being a tower of strength.



In March 2010 we set off once more for Australia for Margie's 50th birthday. We were all meeting, except Richard. David and Michiko and the three, as Colin described them, 'beautiful, attractive grandchildren, full of affection and creativity', from England and Libby, Greg and Joanna. The three children were delighted by Chester, Vince's father Kev's horse, and Kev was charmed by them. We felt at home in Australia, though our daughters made sure that we experienced something new each time we came.

We celebrated Margie's party in her garden, with about 90 people, some of whom we had met before. Colin made the speech, commenting on the various ways in which Margie's name was pronounced – Margie (us), Morgie by some of her South African friends, and Mergie by Australians, but he spoke also about her particular qualities, as a daughter, a friend, a teacher.

After Margie's party, Colin caught a fluery cold and, at one stage, had to go to hospital. He was not well and was happy to spend quite a bit of time staying at home reading, among other things, Pat Whittock's autobiography:

interesting, passionate, sincere and truthful, an inspired and inspiring story.

We went to Nelson Bay for a few days, where we cruised, watched dolphins, swam, fished. We also visited a chirpy Kev, and our son-in-law Tony's parents, Tad and Barbara, where they told us of corruption in their council. During our absence from Pietermaritzburg, the Msunduzi Mayor, Speaker and executive were recalled and kicked out, even out of their council seats, and the municipality put under administration. This suggested that things had deteriorated and it was disturbing. Colin had not been impressed by the new Council, though he got on quite well with the ousted mayor, Zanele Hlatshwayo. He was glad not to be part of it but was pleased that Babu Baijoo was elected Speaker in place of the ousted Alpha Shelembe.

Later we visited Wendy (Matthias) and her husband Desmond in their beautiful house overlooking the sea in Gosford, where we had news of Wendy's mother, Myrtle and the family in New Zealand. Then one by one, or group by group, we all left. It had been a real family holiday, much time given to entertaining the grandchildren. Colin commented very little on events and experiences, though.

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## AGEING

Years ago we were proud and in our prime,  
But now we feel the wear and tear of time.

Returning, we resumed our activities, driving to Phuzamoya on Saturdays, analysing Jung's theories, the importance of nature, *Man and his Symbols*, the unconscious, listening to Gloria Gearing about the analyst's task to set free squashed people; and to Ian Player on wilderness trails and fracking and confronting the inner wilderness, the experience of great religious leaders.

The year 2010 was, of course, dominated by the Soccer World Cup, something that Colin was immensely interested in:

We live in a dangerous and paradoxical country. Quite a lot of crime and inefficiency and corruption, yet the World Cup was a great success. (Only later did the extent of the corruption become clear.)

The event brought visitors to our house:

Kathy and Tony, who decided to travel here and watch Australia play. We were delighted to have them for a full seven weeks. For the game between Australia and Germany at the massive new stadium in Durban they took along Richard and me. It was a memorable experience, looking down from a great height upon the players as upon a chessboard. Our old friend Ian Hughes also came from Canada with his son Daniel for a week; they preferred to watch games at fan parks. Daniel is a professional portraitist (he has had a picture exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery in London), and using photographs, he has done stunning, probing paintings of us and of Richard.

Leslie Weinberg died after quite a long illness. We were grieved at this. We visited Pessa and were asked to participate in the ceremonies conducted in

a Jewish home when someone has died. We went to Leslie's funeral in the Jewish cemetery in Durban, where we were impressed by the dignity and simplicity of the graves and the service. Colin and Leslie had worked together on so many things – the latest their association with King's School.

As we approached our eighties, how did ageing affect our lives? Obviously, we slowed down in some ways. I did not slow down appreciably physically; Colin did slow down physically, affected by his cancer and by his weakened immune system; he had to guard against colds and over-exertion. He would settle down over TV on a cold evening with a blanket. We both tended to prefer blankets or rugs and hot water bottles to heaters, except in the coldest weather, as they were less dehydrating.

Yet 2010, 2011 and 2012 were very busy years for Colin, participating with energy in various NGOs. Since his political role had lessened, his involvement with NGOs and other organisations, and his involvement in church and religious matters, took up much of his time. He was particularly busy with the Community Chest and PACSA as both were going through periods of change.



**MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PIETERMARITZBURG & DISTRICT  
COMMUNITY CHEST**

L-R (Seated) Irene Dugmore, Elna Welman, Julie Todd, Dem Kambouris, Aroo Naidoo, Debbie Harrison and Barbara Watt

L-R (Standing) Kay Makan, Stewart Smith, Lynton Rowlands, Phillip Dladla, Tim McNally, Zithulele Nene, Bongzi Mshengu, John Sprake and Colin Gardner

Not available for photograph: Stuart Craib, Ephraim Ndlele, Simon Gushu, Lin Geber, Topsy Mahlobo, Cllr. Tu Zondi.

*Council of the Pietermaritzburg and District Community Chest, 2009–2010*

The deliberations were prolonged, complex and sensitive. Aroo Naidoo was retiring as director of the Community Chest and there were ongoing discussions, assessments, to find who was to replace him. Colin was on the six-person selection committee that decided to appoint Michael Deegan, and, at the same time he became chairperson. He had enjoyed working with Aroo Naidoo and his wife, Elaine, and looked forward to an even closer working relationship and friendship with Michael and his wife Debbi.

Apart from the usual day-to-day concerns, such as fundraising and allocating money, one of the burning questions was whether to join United World Way (UWW). The UWW was determined to combine with the Community Chest and there were ongoing discussions and meetings, many of them in Cape Town. Colin felt quite strongly that more use should be made of more cost-effective teleconferences, and he asked Kathy to explain how they worked. She responded in detail and he forwarded the information. There was to be a meeting at which the leader of the UWW from Chicago would be present. In preparing for this, Aroo had sent copies of some of Colin's reports to her. She wrote back amazed, saying that she had met Colin. It turned out that Michiko had au-paired for her in Chicago and she had come to their wedding in France. (Sometimes the world seems like a global village; this coincidence and, later, when Kathy and I had enjoyed a concert with Mbongeni Mlaba, the professor of English, we discovered that my daughter, Libby, and his sister, Tchipo, both nursed on Nauru, a 4-kilometre square island near Papua New Guinea.)

Judging by the number of e-mails, the discussions between UWW and the Community Chest seemed interminable: disagreements over wording of documents, questions about financing, about the exact relationship between the two bodies. Colin and Aroo and later Michael Deegan made numerous journeys to Cape Town or Port Elizabeth. In April the first teleconference took place. The local Community Chest felt that they had to maintain their interests in the face of the challenge from this global institution regarding Pietermaritzburg as small fry, and Colin felt quite strongly about this.

He had two bouts of illness in 2012, prolonged flu at the beginning of the year and, more serious, at the end when he spent a month in hospital. When he could, he would read and comment on all the e-mails and his input was appreciated. Janet Butler, vice-president (Africa region) for UWW wrote: 'It is so nice to hear from you and to know that you are up and about. We missed you at the meeting at Port Elizabeth. Take care of yourself and I hope to meet you at the next CCSA meeting.'

Perhaps some might have regarded him as a nit-picker but he was meticulous about the wording and implication of documents, and many were amended as a result of what he had to say. As I saw PS after PS in the list of e-mails, I wondered if people groaned when they saw them; there was no indication that they did – most of the time, they expressed gratitude. At some point, in terms of government regulations the Community Chest had to know all the organisations that Colin was connected with, his position in each organisation and how long he had been associated with them. He listed chairman and founder member of PACSA, on the board and council of the Alan Paton and Struggle Archives, committee member of the Msunduzi Innovation and Development Institute (MIDI), on the board of King's School, committee member of the local branch of the South African Institute of International Affairs, on the board of Edendale Hospital; and there were others. When he complained about my continuing to work, I reminded him of all the committees he was on and how much of his time they took. In a report on meetings with the Community Chest he wrote that he raised laughter with some of his comments from the chair. He believed that humour relieved tension and pressure, and sometimes prevented discord, though he might have annoyed those who hoped to provoke discord.

PACSA was reorganising too, partly as the result of diminished funding from overseas and the feeling among many members that its role had changed. The e-mails in these years were full of queries, answers, doubts, decisions, as circumstances changed. It was necessary to retrench some people and this was a most painful and lengthy exercise, with an attempt to cause as little suffering and disruption as possible. PACSA was being restructured with one word in the title changed – 'Christian' became 'Community'. The logo and brand were also being changed. It was a controversial decision, as it changed the attitude and the work, and some of the founder members were critical. Colin tended to be consulted or spoken to by both groups. He had to some extent, the trust of both but also experienced the unhappiness of both: he had once again become chairperson, so he had had experience of both periods. His own writing was sometimes criticised, and his chairmanship of meetings. And e-mails flew backwards and forwards, lists and lists of them, with Colin sometimes acting as go-between and ever aware of nuances and implications. Daniela Gennrich resigned as director of PACSA, and Colin felt that it was time for a new chairperson, so he suggested Bellina Mangena, who agreed to take it on.

One of his tasks for the organisations he belonged to (usually on the committee) was to proofread reports, minutes and pamphlets. He was

meticulous and would correct errors, but was also sensitive to nuances, tone and implications. (I have so missed his advice in all the writing I have done since he died.) Someone once said to me, 'How does he do all the things that he does?' He almost never procrastinated and wrote things down so that his mind stayed clear.

He was still involved in Council: being on the committee of MIDI meant being on other committees, such as the Air Quality and Environment Forum; we were invited to the opening of the enlarged airport; he was on the Edendale Hospital Advisory Board (he had been appointed to this board by Premier Zweli Mkhize), attended meetings there and was available when people needed him. He received a letter from Shiro Maistry, his secretary and PA when he was Speaker, in which she thanked him for introducing her to life in the municipality 'so gently and informatively'.

Colin's wider involvement meant, among other things, speaking at Ixopo at an Alan Paton occasion in memory of the first film of his book, *Cry, the Beloved Country*. The event started with a slow train journey (he was fascinated by trains) through the autumn countryside to Carisbrooke Station, ceremonies there, included the talk by Colin, and a visit to the school that had been funded partly by the filmmakers. We were impressed by the use of natural resources, the school garden, the dedication of the headmaster and staff, and by the ambience of the school.

There were other invitations: Thayalan Reddy invited us to a mini-conference on Tagore, where we were pleased to meet Herby and Betty Govinden. An Alan Paton Lecture was presented by Verne Harris, entitled 'Madiba, memory and the world of justice'. Michael Cardo's book on Peter Brown *Opening Men's Eyes* was launched and Colin was asked to review it. Later, in August, he was asked to speak about the book at a literary festival at the Yellowwood Café at Howick. The review was published in *Natalia* and Jack Frost, the editor, said: 'I cannot imagine how we could ever have got a better review than this'. He had, of course, to refer to the title, much criticised by feminists – though it is a quotation from nineteenth-century Russian liberal thinker, Aleksandr Herzen: 'We have to open men's eyes not tear them out.'

With pleasure he wrote the preface to the book by Msunduzi's former Medical Officer of Health, Julie Dyer, *The Health of Pietermaritzburg: 170 Years in an African City*. He admired Julie and suggested to Babu Baijoo that she be given a more important role in the municipality. She had been in charge of the city's HIV/AIDS programme, then strangely, despite being a medical



doctor, she was removed from that position, replaced by an appointee without a medical background, and put in charge of the Municipal Market.

Colin gave a talk in October to the Anglican Men's Society on revolution and the views of Milton and Wordsworth and he addressed them as a 'charmingly non-feminist society'. A friend, Brian Spencer, was not able to be present and Colin sent him the talk. In thanking him, Brian referred to him as a member of 'the quaint male-dominated church of Rome' but added how much he had enjoyed the talk.

Colin was also external examiner for the English Department at the University of Zululand, which led to a tsunami of e-mails. He said he had to at least open all of them, even when it became clear that he did not need to read each one. The *Witness* books editor, Margaret von Klemperer, also asked him to review Pius Adesanmi's book, *You're not a Country Africa*. In December he was asked to review Peter Popham's biography of Aung San Suu Kyi, and was delighted to do so, as she was one of the people he greatly admired. (In fact, he converted it into one of his articles as he felt that it deserved longer treatment (what would he say of later problems in Myanmar?) Later he reviewed *Race Trouble: Race, Identity and Inequality in Post-Apartheid South Africa* by Kevin Durrheim. He received an unexpected e-mail from American poet and activist, Nomusa Xaba, thanking him for his support of her during the writing of her book *It's Been a Long Time Coming*. Nomusa was married to world-renowned jazz musician and political activist, Ndikho Xaba, who was born in Pietermaritzburg. Ndikho was a lead actor in Alan Paton's play, *Sponono*, which in 1964 had a limited run on Broadway. When it ended, he stayed in the USA and remained in exile for 34 years. We were invited to the launch of Philippe Denis and Graham Duncan's *The Native School which Caused all the Trouble: A History of the Federal Seminary of Theology*. Christopher Merrett asked Colin to write what he recalled about the day on which the State of Emergency had been announced in June 1986, and Colin wrote what he could remember:

I was made aware that things were going on when I got a phone call – early in the morning – at I think about 5.30 or 6 am – from an old friend of ours, Bernadette Boulle, saying that her daughter, Jacqui, had been detained by the police, and did I know what was going on? I said that I didn't, but I'd phone Peter Kerchhoff to ask what he knew. Well, of course I soon discovered that Peter had been taken too. And as the day wore on, I became aware of detentions of University people



that I knew – Yunus Carrim and Yusuf Bhamjee, for example, both of whom had been working for a development studies group under Norman Bromberger. People I knew in the UDF were also detained.

What about myself? Did I expect to be detained? I can't remember! All of these events took place, as far as I remember, on a busy working day, and news of detentions were threaded in amongst the daily happenings of the head of a busy department – discussions, essays, lectures, tutorials, staff and student problems. Life had to go on. On the whole I had got used to the idea that I probably wouldn't be detained, though I had been fairly active in the ways that others had. It seemed to me then – and I think that it was in fact true – that I was in some degree protected by my status as a professor! The government was I think afraid of alarming ordinary white public opinion, and I think they calculated that, though one could without difficulty detain lecturers, junior lecturers and researchers, the public wouldn't really approve of the detention of a professor unless it could be shown that he had bombs under his bed.

How was one to judge what was happening? The events were worrying at the time, and one never knew whether the Nat government was going to go mad and start bumping people off left, right and centre. (Of course, we have since discovered that they did kill quite a lot of people at that time.) In retrospect one can see quite clearly that the state of emergency was the desperate act of a regime that had begun to sense that it was on the way out. Even at the time, though, I think one had a glimmering that the move represented desperation rather than a confident assertion of power. Also, the morale within the UDF was such that the detentions were in no danger of snuffing out the great energy and determination within the liberation movement.

Some people, of course, had a terrible time during the emergency. One such person was Peter Kerchhoff, who was treated quite badly and kept in solitary confinement for long periods.

There were other events. Walter Saunders consulted Colin about some aspects of his simplified version of *The Merchant of Venice* and we were sad to hear that he was moving to the Channel Islands.

It was inevitable, though, that much of what we did was focused upon the family, as Colin had fewer duties than he had had as Speaker and active politician, though his interests remained as varied as before. The family, too,

felt the need to visit us more frequently as they could not be sure for how much longer we would still be here. They all converged on us for Easter 2011. Our house is a house for children – it is sprawling, the garden is large and fairly wild, ripe for exploration. Although they are city children, Londoners, David and Michiko's children are imaginative and creative. They were constantly surprising us with their energy and their improvisations, their irony. We saw our familiar environment differently through their eyes. Sadly, it was during their stay that Ann's husband Jimmy died.

In July we spent a weekend at Didima Resort, in the foothills of the Drakensberg, with Richard and Dolly, and Colin was able to do a fair amount of walking. We enjoyed the bracing air and being surrounded by mountains. I could walk and walk in this atmosphere but in Maritzburg it was often too hot. Back home, we watched the Tour de France (and at one stage commentators focused on the Chateau de Chissay.)

Two things dominated the second half of 2011. First, in September Colin organised, on behalf of the English Academy of Southern Africa, a seminar on 'Newspapers Today: Their Role in Society' to be held at St Nicholas Diocesan School; an excellent venue, co-operative and easily accessible. There were many preliminary meetings and discussions (beginning months before September!) with a committee of Colin, John Deane, Manfred Schroenn and Elwyn Jenkins, most in our house, punctuated with laughter and date loaf. A number of speakers were to present papers and lead discussion – some of the editors moved before the conference took place and had to be replaced, even after the official programme had been published; some speakers thought that they would be able to attend, and found, often at the last minute, that they were not able to. It was a stressful, challenging time for Colin – e-mails, hundreds of them! In his report to the English Academy, he wrote:

The seminar aimed, within the Academy's broad vision of 'South Africa as a democratic society in which effective English is available to all who wish to use it', to emphasise the vital role that newspapers can play in promoting the values and imperatives of the South African Constitution, and to examine the ways (political, economic, social, technological) in which newspapers find themselves challenged.

The organising committee had hoped for an audience of about 60 people, but gratifyingly 85 turned up. Many sectors of society were represented: university and school teachers, newspaper people, social activists of various kinds, as well as concerned members of the public. There were five speakers, each of

whom spoke for between 15 and 20 minutes. The programme was arranged in such a way as to allow for a good deal of discussion, and participants did indeed contribute a great deal to the value of the occasion.

