Memories of Heather L. Dwyer née Morrison
(Granddaughter of Alex and Lillian Bishop)

I was born on 27 July 1948 in the European Hospital, Lilongwe, Nyasaland, second child of Daniel Kerr Morrison (born 1911 Scotland) and Gertrude Atkinson née Bishop, (born 1911 Tynemouth, Northumberland). My elder sister was born 18 January 1947 at Zomba, Malawi.

Mary Kerr Morrison and Heather Lilian Morrison in 1950

My father, Danny, as he was known, was a tall, quiet, unassuming man of strong morals. He was a Senior Inspector of the Nyasaland Police when I was born and I believe he was liked and respected by all he came in contact with. Danny hardly ever raised his voice but would get a certain look in his eye and a quiet tut-tut of the tongue and this seemed enough to show his disapproval.

My mother Gerty, came from one of the two largest European families in Nyasaland, the Bishop's. My mother was a very short lady, who held her head high and was extremely capable in all she put her hand to. She had three passions in life, her family, dress making and fishing. My mother was quick to lose her temper and equally as quick to forget her quarrel and assume her quiet manner. I have noticed that all the ten children of the Bishop family held a tremendous pride and confidence in themselves and their families. Congratulations must be paid to my Grandmother, Lillian Bishop (née Atkinson) to have instilled this attitude in all her children.

Gertrude Atkinson Bishop 1911-1989 - Daniel Kerr Morrison 1911-1994

My parents had a great deal of respect towards each other and always stood side-by-side in times of joy, sadness or trouble. My father was the gentle Great-Dane and my mother, the Fox Terrier. Growing up with Danny and Gerty as my parents, I felt safe, secure and indeed very much loved.

Nyasaland was, at the time of my childhood a very small, safe country in which to grow. I had a childhood like no child could comprehend today. There was no danger from any person. We were safe to enter any home or vehicle that we were invited into. All Europeans knew or knew someone that knew you or your parents. The natives of this beautiful country tolerated and accepted that children needed to be children and children were never physically disciplined. There were times when we children stepped over the boundaries laid down by our parents and my mother on very seldom occasions would give us a slap. As these slaps were so seldom, it would come as a huge shock and we would go down to the domestic staff's accommodation and vent our feelings of unfairness to them. They never failed to comfort us and would proceed to give my mother the cold shoulder for a day or two in order to show their disapproval. We really had multiple sets of adults caring for us, the house-staff by day and our parents in the evenings and on weekends. This would have to be unique in society today and I feel it is important to protect that history so that my grand-children or great grandchildren will have knowledge of their ancestors. It is to that aim that I will try and recall and describe events to the best that my memory will allow.

Paygate cottage, Burwash, Sussex

As I said I was born in Lilongwe and it appears that we lived there until the birth of my brother, Ian Alexander Kerr Morrison on 20 September 1949. He was born some fifteen months later than my own birth. Ian was born with spina bifida, according to my mother, he was the second child ever to have been born in Nyasaland with this affliction and the hospital was not well enough experienced or equipped as hospitals today would be. My parents decided, well my mother actually, and my father as always, backed her decision to travel to England and seek medical aid there. We all boarded the Llanstephan Castle and arrived in London on the 22 February 1950. The trip was all in vain as my brother died ast sea on the 20 January, one day out from Dar Es Salaam. We completed the six months stay in the UK at Paygate cottage, Burwash, Sussex leaving England on my second birthday the 27 July 1950, travelling on the Llandovery Castle as far as Cape Town.I am told that my dad had bought a new car whilst they were in England and they had decided to motor to Nyasaland from Cape Town, not an easy adventure in those days of poor roads and two small active children, aged 2 and 4.

I can remember living in the Old Residency, affectionately called “the house on the golf course”. A beautiful old house with an orange trumpet flowered creeper rambling up one side and covering up the red bricks. She had a huge front verandah that almost ran the length of the house with French doors opening from the lounge, the dining-room and my parents’ bedroom. This looked out onto a huge front garden that ended at the edge of the Blantyre Sports Club’s golf course. We had a long drive way down the side of the house and my mother used to have fresh vegetables delivered by a Mr Sabari. He would drive up in his little Austin and open the boot for my mother to choose from the selection.

We had a cook working for us named Bell. Bell had been head chef at one of the top hotels in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia and it was there that he discovered his love of spirits. Bell could make the simplest dish divine. Should my parents ever have a dinner party all that was necessary was for him to be told the number of guests and in short time he would return to my mother telling her of his menu and what wines my father was to purchase for that evening. The dining room on the house on the golf course ran the depth of the house; it was our back-door and also had French doors onto the big verandah at the front of the house. It was Mary’s fifth or sixth birthday, but Bell not only made all the sandwiches, jellies, and cakes for her party, he also made her a birthday cake depicting Humpty Dumpty. It was a beautiful masterpiece and my mother put it on the dining table so that it could be admired by all who walked through the dining room on the morning of Mary’s birthday party. Unfortunately my mom’s chickens discovered the cake and scratched it into one huge mess leaving my mother in tears of disappointment and distress. Bell’s typical attitude came to the fore as he said “It doesn’t matter, I will make another one” and he did, absolutely as beautiful as the previous cake. Bell also used to play with Mary and I. Sunset came early in Nyasaland and after our supper, probably at 6.30 pm, we, Mary and I, would go out the back to talk to the house-boys and Bell would ask my father for 2 cigarettes which he would light. Then with all lights extinguished he would move these lit cigarettes around telling us he was “Dzinga moto” (rounder of fire). We would shriek with fear and enjoyment and beg him to play the same night after night. I mentioned that Bell had a love of spirits, unfortunately he was not a happy drunk and on his days off duty he would get drunk and get into fights. I recall Bell standing at our back-door with an African policeman. He was handcuffed and his head was hanging down in shame. I think that was the time that my parents said he must go as when he got drunk he couldn’t be trusted around Mary and I. It was all very sad and Bell was never forgotten by our family.

