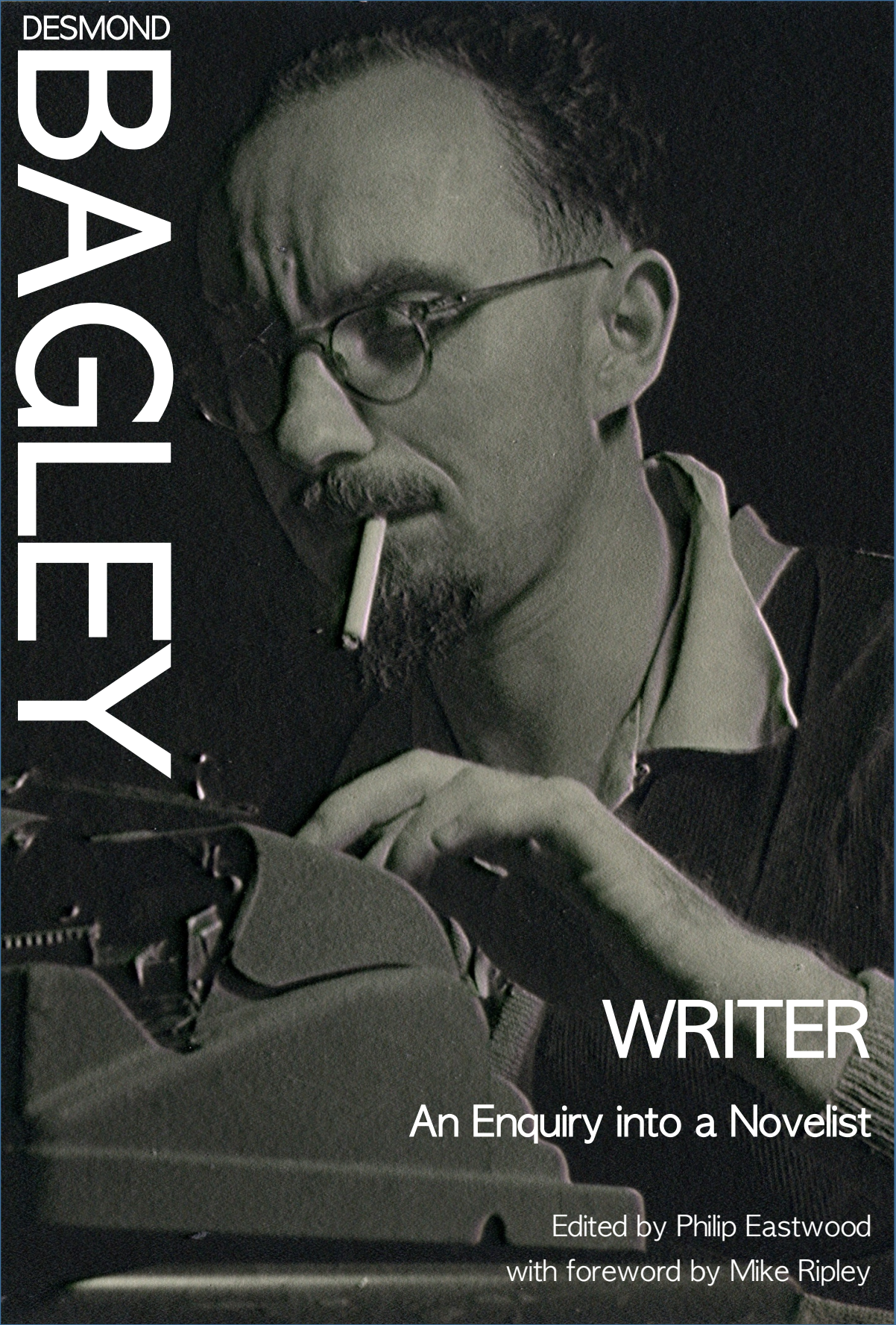
DESMOND

BAGLEY



WRITER

An Enquiry into a Novelist

Edited by Philip Eastwood

with foreword by Mike Ripley

WRITER

An Enquiry into a Novelist

DESMOND BAGLEY

Edited by PHILIP EASTWOOD

with foreword by MIKE RIPLEY

COPYRIGHT

Published by Philip Eastwood
www.thebagleybrief.com

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library
ISBN: 978-1-5272-8391-6

Published with the consent of the trustee for the J M Bagley Settlement:
Moore Stephens Fiduciaries (Guernsey) Limited,
and with the assistance of HarperCollins Publishers and
the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University.

Front cover illustration: © A.H. Edwards 1955, from the Desmond Bagley
Collection Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University.

Rear cover illustration: *Moon Fantasy* © Peter Le Vasseur 1980.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

It is widely accepted that there was a 'Golden Age' of English crime fiction in the 1920s and 1930s, centred very much on the *detective* story which set a puzzle, usually a 'whodunit?' but sometimes a 'howdunit?' or even a 'whydunit?'. Famous fictional detectives were created, among them Hercule Poirot, Lord Peter Wimsey, Father Brown and Miss Marple, all familiar names to this day, yet even in the 'Golden Age', their adventures in print were eclipsed by the popularity of *thrillers*.

However much the Golden Age authors of detective stories are revered – and they certainly should be – the fact is that at the time, they were outsold by thriller writers such as John Buchan, 'Sapper', Leslie Charteris, Edgar Wallace and many others long forgotten. The thriller writer was not so much interested in who had done the crime (invariably murder) but in putting his characters in jeopardy and then posing the question 'how do they get out of this?'

But if there was a Golden Age of the British thriller, and there was, it ran from 1953 (the first James Bond book) until around 1976. In that period, British authors of adventure thrillers, and then spy stories, dominated best-seller lists internationally and the 'big three' were Hammond Innes, Alistair MacLean and Desmond Bagley.

The triumvirate of Innes, MacLean and Bagley had much in common, not the least being the same publisher, William Collins (now HarperCollins). Innes' thriller writing career began during World War II and many of his adventure stories were turned into successful films in the 1950s, the books on which they were based outselling the spy fantasies of Ian Fleming, much to Fleming's annoyance. By 1958, Innes' sales had been overtaken by those of relative newcomer Alistair MacLean, with a trio of thrillers set during the war,

written as high adventure, but both authors benefitted from large runs of paperback editions.

It was no wonder that Desmond Bagley approached Collins with his first novel *The Golden Keel*, supposedly introducing himself as someone who 'wrote stories like Alistair MacLean' and indeed a review of that debut in the *The Sunday Times* claimed that 'it catapults him straight into the Alistair MacLean bracket'.

In truth, Bagley's novels had more in common with those of Hammond Innes than MacLean, a fact ironically acknowledged early on in *The Golden Keel* when a character says '(this sounds like something) from a Hammond Innes thriller.' But all three shared one important life experience: they had travelled widely at a time when foreign holidays for most of their readers were still only an aspiration.