The keynote speech was given by Elwyn Jenkins. During the seminar Stanley Ridge, the president of the Academy, presented him with a certificate which confirmed his status as an honorary life vice-president of the Academy. Jenkins offered a wide-ranging and perceptive survey of the main topics of the seminar. Three of the speakers were newspaper editors: Yves Vanderhaeghen, acting editor of the *Witness*; Deon Delpont, editor of the *Independent on Saturday*; and Aakash Bramdeo, editor of the *Post*. They spoke with the full knowledge and experience of accomplished and thoughtful professional journalists. The final address was given by Martin Prozesky, well-known as a writer and speaker on ethical issues. He stressed the strengths and weaknesses, in ethical terms, of both the English language and of the media. At the end Colin made a few summarising remarks.

All the five papers were interesting, challenging and strongly delivered. They were appreciated by the participants and led to lively, sometimes impassioned discussion. Among the many issues that were raised were the following: current attempts to control the media and the probable reasons for this; the importance of press freedom and the history of it in South Africa; the threats and the opportunities offered to newspapers by the electronic media; the crucial fact that newspapers usually provide credible information; the uncertainty of the technological future; the need to appeal to young readers; the question of whether journalism itself is threatened by current developments; the need for newspapers to be relevant and to have focus and passion; the degree to which English is associated with whiteness and is therefore seen as having been complicit in apartheid; the value of newspapers as watchdogs; the problems of functioning in a multicultural and multilingual society; the often complex ethical issues that newspapers have to face; the problem of getting people with power to take ethical values seriously; and the ways in which newspapers can be made use of in schools.

Manfred Schroenn wrote: 'Your report is absolutely superb, so succinct and vibrant and effectively covering every aspect of the seminar. It really brought the seminar to life for me and will certainly convey to the Executive of the English Academy the quality and relevance of the project and the sense that it was a fine success.'

The second was that we were aware that our dear friend Jacques was dying and this was in our thoughts whatever else we were involved in. At the end

of October, he died at home with Astrid and his daughters at his bedside, with his funeral planned and his gravesite chosen in a peaceful private cemetery. Although we had known it was inevitable, and people had been preparing for it, it was a very sad time. Jacques had been so vivid, charming, witty, challenging, supportive that it was difficult to believe that he was no longer alive. Inevitably Colin and I were reminded that he, himself, faced a similar death, though there was here no equivalent of a peaceful cemetery. There were glowing obituaries in newspapers such as the *Guardian*. A memorial was planned for later at York University.

We were aware too that Colin's colleague, Bill Bizley was also suffering from severe ill health, no longer able to conduct the city orchestra.

Colin once said wryly that one of our most frequent social engagements was funerals, and it was true that many friends died and we met at funerals so many others, some not seen for years. We heard of the death of Ilse Naudé. Colin remembered his time in the Christian Institute and staying with the Naudés in Johannesburg. He had greatly admired Ilse, her dedication to her husband's beliefs, and how she had suffered for this. Their home was welcoming and warm. David Walker of PACSA and St Matthew's Church died and we were reminded of his book on depression. Colin also heard of the death of Glenn Cowley, with whom he had worked closely on the University of Natal Press committee:

a wonderfully lively and creative presence on the campus and did remarkable things at the University Press. He was always generous, open-minded, alert, good-humoured, energetic, thoughtful, bold and wise.

‘In the Bot Gardens’

Along the Avenue of tall plane-trees  
I walk among the golden fallen leaves.  
I rustle them with my feet, and they become  
the souls of all my dead beloved friends.  
Many of them rejoiced in these very trees.  
I rustle them, and talk to them, and they  
commune with me. Together we enjoy  
the timeless presence of this sacred wood.  
And I think that perhaps I may have strayed  
Into the edge of that rare and special ground  
where they and all the host of the dead dwell now.

Perhaps he was thinking of the death of Fidela Fouché. Colin felt strongly the need for some ceremony to indicate the seriousness of the moment and the need for people to say farewell. On a number of occasions, he planned a memorial suggesting speakers and readings. He helped plan Fidela's memorial held in the Botanic Gardens, her ashes scattered in the avenue of plane trees.

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## SLOWING DOWN

On the home front one of the problems we now had was that once Richard's grant was withdrawn, we became responsible to a large extent for supporting him and his extended family: two of his stepdaughters on grants with three children each, one missing and one unemployed husband. At the same time, we felt that we had to continue employing Precious (Lindiwe) Dlungwane, as we had employed the family since 1959, when Teresa, her mother-in-law, came to us from the Martins. Both these responsibilities made great demands upon our income. And we found this awkward when we were asked to contribute to various bodies and causes. One of them was the Rhodes Scholarship Committee and Wadham College. He wrote to the warden of Wadham, and to the chairman of the scholarship committee, Edwin Cameron, reminding him that they had met and explaining his circumstances. He received generous letters from both. Judge Cameron remembered him and thanked him, 'for this remarkable letter. I well remember our meetings, most lately in the lag-end of your membership of the KZN selection committee. And thank you most truly for your intense and candid engagement with my appeal. It wasn't meant to paralyse you, and I regret causing you any anxiety at all. I have found your account of your circumstances intensely moving, and I know the warden, Dr Markwell, will too. Yours has been a generous and big-hearted, giving life, and there is no call for me or the Trust to give you one iota of care about further generosity. That, in these circumstances, you are even thinking about a single small donation is itself greatly affecting, but let it not be a source of care to you. I send you my profound respect and appreciation and personal warm wishes – Edwin.'

We settled down quietly, though there were seldom days when Colin did not have to go out – to meetings or executive meetings, to co-sign cheques for MIDI, to respond to appeals for help in one way or another and he often had evening meetings. In winter we would spend afternoons on the front veranda, north-facing and warm, with the view of the hills which his mother had so

loved. We would read or talk. In summer we sought the shade of the big trees in the garden or swam. He spent far more time in our garden and walking or meditating in the Botanic Gardens, with our dogs Jade and Tess, when I was with him. He was immersing himself in the natural world.

Jim Taylor (he and Liz great friends of Margie, and so of her parents), a philosopher and ecologist, with Liz running the Dargle Dale kennels and very much involved in ecological affairs, wrote: 'Prof Gardner developed a strong interest in ecology and sustainability. I couldn't believe it. Every meeting we had, from then on, at Yalta Road, was all about ecology and how the planet needed to be looked after.'

'Nature'

This blade of grass is my distant cousin.

Much closer is this handsome tree.

I belong to all the bright green world.

The bright green world belongs to me.

Much of Colin's reading and thinking in these later years was motivated by a quotation from Hopkins: 'Over again I feel thy finger and find thee', searching for God. It was meditative and spiritual, challenging. We continued to go to meetings on Jung at Phuzamoya and he would take fairly copious notes and consider them carefully when at home. He also read Roger Scruton's *Modern Philosophy* and quoted passages from it. He was appalled by the Japanese tsunami of 2011, describing it but also the way in which it hit our TV screens:

Hitting us all with horror and dismay/and from there, swiftly flowing/  
and spilling down further, down/into the deep well of our frightened  
dreams.

With his interest in African literature, he was delighted to attend the fourteenth Time of the Writer Festival, particularly as it was held in Pietermaritzburg at CALS with Bernth Lindfors' collection at the heart of it. With his association with the Indian community, too, he was pleased to be invited to the 118th anniversary of Gandhi's eviction from the train on Pietermaritzburg station. There were two things that struck him, 'A spark was lit here which changed the course of world history' and 'a strange original Eastern mystical concept, which shook the West as algebra shook the Greek geometricians.'

At the beginning of December Colin wrote his *Witness* monthly article on the Protection of State Information Bill and the millions of rands of taxpayers'



money to be spent on the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the ANC. He suggested that:

The ANC as a whole doesn't understand democracy ... the degree to which democracy depends on freedom of information and freedom of expression ... and now we find Baleka Mbete, the national chairperson of the ANC, attempting to argue that the centenary of the organisation ... must be seen as a national event to be celebrated by all South Africans.

He continued to both praise and criticise the ANC. In response to this article, Rob Fincham, chairperson of MIDI, wrote to him: 'I found your article in the paper today both pertinent and very brave. So few seem to be expressing the frustration and indignation so many of us feel. Thank you for your voice in our community.' It was because Colin had so strongly supported the ANC for so many years that he was deeply distressed when they seemed to accept corruption, nepotism and cadre advancement to the detriment of improving the position of the poor and unemployed. He, himself, was scrupulous; in fact quite frugal.

In November and December there was University of Zululand marking, and Christmas, the latter rather chaotic with Richard's extended family of (for us) four step-great-grandchildren, three step-grandchildren and their husbands, and of course Dolly. They loved the space in our house and, in the heat, the swimming pool, though they had to be carefully watched as none of them could swim. Colin enjoyed the opportunity to go overboard with Christmas decorations and a much-decorated tree and a crib and listening to the Festival of Carols from King's College chapel. I saw that there were loaded plates, and Richard's family provided noise and activity. The children were younger than our own grandchildren, so the noise and movement were more haphazard; and, the joy of grandchildren as they go home and you are left peaceful in spite of the havoc they create. Colin had his study to retire to, so was fairly tolerant of what happened in the rest of the house.

In January 2012 we set off for Marygold Harman's 80th birthday party at her retirement home in Port Alfred. It was years since we had made such a long car journey. We went through Maclear and the former Ciskei, an unstressful journey except through the towns. Colin drove most of the way – he enjoyed driving.

Our planned journey down was beautiful, and the Eastern Cape had had plenty of rain, so everything was green and luxuriant. We broke our trip at

Elliot at a B&B and lunched at Matatiele. The roads were good, apart from a few potholes, with not too much traffic.

When we returned, Bishop Rubin Phillip told me that I was no longer needed at the diocesan archives. I had intended to leave at the end of the year – Colin was pleased that it was sooner – but I had hoped to have the year to see that everything was in order, so that Ken Chisa could easily take over. I was to leave at the end of April, the others immediately. PACSA wanted people to sort their papers at the Alan Paton and Struggle Archives and they asked Jewel Koopman, Joan Kerchhoff and me to do this, working mornings only. I enjoyed the work and the company, and being, so to speak, on campus again. Colin was not so happy, though he realised how valuable the work was. I had a long list of ‘things to do when I stop working!’ and Colin had pinned it to the back of the door in the study so that I would have no excuse to fritter away my time on spider solitaire or contemplating the clouds instead of the garden. He himself was still involved in the restructuring of PACSA and in the Community Chest and other organisations as I pointed out to him, so he was also often busy in the mornings. He suffered from flu during the last days of January and into February and missed many meetings as a result, though with e-mails he managed to keep up.

Meanwhile, he was also working with Paddy Kearney on a booklet on the life of Denis Hurley and it was close to being completed. A committee including Paddy Kearney, Paul de Cock and Sue Rakoczy were also hoping that Hurley’s worth would be recognised by the Catholic Church and that he would be canonised. He had, they suspected, been too radical to become a cardinal. Colin considered him to be a great inspiration; in his bleakest moments it was Hurley’s example that gave him the courage to continue. Eric Harber wrote: ‘He once said to me that on an occasion when he was a little down Hurley might have noticed it and touched his shoulder: it was as if he had been touched by the hand of God.’

He was asked to assess an article on Guy Butler for the *English Academy Review* and we were invited to the launch of Derek Attridge’s *Cambridge History of South African Literature*. Colin attended an awards ceremony at Edendale Hospital and was impressed by an account of nursing by Rachel Gumbi. With his experience of being nursed, it was interesting see things from the other side of the bed.

The Harbers were coming to South Africa in April and hoped that we would join them in the Cape. Unfortunately, financial constraints prevented this – we had already been to the Eastern Cape and had booked to go to England in June.

We hoped to see them, however briefly, in Maritzburg. Colin and Eric had long discussions via e-mail, often quite fierce; though when they were together, this aspect disappeared and they enjoyed each other's company. We offered to transport them to and from the airport and to lend them a car. In April, too, Mbongeni Mlaba gave the annual Alan Paton lecture to which we took Fleur Webb and Else Schreiner. He spoke most interestingly on the political aspects of Alan Paton's writing. Then our granddaughter Joanna, in Australia, passed her final law examinations with two awards, one the dean's award.

Our genial, cussed neighbour, Bill Peale, used to come to lunch with us on Sundays. As he aged, Colin fetched him and led him by the hand. He went over on Easter Sunday and found him spreadeagled face down on the floor: he had fallen out of bed the previous evening. Against his wishes, we called an ambulance and he was taken to Northdale Hospital, then to Grey's and eventually to Sunnyside Retirement Home as it was clear that he could not live alone.

Our friends Pat and Jenny McKenzie had decided to retire to Durban and we regretted this as we did not often go down there. We would miss them. Gwen Barrett, a neighbour and close friend, was moving to Johannesburg as she was beginning to suffer from Alzheimer's. David's friend Craig (Busky) continued



*Colin with Jenny and Patrick McKenzie, date and location unknown*

to spend occasional nights with us since his schooldays, at times bringing two workers with him. He tried to keep our garden trim by cutting trees, branches and shrubs.

Somehow, we had not been told in time about Cosmas Desmond's death and did not attend his funeral. We were able to participate in a memorial gathering for him. He was a former Catholic priest, known for his opposition to forced removals in South Africa during apartheid. He wrote a book on the subject – *The Discarded People*.

We went to Durban for a meeting about a celebration for Archbishop Hurley and to meet again Sr Marie-Henry out from England. She was to give a talk in Howick on aging for which we would be late. Colin:

What we intend to do is for the two of us to drive up to Howick and slip old age gracefully into the back of the room where you are telling people how to grow old with grace.

This was a joyful event, as was the function at the City Hall where Glenn Flanagan had the 'signet of the National Order of Legion d'Honneur' conferred on her. We had taught together, left Epworth together, and Colin and I had been most interested in her development of the Route Imperial to the place where the young prince Napoleon III had been ambushed and killed during the Anglo-Zulu war.

We had had many dogs over the years; they brought us great joy, but also grief when they died. Our too gentle German Shepherd, Jess, rejected by the police for not having the right temperament to be a police dog, had to be put down; she had cancer of the spine. Colin wrote to our children:

The very kind vet said that she seemed to be in excruciating pain even when she was heavily sedated. He also said that she was remarkably stoical. All three of us – Ma, Richard and I – were with her for twenty minutes or so before she was given the injection and as she was given it. We were all in tears. Richard was particularly attached to Jess as he sometimes spent 8 hours a day with her, as she followed him round as he did gardening tasks.

We had so many varied experiences and interacted with such a great variety of people. We took Father John Patterson out occasionally, to tea, to a concert, to visit Bernadette Boule in hospital at Umhlanga, where she was recovering from a pulmonary embolism and holding forth to a large group of visitors. We returned him to Cleland where he lived. Colin's account:

We arrived back at the small seminary in Cleland where Fr Patterson teaches, after dark, to be confronted by a closed gate. Fr John had no remote nor could he remember the password or the telephone number. We flicked lights on and off, but everyone was in chapel. The old security guard arrived, as helpless as we were. Eventually Mary, the most agile, offered to climb over the wall and went off down the road. She saw a figure walking in the dark and called out. It was a student, amazed that there was a woman calling him, then that she was alone, then that she was a gogo and then to hear that she had climbed over the wall. He was dumbstruck but opened the gate.

In that all-male establishment, I think he thought he was seeing a vision!

Colin was often asked for his opinion on current events, not officially but by friends and acquaintances, and he always replied with courtesy and fully. In an article for Francis Antonie of the Helen Suzman Foundation for its magazine *Focus* on 'Liberalism and the current ANC', he wrote:

What then is my view of liberalism today? I would tend to emphasise that liberalism is not, or not only, something that is or was practised by a special group of (largely non-ANC) people but that it is something that is in many ways built into the SA Constitution, the constitution that the ANC has endorsed. There have been some very illiberal things done and said by the ANC, but there is, as far as I know, nothing inherently illiberal about the ANC's core principles or aims (not that the latter are always wholly clear). No-one could object to 'A Better Life for All' ... In other words, I'd like to encourage the ANC to see liberal principles as what they should live up to, within their own traditions and formulations, rather than as ideas to be encountered in an 'Us versus Them' context.

Colin reviewed for the *Witness*, *Bury Me at the Marketplace* – the letters of Es'kia Mphahlele, co-edited by his colleague, David Attwell, and Chabani Manganyi. He prepared a talk for the Museum 'Some animal poems', to be given only when we returned from England; a *Witness* article 'The value of Pietermaritzburg'.

He was concerned that Bill Guest's book about the Agricultural Faculty. *A Fine Band of Farmers are We* was not sufficiently advertised by the University; he suspected that there was a lack of interest as it was mainly about the Pietermaritzburg campus. He spent some time contacting Bill and others to try to get more publicity for the book.

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## FINAL TRAVEL

We had decided to spend time in England, little knowing that it would be the last time we would travel there together. Kathy was to join us. Shortly before we left, we had news that Paul's wife Jane had died. The funeral would take place while we were there and we would participate in the requiem mass in the church which Colin had attended as a child. Jane was to be buried in the same grave as Paul at the edge of Richmond Park and, like Jacques, in a beautiful peaceful cemetery. I envied them the burial place. As always, Colin had planned the whole trip meticulously, lists and lists of e-mails, phone numbers, addresses, dates of visits ... Luckily, Kathy was to drive us – Colin would probably have insisted on driving and it was not good for him as he was suffering from lingering flu and was on antibiotics. We spent the first week in Sunbury, given over to the children largely – monopoly, playgrounds, walled garden and David's garden. Then we went on to the Harbers at St Alban's, meeting them at the National Theatre to see a fair production of Shaw's *Doctors' Dilemma*. We spent a couple of days at St Alban's, meeting Graham Pechey, visiting Hatfield House, but mainly with the Harbers.