My mother was one of ten children of which the majority lived in Nyasaland. There was a very close bond between these siblings and as such we spent a great deal of time with Aunts, Uncles and cousins. My grandmother would often walk down from her house at the top of Victoria Avenue, Blantyre (where the Mount Soche Hotel stands today) to our house on the golf course. She would arrive at the back-door and always call out “Cooee”. We also spent a lot of time at her house and so the elders could converse in private we were invariably told to go outside and play. There was plenty to amuse ourselves at her house. Down one side of her house there were three sets of bricks set up like step-ladders to the roof. I think these were placed there to ensure the walls stayed upright, but we used to have enormous fun with our cousins holding races as to who could get to the top the quickest. At the end of her front garden it fell like a rocky cliff down into the valley where a few African villages were

dotted about. In this group of rocks was a candle-nut tree and we would spend ages gathering the nuts and cracking them open with stones. The nuts were so rich that we would mostly end up not feeling well and certainly didn't do her 3-course lunch credit that was due. Whilst inside her house we would spend most of the time in her huge dining-room, on one wall was a portrait of my great-grandfather, Robert Reuben Bishop and on the opposite wall a forbidding portrait of a woman with plaits wound around her head, my great-grandmother, Isabella. As a child to sit at my grandmother's dining table, eating a thick soup, followed by a main course and always followed with rice-pudding, these two portraits were very intimidating.

On rare occasions we would venture into her sitting room. To get there you had to pass by a large ebony screen, embossed with ivory. At the doorway stood an elephants foot with a highly polished timber covering. On the living room floor was a leopard skin and on the mantle piece the skull of the same leopard. I was told that my grandfather killed the leopard which they discovered had been stalking them as they hunted for it.

I believe that my fear of being alone at night started at this period in my life. It was school holidays and I had gone to stay with my cousin June. We spent a lot of time with this particular family of the Bishop Clan. They lived on the very outskirts of Blantyre, not far from an African village and their house staff had made us afraid of the ngoma (witch-doctor) of the village to the point that we would hide on their verandah should he happen to walk past the house. This particular evening, my Uncle Dick had gone to the Blantyre Club and my Aunty Marie, cousin June, and I were in the sitting room, the baby of the family, Keith, was asleep in his bedroom. Due to it being school holidays we were allowed to stay up later than usual. As we sat in the lounge room there was a loud banging on the back door and my Aunty shouted out "who is it" in Chinyanja. There was no answer. She then shouted for their houseboy, but he didn't come or reply. Again this loud banging on the back door and my Aunty Marie went and got Keith out of his cot and brought him into the lounge with the rest of us saying "I'm not letting any kaffir in to hurt you two girls". We didn't go to bed until my Uncle Dick came home, heard the story and said he was going out to fix John, their houseboy. I don't think it was too long before he came back and said he had found John's door broken down with an axe and John lying on the floor inside, bleeding from a wound in his head. It was a dreadful occurrence and the fear of that night stayed with me for probably a good forty years, if not more. The security I had always known suddenly gone, the fear of no authorisation or action and the lack of shielding young children from the reality of the situation was wrong in my opinion but I'm not positive that I would have reacted any differently had I been in my Aunty Marie's position at that time.

We went on "leave" as they called it. This was six months out of the country every three years, on full pay and three full passages were also paid for by the Government. So we went to England on the Durban Castle arriving in England on 17 April 1954. We stayed at Sandford, Carisbrooke Road, Newport, Isle of Wight. This was a farm house, they had apples and pears and I think chickens. Down one side of the garden was a stream that ran under the garage. Very pretty, shallow and clear and I can remember paddling in it from time to time. I recall getting there at night in a taxi. The taxi pulled up and this building had no front garden, the front door right on the pavement and I remember thinking the taxi had just pulled up to get petrol. This is not really as ridiculous as it seems. No house in Nyasaland was in a row of houses and certainly, no house was

built right on a street. All houses had a long drive-way and were secluded from neighbours. It was only commercial properties that were built on streets. I do recall that this house had gas lighting and that we were forbidden to switch any lights on or off. My parents would switch the light off in our bedroom by climbing up on the bed and turning a knob. This was quite odd as I don't recall ever not having electricity during my entire childhood in Nyasaland where things weren't meant to be very modern.

Mary and I went to a small school there. We would be put on the bus outside the front door, paid the driver a penny and were dropped off outside the school. I have no memory of any class-room at this school. I do recall wearing a navy blue tunic with a white shirt and a green and blue tie that my father would tie for me each morning. I don't think it was a very big school as I recall the lunch-room having a horse-shoe shape table and we all fitted around it. The head-mistress would supervise the meal for each child individually and a teacher would bring it to that child. I recall the head-mistress saying at one lunch-time "not a lot of mash potato for Heather, it makes her dry-wretch". That is my entire memory of the school there, but I recall other memories from that time. One time going on a walk with my father, across some fields that had a wide stream running through it and him warning us not to go too near some white swans that were swimming nearby because he said "they could break your arm". The farm people also had a dog, a cocker spaniel, and I remember going with them for a walk with the dog. It was forest and all the autumn leaves were down creating a thick carpet on the floor.

It was on this leave that I saw a different, cheeky side to my father. We had been out somewhere and had stopped to buy chips for our supper. Dad showed us all how to rip the top off the newspaper, making it into a sort of bag. This was my first take-away meal. It was dark and as we finished our chips we asked what we should do with the greasy newspapers. My Dad quickly replied "This" and threw his paper over a hedge we were walking past.

We left the UK on 25 November 1954 on board the Rhodesia Castle. We left the ship at Beira and travelled up to Blantyre by train, this journey took about 24 hours. All four member of the family were in one cabin plus a curious kitten who my father struggled to keep from standing on.