Both Bagley and Innes were inveterate travellers and MacLean had seen wartime service in the navy in the Arctic, the Mediterranean and the Far East. Their experience of exotic, foreign locations soaked into their writing and became a key factor in their success. Not surprisingly, few of their stories took place on mainland UK with Bagley's fictional Atlas eventually covering the High Andes, Yucatan, the Bahamas, British Columbia, the Sahara, Scandinavia and, perhaps most famously of all, Iceland. Reading a Desmond Bagley, who could describe the topography, climate and natural hazards of far-away lands in beguilingly simple prose, was like going on an expedition without leaving one's favourite armchair.

And in a Desmond Bagley novel, that expedition would always be in the company of ordinary, believable characters who would come through whatever was thrown at them by nature or by villains, by resourcefulness and pluck, not super-human powers or gadgets. In this, Bagley was following in a long tradition of popular writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Nevil Shute.

One other thing Bagley had in common with Innes and MacLean was sex, or rather the lack of it. Female characters do, of course, feature in the novels of all three but sex – unusually for the 'Swinging Sixties' – never raised its ugly head. Its absence gave Bagley's work something of an air of innocence and certainly did not affect his sales one jot.

It may also explain one other thing. I have no empirical evidence other than conversations with hundreds of thriller readers and writers over the years, but I am convinced that Desmond Bagley was as popular with female readers as he was with adventure-seeking red-blooded males. For proof, I can only offer a snippet from a newspaper interview given by Bagley in 1980 when he told a journalist; 'In Lahore there's even a Desmond Bagley fan club of about 400 teenage girls. What on Earth they do, I haven't the faintest idea.'

They read your books, Desmond, and they enjoy them. They probably still do.

This memoir, painstakingly and lovingly reconstructed, gives a rare glimpse into the early life and formative influences of a very successful author and a man about whom few had a bad word to say. As a writer and as a reader of his novels from the age of 13, I was both fascinated by it and grateful for it.

Mike Ripley

PREFACE

By 1979 Desmond Bagley was regarded as one of the world's most successful thriller writers with twelve best-selling adventure novels to his credit, each more popular than its predecessor. Initial print runs of his hardback novels were in the region of 150,000 copies, followed by a first impression of half a million paperback copies with total sales approaching sixteen million copies. Bagley's success justified William Collins Ltd, in bestowing on him the publishing trade's appreciative description of 'a valuable continuing property'. His 1971 novel *The Freedom Trap*, had been adapted for cinema by Warner Brothers Inc., and released in 1973 as *The Mackintosh Man*. Directed by John Huston the film starred Hollywood actor Paul Newman in the lead role with the cream of British acting talent in supporting roles, including James Mason, Harry Andrews, Ian Bannen and Michael Hordern. In July and August 1978 Fontana Books ran their very first national cinema advertising campaign to publicise the launch, in paperback, of Bagley's 1977 novel *The Enemy*. Success followed success, with BBC Scotland adapting for television his 1970 novel *Running Blind*, which aired in January of 1979.

From his very first novel, which Bagley referred to as his 'action stories', his writing had been overseen by his long-term friend and in-house editor at Collins, Robert Knittel. Despite his success, writing hadn't always come easily to Bagley, who suffered from occasional bouts of writer's block. Just such a period set in around July of 1979.

This particular bout of writer's block followed the failure of Bagley's seventh attempt at writing a novel set in Antarctica, and despite having some promising ideas, by November he was still struggling to get down to writing a new novel. Earlier, in June, Knittel, who had worked with Bagley for sixteen years, had retired from executive responsibilities at Collins publishers to be

succeeded in London by Christopher MacLehose. Loyal to his friend, Knittel continued to act in semi-retirement as Bagley's literary editor, and did so from his home in Vico Morcote, Switzerland. Bagley later confirmed to Knittel that these circumstances clearly had a psychological effect, resulting in 1979 being an unproductive year.

At the end of the year, seeking rest and inspiration, the Bagleys took a holiday in the Bahamas, which provided the necessary stimuli and the author returned to Guernsey full of enthusiasm and plot. By the end of May 1980 *Bahama Crisis* had been submitted to his editors, however in that last week of May, John Donaldson, who had been the Collins representative in Johannesburg to whom Bagley had taken his very first novel, sadly passed away. The passing of this doyen of overseas publishers may well have put the author in a reflective mood.

On 30 May, Bagley wrote to Knittel informing him that within two weeks he would commence work compiling a semi-autobiographical work *Writer*. By 28 June, Bagley had completed a partial draft of the work and sent copies of the first 55 pages to both MacLehose and Knittel to gauge the appeal of the work. *Writer – An Enquiry into a Novelist*, was not envisaged as an autobiography, with Bagley describing it as *'a jeu d'esprit which fits into the interstices of my life which are not occupied by the writing of novels'*, an attempt by the author to portray his professional life as a writer. Bagley continued to work on *Writer* during July and August encouraged by the initial enthusiasm shown by his editors. The work was to be divided into five parts: Proto-Writer; Journalist; Novelist; Distillation; and Afterword, the latter part to be written by his wife Joan.

Concurrent with working on *Writer*, Bagley was also focussing on his next work of fiction and to this end the couple went on a two-week holiday to Kenya in September of 1980. Bagley was of the opinion that this technique of travel and research had recently worked in the Bahamas and he couldn't see why it

shouldn't work in Kenya. This proved to be the case and the author was inspired to start work on 'The Man from Hell's Gate', the first working title of his novel published as *Windfall*.

Perhaps wishing to clear his desk before committing to his new work of fiction, Bagley sent 173 pages of *Writer*, comprising of Part One – Proto-Writer, and Part Two – Journalist, to his editors in January 1981. *Writer*, like earlier projects, was put aside and Bagley next refers to it in March 1982 when he mentions writing the rough draft, somewhat characteristically, *'in desultory manner.'*

Bagley passed away on 12 April 1983 and the month following his death Joan took time to evaluate her husband's unpublished works. Considering adding to *Writer*, which she said her husband had referred to as his *Vanity Fair*, Joan thought that it could never be finished as her husband would have wanted, and that it wouldn't, as they had both always known, have been bestseller material. Joan decided instead to work on the drafts of *Night of Error* and 'The Road', both of which were published posthumously, the latter as *Juggernaut*. In November 1984 Joan expressed the intention to send a copy of *Writer* to Collins, and it is unclear if her husband's draft had been added to, or indeed if Joan sent it at all. All that remains of *Writer* in the author's papers are 99 pages, comprising of a mixture of pages from two drafts of parts one and two. These pages tell the story of Bagley's early life until the point of writing his first best-selling novel *The Golden Keel*.

In editing the surviving pages of *Writer* I have been able to augment Bagley's work with my own research, together with extracts of unpublished material found in his archive of personal papers. This story, which gives us a fascinating insight into both Bagley's early life and his thoughts on writing, is told, almost exclusively, in his own words.

Philip Eastwood

INTRODUCTION

In the course of my career as a professional novelist I have been interviewed by journalists of many nationalities on innumerable occasions and, as an ex-journalist myself, I have been appalled by the poverty of thought behind the questioning. They all ask predictably the same questions and my answers in later years have become increasingly facetious. A sample follows:

QUESTION: Where do you get your plots?

ANSWER: damned if I know. (I like the answer given by Stanley Ellin to this question - 'If Plutarch was good enough for Shakespeare then he's good enough for me.' I intended to appropriate this for myself but Mr Ellin informs me that he has copyrighted it.)[i]

Q: Do you work as inspiration takes you, or do you keep regular hours for writing?