We then left for London, meeting Kathy and taking a coach to Bristol to Bishop Road so familiar to us, our second home, where we met old friends. Later we went to the Waterfront and to the John Wesley Church, which Colin described as: 'soberly impressive and dedicated'. The next day was spent at the beautifully restored centre of Bristol – it was difficult not to remember the centre of Maritzburg which was filthy and steadily falling into a state of disrepair!

Kathy drove us all, including Thurber, back to Sunbury for a large family get-together of all Cath and John's extended family. David's girls were far more delighted at spotting Thurber than at seeing us again. It was a big gathering.

We had one day to recover and then drove to Folkestone on to the train to Calais and from there to Paris to meet Michiko's mother Michèle and her father Teruji San. Near our hotel was another example of urban renewal, a flat area of concrete from which gushed fountains of varying heights. We drove to



York to stay with Astrid. After Sunday mass at St Wilfred's in the shadow of the Minster, Colin suddenly:

Felt cheered and uplifted in grasping a positive purpose. Confirmed for me ('over again I feel thy finger and find thee') by glancing at the end of the 3-volume biography of DHL.

He was interested in a God of power. We visited Jacques' grave and Astrid planted flowers on it; it was only a couple of blocks from their house. That evening Astrid had invited people to dinner, a Pietermaritzburg dinner – the Attwells, Maughan Browns, Derek Attridge, and her grandson Leo Birtwhistle. It was a most convivial evening; the following day we set off for Sheffield to see John Bishop. We visited various places in Sheffield, including the rebuilt cathedral, the peace gardens and Paradise Square, another urban renewal area. On 10 August Kathy left for Australia, with a sad farewell.

We spent a day in London on the South Bank, where all the Olympic tourist events took place. After free ice creams at Waterloo, we visited the South African Ekhaya exhibition where we saw wonderful artefacts, of a kind we never see at home; we wandered into the Book Maze in the National Theatre, where Lou-Anne, our reading granddaughter, said she would like to spend all day; the grandchildren played on the multi-coloured sandy beach created on the banks of the Thames; we took the boat to the Tate Modern, walked to the Savoy, where there was a Qatar exhibition; then it was Constitution Hill, where we watched the Olympic men's walking race. En route we picked up freebies: dark glasses, Olympic bags, computer bags, memory sticks, exercise books and pens! We caught the tube back to Sunbury and then spent the evening on David's boat watching a firework display. This day made huge demands on Colin, but he stood up to them very well, even to hoisting Lou-Anne on to his shoulders to watch the walking race. For the children it was wonderful as all the way along the route there were interesting things for them to view or to enjoy.

As I look back to our travels together, I remember how Colin always enhanced our visits with his knowledge, his ability to notice things and to make comparisons, his positive outlook, his ability to spot incongruencies and amuse us by pointing them out or commenting on them. But we also enjoyed the relaxed nature of our time away from South Africa.



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## RETIREMENT ACTIVITIES

Colin had stood up to all the travelling and sightseeing well, but we were careful not to demand too much of him. We had seen news of the appalling Marikana massacre; Colin wrote a *Witness* article on it. He had not been left in peace while he was overseas as he was inundated with e-mails, some from Richard, but most from organisations such as Community Chest, PACSA and others. Some he received only after we had returned. He was plunged back into hectic decisions at the Community Chest and PACSA. There were resignations from the PACSA council, notably that of Joan Kerchhoff, which Colin very much regretted, although he understood her reasons. He had to send an apology to Betty and Herby Govinden:

I send my greetings and apologies to all of you at the English Academy and DUT gathering. I am very sorry that an important previous appointment prevents me from being there I would have liked particularly to hear what my old friends and colleagues, Michael Chapman and Lindy Stiebel have to say and to listen to Betty Govinden read some of Lewis Nkosi's poems.

The list of deaths continued. While we were away, we heard of the death of Glenn Lawson, a colleague and friend of Colin's in the English Department, a popular lecturer and most likeable; and, after we had returned, of Juliet Armstrong a wonderfully alive, creative and inspiring person. We attended the memorable wake for her in September at their house, a very large occasion with a wonderful speech by her husband, Mike Hart. We were aware too that Gunther Wittenberg, weakened from pancreatic cancer was facing death. Colin was very conscious of mortality and we watched him carefully.

He was caught up in the response to an article by Jeremy Cronin that seemed to be attacking the idea of democracy; he was disturbed by this as he had admired Cronin's poems, and had regarded him as one of the more enlightened members of the ANC. Cronin's article had been published in the *Witness*, but there had been no reply. Colin wrote one when he returned, but

the editor decided that it was too late to respond, so Colin sent it to Cronin:

I am sorry not to have replied before now, but there seems to have been something of a saga at the Witness. Oddly enough, they seem to have been more keen to publish your attack upon them than to produce a response to it, though they obviously thought that many of your accusations were unfair. At first, I gather, there was some uncertainty as to who should write a reply, then there were delays (as other urgencies flooded in, as happens with daily papers), then people began to feel that it was too late

for a reply! In the end, a day or two ago, Christopher Merrett suggested to me that I should write a reply! Anyhow, I wrote an article, which I attach, and sent it in to the Features editor this morning. She accepted it with alacrity, saying that it would appear tomorrow. Then a half an hour later she wrote apologetically to say that the Editor had vetoed it as being out-of-date. So, you will not be responded to by the Witness. Having written my piece and finding it unwanted by the people I wrote it for, I thought I might at least send it to you. As you will see I focus on some of the things you said about democracy. My criticisms, for what they are worth, are quite harsh: I hope you will not be offended but will accept what I say as a part of the cut and thrust of political debate.



*Colin towards the end his life, Paris, 2012*

In spite of all his commitments, he agreed to speak at the sixth annual Faculty of Arts conference at the University of Zululand. He chose as his topic 'A thinking society' and members of staff were pleased when they read his extract. He received a beautifully produced copy of a Shakespeare folio, *Prose*

*and Poems*, sent at the request of Paul Goller, an NCFS friend of ours. We were asked to contribute something for Else Schreiner's 90th birthday and Colin wrote:

Else is a quietly fiery person – fiery in her love and support for her family and her friends ('My dears') and fiery in her hatred of injustice. Among her many other qualities, Else is a wonderful hostess; it's one of the ways in which she expresses her great generosity. We have very much valued her friendship over the years, her lively sense of humour and her infectious laugh. We have appreciated the art works enhancing the family home and the Schreiner Gallery in the Tatham Art Gallery, and the lovely garden we look out over as we sit with drinks, conversation and food on the verandah. We hope to enjoy all these for many years to come, Else!

We looked forward to the arrival of our son David. For his MBA he was coming to South Africa to do research and was to spend some time with us. Unfortunately, Colin developed a very heavy cold, yet he insisted on travelling down to Durban to fetch David, though he did let me drive there and back. His cold converted into flu, then into pneumonia. He went to his doctor, who sent him for tests. He had been somewhat incoherent and with a very short attention span, which concerned him and us. The following day his doctor said that he had to go to hospital, but was first to see his oncologist Dr Seedat, who would not let him walk down the stairs and tried to find a bed for him immediately. He had a shadow on his lung and was dehydrated and anaemic and lacked sodium ammonia. The only bed available was at Oatlands in Howick, so I was told to drive him straight there; he was not allowed to get out of the car, so I had to drop in at home to get some essentials and then drive him to Oatlands. He was admitted and I was told to come back at evening visiting hours. The drive to Howick takes about half an hour, so I did not look forward to doing it three times a day.

But the following drizzly evening, I was told that there was a bed for him at St Anne's Hospital in Pietermaritzburg, so I was to fetch him. It was quite nightmarish in the dark and the drizzle, but he was at last safely in bed. He was given a CT scan and two sachets of blood. We visited him there for a couple of days. Then, at about 9.00 pm, after we had visited him, I had a cellphone call from him. He said that he could not breathe but that the nurse would not take him seriously and refused to call the sister or the doctor. David and I rushed to the hospital. As we reached his ward, we saw him being wheeled

out – he was being taken to ICU. There doctors worked on him; he was by now unconscious, suffering heart and lung failure. I sat next to him, speaking to him as I remembered that David said that he had responded to my presence when he was in ICU at St Peter's in London. I also prayed – partly to Archbishop Hurley for his intervention – passionately and imploringly as I had in London. They sent me out while they did some procedures and one of the partners in the oncology firm said that he should only have lived two years after he had been diagnosed with bone marrow cancer, which was not what we had been told. I did not find that comforting or reassuring. Eventually they said his lungs were clear and he was sleeping quite peacefully, so they encouraged me to go home. David phoned and e-mailed family and friends, while I tried to get some sleep, not knowing what the next day would bring.

He recovered slowly, very slowly, until he was sent to an ordinary ward and then to a step-down facility, Wembley House, which he found so much more pleasant than hospital. David was both helpful and worrying as he kept saying that I should ask for another opinion, which I felt unnecessary, and this was confirmed by Libby. (Sons who are successful businessmen can be a little un-noticing about what one is feeling as I have found with friends' sons!) He had his own problems, suffering from severe earache and was also on antibiotics. He had, though, to go to Cape Town to complete his research.

Colin came home and Richard drove him up onto the top lawn past the side of the garage on the road which I had had built for Susan and which he had thought would never work. He found, though, the walk from the garage, up a slope, then steps, then a path, then more steps into the house, then through the house and up another flight into his study quite daunting. So, we took to driving him up on to the top lawn. I was not able to fetch him as Dolly's mother had died and the funeral was that morning; the family depended on me for lifts to the church and then to the Mountain Rise Cemetery. I did not stay after the burial but dropped them home and came home myself. Soon Colin was back on e-mail, responding to duties, engaging in discussions, though he could not go out for some time. I went to Else's birthday without him but taking Fleur Webb. Later, though, there was a finger lunch for her at CALS which we both attended, as we did the launch of Julie Dyer's book. On 1 November, he wrote a general letter about his situation:

I haven't been feeling too well, and my convalescence seems to be alarmingly slow, but I saw my oncologist on Tuesday, and he said that as far as he could see things were progressing well. So,

I'm grateful for that. I'm beginning to walk about more easily, and I go out at times, with Mary as the driver. I have to say, as I've said before, that Mary has been wonderful over these last six weeks or so. She had to deal with my absence and my parts of household affairs, while visiting me every visiting time, and dealing with various mini disasters: Dolly's mother's death, a lightning strike which knocked out our alarm system, punctures on both Toyotas, failed deliveries at the post office, the e-mail breaking down repeatedly, the TV breaking, the bank refusing to accept her signature. All this while working, when she had a chance, at the Alan Paton Centre archives and scrupulously attending weekly meetings of the St Vincent de Paul Association. And the remarkable thing about her dealings in these matters is that, as I've observed since I came home two weeks ago, she remains calm and kind and empathetic, never getting enraged, as I would be apt to, at delays or incompetence or general unhelpfulness. We worry though, as she knows, that she may be too energetic, and over-stretch herself. Richard has also been a pillar of strength. His wife Dolly agreed that he should stay in the house with Mary while I was away, and she guessed that he could still be very useful in the early stages of my convalescence. Besides many other good deeds, he brings us (his idea) coffee and the newspaper at 7 am each day! Watching a good deal of television – I suppose not surprising in my circumstances – puts my illness into perspective: terrible things of various kinds happening in South Africa, and of course elsewhere.

He was asked if he would proofread the Alan Paton Centre magazine, *Concord*, which he had always done in the past. He agreed:

but the magazine is much longer, and proofreading has been something of a nightmare – whole sentences that have to be re-written.

Still, he spent intermittent periods of time on it. I commented then – 'and I think it is good for him to begin his normal activities, as long as he does not overdo it. He has visitors tomorrow afternoon, and I will be interested to see how things go.' It was the Denis Hurley committee, and things went well. He was also able to do some gardening and he insisted very soon on driving the car, though I was quite happy to drive him. He welcomed Al Cook from the early days of the Liberal Party out from Canada. There was sadness too:

Bernadette Boulle and Pessa Weinberg were both moving to Cape Town to be closer to their children.

Then Colin had to go into hospital for a cardioversion, a shock to get his heart beating regularly instead of irregularly. This was a brief stay, and it was successful. He felt stronger, so we were able to go to King's School's speech day, with *Romeo and Juliet* as the play, using songs from *West Side Story*. It was good to be able to be there and support John Carlyle Mitchell's children, Tanya and Anton, who had taken over the running of the school. Their sister, Lucy Coelho, in an earlier letter to Colin had written: "A precious friend and member, who has shared so much wisdom and guidance and, especially, perspective to the dealings of King's School and its band of miscellaneous supporters."

Kathy and Tony arrived after spending two days in Johannesburg with Kathy's friend Valda Dicks. Tony decided to build a vegetable garden safe from the depredations of monkeys and he roped in Richard to help him. Tony had also asked if he could make the Christmas dinner, to which I assented with a huge sigh of relief. The greatest news, though, was that his oncologist was pleased with Colin's progress: his cancer count was down, his kidneys were functioning better and he looked really well – great news for Christmas and for our visitors. After Christmas they left for the Kruger Park and, shortly after they returned, Margie arrived. With Margie we shopped (Kathy is not a shopper) and they all contributed to a flat screen television for us. We were able to enjoy their stay because Colin was so much better. Kathy and Tony left, and Margie stayed on a while more. We took her to the airport to spend a couple of days in Cape Town on her way back to Australia, and then visited the McKenzies and Fr Patterson. While Margie was here, we celebrated our 55th wedding anniversary, and her birthday, and looked at retirement complexes.

Colin began to catch up with all his responsibilities at the Community Chest and with PACSA. He contacted Marie Odendaal, from the University, to ask what had happened at the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) meeting. Marie replied, 'your name was mooted for the new committee but with the recognition that this could not be confirmed in your absence. If you do have an interest in being on the committee, I know you would be greatly welcomed.' He decided that the up-and-down nature of his health prevented him from accepting. He was shedding responsibilities, or the more arduous or less important ones, and complained of a lack of energy.

The one thing that marred these days since well before Christmas was that Colin, shortly after he came out of hospital and resumed his cancer treatment,



developed a rash and began itching badly. He was prescribed ointment which did not help much. When I began to itch too – I at first blamed mosquitoes – we wondered and went to the doctor. We both had scabies! This meant that all our visitors were in danger of getting it too. We had to wash everything in sight, spray something on our mattress and smother ourselves in white chalky liquid from head to toe. We also had to warn all our visitors to do the same, and Precious and Richard as well. The specialist thought that Colin had probably caught it in hospital. It persisted for some time; Colin's was partly an itch and rash as a result of thalidomide, which his medical aid had allowed his doctor to prescribe. In spite of this he began to lead quite a full life, returning to Phuzamoya and 'getting into the swing of things'. He began to think seriously about the talk he wished to give at Phuzamoya about Wordsworth, not this time the revolutionary Wordsworth but the Wordsworth of nature. He participated in interviews for the new director of PACSA and suggested John Inglis as the new chairman. He read Chris Mann's new poetry and suggested possible publishers as poetry is difficult to get published. Echoing Green Press was not interested, but Colin suggested that he send the poems to Sr Sue Rakoczy for Cluster Publications, which he did. He was fascinated by Bill Bizley's article on the similarities between the build-up to the battle of Little Big Horn (Custer 1877) and Isandhlawana (1879) to try to show that:

The mindset that led to both defeats suggests that you may be dealing with battlefield details, of which I know little, but I have been interested in the colonial and colonising attitudes to be found in many places in the later nineteenth century: the USA, Canada, Australia, India, South Africa.

He was saddened by the death of Margaret Lenta, who had been a Durban colleague for so many years and later we attended the memorial lecture for her in Durban given by Margaret Daymond, at which Colin gave the opening welcome. The ranks of our friends were thinning.

He wrote a *Witness* article 'The price of inequality', which was rejected; but wrote a later one 'Game or family', which was accepted. There were a number of events in mid-February. One of the most enjoyable was the Maritzburg College Old Boys' veteran lunch. There he met many veterans his age, though he was aware of those no longer alive. The meal was served charmingly by the Grade 8 boys. Enjoyable and significant was the handing over of the PACSA files to the Alan Paton and Struggle Archives. It was preceded by an article in the *Witness* on the work that Jewel Koopman, Joan Kerchhoff and I had done.



Both Else and Colin wrote quite long letters to the municipality objecting to the increase in rates, electricity and water, and the impact this would have on the poor. Later Colin wrote a letter to President Jacob Zuma criticising the Protection of State Information Bill.

In contrast to his withdrawal from other activities, Colin accepted his appointment as a member of the Edendale Hospital board; he agreed to be interviewed and filmed by the Museum about opposition to apartheid; to be one of the speakers at the Maritzburg College celebrations; to lead a Lenten faith-sharing group at our house, and to edit Sheila Berry's chapter in the biography of Ian Player. He commented on the latter:

I have read the chapter with great interest and enjoyment. But perhaps 'enjoyment' isn't a wholly satisfactory word, as the chapter is quite challenging: you have managed to get your readers to ask themselves the questions that Ian asked himself. It was not easy to combine a biographical account of Ian and his experiences and insights (and there is of course a bit of necessary autobiography too) with a discussion of Jung's ideas and perceptions and their effect on Ian. But I think you have managed it extremely well. The picture of Ian that emerges is coherent and convincing. His movement through the outer wilderness to the inner wilderness is dramatic; you have done justice to it. And your style, your use of English, which you asked about, is very good indeed (if I may say so).

