

Muriel Williams Sanderson: Letters spanning 2006 — 2015

These materials contain not only Muriel's form letters but also her correspondence with P. David Wilkin (and his form letters in return).

They follow earlier materials that were sent to Botswana in 2006 and end with her death in mid-2015. David was in NYC (USA) while Muriel was in Gaborone (Botswana). This correspondence simply focuses on both their current activities and observations of life in Botswana and New York City with memories of Zambia.

Notes:

- As before, any manuscript letters by Muriel and David were retyped (for ease of readers' use) by Dusan Zavisic and any retyped page appears next to the original page.
- Pdf files were created from photocopied pages of the original copies that will hopefully be sent to Botswana National Archives.
- P. David Wilkin put all this material together in early 2016.

**late 2006
and 2007**

Muriel and David's manuscript letters retyped: late 2006 — 2015

22 November 2006

[Addendum to form letter]

Many thanks for yours of September. Next time you're in S. Africa, I could fly to Jo'burg to meet you. I'm not sure how near that is to where you stay. And I meet the Morton's? Alternatively, you could fly here and I'll meet you -- and pick you up.

I don't hear much news about Zambia. There are a lot of problems with Chibuba -- Pres. from 1991 -- 2000 who is up for corruption, but has heart problems. Mindolo is equally silent -- but it is still operating. I write to one person still there.

To go back to the book "Colour Bar", it is published by Penguin.

Have a lovely Christmas,

Love, Muriel

P.S. Wilfred has re-married, and I was in South Africa visiting his son and daughter while I was away.

P O Box 46515
Gaborone
Botswana
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22 November 2006

My Dear.....*David*.....

Hello!! I have just returned from 3 weeks holiday in Madagascar. My friend Gwithie and I stayed on a small Island northeast of the main Island. It is 55km long, and up to 7km wide.

The journeys were utter hell! We took 22 hours getting there, due to 6 hours wait in Johannesburg airport, in my view absolutely ghastly. Then 6 hours in a little hotel at Tananarive, the capital; out of 22 hours, only 6 were actually flying. The airport on St. Marie Island is in the South, and we stayed in the north. There are no proper roads, we crawled at 10kph around pot-holes and huge stores.

So on arrival I asked myself, "why did I come?"

Gwithie and I did not stay together. She and her husband have leased a beach for 50 years on the extreme northern tip, which is on the Indian Ocean. The sea is usually rough, and the only way to get there is by the sea. Also, the beach is not suitable for swimming.

So I stayed at a small "hotel" 10km further south, on the Mozambique channel. There are 12 chalets and a dining- room. The staff were very nice and friendly, the food lovely- lobsters and prawns and blue marlin were some of the attractions. We ate fish every day.

From my chalet to the beach was a few yards, grass at first, with many trees and flowering bushes, and then lovely sand. So I swam 3 times most days before breakfast, mid- morning and mid afternoon.

I was delighted to speak French everyday. Most of the guests were French, I chatted with them. I was surprised I could remember so much, as I haven't spoken it for years, yet I can't remember the name of someone I met only yesterday. There were Dutch, Germans, Belgians and South Africans.

Gwithie and I met twice each week for the day. Twice I went by boot and she walked 1 1/2 hours to a hotel between our places. On my birthday she took me to another hotel for lunch, and then 3 days later I hired a car and we went to the east coast on the Indian Ocean, to another hotel. This place had a pier with a few chains on the

end and waiter service. We then returned to "La Crique" for dinner and a birthday cake.

The surrounding could not be more different from Botswana. So green and lush, beautiful flowering bushes, orchids growing everywhere, traveller and other palms, pineapple trees, really lovely. I am so sorry that I cannot walk far. Several guests hired bikes and motorcycles to visit around.

I did a lot of reading, but was disappointed at my choice of books. I struggled through "Saturday" by Ian McEwan, and "Never let me go" by Ishiguro. Our book club's next choice is "Short history of tractors in Ukrainian", which is most enjoyable in spite of the title. I read two histories of Madagascar, and appreciate the peacefulness of Zambia and Botswana. I read finally, "Blue shoes and happiness" - Sandy McCall Smith's latest on Mme Ramotswa and her detective agency in Botswana. It will be my choice at the next book club. It mentions Mokolodi where I worked as accountant for 7 years. I shall approach it differently, asking why these books are so popular, all round the world. I find them dull and repetitive. This year I have had 3 letters from friends in America and one in Canada, saying they had met Sandy at a book launch and mentioning me! He is such a delightful man.

Our return was a bit better, but 5 hours on plastic chairs in Tananarive did not help my back! We got back in 12 hours. Gwithie ordered a wheel chair for me at each airport- so we were at the front of the queue. It really was a lovely. I was quite appalled at the poverty.

If Botswana is the 3rd world, Madagascar is the 6th! I didn't see much of the main land, but I flew over it for 1/2 hour. I didn't see any substantial buildings. They export rice, cloves and some other spices, but this doesn't make you rich. There are a few scattered minerals, mined by individuals. While I was there, I read that a Canadian company was planning to export water to the Persian gulf.

For a long time they did not want to be identified with Africa, but they now belong to the African Union and South African Development Committee. I found it hard to believe that, the first inhabitants 2.000 years ago came from Indonesia. The mind boggles- in those little boats, they must have lost thousands of them on the oceans in between, of course the other guests assumed I was British. Most of them had no ideas where Botswana is, 2 of them had never heard of it.

Tourism is gradually growing, but they will have to improve the infrastructure. While I was there the Island ran out of petrol, the supplies arrived a week later. As there is almost no electricity, this was serious.

Botswana celebrated 40 years of independence this year. I went to the stadium, I was impressed with 4.000 children doing exercises trained by the Chinese. There were other events, but I didn't go.

There were however two books launches. The first was, "Colour Bar" (awful title) about Ruth and Seretse. The author, Susan Williams (no relative) came out and it was an informal occasion with all the family, cabinet, old friends and politicians. Susan and her husband were in the country for 2 weeks, and we met several times. She is delightful.

The next night it was the turn of Quett Masire, Vice president to Seretse, and then president for 18 years. His memoirs, called "very brave and very foolish", I found interesting as it filled in some gaps for me historically. This was a very formal occasion- with many of the same guests.

My niece Jackie's elder son Dale has returned to live in Botswana. He has just retired from the British army as an acting major after 10 years. He left Botswana at the age of 10 to go do boarding school in England, then to Holland for his international baccalaureate, then to Bristol University, then British army.

He is with his girl friend, who was brought up in a game lodge in northern Botswana. They are living in Ruth's house, 25 km north of Gaborone. His younger brother Marcus is doing very well at De Beers in London, leaning over 3 years the whole managerial operations. So after 22 years, Botswana has changed!

So an eventful few months. Best wishes for Christmas and the New year,

Love,
Muriel



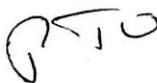
P.S

I took my short-wave radio, the reception was fantastic- I got station all over the world. So I rejoiced at the American elections results. *Donald*

Rumsfeld's departure

P.S

I heard on the news last night that there was an attempted coup in Madagascar exactly 1 week after we left! The international airport was closed for 2 days to stop the President returning from a meeting in Belgium! One week later- and we would have been stuck, as there are only 2 flights weekly to Johannesburg
The coup failed..



(22/11/06 P. 4)

Many thanks for yours of September.
Next time you're in S. Africa, I
could fly to Joburg to meet you.
I'm not sure how near that is
to where you stay. Did I need the
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silent - but it is still operating. I

wrote to one person still there.
To go back to the book "Colour
Bar", it was published by Penguin.

Have a lovely Christmas,

Love Cheryl

PS. Wilfred has re-married, & was
and in S. Africa visiting his son &
daughter while I was away.

Gaborone

2nd Feb. 2007

Dear David,

Many thanks for your Christmas letter.

I was so sorry to hear of your brother-in-law's death -- even more shocked at the attitude of the police. You didn't say his age. I believe he's been in America for years -- so how come the ANC was involved?

It must have been awful to have to make all the final arrangements.

I'm glad to hear that your health is improving. Getting older is no fun!

I had a pleasant Christmas with the family in Serowe. Only 8 of us, as one twin has an American wife, and that family spend Christmas in New Mexico and Florida. It was 40 degrees on Christmas Eve followed by a terrific storm on Christmas Day.