We were to live in the Police Camp in Zomba, the capital of Malawi; this could quite well be due to my father's promotion to Superintendent on 1 January 1954. He was to be in charge of the Police Training School. We settled into a house on a corner near the Police Camp Gates and our nearest neighbours were a family called the Shands. It was from this house that I recall my first school in Nyasaland. I recall waiting outside the headmistresses office with Mary and my mother. Mrs Glen was running late and my mother couldn't wait any longer without being late to work herself. She told us to wait there and said "remember, Heather, your date of birth is 27 July 1948" and off she went. Mrs Glen was my teacher as well as headmistress of the school; she was a very kind lady and never raised her voice to my recollection. Our school day started at 7.30 am and finished at 12.15 for lunch and the rest of the day, except for one day of the week we would return at 1.30 to 3.30pm. On these afternoons we would go on nature walks, across the Zomba Golf Course or up part of Zomba Mountain. Nothing too strenuous, but we found it enjoyable all the same. I believe it was my second morning at the school and we were always early to anywhere my father took us. I didn't have anyone in particular to play

with, so I hung around out the front of the school, swinging round and round one of the pillars on the verandah. Two ladies walked up the school drive-way each with a little girl in tow. One lady was very beautiful, she wore a white dress with red strawberries on it and her shoes were red to match and she had long black wavy hair. Her little girl was also called Heather, Heather Hale and that day was the start of a friendship that would last until Haley sadly committed suicide at the age of 21. Heather Haley's father was also in the Police force and they moved into a flat not far from where we lived and so we also played with each other outside of school.

My mother had at this stage a hysterectomy and went to stay with family friends in Mzuzu, northern Malawi, for convalescence. Gwen Weldon was apart from a close friend, she was also a trained nurse and my parents decided this would be best for my Mom's health. She went away for three weeks. I should state here that my mother was not a believer in giving children excessive sweets and soft drinks and each Saturday we were given five scorched almonds as our weekly treat. The first lunch-time with no mother my dad produced an enormous box of chocolates and offered us to take two each after lunch. We never saw that particular box again but the next day a different box of equal size was produced with the same offer. Each and everyday for the entire three weeks of my mother's absence a box was produced and at the end of three weeks and my mother returned home the chocolates stopped abruptly. Our nanny at this time was a lady called Grace. Grace took over my mother's role in her absence and it was Grace who used to brush my hair in the morning and she always managed to find ribbons to match my clothing. I have no idea where the ribbons came from as my mother believed that hair should be kept off the face using hair clips. Grace used to sit with us in the evening, having supervised our bath and supper; she would tell us all types of stories from her village. Reflecting back now, some of her stories were a bit risqué for our age group but it didn't do us any harm and we thrived on her love and attention.
While my mother was away in Mzuzu my father took more time with us. This particular day that he was home we had a heavy rainfall and my sister and I headed for the end of our garden to the deep ditch there and waded up and down, thigh deep in the swirling brown water, pretending it was our swimming pool. It came as a shock to hear my usually quiet father shouting at us to get the hell out of there and to put our shoes on! It never entered our minds that snakes could have been washed down in the torrent but after that we never waded in the ditches again.

It was whilst living in this house that I learnt how to ride a bicycle. Our kitchen boy, Mafuta, used to run along beside me holding the bike steady at the saddle as we gathered up speed he would let go and I would crash into a tree or a rock at the side of the road until I mastered peddling and steering all at the same time.

One afternoon we must have become bored and Mary noticed an old piece of rope hanging from a telegraph pole that was in our back garden. She offered to jump up and get the rope for me to swing on. Nobody could have known that the heavy pole was just standing there by the grace of God and that everything below earth level had been eaten by white-ants. I was told to run but apparently ran the wrong way and the pole came crashing down on me. When I came round I was in my bed and my dad was home, either, Grace, John or Kenneth (our houseboys) had called him at work. My father was extremely

concerned, not for me, as I seemed little worse for wear, but for Mary. As the pole hit me and I went down cold Mary took off for my cousin Prudence's house at Misery Farm (a mile or so away) and refused to come home as she believed she had killed me. Grace was sent to fetch her and came back alone, my father rang the Bishop' house and spoke to Mary but she wouldn't be pacified. I can't recall how she was encouraged to come back but obviously she did.

I was then taken to Zomba Hospital and a Dr Weir examined me. There was no x-ray machine at the European hospital and there was no suggestion that I be taken to the African hospital for x-rays. Instead, I was taken home and was to return for a further examination a week later. I don't recall any pain at all, but a week later Dr Weir pronounced that I had a broken collar-bone and would have to be bandaged up for several weeks and no riding bicycles during that time – very sad news as I'd only just got the hang of not crashing into everything!

Once again we were transferred to Blantyre, this time there was no Police House allocated to us so we were provided with a house in Sunnyside owned by the Print, it was situated about two miles from my Uncle Harry's house. Sunnyside had a very overgrown garden and about six feet from the front door there was a thick growth of elephant grass. This garden had a gentle slope down to what might have been a small river and then up the other side was an African village or housing for domestic staff. Our garden up Sunnyside butted with the Price's garden and Dianne Price and I became good friends outside of school. Dianne was about 2 years older than me so it would have been unthinkable for us to be friends at school. The Price's had a baby at this time and I loved to spend time over there. Not for the baby but I loved the dregs left over from making up the babies bottles. They also acquired a spaniel puppy which they called Noddy.

That year we went to the Blantyre Club's Christmas Party. When all the children had eaten and it was time to play games, I didn't feel too well and sought out my mom's lap. I was well known at home for my sweet tooth and my gluttony ways when it came to parties with the cakes and sweets. My father, I believe, thought it was one of those times and told me to get off my mom's lap and play with the other children. I was still unwell the following morning and Mary was not feeling the best so Dr Miskensken was called to the house. He diagnosed us with measles and we were confined to bed with the curtains drawn and all lights off. By Christmas morning I was no longer feeling sick but poor Mary was feeling very ill. We would always get individual gifts with one larger gift to share. Boxing Day took a long time to come when Mary felt well enough to open our shared gift – a beautiful dolls house, complete with furniture and a beautiful detailed family of six people made from pipe cleaners. We spent many happy years playing with that dolls house. When we left Nyasaland all our toys and books were sent to the Zomba African hospital and I would like to think that dolls house brought joy to a lot of other children.

We started swimming lessons at the Blantyre pool, the Dolphin Club as it was called was run by Mr and Mrs Themme. My mother was terrified of being in any water deeper than her bath and to this end my parents decided we would learn to swim and not be afflicted with this terror. I can still remember the first time I did doggy-paddle the whole length of the pool – 25 yards with Mrs Themme walking alongside.