Perhaps he felt reassured as his oncologist was pleased with his stable condition and commented on how good he was looking and he was taken off all heart medication. He continued to take a lively interest in PACSA and the Community Chest, in fact he flew to Cape Town for a Community Chest meeting. We said farewell to Mr Truter of Mayor's Walk Pharmacy; on page 1 of his invoices appeared Kathy's name when she was two months old. We were delighted to attend the opening of the new museum at Maritzburg College. We took James Currey (Heinemann African series) and Clare on a Midlands Meander, when they were out from England to visit the Alan Paton Centre. Colin was delighted, too, that the Hurley booklet was to be printed.

Colin began to suffer from backache and scabies returned. Dr Seedat said that his cancer count was up, there was no significant sign of spinal damage but there was increased bone marrow activity and he hoped to be able to prescribe Velcade – very expensive and our children offered to contribute but our medical aid agreed to fund it. He chaired a Community Chest meeting

but felt that he had been too lax and had allowed some members to speak at too great length – he was mildly criticised by Michael Deegan. On the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Liberal Party, Christopher Merrett asked Colin to contribute towards an article that he was writing for the *Witness*. Colin commented on Randolph Vigne's book and other writing but added:

the art of the journalist to say and to summarise a great deal in a few words – and let me say that I always enjoy and usually wholly agree with your now pretty frequent pieces in the *Witness*... Some people have asked why the LP folded in 1968: The fact is that it had been drastically weakened by bannings (some 70 in all, I seem to remember), but also many people were coming to feel, either explicitly or unconsciously, that pure liberalism couldn't by itself withstand the brutal force of Afrikaner nationalism. But in spite of this the LP seriously considered defying the Improper Interference Act by carrying on regardless. When it had its final executive meeting in Johannesburg in 1968, I found myself in the chair. I had been vice-chair to Edgar Brookes, but he happened to be a visiting professor at Duke University at the time. Most of the executive, including me, were in favour of defiance, but lawyers on the committee (Jack Unterhalter and Raymond Tucker, both brave and outspoken liberals), had quietly enquired of their Nat [National Party] legal colleagues what the government's plan was if the LP should defy, and they had been told that it was quite simple: the LP would be declared a white party, and all the non-white members would be prosecuted. That made us decide to disband: non-racialism was one of the key principles, if not THE key principle, of the LP; and in any case we weren't, those of us who were white, prepared to live on unscathed while our colleagues who were not white went to jail... at the very moment when the LP was being forced out of existence, another movement, black consciousness, which was anything but non-racial, was beginning to define itself and gather steam. I have always admired Steve Biko. He said that the energy for the freeing of black people must come from themselves: 'If you are oppressed it's because you are willing to be oppressed.' The LP could never have made a statement like that. Biko's tactics were racial (and social) but what he aimed for was a liberal equal society. He made that clear, and people who knew him well had no doubt about that.

At the same time Colin was asked to write some of his memories of the University by Bill Guest and he wrote a long account. Here is his final paragraph:

Just one very general comment. In the nearly 40 years that I taught and wrote at the UNP campus a large number of things changed in the world. The Western world became steadily less racist, more tolerant and more multicultural. These changes were echoed and indeed very present in South Africa and in the University of Natal, but rather belatedly. Another very big change was brought about by the varied manifestations of the women's movement. Over those 40 years, in this regard, both everyday life and intellectual and emotional life were in many ways transformed; and this was reflected in the university too. Then from 1990 onwards, in South Africa and in the university, a whole new set of challenges emerged.

He listed some of these challenges as the socio-economic struggles of many of the students, some of whom were the first members of their family to attend university. At the pass level 'there was a certain limited degree of leniency creeping in.' He felt that the impersonal, corporate style managerial structure that Universities had adopted resulted in a loss of a sense of unity and collegiality.

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## VICTORIA FALLS

Although Colin was on antibiotics as his immune system was compromised by steroids, which also caused his feet to swell, he was still able to live fairly normally. He was cautious, though, and did not attend local activist and Gandhi-follower Dasarath Bundhoo's memorial service at the City Hall as it was a cold wet evening. Yet, as Brian and Anne Bush were out from England, he arranged for a lunch at Trafford's, an extremely good restaurant in Pietermaritzburg that has since closed down. I had my last day at work that morning. Quite momentous. Momentous, too, was the lunch we had, as Colin described it:

it lasted from 12.30 till 4.30! There were eight of us. The four men had all been in the same class at Maritzburg College, and we took matric in 1950. Besides Mary and me, there were Brian and Anne Bush; John and Patsy Deane; Neil and Emma Chapman, who seem content to carry on living in Zimbabwe; and Neville and Barbara Alcock from Kloof.

The noise level was great as all four gave their reminiscences of Maritzburg College and talked animatedly about many other topics and caught up with their lives. I was toasted as joining the club of octogenarians. Trafford's was run by Penny Hattingh who catered for our Golden Wedding.

Some quite significant experiences can fade, be pushed back in memory by newer experiences. June 2013 will remain vividly with us; partly because so much happened and almost all of it was good, and partly because later events gave it special significance. The first day of June was when I finally gave up working, even part-time, to Colin's delight. In retrospect I wish that I had done it sooner, though I do not regret what I did. And Libby arrived, the first of those celebrating my joining the club of octogenarians. We left early to fetch Libby in Durban, as we were visiting Joan Bell, one of our student friends, now in an old age home and confused, succumbing to Alzheimer's.

On 3 June Kathy and Joanna arrived. On 5 June I celebrated my 80th birthday. We skyped Margie to watch while Kathy presented me with my

birthday gift *Mary Elizabeth Gardner: Celebrating 80 Years*, all 140 pages! I had not had the faintest idea of it and was overwhelmed. Colin, unusually, had revealed nothing, even inadvertently, which he often did. He had consigned all his correspondence to the recycle bin and then obliterated it in case I looked into the recycle bin for any reason. Kathy had contacted relatives, friends, colleagues, pupils and had filled the book with family history and numerous photos. It was amazing. I had to show it off, though felt embarrassed doing so because it was quite flattering, so showing it off seemed as if I was boasting! We went to St Ives on the Midland Meander for lunch. After phone calls, presents, cards, the rest of my (our) presents were still to come, with a present for Colin's 79th birthday, too – our first visit to the Victoria Falls.

There was a slight setback – our medical aid said that it could no longer afford to pay for Velcade. Dr Seedat did not display undue concern, suggesting that he would find an alternative. Colin had not been well during May, with a bronchial chest, and was still not completely recovered. He asked if it was sensible to travel. 'Why else,' said Dr Seedat, 'do you think we are spending so much time and money to keep you going!' I think that Colin was anxious about the trip, remembering his illness in England when he was feeling healthier than he was at this time. We went to Zimbabwe not Zambia, as Dr Seedat said that in view of his compromised immune system it would be dangerous to have a yellow fever inoculation.

On 7 June we flew to Johannesburg, Colin with assisted passage – I benefited too. He was more relaxed when we began the journey with a large breakfast in Joburg and a pleasant flight. At the Victoria Falls airport things were a little more dicey. We were told to go to the back of the plane and saw, approaching us, an extraordinary contraption, trundling along and shuddering and creaking all the time. 'I wouldn't go on that,' said the air hostess and, indeed, we were told to hold on tight, and, emphatically, hold very tight! The contraption, which felt as if it was falling apart at the seams, lowered us to the ground and took us to the airport, squealing every inch of the way. We decided that we would walk to the plane when we returned.

Colin, gamely, did most of what we did though less walking. The trip round part of the falls is 1.5 kilometres long so we had our friendly guide push him around on a wheelchair. Long-sufferingly he allowed us to prop him up with handbags, discarded jerseys, binoculars, cameras. The falls were unbelievably beautiful, huge and powerful. We walked along the gorge edge, dressed in waterproof ponchos but still getting drenched in the spray from 'the smoke that thunders' but were careful to keep him some distance from the edge so

that he did not get wet. We watched bungee jumping from the bridge across the gorge, and Kathy and Libby did a zip slide across it – I was tempted myself. We went for a sunset cruise on the Zambezi above the falls to see the sun set and got up early the next morning to see the sun rise from the front veranda of the Victoria Falls Hotel – an example of colonial splendour. Finally, the girls arranged a helicopter trip over the falls before we left for home. What a birthday present! Colin was lost ‘in awesome wonder’ and inspired by their splendour and power. The guide took him by motorbike to dinner or to slightly distant places. He was intrigued by the history.

Richard carved a path to Durban airport fetching and taking back people to and from spells with us: Libby and Kathy (four weeks) and our granddaughter, Joanna (two weeks), Margie (four weeks) and Vince (coming ten days after Margie). We spent a day in Port Shepstone visiting Ann’s family. Colin sent an apologetic e-mail to Michael Deegan, as he had given his apologies for not attending a CCSA meeting:

You must have been surprised to be told by Richard that I seemed all right and had gone to Port Shepstone. I did feel somewhat better today and, after some thought, decided that I was probably well enough to be driven by one of our Australian daughters, together with Mary and our two other daughters, for a day with Mary’s late sister Ann’s family. Needless to say, my role was a pretty passive and static one. I say all this to quell the suspicion that if I had really wanted to I could have participated in the CCSA talks!

On 26 June we celebrated Colin’s birthday at a soirée held at Fleur Webb’s with her son, Jonathan and his family, Glenn and Priscille – a really good event and Colin enjoyed it. Our grandson Greg and his girlfriend Emily accompanied us to the Drakensberg for a couple of days, although Colin did not feel well. They did most of the walking, up the mountain to the Bushmen paintings, while Colin and I sat at the hotel and read, though I did more walking than he did and ventured up the stream. The girls always spoil us, finding gaps in our comfort zone. This time it was an electric blanket, which Colin delighted in. Colin insisted on driving Greg and Emily to the airport to fly to Cape Town, though it was very cold and he was not well. After they had arrived back in Australia, Greg wrote, ‘How hard it was to accept that last night would be my last dinner at Yalta Road. It is sad that such a long chapter in our lives is coming to a close, though I can’t honestly provide an alternative vision for

how else the transition should be managed. I suppose I should feel lucky to have had such a comforting place throughout my life, know that it is probably far harder for you to consider leaving, or even take comfort in the fact that nothing has happened yet (the house isn't on the market, there is no buyer yet) but that hasn't been easy.'

Once our visitors had left, we settled back into our normal rather undramatic life. Dr Seedat suggested that the lack of Velcade would provide a good break and that Colin's cancer count was low so that he could relax. He was certainly becoming brighter and more energetic. He wrote his last chairperson's report for the Community Chest; he went to meetings and was quite eager to do things. Our medical aid had come to an end so we hoped that we would be fairly healthy till January.

We were shocked to hear that our friend and former director of the Bessie Head Library, John Morrison, had cancer – he had been retired for so short a time – and by the unexpected death of Tim McNally, a former attorney-general of Natal and long-serving member of the St Vincent de Paul Society. In August Libby's divorce became final. We had become reconciled to it but felt its sadness, nevertheless. Sad too was the death of our friend Herby Govinden. In his letter to his wife Betty, Colin wrote:

such a gentle, kind, positive person; we are sure everyone who knew him must have loved him and felt blessed by him.

Colin decided that at the AGM of the Community Chest he would resign as chairperson. In his letter of resignation, he wrote:

I am sad and also a bit relieved to have stepped down from the chair. But I shall miss the interesting and complex issues that the local and the CCSA deal with. Debbie (Harrison) takes over from me, but please remember that if you or she should feel the need to consult me on some issue, I'd be very happy to offer my view.

The responses to this decision give some idea of the respect for him: 'Your wisdom and input will be missed Prof. May your health improve drastically' (Veronica); 'I am saddened by your news and horrified that my editor of minutes is retiring... I will genuinely miss your company, your wisdom and your lovely sense of humour' (Gordon McDonald). Colin retained an interest in the Community Chest, writing to Michael Deegan:

The more I think of the odd goings-on within the CCSA the more puzzled and indignant I feel. As I said, I had thought of writing



myself, to add weight to what has come from the Durban end – but then, when I got home, I realised that strictly speaking I am no longer a member of the CCSA board. Debbie will be taking my place there: don't forget to remind her!

Responding to this, Michael asked him to 'send me your thoughts as to what I should send to CCSA.' Colin replied:

What exactly to say to CCSA, specifically to Lorenzo and Taj, is a tricky issue. Maybe something like this:

'The Council of the PMB and District Community Chest, which met yesterday at 5.15 pm, has become aware both of the delays in moving ahead with some of the resolutions taken at the June CCSA Board meeting and of rumours of CCSA meetings taking place without some members of the CCSA Board being informed. In the light of this our Council has asked me as Director to write to you at once to obtain full clarification on both of these issues. At a moment when the CCSA is moving forward to take on new and exciting responsibilities it would be deeply regrettable for certain events or misunderstandings to block our progress.'

What do you think? This is of course just a suggestion. But I think it is extremely important that this matter be cleared up as soon as possible.

His numerous and often lengthy letters to Michael and others show to what extent he still wished to be involved. Michael, thanking him, wrote, 'As I have said many times and will continue to say your contribution as Chair has been immense and your valued experience, on-going support and impact is greatly appreciated and welcomed. You are and continue to be the gentle GIANT of the Chest.'

He reluctantly turned down an invitation to the Gandhi Development Trust awards in Durban. He wrote to Stanley Ridge about his decision to resign as honorary vice-president of the English Academy, asking how he should set about it as he would remain a member. He was releasing himself from some demanding responsibilities – yet he remained on the Edendale Hospital board. I encouraged him to remain on some boards as I felt that he needed to do things that took him out of the house, out of himself. Was I right to do so? I still cannot answer that question. There were invitations that he did respond to, such as the Diamond Bozas art exhibition, where someone handed him a

copy of Bozas's autobiography and then disappeared so quickly that Colin was not able to thank him adequately. We had a pleasant visit to John Morrison and his wife, Floss, though John and Colin spent part of the time discussing their cancer treatments and the side-effects – Colin was on chemo and began complaining of lethargy and heavy legs; John was suffering from an itchy skin, which Colin could relate to. We had a get-together at the Wittenbergs with friends and early members of PACSA. Gunther had not yet reached the worst stage of pancreatic cancer. Colin wrote to Gunther:

I have now read your fine article, it has taught me a great deal and left me with many things to think about. It is a remarkable example of contextual theology.

Greg and Emily got engaged and were planning a wedding in December 2014, which we doubted that we would be able to get to – such a long flight, through a number of time zones.

As I was now retired – I thought every day was Saturday – and as Colin was feeling easier, we decided to have a rare dinner party. (We also played the first game of chess we had played for 50 years!) On the veranda, Colin read to me while I peeled pears for the party, to which we had invited former colleagues, Rob Fincham and Jenny Clarence, Alleyn Diesel and Mary Kleinenberg from the Black Sash, Anton and Jill, Christopher and Christine Merrett. It was a very pleasant occasion at which Colin was quite relaxed. We later went to a lunch party, with lively and interesting conversation in which Colin joined with energy. His latest *Witness* article was 'Combating corruption'. Linda Longhurst decided to put it on the leader page next to one by friend and journalist, Nalini Naidoo, on corruption. Colin was praised by Al Diesel: 'Congratulations on your especially good article today! You have set out the negatives so clearly, but then offered such a positive way of reacting to this scourge – if only it has some effect on some people. Cry the beloved country! Hope you and Mary are keeping reasonably strong and healthy. Keep writing – it's good for your health and ours!' to which he responded:

Thanks, Al, and let me reciprocate by saying how much I enjoyed your article. Writing about these matters is one of the things we can do. Many friends in today's paper the two of us, Nalini, Christopher.

He gave the Museum talk he had been promising. He asked for a chair in case he could not stand for the whole talk, but he managed that quite easily. His

talk was well-received. He spoke with some passion, though perhaps not with quite his usual energy.

He implemented his decision to resign from the English Academy. Professor Rosemary Gray praised him as ‘a tower of strength, support and advice over the years. Please let’s not lose touch or lose your valuable input for English Studies in Southern Africa.’ Professor Rajendra Chetty, President of the Academy, commented: ‘It would be sad not to have you on the Council and as Vice-President. You have contributed tremendously towards the Academy of English studies in our country.’

At the same time his health was worrying him and he had a number of visits to members of the medical profession. Libby suggested a physiotherapist and his oncologist Dr Seedat agreed.

First the physio, Gillian Freese, who has given me a series of exercises that she is sure will make my leg muscles stronger. That was a one-hour appointment. We then went across to the Medical Centre over the road and had a cup of tea and a muffin. Then Dr Watson at 3.15. He gave me a very thorough check-up. It’s a pity that I can’t see Dr Shein, the cardiologist, before the 17th, as it seems clear that it’s my heart that is causing the swelling in my legs and feet – though in fact both Gillian Freese and Watson were surprised that my legs are not in fact very swollen. My heart is fibrillating again. So, he sent me for blood tests and for a chest X-ray, which meant that we didn’t get home till 5.30 or so. I am seeing Watson again on Friday, and Gillian on Monday. So, it’s quite a palaver ... I must say that I feel like a real old crock!

Dr Shein, the cardiologist, said that his heart was bad but not too alarming, put him on medication and would see him in a month’s time. As Colin was finding it really difficult to walk upstairs, we approached our estate agent to put the house on the market; we needed to go somewhere smaller. Peter Payne, an estate agent, was going to Ireland and promised to bring a possible buyer before he left, but his house was broken into by thieves whom the local media dubbed ‘the five-minute-gang’, so everything was put on hold. Once Colin had retired, we decided that we should put our names down at a retirement centre and begin downsizing, especially books and papers. It was difficult: so many of our friends were busy writing books and launching them. As we discarded a book, we found ourselves buying another – and with pleasure.