I've just finished the biography of Arch. Desmond Tutu. Have you read it? "Rubble Rouser for Peace" by John Allen. I don't like his writing, but the subject is fascinating. I'd read about him in Zambia, but I learned loads more. What a character! Imagine South Africa having Mandela and Tutu at the same time -- world leaders.

I hope you're feeling more relaxed.

Happy New Year.

Love,

Muriel

Rec'd
2/17/07

Box 46515 Gab.
Ind 306 07

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your Christmas letter.
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your brother-in-law's death -
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I hope your feeling more relaxed. Happy New Year.

Love Ormel

P. DAVID WILKIN
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Current Email: pdwilkin@rcn.com

16th May 2007

My dear Muriel,

Thanks for your very newsy Holiday letter last December about your trip to Madagascar. It seemed to turn into a real adventure getting there and back to Botswana. Also thanks for your note of 2nd February. I have just re-read both and am planning to buy and read some of the books that you liked very much. I confess I am not nearly as serious a reader these days as you are. I will especially try to order the new book on Seretse and Ruth this week.

I am still slowly recovering from the horror show of my brother-in-law's passing. The administration of everything has been overwhelming alone and the family in South Africa is simply unable to help. (Mteto closed the ANC offices after Independence as he had been their treasurer for many years.) Fortunately, I have sold Mteto's jazz collection after organizing it and along with four saxophones, my own retirement funds have been repaid. Just yesterday the bank demanded from the estate over \$5,500 he owed them. Of course, there is nothing, but this will mean another six months, or more, of documentation, etc. Anyway, it has been a challenge but one that has consumed over 600 hours of my time in the last eight months; at times the same as a full-time job. Fortunately my health has been very good and I keep very fit indeed.

Regarding jobs, I am still working part-time at the Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene at the Columbia University School of Public Health (Medicine). Hope to retire this year if possible. My boss currently pays me for one day a week but the work requires three days! Not fair but that is truly all the money she has. Fortunately, the work is interesting and challenging, although at times very stressful.

It has been now been one year since I have been in southern Africa. I plan to make another (and possibly final) trip this coming October or November for about three weeks. Have been in touch with Fred and Sue Morton, who have completed their home in Rurutsi and been living in Gaborone now for about nine months. (Currently they are in Iowa trying to sell their old home.) Fred has confirmed that a drive from Jo'burg through Gaborone and Botswana to Windhoek and Walvis Bay is feasible with an ordinary car. A friend in Iowa (Bwalya's boss) loves to visit S.Africa and I've suggested we make the long but interesting drive with two Malawian friends (cum bodyguards and cooks).

Thus, I am thinking about flying into Jo'burg and flying to PE for a weekend to complete traditional ceremonies regarding Mteto (and Zindi's) deaths. Then we head west. We could spend several nights in Gaborone. Fred and Sue say their guest cottage can hold four men, but if not, I am sure you and they can find a self-catering bed and breakfast for us. Jackie knows them quite well from their decades at Univ. of Botswana and so maybe we can all get together. They are a wonderful couple that you'll enjoy chatting with. Then, we'll go on across the Kalahari to Swakopmund / Walvis Bay via Windhoek and back about 10 or 12 days later. Might be fun on the return to stay at Makolodi again. Anyway, all is tentative, so please so give me your frank suggestions on how to improve it. Certainly if it comes off, we'll have a chance to spend time together while the rest of the group are exploring Gaborone and environs.

Hope your year has gone well since I last heard from you in February,

Love,

David Wilkin

Gaborone

13 Nov 2007

My dear David,

It was lovely seeing you again, even for such a short time. I am sending you a brief E-mail tomorrow, from the Methodist Church where I work. I only use this facility for a few people.

I have no objection to your writing an "epiphany" (strange word), but my memory is pretty horrible. I have kept all my letters since 1964. But, David, who will publish it? I'm not a well known character, and I just can't imagine anyone prepared to do it -- they wouldn't make any money.

My telephone has broken down 3 times in the last 4 weeks! They take 2 - 4 days to fix it, I might even buy a cell phone, tho' I hate them.

Oh, yes, I'm glad you enjoyed the books. Ruth and I spent one Christmas jogging each other's memories to answer one set of questions.

I must mention that even tho' Ian is my nephew, I don't understand him! He's very reticent, the exact opposite of his father. Nobody ever criticises him, which is ridiculous, and I do, or rather the Government, so he calls me the leader of the opposition! He is very conservative and I'm very socialist! My closest family contacts are with my niece Jackie's 2 sons, 30+33, with whom I have much more in common. Interesting?

So glad you enjoyed your holiday, and that it all worked out.

Fred and I talk on the phone -- his good friend Rev. Derek Jones who you met and also my old friend has been on the danger list in hospital for a month. I ring his daughter daily, and then tell Fred and others.

Cheerio, waiting for the next exciting episode!

Love Muriel

Box 46515 Gabarone
13 Nov 2007.

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13 NOV 2017

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and the very nice were my wife with whom family contacts are with my wife whom I have lunch more in common.

Expecting to go you enjoyed your holidays, and that it all worked out. Red and I took on the phone -

his good friend also and I may find her in hospital. I left in hospital for a few days, I don't know how long I will be there. I'm sorry to hear that you had a bad day, waiting for the word.

Chloro
Exchanging episode

Muriel and David's manuscript letters retyped: late 2006 — 2015

27th Nov. 2007

[Brief addendum to her form letter]

As I wrote recently, there's not much extra news. Derek Jones is still in hospital, 6 and 1/2 weeks now, he's very weak.

Cheerio

Love

Muriel

Muriel Sanderson

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Gaborone

BOTSWANA

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Dear Friends

David

27/11/07

Another year passed – sign of old age!

There were 2 events which stood out this year. First, the BBC decided to shoot a film based on the book by Sandy McCall Smith – “No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency”. As all the equipment was available in South Africa but not here, they intended shooting it there. When our government heard, they offered to pay to bring it here, hoping this would help tourism, with the 2010 World Cup in South Africa in mind.

My Zambian friend Bishop Trevor Mwamba, who knows everybody, brought the producer round to see me, as she wanted to interview me about Ruth and Seretse. So she came, and later took me to visit the 2 “studios” they had erected. For those of you who have read the books, one was Ma Ramotswa’s office, at the foot of our nearby Kgale Hill. They built a small village (of wood) and made a road. The other was her husband’s garage, where they were shooting the last scenes, and where we stayed for an hour.

I couldn’t believe how chaotic it was. People moving around, some shooting scenes, shouting, unbelievable. I never heard of the star, Jill Scott, an American. She endorsed her self to me by coming up and saying “I’m just reading “Colour Bar” and I’m so thrilled to meet you!” I felt like the star instead of her The director, Mingella, also made “The English Patient”. The male lead was born in Zimbabwe, moved to Malawi, now lives in England. The film will be shown on Boxing Day, early evening. My friend Trevor is in the film, conducting a funeral! CNN were out here to interview some of the stars and I saw it in the evening news the following week.

The other event was a 5 week visit to England. The week before, there was the bombing at the 2 railway stations. I wasn’t bothered about that, but the scenes of long delays at Heathrow, which was prominent on T.V, were rather daunting, well, I can recommend using a wheelchair! I got through both ways in half hour – unbelievable. As I allowed 3 and half hours, I was able to spend hours in the Virgin business class lounge, which is as good as, it was promised. They have beds on the plane, but they are very narrow I’m glad I’m not fat or over 6 feet. I spent the first and last three days with my cousins at Beaconsfield, Hertfordshire, and they drove me to Folkestone where I stayed for a month in the same room in same hotel that I visited 5 years ago. To remind you, I was evacuated at the beginning of the war with my school to Folkestone, and I just love the place. My hotel is on the top of the cliff, bordering a grassy strip which is a mile – long, with shrubs, flowers and trees. My room overlooked the sea. On the Leas, are many seats provided by families in memory of their parents etc. So I could walk and sit down whenever I needed. The daughter of the family, Olive, where I lived, stays just round the corner from my hotel. Several restaurants are nearby, and a café across the road.