February 1958 and it was time to go to England again for the six months and we embarked at Beira, this time to stay at 6c Wilson Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, Kent. Our accommodation was a drab flat with an even drabber courtyard. Dad didn't stay very much with us at this place; he went off to Hendon for a police course of some sort or the other. On arriving at the flat on the first day we were taken to the shops to buy a loaf of bread, butter and jam and to hire a television. Something neither one of us had ever seen. Mary and I were sent off to the local school which didn't have a lawn as I remember it, only a bitumen playground and the in game was "2 balls" – we soon became as good as the other children but back in Nyasaland this wasn't ever considered much of an achievement. I remember my teacher, not by his name which I haven't a clue, but he owned the first protruding Adam's apple I'd ever seen and I would watch it with amazement as it went up and down as he spoke.

There was some sort of school holiday whilst we were there and Mary and I went down to the beautiful cliff gardens to play. Some boys from our school were also down in the gardens and we started throwing small stones at each other. Unfortunately for me one of these stones hit my upper cheek bone and I couldn't see, I thought I was blind. Of course I wasn't made blind but I had a wonderful black eye which still hadn't faded when it was time to return to school. The teacher with the Adam's apple asked me what had happened and I told him the truth never thinking he would guess it was one of the children from my class and even picking the correct child who would end up getting the cane as a reminder not to throw stones at people. The television must have been a Godsend for my mother. She was not a good cook, having never had the need to learn and most evenings she would sit us down in front of the television with baked beans on toast, telling us that what cowboys lived on.

We left the UK on the 28 August 1958 leaving from the London docks on the City of Exeter and then travelled up from Beira to Blantyre by rail. We went to stay with Mom's brother, Uncle Jim and Aunty Eileen until our house in the Zomba police camp was ready for us. Uncle Jim was a fastidious man, his white shorts, shirt and socks were spotless and his brown shoes polished to a very high sheen. Uncle Jim was also a beautiful pianist having taught himself, he couldn't read music but having heard a song he could play it without much effort. Whilst we were staying with him, he would arrive home at lunch time and wouldn't say a word to anybody. He would sit down at his piano and play for about 10 minutes and then stop and say "Now, what would people like to drink". He was a lovely man that told great jokes but he also had a white hot temper that for a short time would get the better of him, he would talk loudly and get rid of his frustrations and then he would be fine and funny again. Uncle Jim never lost his temper with either Mary or I and he and my Mom had great affection for each other but my Mom being the older of the two by 8 years never stopped to tell him what was right or wrong and he accepted her seniority without question. He used to call me his little "Chirombo" which means pest as in fly, insect etc. Even after we had moved into our own house I often spent a night there and went into the market with him early morning and after lunch would come home. Uncle Jim would give me 3 pence to buy the strawberries and I was told whatever money I had left over would be mine, I used to spend my time talking to the native women, cuddling their babies and getting the best strawberries with a penny left over for me. I have enjoyed bartering ever since. He was an extremely nice man that I had great affection for.

We moved into our house after about three weeks of arriving back in Nyasaland. It was a large house with an ugly sloping away garden down to the edge of the bush, except for a small section at the top that was level enough to have a lawn. At the edge of this precipitous slope Mom planted Zinnias and in no time with the Nyasaland climate it looked very colourful. Dad accommodated prison labourers and had the slope terraced and amongst the lawn they planted colourful trees and it looked very pretty indeed.

Superintendent Danny Morrison's home in Zomba

Whilst we were in England our goods were stored in one of the store-rooms of the house on the golf-course in agreement with the Kirkham family who were taking that house over from us. The day we moved in the trucks brought our belongings and the boxes were opened up on the front lawn with the idea that it could be sorted before it was placed in the correct place inside. Much to my parents' horror, as the boxes were opened each contained mud, white ants and not much else. It couldn't have been all lost as we all slept in clean sheets and blankets that first night. This was not my Mom's only disquiet, she found the mattresses too dirty for her family to sleep on and immediately rang up the PWD and demanded new ones be brought immediately. This she achieved and it became a very happy house to live in.

Since our last stay in Zomba, a new school had been built and was just outside the Police Camp, easy access and safety for us to ride our bikes to and from school. Mrs Glen was still the head-mistress and would stay as that for the rest of that year. I was put into Mrs Taylor's class, a very vibrant lady who I liked very much. I was sat beside Angela Phillips, a girl who wasn't good at sports or anything to do with the outdoors and so wasn't really popular, but I found her nice to sit beside and loved going to school and I really enjoyed living across the way from the Chevaliers. Beth and I played with each other and Suzanne and I joined the Girl Guides together. They were a nice fun family to have as neighbours.

Then I started fainting at school, in the garden or just anywhere at all. If I had to stand for any length of time, as in assembly at school, I would start to feel nauseous and then I would come round feeling fine, apparently just fainted. Nobody took much notice as I always was fine afterwards. Well, Nyasaland was changing, the Winds of Change were sweeping across Africa, and Nyasaland was no different. We started to have unfriendly Africans and small outbursts of violence. My father decided at one stage that he would bring his mother-in-law into the Police Camp from Blantyre for safety. Both our parents

went to work each day, my father to his office in CID and my mother to the Post Office were she was the Controller of Post Office's (Harold Bentley) personal assistant. My Gran, during the day was left with us children who were on school holidays at the time. This particular day we were playing in the far corner of the front garden, playing with dinky cars if I recall correctly. The next I knew I was in my bed and feeling fine and wanting to get up which my Granny refused to allow. I had passed out in the garden and the African servants had carried me inside. This time my Gran insisted that I be taken to hospital for a check-up as she said it was wrong for this to happen to children. I was taken up the mountain to Zomba Hospital and they admitted me for observation. I was 30lbs under weight for my height and age and this caused them some concern. I was put into a ward with a lady I didn't know and she sat in her bed eating chocolates but didn't offer me any. During the night I woke up vomiting and in the end this lady pressed the button for the nurse. The next day she left hospital and I was on my own at night for the first time in my entire life and being nervous at night this wasn't an occurrence I enjoyed at all. I had blood taken which was sent for examination in Salisbury as they suspected I had leukaemia. This news must have been devastating for my parents but each afternoon they visited me with smiling faces, telling me it wouldn't be long before I could come home. I believe that every store in Zomba sent a gift of some sort to me in the week I was in hospital. One I distinctly remember was a rag doll all in pieces ready to be sewn together. The African night sister used to come and sit with me in the evening and we used to sit and talk and she would also tell me fabulous stories. During this time it was she who sewed the doll together, without her I would have been beyond lonely of an evening.

