

WARDEN, Marjory Merle (nee Rous)

Marjory WARDEN | 26 August 1904 - April 1964

MARJORY MERLE³ ROUS (JAMES COLE², JAMES COOPER¹) was born on 26 August 1904 in 'The Pyramids' Pretoria, South Africa, and died April 1964. She married WALTER WARDEN on 1 February 1934. He was born in 1894 in Edinburgh and died 1982. Marjory was the daughter of ANNA LOUISE⁶ FLEMMER (CHRISTIAN LUDVIG⁵) and was born on 28 January 1874 in Cradock, Cape, South Africa and died on 22 February 1941 in Frances Street, Observatory, Johannesburg, South Africa. Anna Louise married JAMES COLE ROUS on 26 March 1902 in the DRC Cradock, Cape, South Africa, son of JAMES ROUS and ALIXA COLE. He was born on 25 April 1874 in Pretoria, South Africa and died on 9 May 1931 in Middelburg, South Africa.

As told by her daughter Vicky Canning:

Marjory was the only daughter of James and Anna Louisa (Louie) Rous. She would never tell me her age, and after her death I never liked to look it up so I can only say that she was born on the 26th August. Years later, after her father's death she was helping sort his papers and found his diary for the year of her birth. Eagerly she looked up the date. It said "Daughter born. Returned plough to Joubert."!

I am not sure of her early education except that she and her brothers had a governess when living at Riverside farm. They detested the poor woman and when out walking took switches and beat tufts of grass saying "That's Miss ----". She went to Rhodes University where she majored in Latin and Greek (to the end of her life she read a chapter of the Bible in Greek every night – though she said her Greek was very bad).

She took a teacher's diploma and taught at Eshowe in Natal where she made friends with the local doctor who lent her a thoroughbred and she would gallop over the golf course before breakfast. What the golfers thought is not recorded.

She married my father, Walter Warden on the 1st of February 1934. Walter was born in Edinburgh but educated in England. His father, an actuary, developed consumption and was advised to emigrate to a dry climate. He asked his wife (my grandmother) to pick where and she chose Salisbury, Rhodesia.

When World War I broke out Walter was too young to join up so lied about his age and got in as a dispatch rider in East Africa, first on a horse called Stockings but later on motor bike. When World War II broke out his lie caught up with him when the SA Army declared him too old. He joined the Royal Artillery and became a captain. On his return to Johannesburg (uninjured) he joined the Sunday Times as a sub-editor.

I was born in October 1936 and christened Judith Plesance but prefer my nickname, Vicky. During the War my mother took me (then three) to live at the Hilton-Barber's holiday resort, Halesown, near Cradock. It was a happy time but later she rented a very grand house in Cradock from Garlakes. It was a double storey and had two small canons on either side of the front steps.

Shortly after the War my parents were divorced and my mother rented a house on about an acre and half in Parktown North, Johannesburg (My dear, it's so far out"!). We were very happy there and I acquired a donkey. ("Can't I have a pony mummy? Sorry we can't afford it."). Kit Carter's step-father, Jack Heathcote sold me a donkey for 10/-. In a short time I realized she was pregnant and she gave birth to the most adorable animal I have ever seen – a baby donkey. I rode the mother to school at Parktown Girls' High. The headmistress, Miss MacGregor, was most understanding and said I could certainly keep a donkey there "provided it didn't interfere with school work".

My mother taught all this time and though her salary was low we always had enough. We had a wonderful, dear servant, Dorah who I loved quite as much as my mother. Marjory was very popular and our spare room was hardly ever empty. I also remember people sleeping on the big couch in the dining room. We all enjoyed it very much and many interesting people came back several times.

I went to Wits. where I majored in logic and moral philosophy and came out more bewildered than when I went in. But I enjoyed my time there; friends told me I went around smiling like an idiot. At least I was a happy idiot.

Marjory died in the 60's and I married a civil servant Hugh Canning. Unfortunately they never met as I'm sure they would have liked each other. After Hugh's untimely death I couldn't bear places we'd shared so emigrated to Salisbury, Rhodesia where I spent 10 happy years until Mugabe started putting South Africans in jail without trial. While there, assisted by Jill Swart, I started The Rhodesian Society for Parapsychology (hoping to make contact with Hugh). Through the Society I made many dear friends but finally decided that ESP was a mixture of coincidence, wish fulfillment and downright fraud. I also did two years of a three year honours course in psychology and economics at

the University of Rhodesia which I loved but sadly had to leave in 1982 because of politics.

Back in SA I started the Sandton Literary Agency through which I have met many delightful authors and publishers (and made a bit of money). I love Johannesburg (though I miss the CBD which always reminded me of the song 'Downtown').

Looking back as an old woman I must say I have had a happy life, on the whole. This is probably mostly to do with good health, good friends and many beloved pets.