During that month; 25 of my friends came to Folkestone to visit me, staying 1-3 days. One came from Holland, 1 from Germany, 4 from Scotland, and several from the West Country. I also met 5 others, totalling 30. Exactly half were friends from Zambia, some from my church in London in the 1940's. So I felt most privileged. I have not made such good friendship in Botswana. I was in England at a most interesting time. Gordon Brown had become the new Prime Minister just 10 days earlier. I had never been impressed by him, having seen him on TV during Tony Blair's question time. He sat looking down, bored, totally disinterested, knowing that the world was filming him. Well, he appears to be better, but not very impressive to me. However I saw him give a speech at the Lord Mayor's ball recently, and I was impressed.

I was lucky with the weather. I was there during the floods, in the west of England. We only had light drizzle. Also, we had more sun than most, although it didn't get up to 32 degrees as it did 5 years ago.

My great nephew Marcus was married in April. I didn't go, as the previous April it had snowed. Well, this April it was the hottest month.

To return to Gordon Brown, he had a dramatic first month with bombs, floods and foot and mouth disease. But after all, he desperately wanted to be the Prime Minister all those years, and he knew it wouldn't be easy.

Talking of politics, my nephew Ian will become the President of Botswana next April 1st (Good date). This is because the current President has to resign after 10 years, and he took over when vice President from the previous President. The elections will be in 2009. And they call this a democracy!

I have enjoyed my tennis as usual. I can't believe that Roger Federer is still No. 1, but he has lots of competition challenging him. To my surprise, I really enjoyed the 20/20 cricket. As it was near here in South Africa, we saw all the games.

Our weather has been so changeable that I only started swimming on November 15th. When I returned we had 3 weeks cool – still winter. Then one day it turned hot, and I waited 2 weeks for the water to warm up, as nights were cool. After 2 weeks it dropped from 34 degrees to 21 degrees in two days!

September 30th is our Independence Anniversary, and we have 2 days holiday, joined to a weekend. I anticipated 4 days of swimming. Well, I had none. And after 2 years drought, the second day we had a terrific storm, followed 3 days later by another. So we're all hoping the rains will continue – except me! I had awful arthritis in my knees, and the humidity is bad for them. I realise that other places are far worse off – Bangladesh, Mexico, and Caribbean.

I have read 2 very good books recently, through my book club. One has the unusual title "Salmon Fishing in the Yemen". I was surprised that I enjoyed it so much. Then a quite different book "Unbowed" by Wangari Maathai, the Kenyan lady who won a Nobel Peace Prize for planting millions of trees, among other things. Once again I enjoyed it very much. I also saw "An Inconvenient Truth" very intense.

While in England I managed to twist my knee getting out of the bath! The last week in Folkestone it was really painful. After I returned, I saw my doctor who referred me to a physiotherapist. After 3 weeks it was not better, so a friend suggested acupuncture. I completed 10 visits, and it was much better, but it looks as though I'll always have some pain, as soon as I stopped the pain came back. I then went on my annual visit to the surgeon who took out my 2nd hip. After 20 years the first one is still ok, also the one he did 14 years ago. He gave me an injection of Cortisone to help my arthritis, but said I may need a minor operation on my knee.

Somehow I can't see me flying to England again, but who knows? The airports are worse than the planes. And I can't fly that distance by economy any more.

I still work 4 mornings a week at the Methodist Church. I enjoy leaving my flat, using my brain, and meeting people. The regulations laid down by Pretoria and the poor leadership drive me mad! So far, the positive items win.

Well, cheerio and best wishes for Christmas. I must apologise for the cards. I didn't get my usual brochure from where I order them a year in advance. They're on sale here far too late, so a friend bought these in Joburg - no comment!

Love Muriel

As I write recently, there's
not much extra news.
Dick Jones is still in hospital,
6 1/2 weeks now, he's very weak.

Cheerios
Love Muriel

The No 1 Botswana movie shoot

As Alexander McCall Smith writes in the opening of his best-selling novel "The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency," "Mma Ramotswe had a detective agency in Botswana, at the foot of Kgale Hill." Though her cases tend to dwell on sins like philandering and low-level insurance scams, her greatest mystery these days is whether her story can translate to film.

Precious Ramotswe has no blue steel pistol, just two desks, two chairs, a telephone and an old typewriter. Her tiny white van is incapable of high-speed chases and fiery stunts. Then there is Mma Ramotswe herself. Film sleuths usually exude chiseled sexiness and a noir persona. But as McCall Smith puts it, Precious Ramotswe is "the fat lady detective": rounded, not chiseled; softhearted, not dark.

Would anyone watch a film about a "traditionally built" (as she puts it) shamus whose main preoccupation is contemplating her cases under an acacia tree?

The director Anthony Minghella allows that it could be a stretch. "Because of the addiction to action in American cinema, the cut-to-the-chase excitement of American film, I think it's unlikely that this will work in a movie theater," he said as shooting of "The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" concluded one late afternoon in a dusty Gaborone schoolyard. "This is not an easy film to make. In fact it's been incredibly hard."

But Minghella, the Oscar-winning director and writer of "The English Patient" and "Cold Mountain," is making it anyway, even though it may ultimately wind up on television. In the end, he said, he just couldn't let someone else do it.

"It's been one of those processes of slow seduction," he said, "mostly by Botswana itself."

Many who have read McCall Smith's spare 1998 novel about Precious Ramotswe's foray into detective work, or the seven sequels that have followed, will know what Minghella means. Woven into

the novels' accessible mysteries is a loving portrait of Botswana as a wondrous nation, a place of infinite skies, rooted people and gentle habits that Western society foolishly discarded decades ago.

The tales are fiction, of course, and to some extent so is the portrayal of Botswana, save the endless skies. In modern Africa, riven by AIDS, destitution and dictatorship, very little is innocent any more. But Botswana is as close as it comes, a haven spared many of colonialism's horrors and eased into relative prosperity and democracy by the wealth of diamonds and a history devoid (mostly) of brutality.

Against a torrent of "Heart of Darkness" stories about Africa, Mma Ramotswe is a refreshingly new character, said Jill Scott, the Philadelphia-born R&B singer and poet who plays the lead role, and who put on pounds for the part. "She's a firm believer in justice. She has a strong, definitive way of thinking - right is right, and wrong is wrong. And she believes enough in herself that she will fix the wrong, that she will make it good."

"You have to love Botswana, because that's how she feels," she continued. "And if you see it more than one day, you'll see why she loves it."

Scott is joined by Anika Noni Rose, who plays Precious's fussy budget secretary, Grace Makutsi. Lucian Msamati, the London dramatic actor, is J. L. B. Matekoni, Mma Ramotswe's shy suitor.

Even at the start, Minghella said, the notion that an overweight lady detective would play well on film seemed unlikely. And the idea that "The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" could be made in Botswana, which had never been host to a major film shoot, seemed far fetched at best. But as he and others describe it, bringing the story to film became a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts, a labor of love that overcame considerable obstacles.

The catalyst was Amy J. Moore, a New York independent producer who had

worked and traveled in southern Africa, off and on, for two decades. Moore first came to Botswana as a student in the mid-1980s, "before the roads were tarred," and fell in love. Later she headed a South African venture promoting African films, then took a play with an African cast to Off Broadway. In 2000 a friend gave her a novel set in Botswana by a Scottish writer obscure at the time, and she fell in love again.

"I was struck by an absolute fable," she said, "that leading a good life is possible; that being a good person is possible; that being a good neighbor is possible; that truth can exist alongside beauty. I thought, this African book can teach the Western world a lot."

Mma Ramotswe's series of adventures would not become a literary hit for another year, perhaps, Moore said, because people only began flocking to tales of kindness and morality after the shock of the Sept. 11 attacks. She flew to Edinburgh, found 13 copies of "The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" in a bookshop and bought them all. Then she went to McCall Smith and bought the film rights to the first book and its successors. Afterward she went to London and to Minghella, whom she knew from earlier work, and handed him the novel over tea.

"Frankly, I wasn't particularly excited by the prospect of the book," Minghella said. But "before I knew it, I had finished the book," he continued. "And like millions of others I was hooked." It took six more years, however, to bring the story to film. Mirage Productions, the London filmmaking outfit run by Minghella and the director Sydney Pollack, took on the project. But there remained the central questions of where "Detective Agency" would be filmed, and how the production - by Hollywood standards, a shoestring affair - would be financed.