Christmas was coming and my mother insisted that I come home for my supposed last Christmas. When the hospital staff refused she went to the Director of health and he granted her wish and I arrived back home in time for Christmas. That year Christmas stands out especially in my mind. We had my Uncle Jim, Aunty Eileen and Prudence and another police couple, the Yorks, I don't recall who our other guests were. We had champagne at lunch and I was allowed even a second glass. After lunch we played silly games, games resurrected from my Mom's childhood and still fun so many years later. I think my parents really put themselves out that year so that I would enjoy what was meant to be my last Christmas. Christmas was always fun at our house. My Dad would vanish about mid morning to the mess if we were in Zomba or to the Club if we were in Blantyre and he would seek and discover those who had no home to go to for Christmas lunch and they would be invited to our house. A phone call to Mom notifying her of extra guests was enough for her to tell the cook to add more vegetables and to the houseboy to add more chairs at the table. We never had a Christmas dinner with just the four of us and every year was great fun, this one just stands out above the rest.

I never went back into hospital as my parents were notified that I didn't have leukaemia but that I had been overdosed with antibiotics and I needed to have my body rebuilt. This they did with faithfully giving me a disgusting concoction of a substance called Sanatogen taken three times per day.
By the time the new school year began I was fit and healthy and filled with energy. To my horror I discovered on the first day at assembly we no longer had Mrs Glen but a new head master called Mr. John Walker. He stood at the front of the assembly with a cane between his hands and slowly bent the cane up and down in a very intimidating manner. We were told to listen out for our names to be called and pay attention to the Class we were assigned to. My

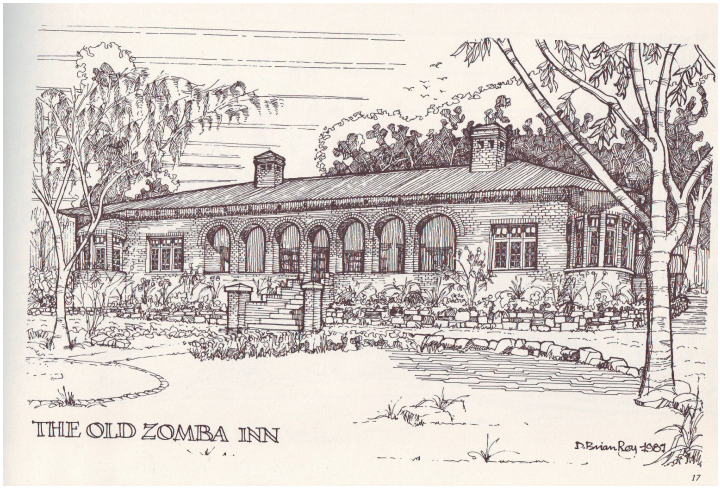
name was called and I was to go into Mr Walker's class which was a mix of Standard 4 & 5. Mary was in Standard 5 that year and when I went and knocked on his classroom door and said my name he told me to get out. I was very timid and easily intimidated at that time and I had no idea where to go next, I didn't know whether to go home or what to do. In the end I went to Mrs Taylor and she found me a desk and a chair in her Standard 3 & 4 classroom, I was again to sit next to Angela Phillips at the back of the class. As the term progressed I found it harder and harder to read the blackboard and would "borrow" Angela Phillips' glasses as we methodically copied the history of David Livingstone from the blackboard.

Mary and I also joined the Young Farmer's Club that year and one day a week, which day I'm not sure, but Mrs Duncan would come in her VW Kombi-van and we would all pile in and be driven out to the Duncan farm. The cost of membership was a bottle of Mazoe (cordial) per term and upon arrival we would be given a glass of this cordial. We were divided into 4 groups and the duties would rotate. Milking, calf-rearing, chicken care and on the fourth week we would stay at the school and tend our allotted garden. I loved milking the best but I do recall having to mix the chicken food for the week. This would be nut-meal, fish-meal, egg-shells and a few other bits and pieces. My group would thoroughly pig out on the nut meal and I recall poor Angela Phillips being the butt of our cruel joke when we pointed out fish-meal as nut-meal to her and watched her put a handful into her mouth. We were donated some young pullets and the eggs they produced were shared out in rotation to the club members. Also butter was dealt with in the same way. I never tried making butter; it seemed like too much like hard work for me.

It was during this year that I saw my father in a temper. He was a very placid man and his disapproval of our behaviour was voiced with a click of his tongue that was followed by a glare and this was always enough to control our behaviour. My Dad we were told this Saturday afternoon was in a very important meeting and couldn't be interrupted. We were told that after lunch my Mom was going to lie down for an hour or so and we were not to get into any mischief. No climbing trees, just read a book quietly was the advise we were given. As soon as my Mom went to her bedroom we decided that if we climbed the tree in the circular drive-way no one would ever find out. Mary was at the top of the tree trying to circle it by going from branch to branch. All was going well until she slipped and down the trunk she came and as she fell her foot got caught in the fork of the trunk. Her screams were so loud that not only did my Mom come running but the house servants also came over the hill at a run from their accommodation. Mary was carried into the house still wailing and there was talk between the adults about a possibility of a broken bone. My mother was forced to ring the guard-house and get him to locate and interrupt my Dad. He arrived home just about purple with anger and waited in the car until Mom and Mary were seated and drove off to the African hospital for x-rays. Poor Mary didn't have anything broken, just very badly sprained. For the few weeks that Mary couldn't ride her bike to school my father refused to accommodate her with a lift and under no circumstances was she to miss any schooling. My Mom had to ring around and find someone kind enough to ferry Mary back and forth to school

