



Rose's

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ROUND-UP

A privately-published monthly newsletter covering mainly snippets of Karoo history * Copyright: Rose Willis *
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OUTRAGE AT THE ARREST OF TOP MEDICAL MAN

Outrage has been expressed across the world regarding the arrest in Dubai on August 18, of Beaufort West-born Professor Cyril Karabus, 77. Cyril, one of the world's top paediatric oncologists, was returning from Toronto in Canada where he had gone to attend a family reunion and the wedding of one of his sons. "This was the first time in many years that all five siblings were together in one country with their parents," said his son, Michael. Cyril's wife, Jennifer, their daughter, Sarah (also a well-known paediatrician) and her two children, were travelling with him, back to South Africa and waiting for a connecting flight at Dubai airport, when he was arrested by a man, who announced himself as "police". Only then did Cyril learn he had been tried in absentia ten years ago and found guilty of manslaughter and fraud, after a three-year old girl who he had treated for acute myeloblastic leukemia, a type of blood cancer, died in 2002. At the time Cyril was contracted by the Canadian firm, InterHealth, to act as a locum for Lourens De Jager, another South African paediatric oncologist, working at the Sheikh Khalifa Medical Centre in Abu Dhabi. A UAE Judicial Department official confirmed the trial and verdict. Cyril, who suffers from a heart condition, and has a pace-maker, was taken to Al Wathba Central Prison, 50 km from Abu Dhabi. He was only allowed the clothes on his back and a toothbrush. His luggage was brought home by his wife, who was told that she could not stay in the country. A legal team headed, by Cape Town lawyer Michael Bagraim, instantly leapt into action to request bail and to establish the exact implications of the case. It took six court appearances before Cyril, was granted bail of 100 000 Dirhams (R240 000) eight weeks after his arrest. He has been transferred to a court-approved house and is awaiting a new trial set for November 20.

HIGHLY RESPECTED BY ALL WHO KNOW HIM

Cyril, the younger son of old Beaufort West's Isaac and Becky Karabus, is highly respected throughout the medical world. Isaac was the head of Karoo Trading, the Ford Agency. The couple was well-liked leaders in the Jewish Community and highly respected throughout the Karoo for their charitable work and contributions to Jewish culture throughout the region. A friend, Dr Nathan Finkelstein, one of SA's top pharmacists and honorary citizen of Beaufort West, said: "We all spent a happy carefree childhood in Beaufort West. I recall playing Monopoly at his home after Hebrew classes. Cyril did not attain the same heights at school as his elder brother, Alan, he shone later in medicine. My cousin, Victor Dubowitz, and Alan were in the same Beaufort West matric class and there was always great rivalry between them. In the finals Alan attained third place in the Cape and Victor, fourth. Alan went on to study law at UCT, moved to Edinburgh, in Scotland and later became a Professor of Law at an American university. Cyril did exceptionally well in medicine. For more than 35 years he served as the head of the

Department of Paediatrics and Child Health at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital and as professor of paediatrics at UCT. He pioneered treatment for cancer and blood disorders at this hospital and worked tirelessly throughout his career to care for sick children from socio-economically deprived circumstances. He is an international expert in the field of paediatric oncology and haematology and highly respected around the world. On retirement, he earned the title of Emeritus Associate Professor from UCT. Ironically Cyril met his wife Jennifer (nee Nichols) in circumstances similar to those for which he is now being charged. Forty years ago he treated her two-year old daughter, Kelly, who also lost her battle with leukaemia. A short time after this child's death Jennifer and Cyril met again, fell in love and were married. They have five children and some grandchildren."

NEWSPAPER TAKES A SAGE LOOK AT 'THE EARTHQUAKE'

In May 1850 rumblings of an earthquake rocked the central interior. *The Graaff-Reinet Herald* reported that "The shock of the earthquake of the 21st ultimo was felt over a very extensive area. Accounts are coming in from the upper part of Graaff-Reinet in the north, to Uitenhage in the West, the land beyond the frontier in the east and south to the ocean. This comprises an area of upwards of 40,000 square miles." One correspondent supposes that there must be some serious geological disturbance south of the Equator; drawing his inference from the fact that the settlement of Wellington, in New Zealand, was a few months ago nearly destroyed by an earthquake. Bombay papers, received to the middle of March, also mention two very remarkable meteors in the Indian Seas. A reader pointed out that the Volcano of Vesuvius was again in active mode, throwing out immense volumes of lava, mingled with masses of rock and other indurated substances, which have inflicted several serious injuries. "These phenomena may well challenge the attention of the philosopher as well as induce serious reflection in the mind of all who believe that the mechanism of the Universe is the Fiat of the Divine Will, and that the whole is regulated and controlled by Omnipotent Power," he wrote.