A: Office hours – nine to five, five days a week. (The straight answer, followed by a string of clichés concerning the application of the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair, 99% perspiration to 1% inspiration, the virtues of self-discipline, etc.)

Q: Do you ascribe your success to talent or luck? (A typical journalistic double-edged question; one answer makes you seem exceedingly immodest, the other a damned fool).

A: Luck, of course, but I find the harder I work and the luckier I become.

Q: Some writers can work in noisy surroundings; others, like Proust, need a cork-lined study. Where do you do your best work?

A: In my head, (I stole that from Hemingway).

Q: How many copies of your books sell every year?

---

[i] Stanley Bernard Ellin (6 October 1916 – 31 July 1986) American mystery writer.

A: I don't know, but if you laid them end to end it would be a pretty pointless exercise.

Q: How much money do you make in a year?

A: As much as I'm worth but probably more than I deserve.

Not one journalist has asked *why* I write.

No doubt the journalists, to judge by their frequent requests for the size of my bank balance, assume that I write for money. That assumption is wrong. True, I am fortunate enough to make money by writing, but I do not write for money. My first book was published when I was forty years old and I had written busily for years before that without much money coming in.

The lay public, too, has its questions. There seems to be a mystique about the act of writing, and particularly about the craft of the novelist, which tantalises people and elicits the questions. Most writers, myself included, answer them patiently enough but without much interest because they are the wrong questions. One favourite, apart from the universal, 'Where do you get your plots?' is 'What is your book about?'

The question, asked about a work in progress, is enough to rouse the ire of any writer. It is usually asked amid the noisy chatter of a cocktail party, and the short answer is, 'If I could tell you in the next five minutes I wouldn't have to write 100,000 words.' At one such party I was asked, 'But, Mr Bagley; apart from tossing off the occasional novel, what do you *do*?' A short, sharp retort from my wife saved me from having to answer that particular question.

If these, then, are the wrong questions, what are the right questions? All my life I have been writing and, in many cases, writing about writing. I have accumulated a couple of box files full of miscellaneous notes and scraps, and there are also my correspondence files which I dignify by the name of The Archives. It occurred to me that these, together with added anecdotal material

from the writer's world which might be of interest, would go a long way to answering the questions, most of which I have asked myself.

I approached my editor, a friend of eighteen years, and put the idea to him. I expected ridicule but, to my surprise, he not only agreed, but commended. 'People are interested,' he remarked. 'And you've had no exposure on radio or TV. It should sell.' That last bit came out because he is a publisher, and he doesn't make a living by publishing unsaleable books.

This is not an autobiography. I have not led so interesting a life as to want to embark on such an enterprise. It is an attempt to portray the strictly professional life of one writer, to find out how he became a writer, to outline in some detail how a novelist approaches his work and even, perhaps, to answer the elusive question of where he gets his plots.

No one who is not a writer – or a writer's unfortunate spouse – knows how much hard work goes into the writing of a book. To the neighbours a male writer is a bum who stays at home all day and gets under his wife's feet. They commiserate with her and ask how she can stand it. Friends who are at a loose end pop in unexpectedly because, as everybody knows, Bagley is at home doing nothing. They have to be deliberately discouraged.

So I state firmly that the writing of a book is hard work. I am not referring here to the intellectual labour, although there is a deal of that, but to the back-breaking bit. My advice to young writers has always been to buy the best typewriter affordable and the best typist's chair to support the kidneys. The ability to live with one's self for long periods is also useful because it is the loneliest job in the world.

When I began writing novels I was ignorant of the most elementary details of book production. I had a reasonable command of English but I did not know the length of a book; up to that time I had had no occasion to count the number of words in a book and a novelist is, to a large extent, a word-counting animal.

The division of a book into chapters was a mystery to me. How long should a chapter be? Why should a chapter end at a particular point? Why have chapters at all?

When I completed my first book there were other mysteries to be solved. I did not know that from the signing of the contract to the time the book appears on the shelf in a bookshop is the time it takes a woman to have a baby – nine months. I knew nothing of contracts; I did not even know if the contract I had signed was fair and equitable. And the world of subsidiary and foreign rights was an arcane planet far beyond my ken.

As for the book I have just written, I did not know if it was good, bad or indifferent; a writer never does know that, not immediately, because he is too close to it – and that applies to *every* book, not only the first. How many would this first book sell? I did not know the average hardback sales of a first novel or, indeed, of any novel. I had inflated ideas about that; I took the population of the British Isles, added in the population of the traditional Commonwealth market, and divided by a thousand, arguing that I might as well be pessimistic. That came to a sale of about 75,000 which seemed satisfactory, especially when I looked at the terms of my contract. In the event, the sales in the first year were just a little more than 10,000 copies, and even then it was classed as a best-seller. I did not know that the average hardback sales of a first novel run between 2,000 and 4,000 copies. It seemed that not many people read books.

In those faraway days of 1963, when my first novel sold in hardback for less than it now sells in paperback, I would have given much to know what I know now. A part of my intention in writing this book is to pass on that knowledge to other up-and-coming writers. In exploring the curious world of a novelist, a man who creates his own worlds, there will be many nuggets of information which should be of use to the beginner.

Some of my readers who are experienced in the book trade may find my explanations tedious. ‘But we know all that!’ they will mutter, and turn the

page irritably. I do not apologise because this book is not for them. It is for those to whom the making of books is a mystery.

Guernsey 1980

[Bagley wrote this introduction using material from 'Bagley interviews Bagley', written in January 1976 for his editor in Germany, Gerhard Beckmann. The version included in *Writer* actually omitted the answer as to *why* Bagley wrote, which had been included in his original article:

> *I write to please myself. There is no greater satisfaction than to take a pile of virgin paper and watch a story gradually take shape.*[1]

Bagley wrote a number of articles describing the way he approached the craft of writing. Most notable were those published in the American Periodical *The Writer*: 'Writing Action Fiction' published in May 1973; and 'Modern Backgrounds for Today's Novels', published in October 1979. This was followed in 1982 by the article 'Unprocessed Idea to Processed Word' written for publication in *Whodunit – A Guide to Crime, Suspense & Spy Fiction*, edited by H.R.F. Keating.]

REFERENCES

[1] 'Bagley interviews Bagley' – The Bagley Collection HGARC, Ref: Box 5 II Envelope A: B.

PART ONE

PROTO-WRITER

GENEALOGICAL NOTE

Patrick Bagley, Desmond's paternal great grandfather, lived in County Sligo, Ireland with his wife Mary McGoolrick. Like many others wanting to escape the mass starvation and disease caused by the potato famine of the 1840s, Patrick and Mary left Ireland emigrating to Ince-in-Makerfield, in the borough of Wigan, Lancashire. They brought with them their son Hugh, Desmond's grandfather, who took employment as a collier and later met and married a local cotton weaver, Elizabeth Hart.

