



## HERBERT, Matthew Christopher Ronald

Matt HERBERT | 25 Mar 1971

MATTHEW CHRISTOPHER RONALD<sup>7</sup> HERBERT (TERENCE RONALD<sup>6</sup>, RONALD HAROLD<sup>5</sup>, HAROLD<sup>4</sup>, JAMES BROADBENT<sup>3</sup>, JAMES BROADBENT<sup>2</sup>, THOMAS<sup>1</sup>) was born on 25 March 1971 in Cape Town, South Africa. He is the grandson of KATHLEEN NORAH<sup>7</sup> FLEMMER (MARIUS TOGER<sup>6</sup>, HANS CHRISTIAN<sup>5</sup>) born on 12 August 1914 in East London, South Africa and died on 31 October 1972 in Cape Town, South Africa. He married DANIELLE MARIANNA ROSTAN on 20 June 1998 in Melbourne, Australia, daughter of FRANC ROSTAN and LUBICA. She was born on 6 November 1973 in Melbourne, Australia.

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### PERSONAL HISTORY OF MATTHEW CHRISTOPHER RONALD HERBERT (25/03/1971)

Mum always wanted a girl. Instead, I was born. Her only child. I sometimes think my memories are unreliable, and other times I think that memories, like our perceptions, make up our own understanding of reality.

My earliest memories of home are of our house in Cape Town, at St Catherine Avenue in Plumstead. The bright pink bougainvillea tree, autumn leaves gold and brown on the grass. Our black and white cocker spaniel, Guinnie, my first best friend. Most of my memories of home seem to originate around Christmas 1976. Dad took me to see "Star Wars" on a sunny Saturday morning at the Cinerama Theatre in Rosebank. After watching the film, and then seeing the unprecedented coverage of its pioneering production process, I knew I wanted to be a film director.

In my memory this was the time we went to barbecues (braais) in Silvermine with family friends. Around this time I place my memories of our visits to Eight Bells holiday farm, and Laurie Brown, the farmer's daughter. My first love. I think I was eight. Somewhere there is a photo showing me sitting on a swing with other kids. I am pulling a face at the camera. I was an extroverted only child, bossy, taking charge. But I don't think I ever told Laurie how much I felt for her. I'm sure she never knew.

When I was ten years old, and just about finished primary school at Western Province Prep (WPPS, or "Wet Pups"), Dad was offered the position of General Manager with Guardian Insurance in Zimbabwe. Moving to Harare was the first major change in my life.

It was hard being uprooted so close to the end of primary school, to join a group of kids nearing the end of five or six years together. I went on to high school at the Jesuit Catholic St George's College ("Saints"), Dad's alma mater. I moved on to my "O" levels, majoring in Art, English Literature and French. I had a group of friends with similar interests, independent of the herd of rugby playing sports-minded boys at Saints. I was introduced to the concept of "cool", through my new best friend, Dion Francois. It was probably his favourite adjective, and to me, it was the best way to judge things. Living in Zimbabwe we were so far from anything cool. This was the early and mid-1980's; we were into New Romantic music - Duran Duran, Depeche Mode. We grew our fringes long - since hair had to be off the collar, we couldn't grow it long in the back. Cool. My favourite escape was in the fantasy role-playing game of "Dungeons and Dragons".

I joined REPS, an acting group in Harare. I was 15, turning 16. I loved the acting classes, and made new friends in the group. But soon I learned that we would be moving again. Dad had been offered a position with Guardian in Sydney. Although Australia wasn't America - where I would have loved to live, and thought I could best pursue my desire to be a film director - I was still excited to go there.

History was repeated, with my schooling broken in my penultimate year of study, just as it was when we left South Africa. A couple of weeks before we were to leave Zimbabwe, I had my first kiss. I was 16. Kate Hulett was an 18 year old girl in my acting class, who already had a boyfriend her own age. At the airport, with all my friends from the acting group there to say goodbye, Kate ran after me in tears as we entered the boarding lounge.

Mum, Dad and I spent six long months in England in 1987, waiting for visas to move to Australia. It was one of the saddest, loneliest times of my life. Kate and I wrote long letters to each other daily for the first few weeks. It's hard enough just being 16, but in England I knew no-one my age, and I had just felt love for the first time, before being taken away.