Moore, a producer on the project, argued that Mma Ramotswe's story could only be made in Botswana. Minghella, who had

shot films in Africa before - notably "The English Patient," in Tunisia - was skeptical. After all, a major film had never been made in Botswana. Equipment would have to be imported, and stars and crews fed and housed, at considerable expense.

Then, in 2004, Moore took Minghella to the Makgadikgadi Pans, a vast salt flat in northern Botswana. They camped out beneath a Milky Way that was a luminous stripe across the sky, with stars that glistened like buckets of salt tossed on black velvet.

That trip was a turning point, but in the end the Botswana government sealed the deal to make "The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" on location and not in a Johannesburg back lot, contributing \$5 million to finance it. In return Botswana received not only the economic benefits of housing and servicing a major film but also hands-on training in movie-making that officials hope will sow the seeds of a film industry. Botswana is also counting on a tourism benefit from the film: the Kgale Hill set that includes Mma Ramotswe's office is being preserved and will become part of a "Ladies' Detective Agency" tour for those drawn to Botswana by Smith's stories. Minghella, who writes the screenplays for all his films, said he regards himself as much as a screenwriter as a director. But for this movie he teamed with Richard Curtis, who wrote "Four Weddings and a Funeral," and helped write the screen version of "Bridget Jones's Diary," to bring a light touch to the characters. The novel's fans will recognize the cadence of Botswana English, with its charming formality and "ehs" and "izzists?" that punctuate everyday conversation.

Like Mma Ramotswe herself "The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" film is simple and straightforward. "It rewards our passion and appetite for mystery and thrillers without bringing all the concomitant rubbish of violence and cruelty," Minghella said. "It's not about misanthropy in an ugly world. It's about venial sins in a good world." (New York Times)

2008

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5th January 2008

My Dear Muriel,

Happy New Year. You've been on my mind so much since I mailed you my last letter and then my Holiday card and year's summary. Thanks for your annual card and circular letter. Do hope that you and the family got out of Gaborone to somewhere nice and relaxing.

I had a quiet and pleasant Holiday Season. Have been also working very hard. My boss has so many projects going that she tries to con me into coming in more than my agreed on three days a week. Still the work is interesting and workmates very pleasant to be around, so I should not grumble too much. I have, however, warned her that my retirement days are coming soon, if not this year, then by March 2009, my 70th birthday!

Have talked to several people about publishing your life's story. They confirm what we both recognize: this may be "dicey" unless published locally as you (like myself to a much lesser degree) have been an active participant in exciting and important places in history but did not reach the "celebrity" stage as did Seretse and Ruth or many Zambians that we knew extremely well. Talking to friends also helped firm up some other things in my mind. Most significantly:

1. Telling one's life story and publishing should be kept separate. See my "simple" suggested solution for telling your story below. (If you have trouble following my points on digitalization, talk to Fred.)
2. Even if feasible, is your/our lives too short to try to publish? On one hand, don't underestimate **your exceptional writing skills**; on the other you are in your mid-80s and may not want to focus your life on writing anymore. Nor am I sure I want to help someone in a major writing project.

[**An important side note:** As I mentioned in my November letter, my old boss at Merrill Lynch (Anita Palau) got totally caught up in your story telling and for 15 years I passed your letters and annual notes to her to read. Now, an older friend of mine (Dusan Zavisic) who is a Yugoslav refugee and linguist has agreed (for a very nominal sum) to type up all our handwritten (not typed) manuscripts that we exchanged over the years; see why below. He is really enjoying reading your annual news and has actually started and is in the early 1980s!]

Possible solution: In early November 2008, I am contemplating another three week visit to South Africa and Botswana. Possibly I could spend a fortnight of that in Gaborone. Until then, we each might just re-read our correspondence, etc., on our years in Africa and continue our reflections on what we have participated in.

In that fortnight, maybe we can simply talk, first off the record and then into a recording device about these years. I could actively interview you on your life just before and after Zambian Independence and then maybe we could gently twist Fred's arm to interview you about Botswana in its formative years both before and after Independence. (We could even get another young Botswanan scholar to sit in if appropriate.) In other words, if we do just talk, I would opine that while your "story" include your Khama family, it should **focus on you** and what you observed and participated in both countries.

Preserving the story. I may lose you here but I trust you'll get the general idea. Printed books are **NOT** the only way to go in preservation anymore. Whole libraries in Europe and America are now going online. Digitalizing old recordings and documents is now the norm. I am in touch with Special Collections at UNZA. They are digitalizing both old documents and all cassette recordings of interviews. I, along with another scholar, have digitalized my old interviews from the 1960s from decaying cassettes and sent them to Zambia. When the cassettes were not stretched, the recordings are still amazing clear. (Side note: my university workmates have helped me do this and have become very interested in applying the technology to whatever I am doing about preservation in Africa.) To hear an interview, all the listener has to do is put the CD in the computer and listen. UNZA is now raising money in Europe and America (I have just given a contribution) to continue digitalization of all old interviews and music cassettes that number in the thousands.

But this is not all. Not just cassettes are being digitalized, but also all old and current **documents** are being turned into something called "pdf files." The effects are startling. For example, the graduate course in Medical Epidemiology that my colleagues are teaching this fall has been revolutionized. Until last year, the technical readings that accompanied the textbooks were all photocopied, creating a stack higher from the ground to my knee. Now the students are given five CDs with all the readings on them. The students simply sit at the computer ~~with~~ and read the literature. To read part of it on the subway, the student simply prints out needed pages on her printer! And creating pdf files is very easy to do. We have a **small** desktop printer-type machine that you feed old documents into and they are instantly digitalized and placed on a computer.

What does digitalization mean for you (Muriel) telling your story? A lot!!! If I come in November and you agree for us to talk for whatever time we desire, we could either talk into an old fashioned tape recorder and then later digitalize the tape or we could talk straight into a special small computer that digitalizes our voices immediately without a second step. It would also be possible for me to get a pdf writer and we could also feed your letters, and related documents including old photos, into the machine and they could be instantly converted into pdf files and placed on CDs. Your whole life's story, including voice, documents, photographs, etc., could probably be placed on 20 to 40 CDs, a stack the length of your hand. You could then eventually, as you desire, bequest your actual papers to UNZA or Univ. Botswana, along with the CDs. You could also make copies of these CDs and give the others to a university in the UK, etc. In short, digital developments are mind boggling but can be easy and at times quite fun to create and use.

Blogs and people with verbal diarrhea! Digitalization is leading to new, instantaneous ways of communicating. Here is a totally "wild" idea that will probably horrify you but is completely feasible and relatively easy to do. The phenomena of the last several years is **blogs** by people with what I sarcastically call "verbal diarrhea!" This is a website that an individual creates and updates hourly, daily, whenever, and interested readers, worldwide can access as soon as he finishes typing, uploading photos, etc. Thus, conceivably you would not need to publish a book or even place your papers in a library, once everything is digitalized, but simply place everything online and it is available from anyplace at anytime! In other words, you could have someone in Gaborone (or even Bangladesh or Thailand) create a website www.murielwilliamssanderson.com and your life is suddenly online: your voice, your papers, your photographs!!!! (**Horror of horrors, I suspect you'll say!**) Nothing published in book form but everything immediately available worldwide!

Dusan Zavisic. The only thing that I cannot yet digitalize clearly are our manuscript letters as both of us tended to write on the odd size of airletters on blue paper. If Dusan can retype these, the text could be preserved along with your annual letters which are easy to create pdf files from. He is motivated and he has a computer at home on which to retype them, but his health is fragile. At any rate he has started and covered several years of our early correspondence (airletter parts). I'll see if he can continue.

If all the above on digitalization seems like Greek, I'd suggest you talk to Fred who is keeping up on the technology, or possibly your grand nephews, who probably are as well. It's definitely a generational thing with only a few oldsters like me (and Fred) keeping up-to-date! Also I'll try to call you about all this. I still stand by what I said in my last long letter: "I feel strongly that because the strong moral principles that you have adhered to throughout your life, you will leave behind an important legacy." I'm clearly willing to gently push, and also assist, you as hard as you'll let me! Again, enough for now!

