

Family Tales by Stanley Loon

And now, a few family anecdotes over the years.



In the early hours of one morning in 1958, Angus Ballantyne, a farmer from Brackenfell, became a member of the exclusive club of patients going on a house call to their doctor. First some background. My father was a GP in Bellville, some 20 or so kilometers north of Cape Town. Brackenfell is a further 10 km north. The Ballantynes were patients of his and used to breed boxer dogs on their farm, Sunnybrae. Most of the dogs we had, came from them.

That day in 1958, our dog was about to give birth to her first litter and as my dad was new at the game, Angus came over to help. They overturned a big old fashioned wooden kitchen table for her to give birth in. Whenever a future dog gave birth, the same table was used! Just after one of the puppies had been cleaned of the after birth by the mother, I remember as though it was yesterday, both Angus and my dad's faces lit up. They leant over the table, pointed to the puppy and in one voice said "That's the one!". That puppy was named Sugar Ray, after the world boxing champion Sugar Ray Robinson and in the early 1960's she was South Africa Boxer Showdog champion.



There is only one word for the next story and that is Karma.

On the 30th July, 1983, I had one hell of an attack of renal colic. This day is etched in my mind as I had planned to propose two days later to my girlfriend whose 25th birthday was on the 1st of August. (do the maths, that makes her born in 1958!!). I went to the emergency unit at Groote Schuur where my dad was working at the time. Around midday, I was referred to the X-ray department to have an IVP. The professor of radiology was there, but all the other radiologists had gone to lunch.

The professor phoned the chief radiologist to get back immediately. He then told my dad the following: "When I was a student, I played rugby for UCT 2nd team. During one match which we were playing at Kraaifontein, I was injured. I had dislocated my shoulder. I saw you run to your car and come back with your medical bag. You manipulated my shoulder back into the joint and made a figure of 8 sling. I am still waiting for your account. Today is payback time". The next day, I had a large kidney stone removed. When I was discharged some days later, I proposed.

🔊) The Loon whistle. When we went out somewhere with my folks and one of us happened to get separated from them, they would whistle the tune of the Big Ben chimes. Much better than

shouting out names. In 1985, my wife and I went from South Africa to Europe on a Eurorail tour. We could go on any train and wherever we were at night, we found accommodation. Crossing the English Channel by hovercraft, was included in the ticket. We made use of this and when in London went to the usual tourist places. We were in Petticoat Lane, which was crowded with people, when I suddenly heard that whistle. We went towards it and there was my brother-in-law whistling for his wife, my younger sister. Unknown to us, they came on holiday to London from Israel where they live.

☪ Everyone who comes on Aliya and learns Hebrew, has a story – usually embarrassing – to tell. In 1986, we came on Aliya. I went to ulpan class to learn Hebrew. My wife, being fluent in Hebrew, found a job quite quickly. We befriended an Indian couple, Frederick and Joy. As in Afrikaans’ “g” sound as in gaan, there is the same sound in Hebrew. Being from a country that does not have that sound, Frederick struggled with it. One day, the teacher asked him in Hebrew “how are you?”. He replied (using Afrikaans phonetics) Kaga Kaga (translation: so-so) but it came out as Kaka Kaka! The teacher told us that when we were outside, we must be prepared to answer a frequent question “what is the time?”. A guy in our class was asked exactly that. He looked at his watch and replied “reva ve chetsi bidiyuk (quarter and half exactly) and walked away happy at first, before realizing what he had said. My folks came on Aliya a few years later. My dad went to ulpan class, my mother being fluent in the language. A woman in his class kept making a nuisance of herself, always talking. My dad whispered “Daai meisie raak op my sinuwies”. A Belgian lady sitting nearby answered back “myne ook”.

👋 One time, I was at a traffic lights in Tel Aviv. I saw a beggar approach a taxi. The driver leaned over to his cubby hole and then opened his window and gave the beggar a handful of cigarettes. The look of sheer joy on the face of the beggar as he ran off to enjoy this fabulous present was wondrous to behold.

🚌 I can pinpoint the exact moment that I felt old for the first time. I caught a bus in Tel Aviv. It was full and a pregnant woman stood up for me! Normally I take up the offer and sit down because I find it very, very difficult to play chess on my phone standing up in a bus. Very difficult.

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