Hugh and Elizabeth moved from Ince to Little Hulton and in the years between 1884 and 1896 had eleven children, one of whom was Desmond's father, John, born in 1879. By 1901 John Bagley had moved with the family to Worsley, Barton Upon-Irwell in Lancashire, and was employed as a hewer in a coal mine.[1] The hewer, a coal face worker, would mine the coal from the coal seam, loosening it with hand tools such as a pick and often working in confined spaces. A decade later John, aged now 31yrs, was living with the family at Farnworth in Lancashire and was employed in the dangerous occupation of a coal mine fireman.[2] The term fireman originally described the worker who would enter the mine workings wrapped in wet cloth, in order to ignite the flammable coal gas before the hewers could start their work. Later this term would be used to describe the work of the explosives shotfirer working under the mine deputy, the term varying regionally.

In 1912 John married Hannah Marie Whittle at Bolton in Lancashire. Hannah, born in 1880 in Little Hulton, lost her mother at the age of seven and had spent her working life, as did her siblings, in the textile industry employed as a tenter (a general term for someone who tends machinery) and then weaver.

On 11 April 1913, now living at 28 Elsie Street, Farnworth the couple had a son, John Bagley,[3] known to the family as Jack. The father John, then having

returned to his job as a hewer, advanced to the position of mine foreman before suffering a nervous breakdown. Advised for the good of his health to seek a change of environment the family moved to Kendal in Westmoreland.[i]

Philip Eastwood

REFERENCES

[1] Census record for England and Wales 1901 PRO Ref: RG 13/3653.
[2] Census record for England and Wales 1911 PRO Ref: RG 14/23262.
[3] Bagley, John, birth certificate; District of Bolton 1913, ref: 332.

[i] Westmoreland combined in 1974 with Cumberland and parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire to form the new county of Cumbria.

CHAPTER 1

Kendal and Bolton (1923 – 1936)

I distinctly remember an incident which happened when I was thirteen years old. I was walking downstairs with my mother when she asked – as mothers do, probing into the minds of their offspring – what I wanted to do with my life. I replied without hesitation, 'I want to be a writer. Galsworthy has just died and there's only Somerset Maugham left.'

Apart from being an astounding piece of literary criticism this clearly shows that the idea of being a writer was in my mind from an early age. And I am not the only writer to match himself thus against the competition. In his book, *The Lost Worlds of 2001*, Arthur C. Clarke notes in a diary entry: 'December 16. My 48th birthday – and Somerset Maugham dies. Trying to make something of this (last of the competition?).'

Although this is not an autobiography, in unravelling the strands of what go to make a novelist there must inevitably be autobiographical elements. In my box files I have many pages written long before I became a professional writer and I propose to include some of them here. To help those who would claim to detect a developing style I will date each of these entries.

I promise to refrain from inflicting upon you my poetry.

The first piece is indeed autobiographical. When in my early thirties and on holiday I borrowed a friend's typewriter and set down 40 pages of biographical detail from my childhood life, and from them I have culled the following:[1]

My father started his working life in a pit at Little Hulton in Lancashire at the age of twelve and, over the course of years, rose to the position of mine captain. My mother came from the other side of Bolton, from the little village of Great Harwood, quite close to the house where Crompton invented the machines that were to give my mother her livelihood in the early part of her life. Her birthplace has recently been demolished to make room for the modern arterial road, the *Crompton Way*.[i]

She started work in a cotton mill at the age of twelve, on half time – that is, she worked at the mill half the day, and on the other half went to the mill school which was mastered by the son of the owner. The owner and his son were apparently humanitarians in the tradition of Jeremy Bentham and Owen of Lanark and did their best, according to their lights, for their own work-people. But the working day was twelve hours and my mother was paid a shilling a week.

How my parents met I do not know. Probably they were introduced at a church social, fell in love, and the usual course ensued. My father was thirty-three when they married and was in a position to support a wife. Of their early lives before they were married I know little, and not much more about their early married life. But I do know that my father had a nervous breakdown and was advised by his doctor to leave the pits for a more salubrious environment.

And so, before I was born, the Kendal adventure began. Kendal, a rather sleepy rural town on the outskirts of the Lake District, had a bi-weekly market. My parents started a business as middlemen, buying the butter, eggs and cheese from the more remote and outlying farms and selling at a market stall in Kendal. The market overflowed the square into the surrounding main

[i] Samuel Crompton (3 December 1753 – 26 June 1827), born in Bolton Lancashire. An English inventor and pioneer of the spinning industry. Around 1779 he produced a yarn spinning machine known as the *muslin wheel* or the *Hall i' th' Woodwheel*, from the name of the house in which he and his family lived. The mule-jenny later became known as the spinning mule.

streets, much to the annoyance of motorists who were then beginning to clog the medieval streets, the motor car having achieved a reasonable degree of reliability.

Down Finkle Street and Stramongate the farmers' carts were arranged in serried rows, each bearing its freight of cabbages, turnips or potatoes, the horses which drew them having been turned out to graze on the common land of Gooseholm, an island in the river. These were the real old farm carts, not those we see today with their pneumatic tyres and wheels in bearings, but rough, sturdy structures on wooden-spoked wheels with iron rims shrunk on by an expert smith. These carts brought the goods to market, spread manure on the river lands, and were good for decades of service.

In the Market Square itself the livestock was for sale. Pens of sheep and bellowing bullocks vied in noise with the chirping of day-old chicks. The gypsies and their cheapjacks came in their gaily painted wagons and did a thriving, fraudulent business. Farmers concluded their bargains with spit on the palm of the hand and a pint of beer. On market days the town was in almost holiday mood.

For a time, the butter and egg business went well. Then came the post-war inflation together with a mysterious cessation of the egg-laying ability of hens. Eggs became precious and were retailing at seven shillings a dozen. Sevenpence each, was in 1921, a fabulous price, and because of this the business dwindled to practically nothing.

My parents buckled to in an attempt to make ends meet. My father took a job as a labourer at Kentmere Reservoir, then being constructed, and my mother took in paying guests. When Kentmere was completed there was nothing to do but to go into the boarding house business thoroughly.

[The Bagley's house, number 1, at 47 Stramongate, was located in one of Kendal's old yards opposite the St. George's Theatre. It was in this house that

Bagley was born on 29 October 1923.[2] The yard at 47 Stramongate no longer remains, it was demolished in the 1960s to make way for what is now Blackhall Road.

Bagley writes:

> *It was fortunate that the house was large, boasting of seven bedrooms, a large dining room, two lounges and an exceptionally large kitchen. I can remember being always in the kitchen when the lemon curd was being made and clamouring to lick the mixing spoon*
>
> *It became a traveller's house. The modern gentleman of the road, nearly as rapacious as their forebears, the highwaymen, soon got to know that here was good food and a soft bed. I was very young at the time and can only remember two of these men; Bateman, who played the violin execrably, and Evans – Educated Evans – the fallen scion of a noble and nameless house, who travelled for Atco motor mowers and, driving back from Penrith one snowy night when drink taken, plunged over a sixty feet precipice on Shap Fell, only to land comfortably in twenty feet of snow, a feat which ensued his dismissal from the firm for which he worked.*[3]]

As the years went by my mother built up a specialist clientele. In Stramongate was the St George's Theatre, now unhappily turned into a cinema. [ii] My father obtained casual work as a scene-shifter and was occasionally asked to find room for a minor member of the cast if the *Woolpack* or the *Nag's Head* were full. Gradually the positions were reversed

[ii] The former St George's Theatre was converted into a cinema and finally a bingo hall until it was destroyed by fire in 1992.

and with the regular touring companies it became the practice for the leading members to stay at our house and the minor members to be relegated to the hotels, truly a tribute to my mother's cooking.