FAMILY SEVERELY SHAKEN

Richard Daniel, the man who established the small village of Sidbury in 1830 and built his house, Sidbury Park on the outskirts, wrote to the *Graaff-Reinet Herald* to tell of his experiences during the earthquake. "The following are particulars of an earthquake, felt here by nearly all the members of my family. About 10.30 on the night of the May 21, my family and I had retired to rest when we heard a rumbling noise seemingly coming from underneath the bedrooms. It was not unlike the sound of a carriage. Then everything seemed to be in motion. A perpendicular heave of the earth was very perceptible, followed by a tremulous motion. The vibration of the walls and beds was so great, that my family rushed from one room to another in the greatest consternation and alarm. Some fainted, whilst others became sick and giddy. One was awoken by the violent motion of her bed, and called out to know who was shaking it. The bottles, basins, jugs and candlesticks in the bedrooms moved and made a jingling noise, even the chairs in the dining room rattled so loud that the servant girl, who slept in the adjoining kitchen thought someone had broken into the house. The shock was felt at Sidbury and other places in this neighbourhood as well. It lasted about one minute. The night was cloudy, with a very light air from the south east. On looking out of my bedroom window at the commencement of the shock, I observed some ewes and lambs that were lying down under the fir trees at the end of the house, suddenly get up, bleating and running about, as if some wild animal had been in the midst of

them. The electrical appearance in the air for many days previously indicated the approach of an earthquake, and those who have felt the effects of one before, observed no doubt, as I did, the remarkable gloominess in the atmosphere. On the following day, the sun was completely obscured.”

DID LOVE TRIUMPH?

In early January, 1845, John Philips, an Eastern Cape farmer, found his daughter was missing. He was distraught. He put noticed into the newspapers stating that Elizabeth Philips, a minor, had absconded from the home of her parents. He stated it was believed that she intended to marry Partick Howard, a discharged soldier from the 27th regiment, and that the couple had attempted this at Grahamstown, but had failed. John called upon all clergymen of all denominations not to publish any banns for this couple, nor to perform a wedding service for them. He added that he would “prosecuted according to law” any person or persons found harboring Elizabeth. There was no follow-up story, so we are left wondering what happened to Patrick and Elizabeth. Did they ever manage to marry?

GRIM REAPER STRIKES TWICE

The Devenish family of Beaufort West suffered a heavy blow in 1855. Marcella Delamere, the beloved infant daughter of J.G. Devenish, Chief Clerk to the Civil Commissioner, died on April 1, and the very next day, John Donald Devenish, eldest son of the late Lieut. John Mears Devenish the Civil Commissioner’s brother, died, stated the *SA Commercial Advertiser* of April 1855.

ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT EARLY DOCTOR

Early hinterland medics were a curious collection of men. In *Frontier Flames* F C Metrowich tells of Ambrose George Campbell, a cantankerous doctor who arrived with the 1820 settlers. The son of Major-General Campbell, he was a clever surgeon, good general practitioner and witty writer. “However, in those robust days of freedom of speech and writing he often dipped his pen in bile, to point out the weaknesses and foibles of his contemporaries and to attack the government. He for instance once asked “Why is Colonel Somerset like a harp struck by lightning?” and answered himself stating: “because he is a blasted lyre.” By 1840 he was publishing a scurrilous, virulent fortnightly newspaper called *The Echo*. This newspaper, which had a short, but merry existence, had a clearly defined policy: it was anti-government, anti-colonist, anti-Wesleyan, anti-*Grahamstown Journal*, in fact anti-everything and everyone. Despite the fact that he was involved in numerous lawsuits, the quarrelsome, vindictive, Dr Campbell was quite irrepressible.

NOT SO EASY TO GET YOUR CATTLE BACK

Cattle raids were an almost insoluble problem of the early frontier. A variety of British Governors introduced a series of laws, but none proved a solution. Under Governor Lord Charles Somerset, for instance, the owner of stolen cattle was only able to recover his own animals. To do this he had first to apply to the nearest military post for a party of soldiers to help him follow the spoor. Usually, by the time this had been arranged all trace of the animals had disappeared. Lord Charles stated that “if they found spoor and if it led to a kraal, those people should be held jointly responsible and replace the animals.” This did not work because the farmers considered their stock superior and they claimed three or four animals as compensation. Also, unscrupulous farmers claimed compensation for every animal no matter whether it had died from disease, fallen

down into a ravine or simply strayed. Under Acting Governor Sir Richard Bourke, commandos were allowed to follow stolen stock across the frontier only if the pilfered animals were still in sight. This too was a useless rule as most cattle raids took place at night or in the early hours of the morning. Sir Richard felt that the farmer, on discovering his cattle stolen, should approach the nearest chief and ask him to trace and restore the animals. Such a course of action would no doubt have led to the chief's overthrow or assassination, states F C Metrowich in *Frontier Flames*. . Under Sir Lowry Cole military patrols were expected to recover only the stolen cattle.