With love as always,

David

David Wilkin

P.S. It was wonderful talking to you this morning after I finished this long letter. Glad you had a nice Holiday escape with the family. I think I gave you a quick overview of what I have written here. I do so hope we can spend time together ~~this coming October~~. Fred has indicated he and Sue may well come through NYC in May. If so, maybe he will opine on all the above.

later this year

Muriel and David's manuscript letters retyped: late 2006 — 2015

Gaborone

25th Jan 08

Dear David,

Many thanks for yours of the 5th, which I have read several times. And I still don't understand some of the technical language! But I got the general gist.

I'm quite happy about your coming in November. I've kept all my letters in one place, but haven't read them lately, so I will re-read them in October. If I start now, I'll forget! I hope I remember in October!

I must admit that I was surprised that UNZA is organised enough to digitalise all old documents. Zambia is not known for efficiency! But why they ever be interested in music?

I am amazed at all the technical developments. But they do have their bad side -- pornography, Nigerians raising money falsely and now today this €7 billion that a _____ cheated a French bank of -- thanks partly to the Internet: One thing I doubt -- and that is any University in the UK is interested in me?

What really surprises me is why people look on the Internet for "blogs" How utterly boring! I have much better use of my time -- and there are so many things to do. What really worries me is the sheer impersonality of it all -- I like communicating with people directly.

I am also surprised --tho' flattered -- that strangers want to read my letters. I enjoy writing them and am lucky that I find someone to type them.

I enjoyed our telephone conversation. As I said, personal contact is so important -- to me.

Cheerio and all the best. I must say the CNN and world news of the American recession is depressing. And I'm already bored with your elections -- and 10 months still to go.

Cheerio and all of the best,

P.S. Many thanks for the books just received.

Love

Muriel

Dear David

Box 46515 Gabarone

25 Jan 08.

Many thanks for yours of 3rd, which I have read several times. And I still don't understand some of the technical language! But I get the general gist.

I'm quite happy about your coming in November. I've kept all my letters in one place, but haven't read them lately, so will re-read them in October. If I start now I'll forget! I hope I remember in October.

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? fraud, and now today this £7 billion that a Nader cheated a French bank of - thanks partly to the internet. - One thing I doubt - and that is any university in the U.K. is interested in me? the U.K.?

(25 June 2008)

What really surprises me is why people look on the internet for "blogs". How utterly boring! I have much better use of my drive ^{Amplitude Mod} and those are no worry in it.

Really massive me to the good communicating with people directly. I can also understand the ~~pattern~~ - the ~~pattern~~ - that ST papers want to read my letters. I enjoy writing them, and am lucky that I find someone to importers - to me.

Cheers & see the beer. I must say the CMO & word news of the people American recognition is let's ramp, find 9% already based with your election - and is wouldn't that to go.

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1/30/08

Phone Call

Wed. 9 — 9:15 AM: **Muriel**. Got both my letters: Fred delivered one and the other w/book came some days ago. She sent me a reply last weekend. Still lots of rain but nothing like the countries to the north. Electricity not off at her place but much of Botswana (and Gaborone) which is tied to S.Af. Following American elections and we also discussed S.Af. politics. Regarding my ideas. She is amazed at the details and electronic happenings that I described. She is not again being interviewed and we discussed our past paths that are over 40 years old.

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23rd February 2008

My dear Muriel

Got your letter several days ago. Am glad you got the unusual book about Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi. I will enjoy hearing your impressions of it in our next phone chat or letter.

Since 30th January when we chatted on the phone, not a great deal has happened except for “normal living”! Thank God, my health has been good and I’ve just passed my annual medical examinations with “flying colors.” In the last six months, my work at the Research Institute has certainly become the most interesting job since I returned to America over 20 years ago, as office manager for the entire research unit with about 30 high powered mental health workers and associates. My software skills at Merrill Lynch have proven very helpful, plus even my archival work and qualifications from my Ph.D. days, have been most valuable. I have now learned so much mental health jargon from the psychiatrists, etc., that I can talk about medical diagnoses like a mental health pro! I am training several bright young individuals to take things over, both the technical and non-technical, in the next 13 months. One is a very charming Jamaican-American guy, who can hopefully be Manager after my 70th birthday in March 2009. So, if my health is good, I still plan to continue until then at 60% (3 days), after that we’ll see. I am far more exhausted when I reach home after one of my long days than even 10 years ago. Sigh, as you’ve probably noticed, aging has its disadvantages! Last, on a personal note, our politics here, as you opined, is too drawn out and will go on until after I meet you in late October! Still, it is the most lively and interesting than I can ever remember even in the Kennedy days.

As you have correctly commented, the Internet has sped up the world making much instantaneous but the bad side is this can be used for ill as well as good and increased impersonality, etc. We’ll talk about this when we meet later this year. Certainly the new blogs are not my “cup of tea!”

Will read my old letters before October. I am hoping in several months to read my initial letters that I wrote in Africa to my mother, 1963 — 1965, to see exactly when I met Jones Banda and Jeff Iredale and then you, through them. Would be nice to pin down when we first got acquainted. Hopefully Dusan will continue typing up your manuscript letters but I am not counting on too much as his health is fragile. He is, however, enjoying your narratives. I repeat, never underestimate your writing skills.

Regarding the universities we have spoken about in various ways. **UNZA** has an excellent collection of recorded interviews and a huge collection of (traditional) musicology (has always a big collection) that you were probably not aware of. The librarian that I have been in touch with tells me some cassettes and recordings are damaged and fading with age, but as I have discovered, cassettes can last longer than recognized in the past and with new funding they are working hard on restoration and digitalization. Certainly they will want copies of your correspondence, interviews and anything you wish to leave with them. I have no idea about **UB** but I am sure Fred can clue us in and also inquire about any questions we have. Regarding your material and **universities in the UK**, I should be surprised if **SOAS** would not be interested. In the coming months, I will ask my dear friend, Robert Molteno, who has just retired from **SOAS**. In my opinion, you simply knew too many people in the post World War II political sphere for universities not to be interested. (You’ve undoubtedly heard of Robert when he was in Zambia after Independence and I suspect you’ve met him.)

[23/2/08]

I am definitely planning on coming before end of October (to help celebrate your birthday if nothing else) for a fortnight. I will plan to come only with Morries as friend, bodyguard, etc. (He was the very quiet, smiling guy.) If it is not too inconvenient for you, maybe we can use your spare bedroom for several nights at the beginning and ending and stay with Fred and Sue in between, or some arrangement. Spread the love around but not overdue anyone's welcome! Morries is a real gentleman and superb swimmer so you can have not one, but two, gentlemen to escort you wherever you desire to go or even do minor repairs around your home. (Smile)

Fred has just confirmed that from late April until early June that he and Sue will make my place / NYC their port of entry and departure and visit their two sons from here. They can carry exactly what stuff they need when they visit each son's family and leave unnecessary items here. It is now certainly cheaper and more convenient to fly from the major airports here than to look for connections between Ohio/Indiana and Arizona where they are. Hopefully it will work out well for them and also give Fred/Sue and I a brief chance to chat in between their family visits.

I won't bore you with too much technical stuff this time, but we just did something at the Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene (RFMH) that is exciting and will impact our long, unstructured chats and interviews. We are planning new several major mental health (m.h.) studies, one for children whose parents who were first responders after 9/11 (firemen, etc.) and one for mothers who have been incarcerated. (Children in such families are at increased risk of psychopathology.) We are noted for our epidemiological research interviews. Unlike our own recorded "chats" these interviews are highly structured question and response sessions and fully recorded on cassettes. Since I wrote in January, our unit in the RFMH had long sessions about our method of recording and decided to abandon recording on cassettes and record digitally directly into computers as I described to you in my early January letter. This was no small decision as security issues had to be addressed with medical Internal Review Boards (IRBs) at the RFMH, City and Federal levels. But they are progressing forward and we will start our new sets of interviews (hundreds) within a few weeks.

I have described to our younger technologist, who is arranging all the new digital recording, our planned chats and he has become very interested in much less structured historical interviews. He has agreed to help me buy and set up a computer that will record our unstructured interviews over many days and make them very easy to use so that recording does not unduly intrude in our chatting.

And, talking about chats, enough for today! I am going to a gathering / party this afternoon of old friends so have to get ready.

Much love,

David

P.S. Fred says he doesn't mind my sending this via him again, so I'll both enclose it with my email to him and also drop a copy in the post.