Maritzburg College was celebrating its 150th Speech Day and the duxes from four decades were asked to give a short speech about their experiences at College during their decade. Colin, as the senior statesman, was also asked if he would present the awards and trophies. He agreed to the first request, but not to the second saying that he did not know whether he would be able to stand for so long. He asked John Deane about current rules at College, saying that he had been bewildered by many of them when he first came to the school. John said that he had been away from the school for quite a long time, so he would need to do some research. Colin began writing his speech. He wrote what he thought was a controversial article on the wage gap, which was immediately accepted for publication by the *Witness*. He was asked by Mr M.L. Sikhakhane from the Edendale Hospital board to help him with a letter of complaint to a government department, checking the tone and the language. He was still involved with MIDI, having to go out to Scottsville to sign cheques and to read minutes. He was still consulted by friends. Joan Kerchhoff and Monika Wittenberg asked him about a function they had been asked to attend, which they felt uneasy about as it seemed to be used as pure ANC propaganda.

There were amusing moments:

There was a striking and amusing incident yesterday evening, at about 11 pm. We had both been worried by some wretched bird that had been (as we thought) sitting in the avocado tree near the pool and making a cawing noise all night. We had been trying to catch it in the beam from our torch. Then we realised that it was very low down – and we concluded that it was in fact a frog! We went out to the flowerbed beside the pool and looked around for it. Then M misjudged exactly where she was and fell back-first into the pool! She was holding the torch and had her watch on. I felt awful – it was terrible to see M fall – but she spluttered and then laughed. And in retrospect we both found it fairly funny. We dried the watch straight away, and she got into her pyjamas, and surprisingly didn't feel particularly cold. In fact, she found it quite exhilarating! [I had just had an expensive hairdo in the afternoon!]

We had another lunch party, this time with people from the Diocesan Archives and those who worked at the Cathedral, then another with Else Schreiner and her daughter-in-law Heather from England, John Inglis who had recently become chair of PACSA, Marie Odendaal and Joan Kerchhoff. Colin wrote that

he had enjoyed these parties. He accepted an invitation to a meeting at MIDI. Joan wrote to him about the opening of the Freedom Exhibition at the Museum as she had expected us to be there. She hoped that he was reasonably well and Colin answered: 'Yes, I think that describes my situation quite accurately!' At the same time, he was involved in long e-mail discussions with John Bishop, Ray Rutherford-Smith and Eric Harber about existence and evolution with the first two and matters spiritual and literary with the last; and e-mails to many other friends, as well as to our daughters and son almost every day. We spent some time encouraging Colin to be positive; neither Dr Shein nor Dr Seedat were unduly alarmed.

On 28 September he woke up saying that he felt much more positive and would like to visit the Freedom Exhibition and the bookmaking exhibition at the Tatham Art Gallery. I suggested that we had lunch at the Tatham. That evening he wrote to Joan:

Just a note to say that we went to the Freedom Exhibition this morning and were impressed. The interviews on the Seven Days' War – those that we watched (we must go back to see the others) – were good, and we liked your one very much.

As he went to bed, he spoke about how positive he felt. I was very relieved as he seemed to have turned the corner. He had written an email to Dr Seedat in which he said:

I am writing to apologise for the half-complaint in the email I wrote yesterday. I think in retrospect that I was probably asking the medical profession to restore my lost youth! I guess I must soldier on, accepting my current condition. I'd still like to know, however, whether I need another antibiotic. My current course ends tomorrow.

I have described in some detail what he was doing, suggesting that, although he complained of fatigue, he stayed very busy, was able to relax on the veranda and in the Botanic Gardens and in front of the TV with Richard enjoying soccer, rugby and cricket – and comedies and documentaries, sometimes films that we had missed on the circuit. He was conscious of approaching death, selecting poems that he hoped he would be able to publish from the so many that he had written, though he knew how difficult it was to get poems published. On the evening of 29 September, he wrote to the family:

This morning we went to two exhibitions: a new exhibition at the Museum on the fight against apartheid in the Maritzburg area – a

really fascinating show, with interviews that one could pull up on touch-screens – and a display of locally home-made books at the Tatham. We then had lunch there. This afternoon we had a long (90 minute) skype with Dave, Michiko and the girls. And a long phone-call with Cath and John. In both of them we talked at length about moving out of the house. And they all now tend to feel that for the time being at least we should stay here. We are comfortable, Ma would be unhappy to move, we are not going down the drain financially, and Richard's current role is working well (not that he has tried to influence us: he is open-minded about it all). We won't give a final decision straight away, and we must wait to see what the developer will say. As Richard says, we have messed poor old Peter Payne about a bit, but we'll apologise, and say that of course we'll go through him when we do sell. David said by the way that my voice was normal, and I look OK. So, I must be grateful for that. This afternoon, too, I watched some sport: South Africa beating Australia at rugby, and on the football scene Arsenal winning and going to the top of the Premier league.

The next letter was written by me: 'I am afraid that Dad/Colin is in hospital. He was so positive yesterday and went to bed feeling that he really had turned the corner, then he got up during the night and fell heavily against the bookcase in our room. He was in excruciating pain and was sure he had broken something. I heard the fall and then Colin calling out in agony. We called an ambulance and Richard stood out in the freezing rain to steer the ambulance in. I felt completely helpless as we waited for the ambulance with Colin groaning in agony, an agony so great that it could not be helped by words or touch. I did not feel that I could give him a painkiller. He had let himself fall as he thought that he was falling on to the bed. I was afraid to move him off the floor, so made him as comfortable as I could. An extremely nice and competent, professional and compassionate paramedic came and took over, sedated him and I went with him to Midlands Medical Clinic which is our designated hospital. Arriving at a hospital in the early hours of the morning is dreary – there are few people around, one has to wait for doctors to arrive and it is cold and stark. We got there at about 2.30 am and he had X-rays, blood tests and was then moved into a surgical ward. Apart from the pain, he was fine, totally compos mentis, and able to joke and describe what had happened. He says that he will remain positive and is feeling fine as long as he does not move. The orthopaedic specialist saw him this morning and confirmed that there are two breaks in his hip.'

To begin with he was positive, though suffering, partly because he could not move – he who had been a restless person all his life (sitting next to him at a play was a challenge). He responded to phone calls from here and from overseas often with humour, and certainly with no sign of a weakening mind, which set our children's minds at rest. He was upset if I was late for visiting hours – getting to hospital was an obstacle course as the City Council, in a moment of strange enterprise, had decided to replace the tarmac outside the City Hall with bricks, and all the surrounding roads, bad at the best of times,



became a nightmare of gridlocks and I would watch the lights change and change and be aware of the passing of visiting hours with despair.

The specialist said that he needed a hip replacement otherwise setting the bone would be difficult and might not work. But he was worried about Colin's white cell and platelet count and his low blood pressure and felt that these must improve before they could operate. Colin was moved to high care, which he considered down care, as it was noisy, rather like Paddington Station! He bristled with pipes and tubes and curious sounds, not unmusical.

He woke one afternoon to find Dr Shein, his small, neat Burmese cardiologist smiling down at him and telling him that he looked so much better than when he had last seen him. He told Dr Seedat that he felt normal; Dr Seedat said, 'You are normal except for your hip'. He remembered his commitments: he had been invited to the Gandhi walk and celebrations and I had to send his apologies as well as an apology that he was not able to go on a projected MIDI tour. I had to send to Mr Sikhakhane the suggestions Colin made about the letter he was writing on behalf of Edendale Hospital. He was writing his speech for Maritzburg College; though, once he had had his operation postponed, it seemed unlikely that he would be able to deliver it; and he decided to ask John Deane to deliver it for him. I wrote many e-mails apologising for his inability to carry out duties.

'Colin is really cheerful and feeling fine except when his leg is moved, and then he is in agony. But otherwise, we are having cheerful visits and he is full of humour,' I wrote. The medication made him sleepy and nauseous to begin with; the meals were too close together and he did not enjoy them, so I took to bringing him food from home. He was amused by our fellow parishioner from St Mary's, Julius Reed, phoning to tell him that he was at Blomeyer's buying a washing machine for me. (Ours had packed up as everything did as soon as Colin went to hospital!) Julius was so helpful, coming to my rescue over all kinds of problems, and bringing Colin communion, a great comfort to him.

Colin's operation was scheduled to take place on Monday 7 October. He had a sign above his bed on Sunday night saying no food and I was told to come in early in the morning before the operation. Colin was apprehensive but quite elated that it was to happen. But it was again postponed as they felt that, although his blood pressure had improved, he was still not quite strong enough for it. They continued to postpone the operation and Colin became disheartened. Could the operation have been a success if they had operated while he was still so positive? Kathy decided to come home and Colin was so pleased at the news. But he was sent for a scan, without ascertaining that he

was allergic to shellfish, so he had to return to the ward and wait another 24 hours. He became so weakened and disheartened that I asked our parish priest Father Neil Frank to give him the Sacrament for the Sick, though warned him that I had to fetch Kathy from the airport. The priest came while I was not there, nor was Richard as there was a memorial function for Dolly's mother. Colin was still trying to write his talk for Maritzburg College but we could not decipher much of what he said. His spirit had deteriorated so much that we decided to ask the family to come. My sister Cath had already planned to do so and Margie and David would come. Libby had to wait until Sunday as Greg and Emily were getting engaged on Saturday.

On 9 October the doctors told us that they were not able to operate and that Colin would be on a ventilator for the rest of his life. They had to decide what to do, but the important thing was to clear his lungs and that they were going to do in the evening. We stayed with him all day. They were going to do the procedure at 9 pm, so Kathy and Cath went home and said that they would pick me up. I could not really speak to Colin, only hold his hand and pray. At 9 pm they came and I asked the sister whether I should stay. She said no, as the doctors had said that he would sleep peacefully once his lungs had been cleared. I knew that the following day would be long and difficult. I phoned at about 11 pm to ask how he was and they said that he was sleeping peacefully. Early the following morning the phone rang and I knew. We rushed to the hospital and they said that all his organs had failed suddenly and he had died. I had not been there and this I still grieve over.

Perhaps it was better that Colin did not have to decline into someone so sick and weak that he could no longer participate actively; that he died as he lived, working, thinking, writing, praying, loving, concerned about commitments that he could not fulfil, his mind alert and, until the end, maintaining his sense of humour.

Margie heard the news in Johannesburg as she was flying down; David saw the posters 'City mourns Prof Gardner' as he drove himself from Durban. The following days, weeks are something of a blur. It was so difficult not to feel that Colin was up in his study as people visited me – this had so often been the pattern when my friends came. We were overwhelmed with visits, flowers, food, phone calls, tributes. We had to arrange the funeral; we wanted it on Friday morning but that was when John Deane was giving the talk that Colin should have given to College, so we had to arrange it for Friday afternoon, 18 October. This gave an opportunity for family to come from overseas – Gregory and Joanna, our grandchildren came for three days. Colin had hoped

his funeral would be in the morning and then lunch at our house and garden, but Jane Sebastian lost her husband Flynn in the same week and I could not ask her to cater. We had to have afternoon tea in the church hall, very well catered for by the Catholic Women's League, though even then people from a distance had to leave immediately after the funeral – it was a drizzly afternoon. It was not what he had wanted, nor me ... He felt the importance of the social part of a funeral.

A friend had warned me that the first months were filled with business and decisions and adjustments; she also advised me to accept invitations from friends, not to shut myself up at home. When I had asked Colin who he would like to speak at his funeral, he had said Douglas Irvine; Douglas and Colleen had long been friends of ours and Douglas knew him in all three of his peaks: academic, political and religious. Douglas based his eulogy on Chaucer's quotation 'He was a verray parfit gentil knyght'. He spoke with great eloquence, in a wide-ranging account of Colin; I spoke about him as father and husband. He had always said that he would like to speak at my funeral and I felt that I owed it to him to speak at his. What I said was so inadequate, though I felt that he had helped me as I woke at 2.30 am and asked for inspiration; what I wrote then was better than what I had written earlier. Our old friend, in both senses of the word, Father John Patterson, said the Mass. He based his sermon on the Sermon on the Mount and the way in which he felt Colin embodied these principles. He impressed people with his warmth and wit. Mike Lambert came up especially from Rhodes University in Grahamstown to sing with his hastily assembled choir and Jacques Heynes played the organ. Colin would have loved this as he appreciated the Madrigal concerts which Mike and his choir held in St Mary's Church where the ceremony took place. A number of local political dignitaries and friends attended – Yunus Carrim, then minister of communications in government and a long-standing friend of Colin's, and the mayors of Msunduzi and uMgungundlovu, all of whom arrived unobtrusively and unaccompanied by many bodyguards. And friends! The church was full of friends, of all creeds, colours, ages, occupations. Colin was to be cremated – 'I would have loved a grave like Paul and Jane and Jacques'. An ANC councillor had once taken Colin on to the portico of the City Hall, pointed out to him all the trees on the surrounding hills and said, 'One day all these areas will be cemeteries!' This made a strong impression on Colin but I was sad to have his ashes interred in the small slot in the wall of the Garden of Remembrance at the church.

The funeral was followed on Monday by a memorial ceremony in the City Hall, organised by Mayor Chris Ndlela, where the organisations that Colin had been involved in had a chance to say their farewells to him. His friend Babu Baijoo was master of ceremonies and he interspersed the speeches with examples of Colin's wit. Other speakers included John Inglis from PACSA, Michael Deegan from the Community Chest, Rob Fincham from MIDI, Anton van der Hoven from the University, Mr Sikhakhane from the Edendale Hospital board, Paddy Kearney from the Denis Hurley Foundation, Truman Magubane from the ANC and Bill Lambert from the Democratic Alliance. What they said was in some ways similar but they all spoke differently, with generosity and eloquence. The similarities were because Colin was an open person and many of his virtues were quite public ones: they spoke of his integrity, his hard work, his commitment to social justice, his compassion, his meticulous use of English, his generosity in helping people, his moral courage, his wit, his warmth. We appreciated the time and thought that they had given.

The ceremony was not as well-attended as hoped. There were various possible reasons for this: the memorial followed quite soon after the funeral and was perhaps not as well-advertised as it could have been; it was some time since Colin had been a member of Council and many councillors might not have known him; and he had been critical of certain aspects of the ANC in recent newspaper articles. He had had spells of illness and time overseas, so he may have faded from the consciousness of many people, except those with whom he worked on committees. The Council had provided a handsome spread for those who were there. We appreciated Mayor Chris Ndlela's effort. He introduced himself to all of our children and conducted himself with quiet dignity and courtesy. It was a memorable occasion.

Colin's niece, Helen, wrote a tribute from England which seemed to encapsulate much of what he was: 'As one of his nieces, Colin treated me as he treated everybody – with curiosity and kindness. He was one of those rare grown-ups (my dad is the same) who were just genuinely interested in different perspectives, even from people a lot younger, less clever and far less accomplished than himself. We have good memories of him at the Bishopston house. Do you remember the day he collected a basketful of broken clothes-peggs from the garden and patiently repaired them? Or, when sent to Gloucester Road for bread, returned with Christmas cake – the last thing on the baker's shelf ahead of the bank holiday. More recently, do you remember the moving description he gave of Shakespeare's Imogen, soon after our own daughter Imogen was born? Reading the tributes and hearing about all the eminent

people he knew, I began to wonder what they would have made of him repairing pegs, laying the table for supper, listening to the half-baked philosophising by a teenager. And then I realised that of course they wouldn't be surprised at all. He was the same with them.'

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## ‘HE WAS A VERRAY PARFIT GENTIL KNYGHT’

It seems appropriate to quote from Chaucer, the quotation that Douglas Irvine asked me to include on the funeral leaflet. Our friend Tim Dunne wrote: ‘becoming acquainted with Colin directly through some lectures on Chaucer he focused on the phrase “a verray parfit gentil knyght” and then as now I associated the description with him.’ Douglas tells us that ‘Our knight, the noblest character of them all [the people gathered together for the pilgrimage to Canterbury] ‘loved chivalrie ... Trouthe and honour, freedom and curteisye’.

Douglas analysed the meaning of these words in Chaucer’s time and explained why the line was a fitting description of Colin. ‘Verray connects us more closely to the idea of truth itself...truly a true knight.’ In almost every tribute to Colin, from academics, from colleagues, students, fellow workers and politicians, friends, the words ‘integrity’ and ‘truth’ have been used. Marilyn Aitken: ‘truth, integrity, a lack of ostentation, and great courage to take risks.’ He himself searched for the truth of things, though he was also criticised by those who felt that he had not sufficiently defined truth. It is a word that is difficult to use in the twenty-first century as so many accepted truths have been questioned and found wanting. Honour has similar problems. So, integrity is perhaps a more acceptable description. If Colin thought that something was important, he felt that this needed to be said. He did not accept things, slide over them, as many of us might be inclined to do. He spoke out strongly even when he might find himself at odds with most other people. He faced unhappy truths about himself and his behaviour too. Integrity was something for which he was almost universally praised.

‘Parfit’ is not the same as perfect: ‘it meant complete, an outstanding example’. Not that Colin would for a moment have considered himself perfect in the modern meaning of the word; he was often critical of his behaviour and attitudes. Douglas describes him as strong-minded, ‘you can’t hold strong opinions without antagonising people or sometimes being wrong; and on rare occasions he struck even his friends as being gloriously wrong-headed’ – even his wife, who argued with him on occasion. But many people felt him to be

an example, someone who said and did what they perhaps might like to have said and done.