The troubles between the African Congress Party and the Europeans intensified that year and at one time the school was closed for a week due to there being insufficient army or police to safeguard the school. Those children

living in Zomba Township were confined to their own gardens, whilst the children living in the Police Camp were lucky enough to be allowed to venture to our next door neighbours for company. It must have been school holidays as Prudence (who went to boarding school in Southern Rhodesia) was in Zomba. Her family lived on the outskirts of Zomba on the Blantyre-Zomba road and to drive to each others residence meant going through the Markets. My Dad had once more fetched his mother-in-law from Blantyre for her safety and my parents' peace of mind. My mother was sewing in the dining room and my Gran was sitting at the table chatting to her. The phone rang and it was Prudence asking if she might come to our house for the day. My Dad was at work and there was no car available, even if my mother drove, which she didn't. There was no public transport either. It was decided that Mary & I could go on our bikes through the bush and the African Villages and arrive at a group of Indian shops on the Blantyre-Zomba road and meet Prudence there. We were given strict instructions that if Prudence wasn't at the meeting place then we were to return home immediately and under no circumstances were we to travel on the road. Mary and I rode to the allotted place with no incident only to find Pru was not there. We looked down the road and couldn't even see her coming. Mary and I argued. She wanted us to turn back as we had been instructed to and I felt we should just wait a few more minutes. The argument intensified and Mary rode off on her bike back to the Police Camp and I rode down the Blantyre-Zomba road to look for Prudence. I had only gone about 500 yards and there she was and we travelled back together, again with no sign of any danger. We arrived back at our house and my Mom just looked at me over her glasses and I knew I was in trouble. Before she could compose herself to say anything my Gran, who never interfered with our upbringing, said "You are nothing but a little bitch, you'll be the death of your mother". They were the strongest words she ever spoke to me and I have never forgotten them.



Uncle Pop's house 'Seven Arches'
(Later leased as a hotel known as the Pop Inn)

There was another large European family in Nyasaland, their surname was Smithyman. Both my parents referred to the patriarch of this family as Pop and Mary and I always referred to him as Uncle Pop. He was a lovely man and we spent so much time with him that he was like a Grandfather to me. He would often just appear at our front-door and stay for the evening and on Sunday afternoons it wasn't unusual for our family to go for a drive and end up at Uncle Pop's. Uncle Pop refused to drive his car and his house-boy, Ali, would drive

him around. Ali was never allowed to exceed 15mph and Uncle Pop always sat in the back seat. This proved very fortunate for Uncle Pop. He arrived one late afternoon at our house and when my mother said she was surprised to see him with all the rioting along the Zomba-Liwonde road. He said he then understood what was happening on his drive to our house. There were many Africans on both sides of the road with stones in their hands but as his car approached they all dropped the stones and waved with friendly smiles and he said he had waved back. It then became apparent that his car was the same make and colour of the Catholic Bishop's car and they had got the two confused with each other. At the start of the next year Mary went off to boarding school in Nyambadwe and I went into my final year of junior school. I was not looking forward to going into Mr. Walker's class; I was still in fear of him and his cane. I could never have been more wrong. Mr Walker was the best teacher I had in all my school years. I don't recall opening one text book in the entire year. There were 16 children in the class. He would write his own maths sheets, which always included his pupil's nick-names; we had to get every question correct before we received another set of problems. We were shown films on a variety of subjects and would have to write an essay at the end of the film. He took us to visit the Changalume cement factory, the tobacco factory in Limbe and even organised the entire school to be picked up by a Hay Transport lorry which took us to see the lion that had been hit by one of their trucks and of course we had to write an essay on this subject too. Each week we were each given a topic and would have to give a speech on this topic that had to last for at least two minutes. One subject I was given was "socks" which I scraped through but the time I was told to give a speech on Anacondas was dreadful. The school didn't have a library and we didn't have anything at home that would help me with research. In despair I asked Haley what she knew and she told me that these snakes were so large that they would encircle an ocean liner, hold their tails in their mouths and crush the ship. I believed her and trotted this statement out in my speech only to be met with shrieks of laughter from the whole assembly, including my best friend, Haley. In his three years as headmaster, Mr Walker changed the school so much for the better. Instead of one playing field he created two and all the pupils were given a tree to plant around their perimeter which would give shade for pupils in future years. In Mary's year two jungle gyms arrived (which are still there today), my year a small school bus was purchased and in the following year the school would boast it's own swimming pool. He formed a parent's committee and encouraged fund-raising to achieve these goals. We no longer were called the Zomba European School. Every child had to write an essay on what they believed the school should be named and as the majority chose Sir Harry Johnston, so it became.

During one of the school holidays he organised that 10 children from his class would go to the Luangwa Game Reserve in Northern Rhodesia. All children going on the pony camp would not be allowed to also go to Luangwa. As I didn't own a horse I considered this more than fair. My Mom was on the school committee and volunteered herself as chaperone for the five girls going and would also be in charge of the catering for the ten days we would be away. My Mom did her role great justice. We left early one morning and travelled to Lilongwe where we stopped for lunch at my Aunty Marie's, we then travelled to Fort Johnstone and spent the night in the hostel of the school there. After breakfast we travelled to the first of the two camps we would be staying at. Although my mother didn't have to cook any meals she had to ensure we had enough provisions as there was no store in which to replenish any items. We

went on game drives in the early morning and late afternoons and the rest of the day we just played games around the Camp. When we arrived at the second camp we discovered that the people before us had decided to extend their stay for a further night and this meant that we would have to have more to a rondavel than expected. My mother made enquiries to the Camp staff about a Norman Carr, who was the head game warden of the Luangwa Game Reserve. Norman Carr had also, like many of my aunts and uncles, been born in Chinde and the two families had been very close friends. Norman Carr's father had been one of the pall-bearers at my Grandfathers funeral. Norman didn't appear but sent six guinea fowl for our supper along with his best wishes.

