

Nyasaland Police Association Reunion - 13 July 2023

'A Salute from the Harling Family'

Derek, Joyce and children Sue, Mark & Richard



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Muli Bwanji

Welcome & Congratulations on the occasion of this wonderful and very poignant 17th, and last planned, Nyasaland Police Association Reunion.

My name is Mark Harling. I am the eldest son of Derek and Joyce Harling. I was born in Lilongwe in 1962. I am writing this salutation on behalf of my parents and siblings who were part of the Colonial Service and Nyasaland-Malawi Police Force from 1956-1969.

Today Derek (87yrs), Joyce (86yrs), Sue (62yrs), Mark (61yrs) and Richard (57yrs) send you our individual and collective congratulations and best wishes from Australia, our home of 50yrs since emigrating in Dec 1972. Sue's greetings of course come from Cambridgeshire, UK where she has lived for the last 11 years.

This salutation is the Harling Family's small way of remembering, honouring and celebrating the officers, wives and children who spent time in Nyasaland and Malawi serving in or supporting the Nyasaland-Malawi Police Force. It is a salute to those of you at the reunion today, those who wanted to be there today but could not be ... and those in memoriam who we hold in our hearts and minds on this special day.

This '*salute*' is an abridged form of '*A Shared Experience in Nyasaland & Malawi - the Warm Heart of Africa*' which will in time be shared via the NYPOL website. That longer missive, in keeping with this reunion's persuasion, has the aim of taking you back to your and my family's time in Nyasaland, your and my family's time in Malawi. It will be an extension of today's gathering and a celebration of this reunion, past reunions, and the joy the Nyasaland Police Association has brought us all. Last but not least, it will celebrate the lives we lived in Nyasaland, the memories we cherish from those days as well as the deep love we will always have for Malawi and the genuine, always-smiling, pure-of heart people of Malawi.

As I conclude, let me be a little philosophical. You-and-yours, together with my family share a bond. A human bond. A bond forged through service, duty, friendship and shared experience. A bond that is meaningful in many different and nuanced ways.

The definition of '*reunion*' is '*the action of being brought together as a unified whole*'. The words and memories you have shared in the past, share today, words resident in the NYPOL website, and the Harling words to follow are all an attempt to unify. They are our gift to ourselves. They are our gift to those that follow us, and to history itself. They are a *gift-that-keeps-on-giving*.

By meeting here today, in person or virtually, we honour Nyasaland and Malawi's history, its people, its land, our service, our achievements, the children that were brought into the world there, the friends we made there, and our memories. These elements are personal and unique to each and every one of us. They bonded us when we lived there. They have bonded us since we left. They bond us today. It is a bond that will live on beyond today. The bond is unbreakable for we belong to, and will always be part of, the fabric that makes up the '*warm heart of Africa*', and the Nyasaland-Malawi Police Force in particular.

And so in keeping with the theme of this farewell-styled reunion, I went in search of a memorable way to 'sign-off'. Something that we could all relate to. Something that would celebrate us, celebrate our bond to each other and to celebrate our service in the Nyasaland Police. Something that would truly capture the emotional attachment we have to each other, to our common past and to Malawi, that tiny little country that forever warms our hearts.

My search was successful. Here follows an extract* from Ann, one we can call 'our own' describing in letters to her mother in the UK how she and her husband navigated the last few days and hours as they prepared to depart Zomba, Nyasaland for the last time in 1963.

My hope is that Ann's experiences of the hot weather (late November), packing, leaving work, farewelling friends and colleagues (with all its highs and lows) further unifies us ... for we have surely all walked in her shoes.

1st October. *Here we are, on our last full day at the Lake, ... glowing with sunburn and shattered at the thought of having to go away from this heavenly place for the last time.*

23rd October. *It was confirmed today that we sail on the City of York on 27th November from Durban.*

5th November. *Things are moving here. By the end of the weekend we had our nine heavy boxes all done up and labelled. On Friday afternoon we went to the Club and saw 'The Road to Hong Kong', with Bing and Bob still being very funny.*

12th November. *At the last moment I decided I could not face going back to the Hostel and saying any more goodbyes. Alex agreed at once and rang up Kuchawe, where we have had such lovely times. We went up on the 6 o'clock clock yesterday ... we had a very pleasant evening ... John broke down and wept when I said goodbye to him and that just finished me we drove down at 7.30 through swirling mist with Zomba invisible below us. We spent two hours in the Bank sorting out our affairs.*

This letter is a little vague, as I feel very much between two worlds. I cannot wait to get right away and start building up a new life ... I refuse to believe there is not some small corner of the earth where we can put down roots, far from the erstwhile paradise from which the almost indecent rush of recent political events in Africa has banished us and our kind forever.

Nevertheless, I know that when I go tomorrow, I shall carry within me a deep sense of desolation, which I suspect will never quite leave me. ["It never has", authors note 1993,]

Congratulations and best wishes to you all from,

The Harling Family

Zikomo

* ***The Real Paradise – Memories of Africa 1950-1963*** by Ann Davidson, 1993 (pp548)