'Gentil' means 'a civilised and generous man'. His father was once spoken of as 'a gentleman in the best meaning of the word' and that would apply to Colin, too, although the word is no longer used without an element of irony. 'Gentle' was used of Colin by Michael Deegan of the Community Chest and by Peter Alexander who wrote the biographies of Alan Paton and Roy Campbell. Colin was not by nature aggressive, though he could be tough. He was courteous. I always asked Colin to read what I wrote to make sure that I did not inadvertently offend people, and he was sometimes critical of minutes or reports that seemed to him to be less than courteous. This does not mean that he could not be strongly, indeed robustly, critical when he felt things to be wrong and needed to point this out. On the whole he did not swear, not through primness but because he found better ways of being critical, or even of being angry. He was by nature not one who swore, nor was his father.

A knight 'rode forth in search of adventure in chivalrous service, in fealty to his love, to do battle against tyrants and to protect the captive and the weak.' It is difficult to imagine Colin in armour and on a steed! An interesting tribute, relevant here, came from Al Cook, now living in Canada, but earlier an activist: 'Sometimes in the bally-hoo accorded to exiles and those in prison, magnificent though their achievement was, those are forgotten who, like Colin, stayed behind and quietly got on, as part of their everyday life, with the job of opposing apartheid on every level, speaking and writing, day by day putting forward a constructive anti-apartheid vision, supporting and contributing to those local as well as national causes and projects that ground away at the pillars of apartheid literally like the Mills of God – or as Mr Vorster would have put it "white-anting South Africa", so that when the trumpet finally blew, the walls of Jericho crumpled without a shot being fired. The keynotes of those activities were ongoing courage, dedication and good will. When considering those activists and stalwarts, Colin is among the first who comes to my mind.'

So, there were no flying pennants but a steady determination and extraordinary energy that carried him forward. 'To do battle against the tyrants and to protect the captive and the weak' was extremely important to Colin. Always, and repeatedly, people spoke of his ability to keep them grounded – in the Community Chest, Janet Butler spoke of 'his commitment to ensuring that service to the poor remained uppermost in all our minds and agendas'; and social justice activist Tajuddin Akleker said that 'his commitment always to serve others selflessly constantly reminded us that it's the humanity within the



community which we serve.' Douglas spoke of his 'passionate commitment in the great struggle against injustice'. This commitment led to his being increasingly critical of the ANC government as it fell short of its vision, being seduced by cadre deployment at the expense of integrity and efficiency, and by corruption. But the best people in the ANC and the best of their ideals he still supported. He was conscious of the corrupting influence of too much power without checks and balances, and that it was inevitably the poor who suffered. He had feared the appointment of Zuma.

He accused himself, sometimes, of cowardice but he was courageous in unobtrusive ways, not in grand gestures (I do not mean this disparagingly of those who did). If he had been jailed, how would he have coped? Solitary confinement would have devastated him, though I hope it would not have broken him; not being able to read would have been a major hardship, yet he would have read and pondered on the Bible (allowed to prisoners); the lack of writing materials would have been a huge problem, yet poetry can be learnt off by heart, so he could have continued to write. I put this to Yunus Carrim and he said that Colin would have coped because of his strong belief. But I have to be grateful that he was not put to the test, though wherever he went he gathered people around him and, given the chance, he would probably have done the same in prison considering that many were there unjustly. His courtesy might well have disarmed some of the warders. But this is all speculation, though he did quite often have meaningful conversations with the members of the SB with whom he came into contact.

This tribute to Colin includes a tribute to his father. At the time of Will's death, Senator Edgar Brookes wrote: 'there will also be a general sense of loss among those who knew him and who valued his integrity, scholarship and great human kindness. These qualities of his you have inherited, and, that is why we are so fond of you.' Again and again, the tributes to Colin mirrored the tributes written about his father after his death. And one of the English Department secretaries wrote: 'I am sure you knew how proud he was of you – but, to me, as secretary, he perhaps allowed his pleasure and pride in your ability and your rapport with even the most difficult student, to come through, shyly, quite often – particularly when someone had praised you to him.'

One of the things about Colin that amazed people was his energy. I tend to be something of a procrastinator – he never was. His diary helped him to remember requests but his determination to get things done meant that his life was very busy and so full that, inevitably, he was not able to cover everything that was required of him, and some things took time, but there was very little

that he left undone. Our social life suffered at times. In times of pressure, he wanted to be called when the meal was on the table, so that he could work to the last moment, so we did miss out often on the cocktail hour; and, when the children were younger, it meant that they all wanted his attention and competed to get it. It was at meals that they described him as a chauvinist feminist as he relied on me to carve the meat, dish up and serve second helpings. 'Mary, Mary, where is ...?' was a call that echoed frequently round the house as he could not find the Q20 or the tin opener. He could be very efficient, though. He and Bill Peale replaced the bathroom floor when we discovered that the plug had not been connected to an outlet pipe and swamped the area below the floor thus rotting the floorboards, and they removed the slow combustion stove in the kitchen replacing it with windows and a counter. His father once said, 'If you want to get something done, ask an academic!'

He really needed his study away from family activities as he could not work when there was a noise. A friend of ours, a writer, used to go to cafes in Johannesburg when he wanted to write, the noisier the better. This would have been a nightmare to Colin who could be disturbed by the turning of pages of the newspaper. When I sat in the chair beside him, I read or sometimes dozed, at any rate whatever I did had to be quiet. One of the things that angered him was a noise from the children when he was on the phone; he felt it was discourteous to the person at the other end. Some of his calls were very long, which may have exhausted the patience of the listener. It certainly did for those waiting to use the phone.

Douglas spoke of 'his personal and religious life, his deep and constant Christian faith'. The commitment that he made in his student years remained with him, though it broadened and encompassed so much more. Let him speak for himself:

I have always felt that God broods or presides over my life, my intuitions, my thoughts, my actions. But I have on the whole felt God to be a background influence rather than a dramatic interventionist! Maybe that isn't wholly precise. There are moments when I feel God acting very distinctly and sharply within events: and I have always been aware of God at work within people... I think it is useful to reassociate the word 'holy' with the word 'whole'. A holy person, especially today, must surely be a person who brings together religious virtues and a wide-ranging and humane secular awareness... a

fusion of the different strands of one's personality and of one's faith/  
commitment.

His involvement in the Christian Institute and PACSA, along with his political and social involvements, meant that he became well-acquainted with many different forms of spirituality and, though he may have disagreed, he gained a respect for them. Our visit to David in Japan, for example, meant visiting a Shinto temple and observing rituals and attitudes, and he expressed his response in the following short poem:

‘Beliefs’

Two places of worship:  
a Shinto shrine,  
a Catholic church.  
So many beliefs.  
All false? Or all true?  
I take the latter view.

Rather than narrowing his life, religion and spirituality added a richer dimension, a sense of awe and mystery. He accepted the idea of a natural evolution but always believed that there was something more. His religious beliefs made some sense of suffering, could fill his being with delight as he walked in the garden, observed his family and other people, drove into the hills around Maritzburg or down to the sea. Many of his prayers, prayer poems were small songs of praise, others of supplication that he would see his life as fulfilling a role that God had intended for him, could accept suffering as creative.

But what of Colin the person, the teacher, friend, colleague, parent, associate? How did people view him in these aspects of his life? He was intensely human, he would say an ordinary person, with faults, with inconsistencies, with paradoxes. He has been described as ‘always humorous and constructive with his disarming humility and the warmth of his personality ... a wonderful teacher, friend and conversationalist’. Joan Kerchhoff spoke of ‘his generosity of spirit and his writing – mostly wonderful eulogies, always with warmth and love.’ He was positive in his general outlook, anything but a moaner. His criticisms were constructive rather than destructive, partly because he strove to understand what caused people to act as they did – though this did not mean that he could not condemn strongly meanness and greed and the inability to take people into account.

Someone gave me a fridge magnet of the Gardner crest. Accompanying the magnet was a slip of paper about the family. What interested me was the family motto: 'Artibus Hand Armis' [By Arts not Arms] and I thought how appropriate this was as a motto for both Colin and his father. ('Hand' puzzled me, so I asked Mike Lambert, a Classics scholar. He, too, had never heard this Latin word and gave me the correct Latin – which is *Artibus Haud Armis*.)

There was something of a paradox at the heart of Colin. He had a strong sense of tradition yet also a strong belief in radical transformation; a deeply religious person yet not pious, always critical and challenging; a love of traditional literature yet also a commitment to what was new, though again always critically; someone who delighted in arguments and confrontations yet remained close to many of those against whom he most often argued. 'I am so glad we became friends over the most recent years and had a creative and valuable email dialogue [an exchange about Dawkins] which I will always hold dear,' wrote Jim Phelps, who also regarded Colin as a 'most influential teacher, with a most energetic life, lived to the full and up to his highest ideals and values. The world much enriched...' He had long e-mail and face-to-face arguments with many people – he did not believe in keeping quiet if he disagreed with people – yet they remained friends, often close friends. In his arguing he often delighted in exaggerated comparisons and wild turns of wit, somewhat at odds with his carefully reasoned arguments. It irritated me sometimes. But he was also capable of a 'most gentle and delicate and funny sense of humour'. Friends described him as 'inspired and eloquent' with his 'puckish sense of humour'. Students, too, often referred to his humour.

What of Colin the husband and father? We all miss him – his love for us, his interest in us, his way of sharing enthusiasms and interests, his way of adding richness to our lives. He never just pointed things out to us: he commented and brought things vividly to life, made us think and observe critically; he embarrassed the children when they were young at times because he was in some ways different from their friends' fathers. He was supportive of what they did, unless he was disapproving. He was perhaps too helpful as he fetched and carried them and their friends, came to the help of their friends when they needed help. How often did we have long phone calls when members of the family were going through bad times? In spite of his many friends, Colin was quite shy and did not have an easy joking way of talking to people. He was often quiet in company when he did not know people well. In hindsight there were many things which we would have done differently if we had known what we later came to understand.

I miss him greatly and constantly remember things that he liked – the crocosmia those bright orange flowers that scatter themselves like weeds through the garden as autumn begins, the stretch of lawn which he did not want made smaller, the bright red flowers of winter – aloes and poinsettias and red hot pokers – the delicate green of spring unfolding, our house with all its memories, omelettes on Saturday evening, the view from his study window, the Dlungwane family who like us, had their ups and downs; while Philane stayed with us and went to Alexandra High School, Colin enjoyed watching soccer with him (and how he would have enjoyed the soccer skills of younger family member, Sihle); and paintings and books and music. I remember once, as I frantically prepared for a dinner party, he re-arranged the paintings on the walls; he felt strongly that they needed to have their positions changed so that you were able to look at them freshly. I miss our closeness and sharing; I have become accustomed to his absence but am often caught by an acute sense of loss, at church, at a concert, at experiences that he would have been so excited by – why is he no longer here to share them with me? He was so much a part of my life. I remember once, years and years after we were first married, how delighted I was as I looked up one day and saw him outside my classroom waiting for me. We took such pleasure in each other's company.

I am often aware of his presence, can almost hear what he is saying, ask for his help when I am finding something difficult, but no longer his arm suddenly round my waist as I am cooking or working, no longer does the house re-echo to 'Mary, Mary ...' as he wishes to share something with me or ask for my help with some household task or advice about what he is writing, or wanting me to read something that has suddenly excited him; no more the joy of making up after an argument. No more whistling, his books largely undisturbed in the bookcases. We simply enjoyed being together. Let me quote three poems which he wrote, one anticipating that he would die before me:

All I have to do is die.  
The bigger task is yours: to live,  
to voyage to the future years,  
continuing to love and give.

And I hope that I have been able to do this. The other poem, seeing me sleeping as he followed me to bed one night:

*'Old Couple'*

As I see you softly sleeping,  
My dearest wife of more than fifty years,  
it's amazing, it's astonishing  
what life has entrusted to us:  
each of us – independent yet vulnerable,  
vulnerable as you sleep here now –  
entrusted to each other.

And the last one in 2013

*'To Mary'*

In leaving life I leave you too,  
My darling girl, my love, my dear.

In hospital he wrote one final poem, so difficult to decipher:

You have all come home from the ends of the earth  
to say your last goodbye.  
You stand around in a circle of love.  
Now all I need to do is love and die.

And Douglas said some of it: 'his personal and religious life, his deep and constant Christian faith; his scholarly and academic activities as a fine teacher, critical thinker, author and indefatigable committee man; his passionate commitment in the great struggle against injustice; and more narrowly as a political activist, politician and social commentator... in everything that he did Colin was always recognisably himself – a man of parts indeed, but much more than the sum of his parts.'

## COLIN GARDNER MY MENTOR

*Babu Baijoo*

Colin Gardner was deeply rooted in the community of Pietermaritzburg. He was completely immersed in the activities of organisations that were devoted to improving the lives of the oppressed and the poor. He joined the central branch of the ANC after the unbanning of the organisation in 1990 and went on to be elected as member of the greater Pietermaritzburg region of the ANC. It was therefore no surprise that, in 1996, the ANC deployed him as a proportional representation member of the first democratically elected council of Msunduzi. This was the Transitional Local Council, in preparation for the local government dispensation in 2000.

Rob Haswell told me that although Colin was a backbencher, he soon became an invaluable adviser during Mayor Omar Latiff's term of office from 1996 to 1998. He once described this relationship, saying that 'Colin would simply listen to the noisy and often turbulent debates within the ANC caucus, and in the Council. He would then send me a concise note on what he thought were the main issues. We would then meet, and his ability to crystallise matters assisted me, and the Council, greatly. Of course, his own speeches, and the citations he helped to write for the Mandela-Gandhi freedom of the city civic awards on 27 April 1997 were masterly and added immeasurably to the dignity of the occasion.'

The new municipal boundaries extended beyond the traditional city limits to the peri-urban and rural areas of Vulindlela, Edendale, Imbali, Ashburton, Bishopstowe and Claridge. New councillors from these newly incorporated areas brought to the table overflowing baskets of basic service delivery needs from areas that suffered disgraceful inequity. Each ward competed for priority funding from a very limited budget. These new councillors also had their own challenges: many could not drive and Colin was always available to offer them lifts to wherever they needed to go. He was also an excellent teacher, helping



councillors negotiate their way through the local government legislation, rules and regulations.

Colin was appointed the first Speaker of the Msunduzi Council. Hloni Zondi, who served as mayor from 2000 to 2006, said that ‘the ANC could not have chosen anyone better than Prof, as he was fondly called, to be the Speaker.’ Hloni echoed my sentiments when he said that it was an honour to work with Colin and to be guided by such a sincere and wise person. For all of us who worked with him, his dry sense of humour remains a fond memory. I remember the time when Twitter was being introduced on the social media platform. When asked ‘What is Twitter?’ Colin responded, ‘I think it is a diminutive version of a twit’.

Colin led the street renaming process in Msunduzi and of all the cities and towns in the country, it stands out as the one that went ahead with the least opposition and controversy. Rob Haswell, who worked closely with Colin on this project, said that despite the fact that the ANC had a two-thirds majority in the Council, Colin did not bulldoze the street renaming process through. He facilitated and encouraged full and open debate and careful thought about the names chosen and the names retained so as to reflect the different layers of Pietermaritzburg’s history.

In fact, those accustomed to a confrontational, headline-attracting style of debate, often found Colin’s chairing of a meeting to be unnecessarily tedious. But allowing as many as wanted to speak, to participate, invariably yielded consensus rather than a divisive vote. Allowing debate and consensus building was a valuable lesson I learnt from Colin. He mentored me. Not only did he advise me on Council matters, but he taught me how to tactfully merge the vision of the ruling ANC into the agendas of the Council.

MIDI was launched in 2005. It was a partnership between Msunduzi municipality, the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Business (PCB) and UKZN. It brought together pockets of excellence in these organisations and successfully supported innovative projects for students and the broader citizenry of Pietermaritzburg. Colin represented the municipality as a trustee on MIDI and I served with him on this trust. This was another learning arena for me and where I witnessed the quality of his leadership.

Colin served as chairperson of several committees of Council. He chaired the City Hall Working Group. Councillor Judith Lawrence also served on this multi-party committee and she said that a lot of work was done on improvements to the City Hall during that time: ‘Experts were brought in, and you could see things happening.’ She added that unfortunately after that term,

the new mayor decided to move the City Hall Working Group to the Mayoral Office and it was never the same again.

The LA 21 committee, which dealt with environmental issues, suffered a similar fate. After Colin's term ended, LA 21 faded. Although it had difficulty in getting across the message about the need to protect the environment, under Colin it met regularly and issues were raised. During his time, the LA 21 group encouraged the mapping of wetlands, places so vital to the health of the city. Judith Lawrence recalled the following incident: 'It was at a LA 21 meeting that I saw Colin exercise extreme self-control. A member of the public who was an extreme "bunny hugger" and a really over-the-top individual, was holding forth about litter and claiming that we should embrace it and make a shrine of it and goodness knows what else. I could just see the shoulders of everyone present starting to shake and it was very difficult to keep a straight face but Colin did and handled the whole situation beautifully. I remember telling the committee clerk that the tape of that meeting should be kept for posterity, it was so funny.'

Colin was very fair as he steered the work of the Grants-in-Aid Committee. Grants were offered, by application, to community-based organisations that represented various categories, which included sport and recreation, social welfare, culture, and general. Understandably, demands for grants were high. Every application had to be carefully considered and money would only be granted to those organisations that had proved themselves viable or shown that they were able to provide a service to the population. An onerous task. Colin tactfully involved leaders of NGOs that represented the culture, sport and social welfare sectors. They would then help the committee to screen the organisations and their needs. The Community Chest had deep penetration in every ward of the municipality. Its director made valuable contributions to this process. In keeping with his ethos of serving the community and the poor, after Colin left the Council he continued working with the Community Chest.

It was both a privilege and an honour to work with Colin and I cherish the lessons I learnt from him.