We arrived in Sydney in late 1987. I joined the class at Killara High for the last term of Year 11. An outsider again: Australian kids in their ignorance thought it was fun to call me "kaffir", not knowing the ugly hatred and violence that word conjured.

Following my longtime desire, I applied for the Film, Television and Sound Production course at Riverina Murray Institute of Higher Education (RMIHE) in Wagga Wagga, in country New South Wales. I was accepted into the program, and while Mum and Dad would relocate from Sydney to Melbourne for Dad's work, I would be living on my own for the first time. I was still 17 when I started at University, and for the first semester, I lived on campus, in dorm-style accommodation. Being around like-minded people who wanted to make films or videos was a buzz for me, and I felt I was on track toward what I believed would be my destiny. I would make an exceptional film in Uni, be discovered, and fast-tracked to a career in feature film production.

On April 15, 1991, I was driving my 1974 Honda Civic alone, and collided with an oncoming car. I sustained a closed head injury. I was in a coma. Previously, my memory had been exceptionally good. I have never recovered the clarity I used to have. I have become more introspective. My head injury, combined with my studies at the time, led to an ongoing interest in psychology and the unconscious.

I moved to Melbourne in 1993 after graduating one year later than planned, as a result of taking most of 1991 off to recover. I was unemployed, and spent days drifting around Chapel St, yearning to be part of the glamorous South Yarra scene. I was on the dole, jobseeking without luck, and realised my degree was a permit to unemployment. I chose to have a job only so I could achieve the standard of living I had been accustomed to, and aspired to. I wanted the security of my own income, and the independence it brought. With a persuasive word to a colleague, Dad secured a job for me, working in the accounts department of CIC Insurance in Bourke St. I was living on my own in a flat at 1/34 Wynnstay Rd in tree-lined Prahran East.

I didn't last long working in insurance, and after a time out of work again, I picked up a casual job as a hotel porter at the Crossley Hotel in Little Bourke St. Danielle Marianna Rostan (06/11/1973) worked there as a part-time room attendant, while completing her Bachelor of Applied Science in Cleaner Production at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). We became friends. Danielle's father (Franc Rostan) is Slovenian, and her mother (Lubica) Macedonian. She had been born and lived all her life in Thornbury, in Melbourne's North. Her stability, and everything else about her, made her my perfect match. Within two weeks of going out together we were discussing marriage. I proposed to Danielle on December 20, 1996, 18 months later. It was the eve of our first overseas holiday together, to South Africa, to see my parents, who had returned to Cape Town.

In December 1997, we bought our first house, at 189 Hutton St, Thornbury, and I moved in. Danielle lived at home with her parents until June 20, 1998, when we were married at the Slovenian Catholic Church in Kew. I planned our honeymoon to Austria, Germany and Slovenia as a surprise for Danielle. Travelling became one of our favourite shared experiences, and we visited California in March 2000, then in December we joined my parents for an unforgettable cruise from Hong Kong to Singapore.

I had been working at Foxtel's call centre since April 1996, and after we returned from our honeymoon and settled back to our new life, I decided it was time to change jobs. I moved to Gaslight Music, selling CDs for insurance replacement in the company's wholesale division. After more than three years in that position, as I approached my thirtieth birthday, I reawakened my lifelong dream of writing and filmmaking. I secured a six week attachment writing with the Story department of the TV soap "Neighbours". This didn't lead to an offer of a position, as I hoped. But I was referred for the job of Content Writer for Screen Hub, a daily email and web news publication for the film and TV industry. While delighted with the opportunity, I learned that writing for a living was not what I had imagined. I lasted less than three months in the job. I left, focussed on working in a secure job. I was forever torn between the dream of writing and directing films, and my wants, which necessitated a steady income. Getting the balance right. My dream is not dead, not forgotten, but under constant review. My question is always, how do I make the change?

Our house at Hutton St was the best we could afford at the time we bought, but it needed total renovation. In October 2001, our builder began work. At the time of writing, January 26, 2003, I am literally on the last day of painting the inside of our house. The task of rebuilding our home has been incredibly demanding, stressful and, finally, rewarding. It's wonderful to see our dream home come to life, but as much as I love the house and Melbourne, Cape Town will always be my true home.