Most hoteliers and caterers abhor the acting profession as consisting of neurotic and hard-to-please people, but my mother seemed to handle them very well, although there were occasional contretemps. A leading actress in one of the shows asked my mother to wash her costume. My mother had, from the first, set her face against washing clothes, maintaining that she was not a washer-woman; but when she saw the costume, two very small and flimsy strips of cotton cloth, she had to relent. The actress was playing the part of Tondelaya in *White Cargo*. The rest of Miss Tondelaya's costume consisted of greasepaint which took an hour to apply and even longer to remove, a fact which irked my mother when she saw the state of the bath.

Then there was the leading lady of that horrific play, *The Cat and the Canary*, who was very neurotic. She had immersed herself so much in the part that she was slowly going mad. She insisted on having not one, but two, extra bolts put on her bedroom door, and regularly woke everyone every night by her screams during her nightmares.

I am informed that when I was an infant I was dandled on the knee of Basil Rathbone and that our house had the dubious distinction of being the place where Rathbone's uncle, Sir Frank Benson, the finest Shakespearian actor of his time, broke his leg while falling down the house steps.

[Sir Frank Benson toured with The Bensonian Players, who returned annually to Kendal, and it was in November 1926 that Benson fell down the front steps of the Bagley's house. It is recorded that Benson suffered a head wound during the fall that required twenty-three stitches and prevented him performing that evening.[4]

Bagley started his education at the Dean Gibson Roman Catholic Primary School, which was then interdenominational as there were only seventeen Catholic pupils with Kendal being a Quaker town. He recalled:

> *As far as I can remember I was happy there, filled with the importance of play, catching tiddlers in the Kent after school and taking them home in jam-jars to die and fill the house with a dank fishy smell.*[5]]

Then the family fortunes took another turn. I have never found out why the business failed, but fail it did, and in 1929 my parents, like animals licking their wounds, went back to the places they knew, to the country of their childhood, to Bolton. I was six years old.

They bought a fish-and-chip shop in a rather insalubrious neighbourhood and a far cry from the open freshness of Kendal. It stood or, rather, cowered on a corner. On the other corner was Dobson and Barlow's foundry; opposite was a row of mean houses cringing under the sheer wall of a ten-storeyed cotton mill. It was a poor and hard-working neighbourhood, soon to become poorer and with no work at all.

The slump hit Lancashire in 1930.

[Bagley identifies this premises as 105 Sidney Street, Bolton.[6] Located opposite the junction with Foundry Street, the cotton mill he describes would have been Albion Mill with its entrance in St. Mark's Street.

The 1927 Bolton trade directory lists Henry Shaw, Bagley's paternal uncle-in-law, (married to his Aunt Alice) as operating a business as a fried fish dealer at 42 Bull Lane, Bolton. A move of business premises to another fish and chip shop at 2 Apple Street left a business opportunity available that was swiftly taken over by Bagley's paternal uncle, William, who made the transition from

engineer to fried fish dealer. John Bagley ran his new business venture, at 105 Sidney Street, under the tuition of his both his brother William, and sister Alice.[7]

By 1932 Tillotsons Bolton directory records John Bagley, a fried fish dealer, operating at three premises. In addition to 105 Sidney Street he also has shops at 4 Adelaide Street, and 66 Belmont Road, Bolton.[8]]

Music may be the food of love but it is also the trigger of remembrance. Sometimes I feel an unbearable nostalgia when I hear a casual tune. These melodies are not to be noted for their aesthetic qualities but for the memories they evoke.

For instance, today I heard a gay tune from the early thirties – *You Will Remember Vienna*.[iii] Immediately I was transported to Adelaide Street, Bolton; that long hill of grimy houses with the fat old women squatting at their doors, sunning themselves like lizards. There the cloth-capped, muffler-choked young men congregated on the corners and under the street lamps, debating whether to spend their fourpence's on the pictures or on a packet of Four Aces.[iv] There the ragged, clog-shod children played, me among them, although I always wore shoes – a sign of aristocracy. Did not my father have his own business, the chip-shop on the corner?

But it was a barren aristocracy, for a man working sixteen hours a day in that depression stricken, povertied district made less money than the father of a family on the dole. Chips were a half-penny for a generous heap, with 'scraps' thrown in free; fish, battered with flour, were a penny. My father sold hot peas and black peas and fat butter beans – all at a penny.

[iii] *Viennese Nights* was the first original operetta written especially for the screen by Oscar Hammerstein II and Sigmund Romberg. Filmed in March and April 1930, *You Will Remember Vienna* was released as a single record in 1931 sung by Richard Crooks.

[iv] Four Aces – A brand of cigarette produced by British tobacco importer and manufacturer W.D. & H.O. Wills.

The vinegar on the tiled counter was rumoured to be pure malt vinegar, and so we drew badly needed custom from the numerous other chip-shops in the district; but I knew my father kept a stone jug of acetic acid under the counter which, when diluted with water and coloured with gravy browning, made an excellent vinegar. Our fish and chips were reputed to be cooked in pure lard, but when the salesman's van came to deliver there was much secrecy observed in transporting the cases of 'Veebol', a cheap vegetable fat, into the shop.

Such sordid subterfuges were necessary, for competition was cut-throat. Let one of our competitors throw in a fraction more scraps with his chips and our custom left us in droves, because these were poor people and had to stretch their half-pennies to the limit.

[In 'Dissertation' Bagley recalled an incident when his uncle Harry had an idea that more money could be made from selling potato crisps instead of chips. With three fish and chip ranges in the family, Harry Shaw fired the enthusiasm of the families convincing them that all they needed was packaging and a sales organisation to succeed:

> *He communicated his idea to the rest of the family where it, at first, received a lukewarm-warm welcome, but under the force of his personality the idea blossomed like the rose. They all clubbed together the ten pounds necessary to buy the machine to slice the potatoes and from then on, were all in it together. It was necessary that the work be done on Sunday, when the shops were normally closed, so the curtains were carefully drawn and the crisp frying went on.*
>
> *The greaseproof packets were ordered, carefully patterned after the design made familiar by Smith's of potato crisp fame, then came the vexed question of what to call them. Several suggestions*

were made then, since the Bagleys and the Shaws were equally interested in the project, it was decided to call them 'Bagshaw's Potato Crisps

My brother, aged nineteen, was entrusted with the sales side and so, a bagman out went he, and had a marvellous success. He sold more than we could make and still was taking orders. The family was jubilant. At last our troubles were over, we had at last found a selling line. My father and mother broiled themselves over the open pans each Sunday while I and my cousin, Mamie, both of an age, about ten, filled the greaseproof packets. Mamie had long hair and was continually cautioned not to let her hair get into the packets, while I, presumably a generous soul, had to be constantly reminded not to fill the packets too full.