Muriel and David's manuscript letters retyped: late 2006 — 2015

Gaborone

19 Aug 08

My dear David,

Many thanks for your phone call yesterday. I was so sorry to hear of your new medical problem, I do hope that everything goes O.K. I'm disappointed you won't be here to celebrate my 86th birthday, but I'm looking forward to celebrating yours next March. I hope you have good friends to support you in the next few weeks or months.

I loved my holiday, at the sea, which to me is special. The hotel was very big, and it was off--season. It had been built 6 years ago by an Arab Co. from Dubai, and was most attractive. But tourism is new there, fortunately the staff were very friendly and helpful, and made up for some inefficiencies! I swam every day -- in a lovely pool! The beach was very rocky, so sea swimming was not for me. I met a nice Dutch-German couple from Gaborone the 2nd week, and I spent time with them. We had several mutual friends. It was quite warm by day, much cooler at night.

Are you watching the Olympics? I find it rather boring -- too much sport in so little time! I loved the tennis, and gymnastics on bars, and sailing, but not much else.

I went to the opera on Sunday! A Russian co, who'd been to S. Africa. But it was disappointing -- wooden, no really nice songs, poor translation. First ever time opera in Botswana.

Well David all the best, love and prayers,

Muriel

I'm looking forward to Fred's parcels!

But this is ~~reference~~
Red Sox and
19 Aug 88

My dear David,
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Are you watching the Olympics? I find it rather boring - too much sport in so little time! I loved the tennis, & gymnastics on bars, and sailing, but not much else. I went to the opera on Sunday! A Russian co, which been to S. Africa. But it was disappointing - wooden, no really nice soups, poor translation. First ever live opera in Botswana well David all the best, love and prayers.

Amel

I'm looking forward to Fred, David!

Gaborone

[Addendum (dated 11th Nov) to Muriel's form letter of October 2008

Later Ian organised a family birthday as usual, in his garden.

I received your detailed fax this week. I found it very complicated but I do feel for you as you gradually love your independence. I do hope that things improve, and that the operation can take place successfully. It's a good job you have such good, reliable friends.

I hope you felt able to celebrate Obama's victory. Wasn't it fantastic? It reminded me of the sudden change of fortunes in S. Africa, which I never expected to see, and Nelson Mandela's Presidency. It seems that expectations are far too high, he's got so much to cope with, and here in Africa he's like a Messiah who will cure all their ills. This probably reflects their disappointment with their own leaders.

I've no doubt that Bush and Palin helped him to win!

Mindolo will celebrate 50 years in May, so I hope to go.

All the best, hope to see you early next year.

Cheerio

Love

Muriel

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Gaborone
BOTSWANA
Tel: +267 3957800 (H)

11 Nov
October 2008

Dear David:.....

When I last wrote, Ian had become President. After just 6 months, he is doing very well. He has so much energy and is trying to revive a rather tired slow government. He has already tackled the problem of too many graduates and no jobs - so I ask why give so many scholarships? There should be more technical training, and fewer useless arts degrees. He has also increased police to tackle road speeding and useless accidents. As you probably know, he is the leading critic of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, and it's sad that the Zambian president died, as among other things, he also criticised Mugabe; they were the only 2 presidents to do so.

I didn't approve of the sudden dumping of President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, even though he was not a good president in many ways, except for economics. In his feeble attempts at negotiating compromise in Zimbabwe, he always supported Mugabe simply because they were both freedom fighters. It's not sure how much influence the Zimbabwe army has, and I fully expected a coup, the weekend the agreement was signed. Mugabe pays the army and the police in US Dollars, so they have a lot to lose. Also, there could be court cases at their cruelty with anyone who supports the opposition.

So with a troubled Zimbabwe to the east, and now an unsettled South Africa to the south, on whom we depend for most of our imports, poor little Botswana is surrounded by trouble.

Going back to Ian, he visits small village Kgotlas almost every weekend. The previous president never did. Fortunately he loves the PANS, former lakes now nearly dry in the Kalahari Desert. With a group of friends he goes at every opportunity. They all have 4 wheeled bikes, and some have mini-parachutes and they do their stunts.

To my surprise, Ian is very daring and chancy as they actually fly a few feet in the air. He also goes to the army barracks where he worked for 20+ years, 4 evenings a week, and plays soccer, cycles for miles, and goes to the gym. Fitness is priority. I don't see him as often as before, as he's busier. But we telephone each other every week,

I had a lovely holiday in July - August. Apparently the Seychelles was not recommended due to the maintenance work on most hotels. I found that reason rather strange. So instead I went to northern Mozambique. Pemba Bay is a 3 hour flight from Johannesburg and the largest bay in Africa. Tourism in the area is only a few years old. So it was quite different from Mauritius. The hotel was built 6 years ago by an Arab company in Dubai. They have 6 hotels in Africa, and spreading. Architecturally it was pleasant.

Over 100 rooms, 30 self catering houses, a spar, and second restaurant at the far end open to the public. It is on the cliff edge, with a narrow sandy beach and a stony ridge out to sea. I went there to run away from our cold weather, and I wasn't disappointed. So I swam everyday in a lovely large pool just above the beach. I had dinner bed and breakfast. I couldn't eat the huge breakfast, so I took ham cheese and a bun to eat my lunch on my veranda.

There weren't many there, and nobody else stayed for 2 weeks. However the first morning I met 2 women, one Scottish, one American, who were working as volunteers at a nearby orphanage for orphan Children for 2 months. They came to the hotel to eat a decent meal sometimes. So we met several times. They left after 10 days. Then the second week I met a couple from Gaborone. I had been at an exercise class after my second hip operation 15 years ago at the hospital, and Ulrica remembered me at the class! So we met for breakfast some mornings, and dinner every evening. We also went out together one day to visit the local harbour. Pemba is a rather poor area, still recovering from the civil war, which ended ten years ago.

The hotel had a travel agency, which wasn't very good. However, I went on a sunset cruise for 2 hours, the best part being the dolphins leaping around. There was a guest manager, Portuguese, who was most useful in compensating for the staff, who was most pleasant and helpful, but not very efficient.

I have read the 2 books by Barack Obama, and am most impressed. His thoughts are most profound; he would be the greatest contrast to George Bush. Our book club is still going strong, even though I haven't enjoyed the last few books. Sounds crazy, but I enjoy the company.

We have recently had 2 local concerts and one opera. The latter was dreadful! It was Russian, I never head of it and the music was dull. They had 3 singers for each role, and we had the worst. They were returning from a South African tour. The concerts were excellent. One consisted of local talent, which is most impressive. But they have no chance of turning professional. The other was the Drakensburg Boys' Choir from a music school in South Africa. They had much talent, and tour around the world.

Up until last year I received a catalogue of Charity Christmas cards and I ordered them for the following year. But none came last year, so I have been obliged to buy local cards, which are not very good. I intend to post this early so I can send European mail at the "sea" postal rate, which is half the price of air. I was told in Zambia that if there is room in the airmail postbag they go that route, and so far I have been lucky.

[Oct 08, p. 3]

I send around 80 a year, to friends in New Zealand, Australia, Germany, Sweden, Holland, Canada, USA, Britain, South Africa and Zambia. I worked with most non British friends at Mindolo in Kitwe, which is shortly celebrating its 50th birthday. I arrived the second year.

My aches and pains are always coming and going. I had been using a stick to walk, but didn't take it to Mozambique. On my return my back was better, so I haven't used one now for 2 months. My arthritis comes and goes. I take so many pills, devils' claw local plant, flax seed, linseed oil, Osteoeze and pawpaw seeds, but they don't make much difference. I have little pain, and the next week it's much worse. I find panadol, a hot bath and massage the most effective! I have started swimming again, and I like to think that it helps! But sciatica refuses to respond to anything. Later - I'm back using my stick.

Our summer is about here, which I appreciate.

The world economic crisis is depressing. When I was divorced; Murray gave me a lump sum, which I invested in England. The only pension I have is from the British Government, - under £3.000 a year. Up until now the dividends have been fine, but I'm sure my income will be halved for at least a year, probably longer. I know I'm not the only one, but somehow that doesn't help. This week I can hardly bear to watch the news, yet I have to know what is happening. So I'm planning what to cut out - massages, hair, entertaining for a start.

Now for more cheerful news. At present Gaborone is looking lovely, with purple jacaranda trees, yellow tachoma trees, bougainvillea bushes in pink, red, orange and white. In my garden I have a golden shower bush which has spread over 3 walls. The jacaranda only lasts about a month, but the others bloom for months. I also have a yellow bush which blooms all the time, the flowers are rather like daises.