It was at the 2nd camp that we were invited to go for a walk with the game warden. We were taken in small groups. In my group was my Mom, Haley and Colin Thurlow, a short quiet boy as I remember him. We followed the game warden in single file, stopping when he stopped and doing precisely as we were told. We were walking along a path with very high grass on both sides when suddenly we heard a very loud roar and I'm positive I stopped breathing for at least a minute. I looked at the back of the African Game Warden, expecting his rifle to be at the ready but he just kept up the same steady pace, with his rifle casually swinging over his shoulder and down his back. Another roar and there was still no reaction from the Game Warden. A few minutes later we arrived at the bank of the Luangwa River and a hippo surfaced to belt out a roar – the exact sound that I had been positive was a lion. We turned back for camp at this stage and no-one mentioned the damp patch on Colin's shorts.

I was at the age of liking to be private and I would play with my paper-dolls in my bedroom before lunch, our main meal of the day. The ritual in our family was for my Dad to have a glass of beer and then call out "Kudja" (food). This would get the staff ready and after a short time, John would appear in the doorway of the lounge and say "kudja ali leddi". My Mom would then call out "Heather, lunch" and we would all meet up in the dining room. This particular day I heard my Dad call out the key word and after an appropriate time I heard my Mom telling me that lunch was on the table. I walked down the passage to find the dining room void of people and ventured on into the lounge to find out what the problem was. I found John, Mom and Dad all clutching their sides as they laughed. Not one human had voiced a communication – it had all been Stinker, our parrot, imitating precisely the voice and pitch of each person and timing it to perfection.

With all the trouble with the African National Congress, Nyasaland sought for assistance and we had forces sent down from Rhodesia and also Police were sent out from the UK. Two of the British Police came to stay with us for a few weeks. Looking back I wonder how much of a culture shock it would have been for them. I can recall Dad explaining how to eat Chimanga (maize cobs) at one lunch and at another time informing them of the avocado that was presented to us. They arrived late one evening, long after I had gone to bed but on venturing onto the Khonde the next morning to feed my silk-worms before going to school I found one of the gentlemen sitting very quietly. It must have been surreal – a very beautiful time of day in Nyasaland, with just the birds singing their morning tunes and as far as the eye could see was bush beyond the expanse of lawn, shrubs and flowers. Very different to the England they would have left with traffic noises and neighbours fencing. I couldn't get either one to try some nsima and ndeu (nsima was the staple diet of the Africans and

ndiu was a relish, which could be fish, chicken, meat or vegetable). On this occasion it was my favourite, pumpkin leaves cooked as spinach with tomatoes and nuts.

Sadly my year with Mr Walker came to an end and boarding school was to be my next stop. I had missed not having a sibling in the house and I had spent more and more time down at the African Compound for company. Kenneth, who had been our head-houseboy for as long as I could remember left us to go and work for another police-officer and wasn't replaced. Edith, our nanny was head hunted by Pat Humphries and accepted a better salary. This poaching of staff was not the done thing and my Mom being my Mom didn't let it go quietly and poor Pat Humphries found the sharp, precise tongue of a Gerty Morrison affronted. John, who had also worked with us before I was born was asked and accepted the role of running the house and also the cook. He was a short, slightly built quiet man and would often come into the lounge room when I was home alone and make the right comments when I played him my latest Elvis Presley record. I of course in turn had to make equal sounds of enjoyment when he gave me his records to listen to. John's wife, Lofi, agreed to be our nanny on the condition that she could bring her young daughter, Margi with her. If this question had not been asked it wouldn't have mattered, we girls were never left alone and neither of my parents would have allowed a young child to be left without adult supervision in their domain. Lofi was a tiny thin lady, every bit as quiet as her husband and just as delightful. Lofi was extremely ticklish and suffered many times with me constantly tickling her – I can still her saying "Eeeeeeeee Dona Hever" and giggling uncontrollably. The ACP were still causing trouble and intimidation tactics to join the party had become common. My Dad gave our house staff the money to buy the correct badge and keep them safe whilst in the market and township shopping. Each night at 6pm (I think) a police run station called Blue Band Radio would broadcast the emergency news in England and in Chinyanja and my parents insisted that the house staff listen and be kept informed. Should I be left on my own at that hour it was my instruction to call in the staff and put the radio on for them to listen to.
Haley and I spent many hours riding around the police camp on our bikes and it became uncomfortable going through the African police accommodation (called the lines), not from the adults who would still call out a friendly greeting but it was the youths who would tell us that one day we would be their wives and yell Kwacha (the freedom cry) to us. We still had fun all the same. Come the rainy season we would watch the clouds darken and either phone or yell out to each other across our gardens to meet "at the corner" and we would ride along the roads until the threat of rain became a reality and then we'd turn our bikes around and peddle as fast as we could to try and beat the torrent the skies promised. The majority of these races ended up with us arriving home soaking wet but we had so much fun in the race against nature.

My Mom's sewing machine was constantly working during the Christmas holidays, getting my new school uniforms ready for boarding school and new items were bought to fill the list of requirements and then all too soon Mary and I were driven to Nyambadwe by dad with the boot filled with our suitcases, tennis racquets etc. I was assigned to a bed in the "New Wing" sharing a dormitory with nine other girls. We had 3 baths between 20 girls, we shared ward-robe space, and the only item of furniture we were allocated for our own personal use was a large wooden box beside our bed which they called a locker. One of my dorm mates was Cousin Vivian who had a bed about four

away from mine. Mary and cousin Bobo were in the dorm next door, also in the new wing. I slept badly that first night and just wanted to be back home in my own bed with Rommel gently snoring in his bed under the dressing-table. The bell was a solid iron shovel hanging from the fire-escape that was banged with an iron rod. The sound ricocheted around the quadrangle of the girl's hostel. This was sounded at 5.30am and we had to be dressed, beds made and ready for breakfast in the hall by 6am. I'm not sure how Vivian felt but I was extremely embarrassed that first morning, when Mary and Bobo rushed into our dormitory and helped us make our beds and showed us how to twist and tie our mosquito nets up for the day.