THE COLIN GARDNER I KNEW – AND REGRET  
I DIDN'T KNOW MORE

*Yunus Carrim*

Colin Gardner was ever so wonderful! Human, humane, kind, compassionate, generous, progressive, witty, humorous, articulate – and more. He was a delight to be with. Not that I was often enough with him, but enough to enjoy his company and get a sense of him.

He was the most prominent progressive white person I knew in Pietermaritzburg as I was becoming politically aware in the early 1970s. His progressive views were covered in the *Natal Witness* every now and then and so he caught my eye. And when a small group of us in high school launched the Pietermaritzburg branch of National Youth Action – a high school student organisation committed to a single non-racial education system – in April 1971, he was an obvious person to invite as one of our guest speakers, who included Saths Cooper of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). They spoke on 'The role of youth in society today'. Cooper was critical of Colin's presence because the BCM believed that progressive whites should focus on winning other whites over rather than getting involved with blacks (Africans, coloureds and Indians). But he wasn't as aggressive as he could be. Even so, as the chair of the meeting, I felt a bit uncomfortable about it. But not, as I recall, Colin – he seemed to be very understanding (was he ever not?) and almost gracious about it.

Our paths didn't cross much after that. I saw him at the odd public meeting at the University. But then I moved out of the city in 1975 and didn't come back until 1983 – and there he was again expressing his progressive views in the *Natal Witness*. And when I went to UDF activist forum meetings, there he was. I was surprised to see him there as I took it that his sympathies were still with the genteel Liberal Party, and the UDF was obviously ANC-oriented, with its rough-and-tumble politics that I thought wouldn't suit his temperament; but he was very much at ease at these meetings and respected for his views.

I also got to know him when I became a lecturer at the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of Natal. Apart from playing a very significant role in the English Department, Arts Faculty, University Council and many other University structures, he was a very prominent activist at the campus and addressed many anti-apartheid meetings there and attended many academic seminars. He was very active too in our staff association, gently steering it in an ever-more progressive direction.

As the overall political struggle heightened from the mid-1980s, his role grew both on and off the campus. And he played a huge variety of roles – educational, political, social, cultural – and other, which I’ll not mention, as they are no doubt covered in this book. The point is that he was always there, always available, ever reliable.

And he became increasingly involved with a wide range of people across all races. He was very supportive of emerging poets in the townships and assisted disadvantaged high school and university students with special lessons. He also headed DESCOM in the city and was involved in PACSA, which played a very important role in the townships. He was probably involved in a lot of other activities that I don’t know about; but got a sense of from the tributes paid to him at his funeral.

Even though he was over-stretched, with far too much to do across several spheres, he seemed to take things in his stride. He wouldn’t easily get ruffled and would hold on to his composure. When the violence between Inkatha and the UDF erupted in 1987, the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce convened meetings between the two parties and other stakeholders as part of mediating a peace process: many workers were unable to turn up at work and businesses were disrupted. Several of the African UDF leaders were in detention and Colin and I were among those who were drawn into the process. Colin was a very credible, calm, respected presence in these meetings and though he was known to be in the UDF, he was not seen as having any narrow or hidden agenda, unlike most of us. Alas, the talks got nowhere and the violence persisted until 1994.

The more I interacted with Colin, the more I got to like and respect him. And he was very liked and respected by others in the UDF too. He was probably the only senior figure in our ranks who was universally liked and respected. There was nothing contentious about him – which is rare in politics.

Whatever shade of liberal he was in the Liberal Party in the 1960s, by the late 1980s, he came across more as a social democrat and in the early 1990s when he sometimes engaged with me about my Marxist views, his views seemed to border on being a socialist, even if not in a Marxist sense. In other words, he was clearly not a liberal in the traditional sense: he seemed to support more active state intervention in the economy; he went beyond a focus on just individual rights and equal political rights for all; he recognised the need to address the specific needs of collectivities and wanted to see a significant reduction in material inequalities. Yes, there are some ‘Left liberals’ who share this sort of approach, but he, as I saw him, went beyond that. There was a lot

of overlap between his thinking and mine on the immediate tasks confronting our country, never mind that I'm an SACP activist.

With his increased political role in the late 1980s and his prominence in the UDF, he inevitably joined the ANC on its unbanning and, in fact, was our Pietermaritzburg Central Areas branch chairperson for several years and served on its executive for many years after. I was also in the same executive and got to know him in this new terrain too. Of course, I knew him – as did so many of us – to be a very good chairperson of meetings before, but was surprised by how adroitly he chaired our branch meetings, not just with his usual wit and humour or calm disposition, but also a sense of political strategy that I hadn't seen previously. He adjusted very well to this new terrain and had very good sense of ANC policies and politics.

Inevitably, he would be very humorous at meetings. He had this calm, effortless humour; he wouldn't himself usually laugh at what he would say; the humour seemed inherent in his sentences, it just flowed out. Of course, he loved the play with words. I remember once speaking with unnecessary passion about ensuring that 'the branches were rooted in the membership' – and uncharacteristically he interrupted with 'hmmm...branches being rooted...not trunks...well, I suppose since we're not talking about trees, hmm, maybe that's possible...hmmm...' – and for a few seconds he seemed to retreat into his thoughts, mulling that over, to my immense irritation and the stifled laughter of others.

But when I got home later, his retort came back to me – and I burst into laughter at how absurd the analogy was. Though I must confess I've never stopped using it. It remains a part of the ANC's political idiom and is useful to convey the need for branches to have an active membership – though who originally coined the phrase I don't know. And who knows – maybe Colin even used that term at some time? Should he have raised his query in the first place?? I mean, he, with his poetic imagination!

Anyway, we were all very pleased that he was elected a councillor in the Msunduzi municipality in 1996 and in December 2000 became the first Speaker of a fully elected council. Although I wondered again whether he'd be able to manage the rough and tumble of ANC politics in a municipality, he was by all accounts, a very good and (inevitably) very fair Speaker. He was also elected to the ANC's regional executive committee on which he served from 1997 to 2002. That he was elected to it, given the fierce competition for places, was a huge tribute to him, all the more so because he wouldn't have asked anybody to campaign for him or campaigned for himself.

But it was during this period that the first signs of his disillusionment began to emerge. I was chairing the National Assembly's Provincial and Local Government Committee at the time, and he would phone me now and then to get clarity on the new local government legislation and information on local government or raise concerns about unnecessary divisions among the ANC councillors or errant behaviour by some of them.

After his term as Speaker ended in 2006, our conversations were more about broader ANC policies and politics – and he became more and more disappointed in the ANC. It was the predictable issues: Mbeki's bizarre views on HIV and AIDS, the government's soft approach to Mugabe and the Zimbabwean crisis, the increasing corruption, the failure to deliver services to the poor, and the ANC's increasing drift away from non-racialism. His incremental unhappiness with the ANC also began to seep into his regular column for the *Natal Witness*.

He took to sending me e-mails and wanted to speak to me more often when I was home. I did reply to his e-mails – but often after too much of a delay, and we would meet at my home or at his at times – but not nearly often enough. Yes, yes, I was very busy and moving around the country a lot – but that's not enough of an excuse. And when he died, I felt enormous regret that I hadn't responded to him and engaged with him more. How typical of so many of us who neglect others! And how hypocritical and useless such belated regret is! And how many of us learn from this and mend our ways?

At his funeral I was surprised at the surge of feeling I had for him. Those who spoke there were so universally full of warmth and praise and love for him that his loss to us all, not just his family and close friends, surfaced quite strongly.

Colin was a very sincere, consistent, immensely decent person. It's what impelled him to take up the struggle against apartheid. And it's what also impelled him to drift away from the ANC as we began to lose our way. He came across to me as a positive, maybe even slightly too optimistic, person – and so when I tried to convey the structural and material context for the ANC's increasing failures and the historical precedents for national liberation movements fading in their commitments and the need to continue to wage struggles within the ANC to help to steer it back to its progressive path, I think maybe he clutched too much at that at that moment and parted from our exchanges with a more positive approach.

But soon after, that more positive feeling would fade – for he would come back to me with a call (since I wasn't great at responding to his e-mails) about

other issues that troubled him – and I think he became less and less convinced that I was right about the ANC. But he always, always, said that he appreciated those of us who shared his concerns who remained active within the ANC. I think he felt that we should persist, although he may not have had the stamina for that. Unfortunately, in the last few years before he passed away, I saw even less of him as I was serving on the executive and was in Msunduzi far less – and I don't know how far his disillusionment with the ANC went. It wasn't he that had changed. It was the ANC. So, whatever his views were about the ANC in the end, I respect that. How can I not?

It strikes me now that in all the years I knew Colin – although I was no close friend of his – I never saw him lose his temper. Was he always like that in every situation? I can't tell. Mary, his lovely wife, and their children and close friends will obviously know better. But even if he wasn't always like that, so what? Who's perfect?

Colin was human. No doubt he had his flaws. But I saw none. Well, maybe one – at times, he could go on talking, when you wanted him to stop (Ya, look, who's talking ...but this is not about me, it's about Colin, please!) Am I'm being over-generous in my views about Colin? No, I certainly don't think so. I can only speak about the Colin I knew – and this is how I experienced him.

You can't speak about Colin's goodness without mentioning Mary, his wonderful wife! I don't know Mary anywhere nearly as much as I knew Colin – but she came across to me as a very dignified, pleasant, polite person. Somehow, she seemed the sort of person who Colin would partner with, and from what I can tell, they seemed to have had quite a loving, fulfilling life together.

Colin was a cultured, dignified, literate person. He inevitably stood out in our ranks. His moral anchorage and his wide-ranging contribution to our city needs to be acknowledged far more. Pity our ANC leadership in Msunduzi is too torn by our internal wrangling and too distracted to recognise this and give him the highest civic honours. He certainly deserves it. Though typically him, he would never expect any reward and nor would he make much of one. His reward was the opportunity he had to serve others. That's Colin for you!



## COLIN GARDNER: THE ACADEMIC

*Bill Guest*

Colin's association with Pietermaritzburg's University campus, to which he was to devote most of his working life, began at an early age. Through his father William Gardner, he assisted in various Old Main Hall stage productions and aged fourteen he trod the boards, possibly for the first time, when he acted as the boy who leads the 'blind' Tiresias in *Oedipus Rex*. This was no mean task as the student playing that role, an ex-serviceman, was blind drunk during each evening performance and had to be tracked down prior to being coaxed on stage! For Colin it was an early experience not only of live theatre but in personnel management.

Later, as a University student he continued to take an active interest in the Dramatic Society as well as in several other campus activities including soccer, which was his favourite sport. Among several enduring friendships forged at that time on what was still a fairly small, close-knit campus were those with Brian Bush and John Bishop who also subsequently pursued academic careers.

Members of staff who made a deep impression on him were Geoffrey Durrant and Fred Langman (both of the English Department), Marie-Louise Tricaud (French), Mark Prestwich (History) and Winifred Maxwell (Politics). In 1954 Colin completed a BA Honours (English) degree at what had only recently (in 1949) matured from the Natal University College into the University of Natal.

In 1955 he served a semester as junior lecturer in the French Department, in which he had completed his other BA major, before proceeding to Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship. He found the standard of lecturing there disappointing but the one-on-one tutorials were very demanding. In 1957 Colin completed a BA Honours degree, which in the fullness of time was converted to an MA. On his return to South Africa he worked for two years in Pretoria as a lecturer in English at UNISA, where dealing with students by correspondence was a very different experience to Pietermaritzburg and Oxford.

In mid-1959 Colin returned to his alma mater when he was appointed to a lectureship in what was still Professor Geoffrey Durrant's English Department. There he found the F.R. Leavis 'great tradition' approach to teaching the subject was still strong but by no means exclusively so. He resisted the temptation to follow Durrant's example and that of several of his own friends in emigrating after the 1961 Sharpeville tragedy, but was sorely tempted to do so after the 1976 Soweto uprising. Instead, a relatively rapid rise through the academic

ranks followed his return to Pietermaritzburg, from lecturer to senior lecturer in 1962 and to professor ten years later.

Colin found himself occupying what had once been his father's chair of English on the Pietermaritzburg campus (1962–1967) for the next 25 years until his retirement from academic life in 1997. During that period, he also filled the role of departmental head for two long terms and between 1976 and 1979 served as dean of the Faculty of Arts. The latter responsibility extended to the humanities departments on Durban's Howard College campus and required him not only to chair board meetings but also to sit on every faculty committee, including those dealing with staff appointments, disciplinary hearings and promotions. His contribution was so valued that he was retained on several of them beyond his term of office.

As dean Colin also represented the faculty at the monthly day-long Senate Executive Committee (Senex) gatherings where he was required to speak to the minutes of each of his own board meetings. This was an important role as Senex was the most senior academic body in the University. It considered the proposals forwarded from the boards and made decisions on all important matters of University business for recommendation to Council, which was technically the employer of all members of staff. After his term as dean, he remained on Senex for many years as a Senate member representing the Pietermaritzburg campus.

From the early 1970s, as a professor and departmental head, Colin occupied a seat on Senate ex-officio and by the time of his retirement had become its longest serving member. He soon emerged as a prominent personality in that body through his reputation, by his own admission, as a left-winger. This was acquired in the course of numerous debates on the various socio-political issues that increasingly impinged upon the life of the University. He later recalled that some of the older senators probably regarded him as the lunatic fringe of that august body, but that the right to freedom of expression was always respected.

By the 1970s Colin was convinced that the University could not remain an impassive ivory tower in a society that was experiencing dramatic social change. He later recalled that by the mid-1980s the views of the University Executive on most politically contentious issues were not much different to his own. In that sense he could be regarded as one of the institution's significant agents of change also supporting, among other causes, the representation of non-academic staff and of students on Senate. Colin was in his element during the lively debates in that body and found several memorable jousting partners

there. Not least among these was the conservative Arthur Rayner, professor of Biometry, a prominent senator in his own right who often resisted change, being a stickler for established rules and procedure.

Prominent membership of Senate inevitably led to service for varying lengths of time on several of its committees. These included those pertaining to academic ceremonials, academic freedom, academic planning, scholarships, staffing and the University Press. Colin chaired the last for some years as it established its reputation with a strong emphasis on KwaZulu-Natal regional geography and history. In an institution that was arguably dominated by the sciences and applied sciences, he found it important to promote the interests and sometimes differing views of the humanities on these committees. An example of this, as Colin recalled, was the difference of opinion he encountered on the scholarships committee where it was argued that if top arts students were to compete more equitably with their scientific counterparts, they should similarly be awarded marks of 90% plus and not 75% plus to identify them as deserving cases. At the time it was a notion that was as unthinkable to the non-scientists as adding one's name as supervisor to a student's publication.

The Academic Freedom Committee was another body that Colin considered important to serve on as it was the means through which the University responded to perceived governmental threats to its autonomy and to the banning of students and members of staff in terms of the prevailing security legislation. Notable examples of the latter were the cases of Rick Turner and Ken Hill. Unfortunately, the statements issued through the principal's office in response to governmental intrusions were often more moderate than some members of the committee would have liked. In Colin's experience of all these committees and in his dealings with the University Administration there was always a very pleasing 'standard of civility and friendliness and pleasantness and decency'.

Other important campus-based bodies that he served on included the Alan Paton Centre's Advisory Committee. Indeed, Colin played a significant part in helping to develop what became an important documentary research facility and library on the Pietermaritzburg campus. He was also a long-standing executive member of both the Lecturers' Association and then the Academic Staff Association (the latter incorporating professorial staff as well). In that capacity he assisted in pressurising the University Council for improved salaries and conditions of service as well as persuading it to grant authorisation for periodic protest action against government threats to University autonomy.

In the early 1980s, as chairperson of what had become the JASA, Colin led a highly contentious move to affiliate that body to the UDF. It provoked several mass meetings on campus and an appeal from the principal not to pursue that course of action lest it divide the staff. There was indeed a subsequent loss of some members, but the campaign was ultimately successful and, in Colin's view, made JASA more representative of left-wing academics in the University. His own prominence led to his inclusion as the University's representative in the UTASA (University Teachers Association of South Africa) delegation which in June 1989 met what was by then regarded as the ANC government-in-waiting in Lusaka. There he was able to participate in absorbing discussions on the possible future of South Africa's universities.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1994 democratic election JASA assumed a trade union direction focusing, as Colin recalled, more specifically on domestic staff concerns in the absence of any obvious threat to University autonomy. As before, JASA continued to be a valuable means of maintaining some measure of contact between the two centres of the University, though there was always some tension based on a longstanding feeling that the Pietermaritzburg campus, where the University had originated, was disadvantaged in its relationship with what had become a far bigger centre. In the 1950s and 1960s some staff members had even suggested that as Pietermaritzburg was larger than Rhodes, it should rightfully be an independent institution. Colin did not subscribe to this view, which in the 1970s was tempered by the prospect that if independence was indeed achieved currently rampant Afrikaner nationalism might ensure that Pietermaritzburg became the province's Afrikaans-medium campus.

Interaction between what was from the mid-1970s two separate English departments at the University of Natal for the most part involved personal friendships rather than periodic formal meetings. More regular contact was maintained with all of the country's other campuses through the conferences of AUETSA, of which Colin was a prominent and active member.

Contact with staff in other departments on the Pietermaritzburg campus itself tended to diminish over the years. Colin nostalgically recalled the days when virtually everybody, other than those at the distant Faculty of Agriculture, met for tea at what was then genuinely a 'common room' on the old campus. Unfortunately, this tradition declined as time-saving departmental common rooms emerged. The biggest loss of all followed the 1976 opening of the New Arts Building on Golf Road where half the Arts Faculty began to make use of its more convenient facilities and were less frequently seen on the old campus.