The filled packets were packed in cardboard boxes and my brother delivered them on foot, for we had no van or car. He must have walked miles. So it went on, Sunday after Sunday, until Aunt Alice, who was keeping accounts, put a stop to the triumph.

'We seem to be using an awful lot of fat,' she said.

Everyone looked at her.

'It's extraordinary,' she said, 'These crisps take up a lot more fat than chips.'

'Nonsense,' said Uncle Harry, 'It's still the same quantity of potato. Why should it take up more fat?'

'I don't know,' said Aunt Alice worriedly, 'but it is. It's taking three times as much.'

Everybody stood aghast. The cost of the frying fat was at that time the most expensive item in the running of a chip shop, and the cost of making the crisps had been worked out on the same basis. If the uptake of fat was three times more than normal, then obviously the whole scheme was in danger.

I said, a youngster butting into the deliberation of my elders, 'perhaps…' [9]

This recollection is unfortunately incomplete, finishing at the end of the last page of Bagley's 'Dissertation' and leaving us with a cliff-hanger in the, most likely brief, history of Bagshaw's Crisps. The work may have been finished and the pages lost, or never finished at all, for as Bagley once explained:

I end my work at the end of a page, even if I am in the middle of a sentence. She [Joan] reads my day's production as a sort of cliff-hanger, and she comes to the end of a page in the middle of a sentence, and it drives her nuts! [10]]

And all the time there was the gay lilt of *You Will Remember Vienna* played on the radio we had just bought; a radio costing £15 which took three years to pay for.

Poet and Peasant, that standby of the brass band, is another evocative tune. The *Adelaide Street Jazz Band* used to practice it in the upper room of the Masonic Club, just across the street from the shop, and made the night hideous with their braying. They used 'kazoos', those metal whistle-shaped

instruments with a celluloid vibrator which, when voiced, gave the sound of a ‘raspberry’ or ‘Bronx cheer’ and could come close to approximating a tune.

They were very critical of the quality of these instruments and looked after them carefully. The cheaper ones were threepence, while the best, the Stradivarius of kazoos, were sixpence and resplendent in chrome. Three times a week they practiced, and I can remember the long, hot summer nights, lying in bed and watching the sunlight redden on the wall and wishing they would stop their noise.

Then came the great day when they marched in procession through the streets to the Wanderers’ football field where the annual competition was held. They had a fund to which they contributed their pennies and each man had a chromium kazoo to which was fitted a cardboard horn about eighteen inches long, making it look vaguely like a trumpet.

They made a brave and martial show, these men, as they marched through the streets led by the band mascot and followed by their vociferous supporters. They were all dressed in their best with new checked caps and clean white mufflers, jaunty in their narrow-waisted, shoulder-padded jackets, and resplendent in their club colours. Green and yellow waistbands, sashes across their bodies and rosettes in their caps; all made of crepe paper, for they could not afford cloth.

They marched with an air and stepped like kings, for this was their day; this day they would expect to be cheered by thousands, their day of glory. This was the day of exaltation which, in some mysterious way, cancelled all the months and years of penny-pinching and vague half-understood misery, and atoned for the long fruitless days and hours spent in queues at the Labour Exchanges.

These were men who, in another six years, when they were in their late twenties and early thirties, were to fight and die in the Western Desert for a country to which they apparently thought they owed something.

Valencia! --- tum-ti-tum-ti-tum-ti-tum; another nostalgic tune.[v] In 1933 the family went for its annual week's holiday and, being aristocrats of the street, to the Isle of Man. My brother was sick on the boat, but I ran about and ate sweets and chocolates and sandwiches and drank sticky lemonade and sweet tea. I loved that boat, the first I had been on, and heard with regret of its sinking at Dunkirk.

My father averted seasickness by staying in the bar and drinking solidly for three hours. He spent seven-and-sixpence, and when my mother heard of it she made his life a misery for the rest of the holiday...and mine too, because I always favoured my father.

The Isle of Man was humming with *Valencia* and roaring with the noise of racing engines, for the T.T. races were being run, much to my mother's disgust. If we were not out of Douglas by nine in the morning, we had to stay in town that day because all the roads leading out were sealed.

Then there were the Bifbats, the current craze; these consisted of a plywood bat with a small rubber ball connected to it by a long piece of elastic rubber, and had just replaced the yo-yo in popularity. They were wielded with dexterity by young and old, and I shouted and wept for half the week before I got one for myself. They cost sixpence.

We went all over the island; to Groudie Glen, to Laxey and Peel; my mother packing our own food before we went. I did not like the beaches which were pebbled, and considered them far inferior to the smooth sands of Blackpool.

Towards the end of the week there was a conference about whether we should go to the pictures. My father's wild extravagance in spending seven-and-sixpence had apparently made serious inroads into the holiday fund and it

[v] Bagley's onomatopoeic description clearly refers to *Valencia,* a pasodoble song composed by José Padilla for the 1924 Zarzuela *La bien amada* and included in the 1926 silent film *Valencia.* Recorded by Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra it became one of the biggest hits much earlier in 1926, topping the charts for 11-weeks beginning 30 March 1926.

was doubtful if we could spare the money. The best seats were a shilling. I did not understand the situation and clamoured to see *King Kong*, so finally we went, sitting in the ninepennies because the sixpennies were full.

I realise now that it must have been the nadir of the family fortunes. I was ten years old.

REFERENCES

[1] Bagley, Desmond, 'Dissertation'; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, IV, manuscripts, B.

[2] Bagley, Desmond, birth certificate; District of Kendal 1923, ref: 405.

[3] Bagley, Desmond, 'Dissertation' p.68; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, IV, manuscripts, B.

[4] Trewin, J.C. *Benson and the Bensonians*, (London: Barrie & Rockliffe, 1960, p. 250).

[5] Bagley, Desmond, 'Dissertation' p.70; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, IV, manuscripts, B.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., p.72.

[8] Tillotsons Bolton directory: *Tillotsons Newspapers*, 1932, p.374 (4 Adelaide St), p.396 (66 Belmont Rd), p.660 (105 Sidney St).

[9] Bagley, Desmond, 'Dissertation' pp.75-76; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, IV, manuscripts, B.

[10] Bakerman, Jane, 'An interview with Desmond Bagley': *The Mystery Fancier*, (Madison IN: Guy M. Townsend, 1983), Volume 7, No. 2, March-April 1983, p.16.

CHAPTER 2

Blackpool (1936 – 1946)

My publisher thought that this would be a good book to write because I have had 'no exposure on radio or TV'. Not for me the interview on a book programme or making a guest appearance on a late night chat show. It's not that I have not been asked. True, of late the demands for my appearance have abated, but this is because the word has got around that Bagley does not – repeat not – broadcast. In those countries where the word has not got around I have offered my wife as surrogate and she has broadcast on *The Care and Feeding of an Author*.

[There was in fact one notable exception when Bagley was interviewed at his home in Guernsey by his friend Linda Le Vasseur in 1979. The interview, which no longer survives, was broadcast on Radio Jubilee, the radio station for the Princess Elizabeth Hospital in St. Peter Port, Guernsey.[1]]

The reason I do not broadcast and the reason I write are intimately bound together. I have a speech impediment – a stammer. Malcolm Cowley, the American literary critic, propounded in a series of essays, *The Life and Times of the American Writer*, the theory of the 'psychic wound'. He observed that many of the writers he knew had an unhappy childhood or suffered from some physical defect, causing a tendency to introversion and solitariness.