So I will say goodbye on that more cheerful note.

Best wishes and love,

Muriel



p.s. I shall be celebrating my birthday at the end of the month in a very different way. One of our local choirs is performing the Messiah, so I'm taking a few friends - although one of them will drive me! I just love the music, and tried to sing it in the Kitwe choir. Later, Dan organised a family birthday party as usual, in his garden.

I received your detailed fax this week. I found it very complicated

[Oct 08, p. 4]

but I do feel for you as you gradually
lose your independence, I do hope the
things improve, and that the operation
can take place successfully, it's a
good job you have such good, reliable
friends.

I hope you feel able to celebrate
Obama's victory. Wasn't it fantastic?

It reminded me of the sudden change
of fortunes in S. Africa, which I never
expected to see, & Nelson Mandela's
President ship.

It seems that expect-
ations are far too high, he's got so
much to cope with, & here in Africa
he's like a Messiah who will cure
all their ills. This probably reflects
their disappointment with their own leaders.

I've no doubt that Bush and Palin helped
him to win!

Mindelo will celebrate 50 years in May
so I hope to go.

All the best, hope to see you early
next year.

Cheerio
love

Ormel

2009

Muriel and David's manuscript letters retyped: late 2006 — 2015

Gaborone

13th Feb 09

My dear David,

I've been wondering how you are getting on, so decided to write. I do hope the operation went O.K. I assume you are at home right now.

I watch the world weather 2 -- 3 times a day, so know how cold it has been -- in the USA and Europe.

I am fascinated at how much Barack Obama is dominating the headlines -- BBC, CNN, and El Jazeera. I wonder if he's beginning to realize what a tough job he's taken on.

I watched bankers in Washington being grilled by an accounts committee of government, as well as some in London by parliament. It gave their annual salary -- in UK around € 1 million a year -- plus hoped for bonuses.

Did I tell you that Mindolo is supposed to be celebrating its 50th birthday? The actual date was last October. That was postponed until May, and again to October. So I wonder if it will ever take place. Meanwhile Zambia has changed all its passports to new metallic ones from end of February; and they are short of forms, and I lost my identity card (which they need) so I am not sure I will ever get one.

The world recession is hitting Botswana hard -- diamonds being the main export, bought mostly by Americans and Japanese; and Japanese with cars as their main export. Second is tourism -- also hit. So we're in for a tough time.

Cheerio and all the best,

Love

Muriel

Box 46515 Canberra

Friday 13th Feb 09.

My dear David,

I've been wondering how you
are getting on, so decided to write.
I do hope the operation went O.K.
I assume you are home right now.

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times a day, so know how cold it has
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Barack Obama is dominating the head-
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Botswana hard - diamonds being the
main export, bought mostly by
Americans & Japanese; and Japanese,
with cars as their main export.
Second is tourism - also hit. So
we're in for a tough time.

Cheerio & all the best,

Love
Auriel

Muriel and David's manuscript letters retyped: late 2006 — 2015

Gaborone

Good Friday -- [probably 2009]

[Important note: There was no date on this letter but it was among the 2009 letters so am assuming it was Easter 2009]

My dear David,

I wonder how you are. I saw Fred 2-3 weeks ago. He said you'd had a slight relapse. I do hope you're getting better again.

Isn't Barack Obama incredible? It shows what a difference an active 40+ year old makes, compared to a tired 60 or 70 year old. This energy and enthusiasm takes some beating -- in a short time he's impressed the whole world -- almost. I watched his trip from the [???] to Iraq last week, arriving home at 2:30 am. . Wow!

Ian was President for a year on 1st April, and we had a family lunch. He seems to love all the challenges, too.

We've just had our annual drama/music festival here in Gabs. At the same time, the human rights organisation had a 2 week film festival, so I've been out quite often. I saw films on the death penalty, Robben Island inmates playing soccer, and the Kenyan tree-growing peace award winner. Lovely operatic and choral music, and a corny British comedy! I wish they would be separated. This Easter it's mainly church, and meals with friends.

Our climate has never been so changeable, from day to day, often cold -- I long for real global warming. I see N.Y. is still cold -- ugh!

Cheerio and all the best for a good recovery.

Love

Muriel

Box 46 515 Grubame

Good Friday.

[Probably 2007]

My dear David,
I wonder how you are
I saw Fred 2-3 weeks ago. He
said you had a slight relapse.
→ do hope you're getting better
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Don't Barack Obama incredible?
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~~Probably 2009~~

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 I see N.Y is still cold - yeh!
 Cheers & all the best for a
 good recovery
 Yours
 Annel

Muriel and David's manuscript letters retyped: late 2006 — 2015

Gaborone

[Addendum 21st June 2009, on last page]

I have a friend from 1949 visiting, so taking advantage of him to post this.

I do hope you are still improving, even though slowly.

I enjoy our phone conversations, I wonder if you have started work again? And walking without a stick?

Your weather has been as changeable as ours! Ours is quite cold, which I hate. Another cold spell on the way in 2-3 days.

Cheerio and all the best,

Love Muriel

Muriel Sanderson

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P.O. Box 46515
Gaborone
BOTSWANA
Tel: +267 3957800 (H)

21 June 2009

Spoken
Phone on
7/4/09
10.30 AM

Dear *David*.....

It was lovely hearing from most of my friends at Christmas. A belated Happy New Year!

Talking about Christmas, I must tell you something that impressed me. As usual, most of the family were in Serowe, except for Marcus (see family tree) who had gone with his wife and 11 month old baby to visit Julie's parents in England. Many, many years ago, Ruth started a custom that Ian has continued. Lots of kids from Serowe (the town centre is about 4KM from the house) walk out and collect sweets, biscuits and a drink. (very Lord of the manor style) it's always been in the garden, but this time it was cool and raining, so Ian decided to hand them out on the balcony. For 2 hours Ian, the twins, and their 4 kids (13 - 17) handed out the food, etc. Ian specifically helping the 3 year olds. I tried to imagine Berlusconi (Italy) of Bush (Ex USA) doing this!

Talking of the weather, I keep asking - where is global warming? It's been the coolest summer, with weather change every 3 - 4 days. Nobody here can even remember such a summer. It would drop 20° overnight - 30° - 10° and back again. I've managed to swim on average 5 days most weeks, because it's the only exercise I get, and I just love it. I then lie in the hot sun (if there!) for at least ½ hour. I swim at the hotel near me, and it's a large pool, and often I'm the only swimmer, except at weekends, when there are many kids. So I visit friends with pools sometimes on Sundays. I realise most of the rest of the world also has extreme weather. My rheumatism has got much worse.

I can only walk short distances, with a stick. But I can swim. My right knee has painful arthritis, the left one less so. But during the day it comes and goes. I have a hot bath before bed, massage my back and legs, and in 5 minutes its much better. Unfortunately I can't do that all day. The 2 lowest spine bones are suffering from degeneration, like my hips which were replaced 100% successfully. So far, there is no spine operation. So when I walk, the knee and back react together, one making the other worse.

Like most other people, I know, I was delighted when Barack Obama won the US election. But the expectations are daunting! So many Africans dislike their presidents that they openly appeal to him to sort out their mess! Even French speaking countries. When he was in Germany recently, he even mentioned Botswana, saying it was a well run democratic country badly affected by its main exports - diamonds and tourism.

29/6/09/p 2

There was a month - November where no diamonds were sold. But South Africa is in a much worse state, as it started off much worse economically than Botswana.

Recently, we had our annual drama/music festival. Ruth used to be their patron, so I've been all the 13 years that I've lived here. The human rights organisation also runs at the same time (why?) So one week I was out 3 nights running, which I find tough these days. I saw 4 films - on the death penalty.

American colonisation of Latin America (an American film); Robin Island prisoner playing soccer which kept them sane; and the Kenyan woman who planted 3 million trees and won the Nobel peace prize. I also saw a corny British comedy, well acted and directed, but pathetic story. And finally 2 concerts, one a chamber concert which was dull, and finally a marvellous choral/solo classical concert, which really was inspiring, one young woman with an English father and Tswana mother is now singing in the Zurich opera; apart from a super voice she can act and has a lovely personality. Then there is another local girl who is studying music in France; and third, a local young man who I've heard over several years. There were 3 combined choirs, mostly locals, who sing without music operatic areas in French, German and Italian. It's too bad they don't sing frequently enough for me.

