



FLEMMER, John Oliver

John FLEMMER | 6 Feb 1934

JOHN OLIVER⁸ FLEMMER (JOHN SWEET DISTIN⁷, JOHN DISTIN⁶, CHRISTIAN LUDVIG⁵) was born on 6 February 1934 in Schoongezicht, Transvaal, South Africa. He married (1) RUTH RATHBONE. He married (2) JOAN JENKINS.

I was born on 6 February 1934 in a trading store house in Schoongezicht, Tvl. It stood at the base of a 'koppie' which was to be the backdrop to many youthful adventures. Shortly after my birth I believe this store burnt down. We moved to LaRochelle, Johannesburg, near Wemmer Pan. When I was five my father moved to 'the farm' in Schoongezicht, situated about 2 miles from the trading store where I was born, My best memories are of this period. Dad built various outbuildings around the house. One of these was a garage with storeroom and also contained an apartment for my mother's father. Grandpa Oliver Bentall, even from my earliest memories of him, was an old man, widowed in 1920, given to enjoying his own company.

Bicycles played a big part in my life. When I got to schoolgoing age Maurine, Joan, Ludvig and I rode six miles into Daleside to the station to catch the train to Meyerton for school and reversed the routine coming home. During the war years we had Italian prisoners of war working for us. When I was 13 years old my parents were asked by my Uncle Ludvig (Lolly) to join him in Kakamega, Kenya, to help with the running of a garage and the felling of trees for charcoal, businesses which he owned. The farm at Schoongezicht was rented out and Mom, Dad, Joyce and I set out for Kenya via Durban, in the SS Tyreha, a British India line. Maurine, Joan and Ludvig were working in Jhb living with Aunt Doris and son Leslie.

On arrival at Kakamega we stayed first with Uncle Lolly in his own house and then later moved into a bungalow on an adjacent property. A year later we returned to the farm at Schoongezicht. Back on the farm I was pleased to meet up with my siblings and old friends, especially Oscar Hunzinger, who shared my enthusiasm for bows and arrows I had brought back from Kenya. The farm didn't however prove a viable proposition and when I was about 15 it was sold and my Dad went into partnership in a greengrocers in Rosettenville. I remember spending one holiday in Rivonia at Gran Maud Flemmer's cottage adjoining Aunt Barbara's house. This was also about the time of my sister Joan's marriage to Johnny Geysler. Previously our holidays were spent at the south coast with our aunts and cousins in cottages rented by Gran Maud Flemmer. Great fun.

Dad had a 'thing' about doctors, having been disabled at the age of 4 by polio. Whooping cough was cured by being near a goat and home remedies. Ludvig's six months in hospital with double pneumonia was a total deviation. Joyce was the only child born in hospital ... and that was because mother insisted, having lost the baby Grace, born two years before Joyce.

Dad was fond of music and played the piano and sang at family gatherings and parties. He also could recall quite large sections of poetry which he had learnt at St. Andrew's, Grahamstown, and recited these pieces regularly as I know some of them even now.