My first week at boarding school was filled with tests done in the assembly hall and when we weren't doing a test we were free to roam around the school grounds. At the end of the first week the results had come through and I was assigned to Form 1B. This meant that I would have to learn Latin and French as well as other subjects. English and Maths had never been a problem for me and I had become lazy with no interest in study. I could speak the local language fluently where most children having not been born to the country couldn't. I felt it was wrong to teach two languages that had no bearing on Nyasaland and so never bothered with either subject. I had a good group of friends in the hostel, some in my class and some from another stream and although I complained about being a boarder it really wasn't that bad. Each Friday evening at prep we were given our pocket-money for the week, 2/6d was the normal amount but if a good excuse were given then a few extra shillings would be doled out. Each Saturday night we were shown a picture in the school hall but these were all so old and out-dated black and white Mickey Roonie (at best) movies. Every now and then we were allowed to have a dance evening in its place and the boys and girls hostels would dance to records whilst the teachers who also lived in the hostels sat upright in chairs at the front to ensure everything was all above board. I remember one evening I was sent back to the hostel to put on a "straight petticoat". The boys on these occasions would sit on one side of the hall and the girls on the other and the strict rule was if a boy had the courtesy to walk across the hall to ask a girl to dance then it was disallowed for the girl to humiliate the boy with a refusal.

Once a fortnight we were taken into Blantyre on the school bus, we had to wear full school uniform on these occasions (including blazer). There were certain places in Blantyre that under no circumstances were we to venture, the coffee shop with the only juke-box in Nyasaland was first on the list. With limited money to spend, I invariably ended up visiting Aunty Lillian at her office where she would give us a cup of tea and a biscuit or two. I also discovered that I could telephone my Mom free of charge if I went into the post office and mentioned that she worked for the PMG in Zomba; this not only filled in a few minutes but kept the home-sickness at bay. We had "exeat's" every three weeks in which we were allowed to go home for the weekend from Friday morning tea till Sunday 5pm when the doors of the hostel were locked.

My Dad would have taken time off work to travel the hour to come and collect us and it was never just Mary and I. Bobo's parents lived in Lilongwe and a friend of mine lived in Fort Johnstone, both too far away to travel just for a weekend. Sometimes other children would also be invited for various reasons to spend this time at our house. We would arrive home in time for lunch and then in the afternoon we would share our two bikes around, going for rides around the police camp, walk up to the Zomba market and buy samosas or just

sit in the lounge listening to records or the radio. It was always nice to come home. After a sandwich and a cup of tea at 4pm we would all go to the Club for the Friday night pictures, enjoying something a little bit more modern than what the school provided.

At certain times of the year our older school athletes would compete against the police and army and we were bussed to Rangeley Stadium to cheer them on. Again full school uniform was required. It was on one of these occasions that I landed myself in trouble. I was sitting with five other girls from my year when a group of coloured girls sat a small distance behind us. After a short time they started to throw bits of gravel at us, which we ignored. They then started to call us “white rats”. One of the girls I was with retaliated by calling them “black rats” and they moved on and the incident was forgotten. Until we were getting back on the school bus, standing in line waiting our turn to board one of these girls rushed up and started to punch Sara who again retaliated. When we got back to the hostel the six of us were questioned by the teacher in charge, Mrs Lowe and we gave her an honest account of events. The next morning, the class door bounced open and there was the headmaster in all his gowned glory saying “Jennifer Durieu, Heather Morrison, to my office now”. We scurried along to his office, terrified and found ourselves standing side by side in front of his desk. He first threatened to contact our parents which scared me even more. Then he asked me what I had had to say for myself to which I told him I had done nothing and on reply gave him my word. He then turned to Jennifer and said “And you” poor Jennifer said “no Heather didn’t do anything” He voice boomed out “I’ve already got her word, what about you” and without waiting for her reply told me I could go. This wasn’t the end of the matter, our House (hostel) Mistress, Miss Childs, also questioned us later after school and informed us that for the rest of the term we would not be going to Blantyre or to the Stadium and whilst the rest of the hostel were out we would be doing manual labour. This meant about 4-5 weeks of either weeding or mending mosquito nets. To this day I still feel the punishment measured out was unjust and extremely unfair but curious as to what view Mom and dad would have taken on this matter had they received the letter.

Our days of being a boarder were over. My Dad was retiring from the Nyasaland Police Force and they had chosen England as the country in which to retire. Our car was sold and Dad borrowed an old Citroën from one of the young inspectors. It was the rainy season and one Friday evening it was pelting down and we all wore raincoats to keep ourselves reasonably dry as the car leaked dreadfully. My Dad was driving the car and my Mom was operating the wind-screen wipers which worked by turning a knob on the dashboard – definitely not suitable for Nyasaland in the rainy season. Dad offered to drop us all off at the front of the Club and he would go on and get a car park. This Mom accepted gratefully but Mary and I refused, preferring to get soaked, so worried that someone would see us get out of this particular wreck of a car.
Our belongings were packed into big crates, items were sold. What crockery, cutlery and any other odds and ends that we were not going to take with us was given to John and Lofi, who planned to open a canteen in their village when their employment with us ceased. Mom’s chickens were sold several times over as each night they returned to wait at the gate of their enclosure. Dad had shoes he did not wish to keep and even though this was never advertised, we had lots of African strangers at our back door enquiring about the shoe sale. Dad’s orderly, Lapkin was given a watch in gratitude for his

service and I'm not sure if the tears streaming down his old face were greater than our own. John and Lofi were given a percentage of their salary calculated on their years of service with us, it might have eased their loss but it didn't help mine. We left the Police Camp and moved up the Mountain side to stay with Uncle Jim, Aunty Eileen and Prudence. Christmas lunch, our last in Nyasaland, was a miserable affair, as we were invited to the Lodges for lunch, Alan Lodge being the Assistant Commissioner at that time. Neither of their two daughters, pleasant though they were, were not our age group and it was a stiff affair with no fun and games.

Then on the 30 December 1961 we were driven by Government car to Blantyre railway station to catch the train to Beira. A crowd of people were there to wish us farewell and as the train pulled out it was to the sound of "Auld Lang Syne". I believe this is where my wonderful childhood ended and nothing would ever be quite the same again.