I'm still on the Methodist circuit treasurer, working at the office 4 mornings a week. But church politics is driving me mad; I don't know how much longer I want to put up with it.

Next, money. Like millions of others my income has gone down. My only pension is the British government one, all of £2 800 per annum. Then I have dividends from the money my ex-husband gave me. That has gone down by 1/3. So, no holiday this year. There is no such thing as a cheap African holiday.

However, Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Kitwe Zambia where I worked for 25 years was 50 years old last October. That celebration was postponed when the President, Mwanawasa, died. The next date should have been in May - but the economy in Zambia is terrible due to the fact that their only real export is copper, and the price dropped by half. They tried to raise money, but failed. They now say this October. But I doubt it. If it goes ahead, I plan to go, but a few months ago Zambia Airways collapsed, I could fly from Joburg to Lusaka, on S.A. airways, but from there (400 KM) it would have to be bus.

I still belong to my book club, that although I enjoy the company the recent books have not been very good. Because books, are now so expensive, we have started going round the group telling our life histories. There is an organisation called the Botswana Society, and through circumstances which are curious, they are planning to publish a book of extracts from my circular letters over the years since 1960, concerning my visits to Botswana. The editor is interested because there is not much written history about Botswana.

[29/6/09 p. 3]

I was friendly with a young American school teacher in Zambia, who later returned on the university staff, I sent him all my letters and saw him on 3 occasions. When I visited the USA, David was at university with Fred. I came to visit Gaborone after Fred retired here following years teaching history at the university. Small world! So David persuaded Fred that my letters were historical. As I started, I'll finish with Ian.

The general opinion is that he doing a good job. He went on a state visit to England in November; I A.F..P printed a lovely photo of him with the Queen - which Marcus gave me from the internet. There is a lovely story about this visit.

At Buckingham palace, one is handed from one equerry to the next en route to the Queen's apartment. At the penultimate room, the equerry here had met Ian, and asked him about Zimbabwe. The new young one who introduced him to the queen (who he had met before) heard this conversation, and introduced Ian as the president Zimbabwe! So the queen apologised - he was new - and it broke the ice as they both laughed.

In February Ian was 56, and on 1st April he celebrated one year as President - so family parties on both occasions. Ian hates banquets.

I didn't get this typed, and I have another story.

Jackie was 59 on 15 May, and Ian decided to take a group of us to the Chobe Game Reserve, in the north, after the usual birthday lunch. We were 12 - 6 family, 3 friends, and 3 presidential guards. We flew in the presidential jet, which has 14 armchair seats, good refreshment service, and couldn't be more different from tourist class in any airline. Also of course, no bookings formalities. We stayed at a lovely lodge in the game park, and there we were joined by the owner, a good friend of Ian; and Anthony, his nephew, working there while waiting for university. Obviously, we were well looked after.

We went to a combined game drive and visit to another lodge, and I went on a 2 hour boat trip/game drive, while the others visited a snake park, and Ian went on his weekly walk - about - talk to nearby villages. It is much warmer there, so I also enjoyed 2 swims. I have been to this lodge twice before, for Ruth's 70th birthday weekend, and the Christmas before she died. Chobe is in Kasane, and I've visited other lodges there. Kasane is a village where Botswana and Zimbabwean border meet, across the Zambezi River from Zambia, with Namibia across the Chobe River.

Finally my mid-year letter only attracts about half the replies I hope for. I really do appreciate letters from friends, as since I arrived in Botswana I have made very few local friends - only acquaintances.

Cheerio and all the best,

Love
D... D

Gaborone

[Addendum to her form letter of 24th Nov. 2009: two full pages]

Dear David,

Many thanks for your phone calls, and also the tribute to Jeremy Peake. I knew him well as chaplain at Mindolo, but I learnt a lot about him in Robert Molteno's tribute.

When I saw him in England 2-3 years ago, he was much weaker.

I never heard another word from Mindolo -- but I heard from a friend that they celebrated their golden anniversary very quietly as they have little money. Nobody from overseas. I really had wanted to go, but I think it's just not the same place.

I hope you're continuing to get better.

I'm trying to settle here, [in her new flat] it's over two months. I still can't find things, still suffer from the cold. I'm not as desperately miserable as I was, but still regret having to move.

Did you know that Ian met Obama last month? He's on a world environmental committee that is run from the USA, and he attends meetings once a year. This year it was in Washington, so Obama invite him for coffee one morning. I've got some lovely photos from the Internet.

He finally moved into State House this weekend -- 18 months after maintenance work that had never been done since it was built in 1965. So he invited the family to lunch today.

I was last there in 1980, when Seretse died, and struggled to remember how it was then!

I'm loving the tennis -- last 8 men, in London.

Best wishes, and all the best.

Love

Muriel.

My article is on hold until I can sort myself out.

Muriel Sanderson

P.O. Box 46515
Gaborone
BOTSWANA
Tel: +267 3957800 (H)

24 Nov. 2009

My dear, David

I am very late with my Christmas letter this year, because I had to move 2 months ago and I would never have believed the effect it had on me.

I was living in a Debswana flat, and this company is the main diamond business. Their sales have dropped alarmingly due to the economic recession; they panicked, and decided to sell flats and houses.

I was in complete denial and only had 2 months to find another flat. The 5 estate agents I contacted had nothing, and I was lucky to have an acquaintance who was moving. I knew those flats, but it has taken me 2 months to accept that this is where I am living. I felt I was looking after someone else's flat.

My main problem is that this place never gets the sun, so it's cold. Most people I know would welcome this, but I feel the cold terribly, mostly due to being on warfarim. I used to spend every afternoon in my bedroom, that had the sun all day, and I slept, listened to my shortwave radio, and watched tennis on TV. Then there are several little things that bother me - and I can't remember where most things are to be found. I haven't been so miserable for years. I went to the doctor who said I was suffering from depression. I've lost a lot of weight, and my hair and nails are hardly growing.

My great nephews, Dale and Marcus helped me on the day. Another 2 couples, one from church and from the Botswana Society helped me for 2 weeks beforehand, as I rented both flats for September. So things I wasn't using were taken over and the kitchen items were put in place. After 2 months, I still haven't unpacked half my 200 books, and lots of papers and files. The move had made my back and knees much more painful. Another friend gave me my meals for a week.

Then there was the British postal strike, I heard there were 47 million letters stacked in warehouses. As if this wasn't enough, our so-called summer is the coldest anyone can remember. For 2 months we had 2-3 days hot (normal) and then cloudy cast days 10° lower than normal. Finally we had a 2 week hot spell, but then clouds, wind and rain. Why it's called global warming I can't imagine.

[24/11/09]

On a more cheerful note, I'm going to Capetown for 10 days in early December, with a friend who has a friend there who lets out his house. As my income is down by one third, like so many people, I couldn't go on my usual jaunt. More positive news is that Ian's party won the recent elections, so he's President for another 5 years - at least.

I went to the opening of Parliament last week; he spoke for 1½ hours, with the government's future plans. The local TV announced that the President's aunt had flown out from England for the occasion!

He went to Washington earlier this month as he's on the board of a World Environmental NGO, and was invited to meet President Obama. I've got some nice photos given to me from the internet. They met for 40 minutes. Poor President Obama is having a tough time, but expectations were too high.

Cheerio for now, I promise to be more cheerful next time.
Best wishes for Christmas and New Year!!!

Ps. Having read this, I realised how miserable it was. Having seen the flood in Cumbria, bush fires in Australia, floods in Turkey, and load more, I have no excuse to complain of the weather here!

Love

Mum

Dear David,

[24/11/09, 3]

Many thanks for your phone calls,
and also the tribute to Jeremy Peake.
I knew him well as chaplain at
Oxford, but I heard a lot about
him in Robert Stolten's tribute.

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Nobody from overseas. I really had
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maintenance work that had never
been done since it was built in 1965.
So he invited the family to lunch today
I was last there in 1980, when
Derek died, & struggled to remember
how it was then!
I'm loving the tennis - last of

men, in Jordan. all the best,
Best wishes,
Love and
My article is on hold until I
can sort myself out.