My childhood was far from unhappy but, all the same, I had a stammer. The formal educative process in childhood is designed to turn little savages into civilised human beings, and children can be very cruel. There is no one so uniform in behaviour as a child or teenager, in spite of the teenager's claim to be 'different'. Children play the same games in the same season as the year rolls around. Suddenly it will be the time for conkers and everyone will have

chestnuts on strings. Unaccountably it will be marbles or top spinning that comes into fashion, and everyone will have marbles or tops.

[Bagley had attended St. Peter and St. Paul Catholic Elementary School in Pilkington Street, Bolton, and recalled:

> *So I arrived at Sts. Peter and Paul, a small boy of six or seven, with a stammer and a curious Westmorland accent which the other infants found somewhat hilarious.*[2]]

As a result of this uniformity the child who is different, in any way, stands out from the crowd – he really *is* different. The crowd, as it turns out, does not like differences. There is a certain amount of minor persecution, which you can stand, but the worst aspect is social neglect. You are left out of the childish games and so feel rejected. Because of this social alienation you are driven to other resources. Unable to converse with your fellows you find a way in which, in a very deep sense, you are conversed with. You turn to books, and ultimately out of much reading comes the writing.

Now I am not suggesting that every writer *must* have Cowley's 'psychic wound'[i] - nor that a speech impediment is essential to be a good writer, or a bad one, come to that. But it is remarkable how many writers had or have this affliction; Arnold Bennett, Somerset Maugham, Kenneth Tynan and myself, to name but four. H.G. Wells did not stammer but he certainly had a peculiar voice. And in any case the 'psychic wound' need not necessarily make an overt appearance; it may be well hidden and disguised under a shell of bonhomie and good fellowship.

[i] Malcolm Cowley (24 August 1898 – 27 March 1989) was an American writer, editor, historian, poet, and literary critic. A contemporary of, though not admired by, Ernest Hemingway he later edited *The Portable Hemingway*.

This, too, I wrote about many years ago, so back to the box file for more bits and pieces.

In 1936 when I was 12 the family moved to Blackpool.

[The family moved into 48 Lord Street, Blackpool – The property was to remain as a boarding house for many years, run by his brother John 'Jack' Bagley, to whom the property was later bequeathed.[3]]

It was a long, hot summer and, as I had a total of two summer holidays due to the move from one town to another, time hung heavily at first. I was in a strange town and had no friends save my cousins, Connie and Edmund.[ii] But they were at school during the day so I was left pretty much to myself. My parents were busy making the most of the summer season in the boarding house they had bought and had little time for me.

So I went to the library – and discovered H.G. Wells.

The impact of the writing of Wells on an imaginative boy was shattering. I had bullied my father into taking tickets in the adult section of the public library and it was not a week before I found Wells. From thenceforth I read one of his novels every day until I had exhausted the supply, and read them on the hot sands of the beach or sprawling on the sea wall, oblivious to the thousands of holiday makers surrounding me.

At first I was drawn to his scientific fantasies. Wells wrote superlative science fiction long before the term was invented, and I soared with Cavour on the moon, and hid with the gibbering curate in the ruined cellar while the

[ii] Edmund 'Edward' Harrison born 1916 in Bolton, Lancashire and Constance Harrison born 1920 in Fylde, Lancashire. Both children of Elizabeth Harrison (nee Bagley, Desmond's paternal aunt) and Thomas Harrison.

Martians went about their mysterious processes outside.[iii]

But this was merely the introduction to Wellsian philosophy and soon I was immersed in his more serious work such as *The Story of Life* which he wrote in collaboration with Huxley;[iv] the *History of the World*, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, that marvellous review of the world of the thirties, *The Shape of Things to Come*, and many others.

At the time I did not realise that Wells was writing with a total disregard for the cold facts of politics and of human nature. I believe that his grandiose schemes and facile Utopias could be made to work if only people could be made to see. With Wells, I did not realise that men are pushed and jostled by forces which bear little relationship to their conscious desires. And Wells had no conception of the multitudinous variety of man; he wrote as if to equate all men – white, and people of colour – with middle-class Englishmen. He wrote with a magnificent ignorance of the findings of the psychologists and the cultural anthropologists. He was essentially a Victorian of the post-Darwin era, conscious of holding advanced views and believing in the ultimate 'progress' of Man; but totally unaware that the findings of science since 1900 had cut the ground from under his feet.

Wells, himself, towards the end, must have suspected this. His last work, *Mind at the End of its Tether*, was the angry wail and stamped foot of the five-year-old whose elders take no notice of it. He died an embittered man, conscious that a life spent in profound thought had been wasted.

But Wells opened my eyes to the strange, varied and complex world in which we live; he drew my attention to the increasing role of science in the

[iii] Mr Cavour, an eccentric scientist, together with Mr Bedford, a businessman narrator are the protagonists in Wells' novel *The First Men in the Moon.* Originally serialised in *The Strand Magazine* from December 1900 to August 1901 the story was published in hardback in 1901.

[iv] Aldous Leonard Huxley (26 July 1894 – 22 November 1963) English writer and philosopher.

affairs of man; and, unconsciously though it may have been, showed me that men do not invariably follow their best interest – as that interest is pointed out by others.

I became an omnivorous reader. I wanted to know things and had access to a good library. The next four years was a glorious wallow in books. I read widely and, it must be said, indiscriminately. All was grist that came to my mill. At first I was attracted to the physical sciences; I read the standard authors, Jeans and Eddington on astronomy, Soddy and Bragg on physics; I delved into the extragalactic nebulae and the mysteries of the atom, and became the mental intimate of the great men of science – Niels Bohr, Max Planck, Heisenberg, Rutherford of Nelson, Fermi, Chadwick, Hubble, and the multitude of others. I found out about the 'scientific method' and, in doing so, acquired a wholesome respect for facts.

Then I moved on to new worlds. The vast field of biology lay open to me. More strange words entered my vocabulary – cytology, embryology, gamete and allele. There were more new names – Lamarck, Darwin, Huxley, Mendel, Malthus, Pasteur, de Vries, Tschermak, Virchow.

Then on to language and communication. Korzybski on general semantics; Weekes on place names; Ogden and Richardson on meaning; Jesperson on etymology; and so, by a natural path, to the social sciences. Mead and Benedict on cultural anthropology; Freud and Jung on psychoanalysis; Watson on behaviourism; Chase on the synthesis of the social sciences.

I plundered the world for knowledge.