MY KINGDOM FOR A HORSE

George Kramer was born in Moscow. He inherited a love for horses and horsemanship from his father and grandfather, both of whom bred excellent bloodstock. George had his first riding lesson when he was five and he loved it. After that he was never far from horses. He graduated from the Cadet School in Moscow and later the Military Academy in St Petersburg. After that he joined the Horse Artillery of the Imperial Russian Life Guards. During his period of service with the army he took part in many steeplechases. He was exhilarated by his success in this sport. In WW1 he attained the rank of captain. He also fought against the Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War and, according to an item in *Progress in South Africa and Rhodesia*, on cessation of hostilities, emigrated to Switzerland where he graduated at the Agricultural College of Marcellin. After some years in France and Yugoslavia, George came to South Africa, where in 1939 he was awarded first prize for horsemanship at Rosebank show in the Cape. His deep passion for horses and his desire to become a breeder led him across the country in search of a suitable spot for a stud farm. He stopped one day on a koppie about 40km east of Middleburg and looked across the valley to mountains on the far side. He visualised horses in the valley, a water scheme for irrigation and pleasant pastures for horses. Instantly he knew he had found the place he was searching for. George immediately bought this beautiful land and named the farm Askania Nova. On it he built a beautiful homestead and surrounded it with poplar and willow trees, which provided a world of green luxury for his beloved horses. Years later George decided to move south and sold Askania Nova, which produced many famous horses. He transferred his stock to his new farm, Broadlands, near Sir Lowry's Pass. In time he sold this farm to Lady Kenmare and retired. George's son, John, fondly known as JK, became one of South Africa's best known and well respected judges of yearlings.

PROTECTED' CATTLE ARRIVE IN SA

Jersey cattle were brought into the Karoo shortly after the first small herd was imported into South Africa in 1882 by Adrian van der Byl of Roodebloem Estates, in Woodstock. "From there the Jersey moved to Paarl, Worcester, Robertson, Bredasdorp, Stellenbosch, the Eastern Province, Karoo, and Cape Midlands," wrote Douglas Houston, a past chairman of the Jersey Cattle Breeders Society in *Progress in South Africa and Rhodesia*. George Harcourt-Vernon from Clocolan in the Free State, however, thinks Van der Byl might have brought Jerseys into South Africa much earlier because a note in his grandfather's diary states he had bought a Jersey cow named Buttercup from Adrian van der Byl in 1893. Her great-grandam was given as Eva, imported by Van der Byl in 1877. On the farm they apparently also had Bridesmaid born on August 27, 1891, and shown as the great-great-granddaughter of Eva. "Once known as the Richman's cow, this ancient breed originated in the Channel Island of Jersey. Researchers agree that the breed possibly originated from France, which way back was joined to this island by an isthmus and that the

breed has its roots in an Asian breed which was tamed during the Stone Age, says G D Nel in *Jerseys of SA*. In 1763 the breed was considered so superior that restrictive measures prevented Jersey farmers from importing cattle from England and France, later, in 1878 these regulations were strengthened to prevent the introduction of bovine disease. These regulations were so strict that even cattle previously exported could not be re-imported. These restrictive measures prevented the breed from becoming contaminated by other strains and forced Islanders to concentrate on improving their own herds.”

THE PLACE TO BE

Robert Torr came out to the Cape as a soldier during the Second British Occupation in 1806. While in this country he lost his heart of the lovely widow of his late commander, and married her. They migrated to the Eastern Cape Karoo area where he traded and in time was granted a piece of land for services rendered during one of the Frontier Wars. Later, one of his sons, Harry, married a woman whose parents had come out with the 1820 settlers and they moved towards the central Karoo area. Their son, Brain Filmer Torr, was born in Cathcart. Harry later moved to the Victoria West area where he purchased the farm, Melton Wold. He sent his son Brian to Diocesan College in Rondebosch and later to at Elsenburg and Grootfontein Agricultural Colleges to be educated. Brian loved the idea of farming and looked forward to assisting his father, but a world war put paid to those ideas. At the outbreak of World War II Brian joined the South African Armed Forces and served with the Royal Natal Carbineers in Italy. After being demobbed he returned to his beloved Melton Wold and married Doreen Mary Oliver of Bloemfontein. Brian purchased Merino stud sheep with the assistance of Mr A G L Murray of Beaufort West, built his farm into an enviable, award-winning stud. Brian set up a 220-V AC lighting plant to supply electricity to his farm and he also utilised this to power his pumping plants. In time he purchased the adjoining farm Morgenson. Brian and Doreen started one of South Africa’s earliest and best known guest farms at Melton Wold in the 1930. It offered a very high standard of catering and plenty of outdoor games and soon people were flocking from across the country for a “true country holiday” there. The Torrs also ran a general dealers business and post office on the farm.

JUDGES JUMP FOR JOY

The trip across the Karoo from Beaufort West to Karoopoort was long, tedious, trying and tiring. A correspondent of the *Cape Monthly Magazine of May 1878* wrote: “I remember a Circuit Court’s Judge’s entourage reaching Karoopoort and every member of the cavalcade, from the oldest and sedatest to the youngest and liveliest, not concerned for dignity, but giving a roar of joy. They ranged themselves on either side of the road where the wide Karoo converges into this narrow *poort*, and gave three cheers to celebrate the end of the sandy miseries. They looked forward to a rail service because at Wagenmakerskraal, formerly a miserable, dilapidated-looking Boer house, which, despite the hardships of the journey, only brave travellers dared enter, they had seen large flourishing railway workshops and beside a spreading mimosa a neat house for the engineers and a pulsating “smithy”.

It ain’t the roads we take; it’s what’s inside us makes us the way are - O. Henry (William Sidney Porter)