By 1981 Colin had long-since become recognised as one of the institution's more articulate speakers when he was appointed University orator in Pietermaritzburg. This involved the preparation and delivery of numerous laudations for honorary doctorates. It also offered an opportunity, however brief, to meet the recipients, among them Albertina Sisulu, Beyers Naudé and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. As orator, Colin became such an institution that he was requested to retain the position for some years after his retirement.

His eloquence extended also to the written word. Unlike his father who became internationally renowned primarily for the multiple editions of his two-volume study of the poetry and prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Colin published numerous academic and popular articles, edited works, book reviews and letters to newspapers. The last made him a contentious local public figure and in some circles extended that left-wing, perhaps even lunatic-fringe, reputation he recalled having acquired during his early years in Senate.

Most importantly, Colin was a capable and conscientious teacher, respected by his students as both tutor and lecturer. Several of them subsequently became fellow academics or pursued successful careers as attorneys, journalists, teachers, writers, and in a variety of other fields. In his teaching as in his academic articles, Colin continued to focus primarily on what he described as 'some of the more traditional parts of the English syllabus' like Shakespeare, seventeenth-century poetry and twentieth-century British poetry.

At the same time as professor of English he was constructively involved in reconceptualising his department's course offerings and readily promoted new fields of study. In the process he came to be regarded, he later believed, as 'simultaneously avant-garde and traditionalist'. In 2002, five years after his retirement, Colin still maintained that 'an English Department which doesn't teach Keats and Wordsworth and Shelley and doesn't teach Milton and Shakespeare is really ... losing part of its function'. Yet in his own case he had earlier comfortably found himself teaching *King Lear* and modern anti-apartheid South African short stories to the same class.

By the 1970s, if not before, some colleagues were embracing interesting alternative approaches to literary theory including Marxism, structuralism and post-structuralism. These led to some vigorous departmental debates, and disagreements, as it did at other universities worldwide. It caused tensions among some staff members and either excitement or confusion among students. Yet, in Colin's view, the department managed to remain 'a fruitful and fertile group over the years.'

It was not only how English should be taught but also what should be taught that was subject to review. He recalled that, as far as possible, syllabus changes were implemented organically by means of departmental consensus rather than professorial fiat and were a consequence, in part, of what was happening in other universities and in the broader South African society. To some extent student demands were changing and their increasing numbers made it viable to offer more course options. By way of prominent example, from the 1970s onwards South African and African literature as well as post-colonial poetry became areas of teaching expertise and gained increasing favour among students as course options.

Indeed, from as early as the 1960s some members of staff were becoming more specialised with regard to their areas of interest and to some extent this also promoted a greater volume of publication in what had previously been a largely teaching department. While this was to be applauded and for some became the route to personal promotion as it was in the sciences, Colin recognised the need to maintain a balance between research and teaching and to acknowledge the value of those staff members whose focus remained primarily on the latter.

From the late 1980s, with an increasing influx of black students into the University, there was a need for new modules in which the emphasis was more on acquiring a written command of the language than an appreciation of English literature; that is, English as a practical tool that might lead to employment rather than as an entrée to British culture. It was a phase of adjustment to new social and educational realities on campus which Colin, in common with many colleagues, found interesting and challenging. By way of one small example, as University orator he persuaded the Academic Ceremonials Committee to follow the lead of other institutions like Oxford and Cambridge to abandon the traditional Latin wording on the University's degree certificates as this was meaningless to black graduates and probably to most whites as well.

When Colin retired from the English Department in 1997 the lifespan of the University of Natal had almost run its course, merging in January 2004 with the neighbouring University of Durban-Westville to form the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). As a member of staff he had served on the Pietermaritzburg campus for 38 of the 48 years since the University of Natal was launched in 1949, indeed 42 years if one includes his student days. During that time, he had worked with seven of the University's eight principals and witnessed exponential expansion in terms of campus development as well as staff and student numbers. In the process, Colin had emerged as one of the

institution's most prominent personalities, well-known in both of its centres of operation and respected also by those who did not necessarily always share his strong opinions.

- This article is based on Colin Gardner's biographical file in the UKZN Archive in Pietermaritzburg (UKZNA BIO-S 823/1/1) and on a five-hour interview that I conducted with him on 6, 13 and 27 September 2002. It took place in the Gardner Library (his former office and that of his father William Gardner) in the Old Main Building, UKZN Pietermaritzburg campus. The video and transcript of the interview are also lodged in the University Archive. This article is written from the perspective of a faculty but not a close departmental colleague.

#### PROFESSOR COLIN GARDNER: A GENTLEMAN OF PRINCIPLE, INTEGRITY AND PROFOUND INTELLECT

*Ben Dikobe Martins*

I make no claim to say anything new about Professor Colin Gardner. Anything that seems to be new is no more than a reflection on what is already well-known or an elaboration of a pre-existing view.

I simply hope to give a personal portrait of an individual familiar to us as a much-respected and loved teacher, lecturer, mentor, political and cultural activist, professor of English at the University of Natal, dean of Arts, University orator, and former Speaker of the Msunduzi City Council.

Many esteemed persons like his friend, the renowned author Alan Paton who knew him well, opined about him as a man who not only had a voice of gold, but whose heart was also golden.

Colin was a political and social activist who fought apartheid for the better part of his life from the trenches of righteousness. 'Equal justice under the law is something that you have to strive for all the time,' he once eloquently said.

I had the privilege to interact and work with Colin in the late 1970s and in 1979 in particular when the poets Mafika Gwala and Nkathaza Meyya from Hammarsdale and I formed the Mpumalanga Arts Ensemble. Under the banner of this ensemble, we contributed poetry and graphic art for publication to *Staffrider*, an anti-apartheid journal for radical views on art and culture. Colin played an important mentoring role in the Mpumalanga Arts Ensemble, by sharing ideas and taking turns with Mafika Gwala to facilitate discussions



on literary theory, poetry, art, literature, international liberation struggles and South African politics. On several occasions, he in turn invited Mafika, Nkathaza and I to discuss art and culture with the students that he lectured at the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University.

He also played a pivotal role in organising the art exhibitions, poetry readings and talks on art, culture and politics which were hosted by Dianne Lawrence and Victoria Biyela at the African Art Centre in Printing Office Street in the Pietermaritzburg city centre. What I recall most vividly, which left an indelible impression of him, was his ability to use the timbre of his voice to command attention, inspire, evoke and elicit dramatic responses from audiences. This was evident when he spoke on any matter close to his heart; when his superb skills as an orator were displayed; or with his renditions of Bertolt Brecht's poems: 'A worker questions history' and 'Literature will be scrutinised'.

Colin was a discerning and sensitive wordsmith who believed in the future of the South African nation. The focus and energy of his contribution to the transformation and democratisation of South Africa was second to none. He believed that the development of a non-racial democratic society was an ongoing process, just as the race for excellence in the arts and culture, and the liberation of the poor from poverty have no finishing line. He and Mafika Gwala steadfastly believed that our best ideas would remain words on scraps of paper, if we lacked the commitment to put them into effect.

Colin never sought credit or mention for the work that he did. He worked quietly to benefit others and by so doing, to the benefit of South African society as a whole. He gave practical expression to Mahatma Gandhi's dictum: 'be the future that you recommend'. He stood side by side with us in the trenches of the liberation struggle during the brutal days of apartheid. He politicised and recruited many persons across the racial colour line divide to join the struggle against apartheid in order to bring about meaningful transformation. He advocated and promoted active citizenry with a strong focus on democracy and human rights.

Personally, I shall never forget the support he gave me when I was a political prisoner. The work that he did with DESCOM helped ensure that we as political prisoners were not forgotten.

Professor Colin Gardner's life was epitomised by excellence.

## COLIN GARDNER: ACTIVIST ACADEMIC

*Christopher Merrett*

The heyday of Colin Gardner's academic career in the late seventies and during the eighties coincided with a remarkable period of national political upheaval alongside unprecedented robust and vigorous debate in the academy. It was an era of unparalleled intellectual ferment in universities that produced a significant number of articulate and engaged activist academics, of whom Colin was a notable example. Their main characteristic was an ability to merge (as near as possible seamlessly) their university obligations and interests and their civic contributions; and, indeed, develop a creative tension between the two.

The roots of this were complex, but academia had been energised by a new radicalism strongly influenced by events on campuses in North America and Europe in the sixties. Among other developments, Marxism had injected consideration of class, economics and the State into most corners of the arts and social sciences. One did not need to be a Marxist to be affected by this: the new radicalism encouraged alternative ways of looking at South African society regardless of political allegiance. Indeed, much of the disputation amongst academics showed that basic differences of opinion were in fact minimal and there was general agreement on the desired outcome, a democratic society based on human rights and economic justice. Individuals identified with different camps that appeared to be ideologically rooted, although much of the time this was just a matter of preferred terminology and group identity and style. Colin was a good example of this paradox: he was never a Marxist, but undoubtedly strongly influenced by radical ideas that infused and enhanced his liberalism. And he was above all concerned about ultimate outcomes, not political labelling.

Academic endeavour in the service of liberation and the possibility of a free, democratic society was a logical antidote to the damage done to universities by colonial tradition and apartheid legislation. But it was not a popular view with many University staff. I can recall in the early days of the State of Emergency in June or July 1986 overhearing from an adjacent room at the Computer Centre in the Science Building in Pietermaritzburg a conversation expressing the hope that campus radicals, in particular Colin, would soon be removed and detained in police or prison cells as compulsory guests of the government.

This was not an entirely unrealistic wish. Early one morning in June 1986 Colin was visited at home by security branch police asking for his passport. As

soon as he could, Colin reported to the campus principal, Deneys Schreiner, who suggested (perhaps half in jest) that he should go on a trip over the border (presumably Lesotho or Swaziland: it was all very reminiscent of the sixties) for a while in the hope that the excitement would blow over and the police would lose interest. This was not as fanciful as it sounded at the time: it later emerged that the SB had been told to tidy up their files and were pursuing all manner of false and out-of-date leads that would soon exhaust their stamina and resources. Colin pointed out that a foreign trip of indefinite duration was not really an option for a husband with a wife, family and mortgage and a university lecturer with exam papers to mark. Schreiner laid a complaint with the police about this harassment, as well as about an inflammatory and fake COSATU pamphlet that mentioned the names of four university staff and students, Colin included. It led to an ostensible follow-up visit to the campus by a Major Smit of the CID asking questions about the whereabouts of UDF secretary Martin Wittenberg and implausibly suggesting that illegal documents were being printed by the SRC. There the matter rested. Everyone knew the most likely source of fake pamphlets.

What was the meaning of academic activist? It involved bringing intellectual and institutional resources to bear in support of civil society organisations struggling against apartheid and for the attainment of a democratic society. A good example in Colin's case was the Detainees Support Committee (DESCOM, restricted in February 1988 and renamed the Detainees Aid Committee or DACOM), a small group of university staff and human rights lawyers and activists of which he was *de facto* chairperson. It gathered information about individuals imprisoned without trial, identified trends and fed these into the global human rights support network, particularly Amnesty International (on the premise that international involvement was some sort of protection for detainees), and provided the imprisoned and their families with moral and practical assistance. The last was illustrated by afternoon parties for released detainees and their families (tea, currant buns and oranges) where advice and support were offered and information gathered. It would be an exaggeration to claim that this was dangerous for DESCOM members, but it had its inconveniences like police surveillance and the foreign funding case in which Colin and two others were charged. This related to funds accepted from overseas (largely Rockefeller Foundation and Amnesty International) to support political prisoners and their families and provide the necessary administrative backup (DESCOM had a fieldworker with a vehicle and a part-time administrator). After three magistrate's court appearances the case

was abandoned, probably because of pressure from representatives of foreign governments in South Africa.

And then there were the never-ending meetings. In a small city like Pietermaritzburg the numerous anti-apartheid organisations had overlapping memberships. The security branch, possibly accurately, claimed that Colin's friend Peter Kerchhoff of PACSA belonged to more than forty. While Colin was certainly involved in far fewer, there were some evenings when he would attend three meetings. This load may have had something to do with his habit of heavily erasing each day's entry in his small blue university diary; emphatic recognition, maybe, of another day's struggle duty done. In many cases this level of commitment would have been counter-productive, but in Colin's case it made sense. Apart from his other qualities and contributions, he was a bridge builder and networker adept at bringing people and organisations together, highlighting and emphasising their joint interests and purpose. All in an evening's work as it were.

It was as chairperson of JASA from 1983 to 1985 and before and after as a committee member that Colin was very well-known in the 1980s. JASA was the successor to two amalgamated organisations at University of Natal, the Academic Staff Association and the Lecturers Association. Its executive had a strange membership structure that included four lecturers' representatives on Senate who tended to be of a more conservative outlook than the average JASA committee member. There was also an added dynamic of two main campuses, Pietermaritzburg and Durban, 80 kilometres apart. The former was generally reckoned to be less radical than the latter, although there were notable individual exceptions to this rule.

In the resultant potent mix of academia and politics Colin was truly in his element. One of JASA's early actions after he had been elected chairperson in March 1983 was to affiliate itself to the UDF. It was a bold move for an academic organisation but perfectly logical in a situation of developing civil war in which the State acted as one of the protagonists and abandoned the rule of law. The great virtue of the UDF was that it was an umbrella body, a front that bound together in a loose alliance a wide variety of independent organisations. Their common aim was a democratic, non-racial, non-discriminatory society. JASA was declaring its belief in the future without compromising its organisational integrity in any way.

But not all members agreed and affiliation was highly contested over the course of three meetings whose very location was contentious. Colin chaired these general and special general meetings in masterly fashion. It was clear

where his sympathies lay and he was not averse to challenging reactionaries, but did so with fairness, skill and a great sense of humour and history. He presided over debate that was robust and challenging, pitting Mike Morris, Mike Sutcliffe, Heather Hughes, David Maughan Brown and Jeff McCarthy against Paul Thompson, John Swart, Alistair Verbeek and Clive Graham. It was the cut and thrust of university debate at its best and there was no one better than Colin to preside over it. In this instance it was won by the radicals, of whom Colin was prominent, but he played his part in making sure that JASA remained largely united. There was no mass walkout of the disaffected, just a few predictable resignations of no great consequence, and Colin played a uniting role. This ability to conciliate from a clearly partisan position is rare.

Executive meetings of JASA with Colin in the chair were an experience in their own right. Rather than alternate between Durban and Pietermaritzburg, they took place at a supposed midway point (although that in true academic fashion became a subject of debate in itself). At some stage the architectural charms of the old railway hotel at Inchanga gave way to the more functional surroundings of the Polo Pony at Assagay. Meetings started at 7.30 pm and could last until nearly midnight. Colin was a loquacious chairperson and therefore hardly in a position to cut short the contributions of others, especially the more conservative members of the committee. Some of the longest debates were about somewhat arcane matters that underlay broader political strategy and reflected deeper schisms.

One of the memorable evenings was in late October 1983 when a delegation arrived from the University of Zululand's Ngoye campus bearing first-hand news of the attack by an Inkatha impi on students in which four were killed. Not untypically this interaction resulted in a JASA press statement that in this case was phoned through to SAPA from a public callbox close to midnight. Those were the days when universities played a significant role in politics and the opinion of a staff association was taken seriously by the press. Colin's role as chairperson was crucial.

He was by temperament ideally suited to the pursuit of the cause of democracy and human rights in the context of a repressive state. He was argumentative while knowing when to be conciliatory. He understood all too well that authoritarianism has its weak spots and knew instinctively where to find and make use of them. And his wry and mocking sense of humour was well-suited to the situation, providing light relief and moral support for those inclined to despair under the burden of repression.

During the seventies and eighties, the four staff associations from the open universities belonged to a national body called UTASA. They took turns on a two-year rotational basis to provide the chairperson and when Natal's number came up in 1985, Colin took over. Again, he was in his element, although the dynamics were very different and complicated by regional differences, not just the rivalry between a coastal port and an inland capital. At the end of his term, he was involved in the politically charged task of dissolving UTASA and making way for a more inclusive progressive national academic organisation.

Amid these developments at the end of the eighties as apartheid began to crumble Colin the politician emerged out of Colin the academic advocate and from 1990 he became clearly identified with the ANC. For him it was a logical career move and from city councillor on the party list he eventually became Speaker of the Msunduzi Council. Other academics such as Omar Latiff and Robert Haswell followed similar paths. But for some there was a sense of regret about this: something had gone missing from our lives.

Colin the broad-minded partisan had inevitably become Colin the party loyalist. Despite the all-embracing rhetoric of the ANC, it was in fact tightly ideologically controlled, a fact Colin readily admitted when he effectively parted company with it after the insensitive axing of Thabo Mbeki in 2009. At his funeral at St Mary's and the civic memorial service in the City Hall a great deal was made of Colin the local politician, understandably so because that was the recent and high-profile role people remembered most readily. But for some there was a sense of regretful sadness that more was not made of the academic activist, not only to celebrate Colin but also commemorate the effective passing of a type of intellectual who belonged to a heroic age. Its virtues have all but disappeared as a result of the imperatives of the corporate, managerial university. It is a sobering thought that a contemporary Colin Gardner would not last long, let alone thrive, at the present-day UKZN and would almost certainly perish in the disciplinary system that takes precedence over academic freedom and academic rule. His was a university that flourished on academic freedom, academic autonomy and academic rule; and the authority of reason. He largely escaped the toxicity of line managers, human resources commissars, financial executives and legal enforcers; although ironically they were in part encouraged by his political party.

Colin played a remarkable and eminent role in academia, but one whose essential nature has quickly and lamentably passed into the realms of history.

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