I was fortunate in that my parents kept no check on my reading. My mother, a nervous, highly-strung woman given to fits of temper, was the ruler of the family. My father was a gentle, placid man who let my mother's sudden, unpredictable angers roll over him and remain unperturbed, always retaining his wry, dry humour. He did not read anything except the morning newspaper, and I doubt if he had read more than half a dozen books in his life that did not

have to do with mining practice. But he showed an acute interest in world affairs and, at times, displayed an uncanny gift of prophecy. He had, for example, an unreasoning faith that power would be produced from the atom in his lifetime at the time when I, with my readings into atomic physics, doubted the possibility. He was not an educated man but he had a sense of the goodness and fullness of life which took the form of an unconscious poetry. He would stand at the sea's edge for hours watching the seagulls and would point out how beautifully they were made, how marvellously adapted for flight. Once we found a dead seagull and he spread the wings, minutely examining their structure and pointing out what each pinion was for. Then he carefully buried the bird.

I think that if my mother knew the nature of my reading it would have been stopped because we were puritanical in those days. But she was a hard-working, harassed woman engaged in running a business and had no time. An amusing example comes to mind. At the time I was attending a Christian Brothers' College [St. Joseph's College, Layton Mount, Blackpool [4]] - and, twice a week, we had an hour during which we were free to read anything we liked. I realise now that there was an ulterior motive behind it, in that the teachers were interested in what we *would* read in order to evaluate our temperaments and characters. Most of the other boys read adventure stories of the Percy F. Westerman type,[v] but I turned up one afternoon with a book on genetics. It was quite a serious work and replete with illustrations, diagrams and photographs of the sexual processes and of genetically sexual variations, all of which I took as a matter of course. It came as something of a shock to

[v] Percy Francis Westerman (18 May 1876 – 22 February 1959) was a prolific author of children's literature, many of his books are adventures featuring military and naval themes. During the 1930s Westerman was voted the most popular author of stories for boys.

me that the other boys reacted with sniggers and regarded the book as a titillating experience.

The master in charge, attracted by the attention centered on my desk, came over and picked up the book. He raised his eyebrows. 'Does your mother know you're reading this?'

'Of course,' I said untruthfully.

The book was confiscated and returned to me at the end of the day with instructions not to bring that type of book to school again.

So the years passed. In the midst of the tawdry glamour of an English seaside resort I was becoming a thorough bookworm. To a certain extent I was forced into it. An impediment of speech is not an easy thing to live with, especially in a boy's school – children can be very cruel. I became more and more retiring, retreating to my books and my own interior world, thus losing the normal social contacts of the average youth.

Thus passed the days of my youth. There is an interesting addendum to the above. In 1973 my wife and I attended a PEN Congress in Dublin.[vi] We were accompanied by Lecia Foston, my sister-in-law, and intended to tour Ireland after the Congress. At a reception given by the Irish Government we met an American scientist, Dr Amram Scheinfeld, in whom Lecia was particularly interested because Dr Scheinfeld's brother had founded the firm of Manpower for whom Lecia then worked.[vii]

In passing, I might mention that I have always thought that company to be misnamed. The staff passing through Lecia's capable hands seemed to be

[vi] The organisation known today as PEN International began in London in 1921, simply as PEN. The name was conceived as an acronym: 'Poets, Essayists, Novelists' (later broadened to 'Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists, Novelists').

[vii] The company known today as ManpowerGroup was founded as Manpower in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, U.S., in 1948 by attorneys Elmer Winter and Aaron Scheinfeld.

female temporary secretaries and typists, and the company would be more aptly titled Womanpower.

I, too, was interested in Dr Scheinfeld. He was a biologist and we had an interesting and lengthy conversation. But it was only when the Congress was over and we were somewhere in the wilds of Connemara on the west coast of Ireland that it came to me that Amram Scheinfeld had written the book on genetics which had been confiscated so many years before at school. I wish I could have told him about it, but he died not long after our meeting.

The war changed all or lives for better or for worse. For me the change was for the better; I was dragged willy-nilly from my introspective bookish existence and thrown into a world I did not know existed. And I met George Higgins. Looking back over the years I can identify a few people who have changed the course of my life. George Higgins was one of them and so, out of the box file comes the next bit.

In 1938 came the *Anschluss* and I, with many thousands of others, undertook voluntary training in air raid defence. I attended classes and learned how to put out an incendiary bomb, how to identify poison gases, how to fit a respirator to a six-month-old baby. I was fourteen years old.

[Bagley then started his working life in a printing establishment where he worked as a ‘printers devil’ an apprentice position that he didn’t much care for. He subsequently took a job working in a factory producing electrical fittings, and later found employment with Frank Hawtin Ltd., of Preston New Road, Blackpool, a company specialising in the manufacture of amusement rides and arcade machines.]

Finally, the long expected war came. People sighed with relief and the tension relaxed a little as the ‘phoney’ war developed. I went to work in an aircraft factory.

[Hawtin's factory was turned over to the production of aircraft parts for the war effort, and Bagley, too young for conscription to the armed forces (eight weeks shy of his 16th birthday at the outbreak of war on 3 September 1939) was engaged as an engineer, a reserved occupation, exempting him from military service.[5]]

In the factory I suddenly became conscious of people. My social life had been nil, and now I was thrown into the midst of a more-or-less boisterous crowd coming from all social classes. I became aware of their individual idiosyncrasies, of their constant interaction, of the bonds and frictions between them.

We had one or two 'characters'; witty Jimmy Langley who sang in a church choir, and who had entertained the prisoners of Walton Gaol one Sunday afternoon with two tenor solos – *Bless this House* and *Comfort Ye, My People*; the equally witty, but more obscene, Harry Warburton who left the factory as soon as regulations allowed to become a dustman because then he would have an 'in' on the Black Market; the ex-Guardsman, Alan Nelson and the aristocratic Neville Tibbits who lived together; the patriotic Mrs Jones, to whom Churchill was a demi-god, and many others.

And there was George Higgins.

George was a fat blacksmith and metal-hardener. He was a twentieth century Falstaff, had a pseudo-medieval mind and abounded in strange oaths. He had a Chestertonian air although, unlike Chesterton, he was an unbeliever. I really believe he regretted living in the twentieth century and longed for the flamboyance of a more colourful age. But, in truth, he was an arrant *poseur*, albeit unconsciously, and was a very shrewd product of our age.

It was he who introduced me to verse, and laughed at my juvenile scribblings. It was he who introduced me to the drama; to Shaw and Ibsen, to

Greenwood and Fry. He was the producer and leading light of *The Anonymous Players*, [viii] a dramatic society in the town, and raged tremendously at rehearsals, pacing the floor like a wounded lion and screaming in his peculiar falsetto voice, 'Nails of God, woman, you're supposed to be in anguish because your son is dying of syphilis; and here you are, dashing about the stage like a bloody sprite. In the name of the Blessed Gamaliel, do it like this.' And he would give a flawless performance – discounting his maleness.

It was to George I took my first story. He was in the hardening shop at the time, and he read it in the intervals between pumping bellows and peering into the white-hot glare of his furnaces. 'It's not bad for a first attempt,' he said, as he poised a piece of incandescent steel over a vat of oil. 'But it won't *do*.' There was a pause. 'It's got to *do*, you see.' The steel disappeared into the oil with a discouraging hiss.

It was George who made me see that I had a gift for writing. Of course I was headstrong and embarked on long and tedious novels-to-end-all-novels, but George always pulled me up short and made me blue-pencil and condense repeatedly. 'God's Teeth, lad,' he would say. 'It's condensation that counts – that makes the story go. Don't you *see*? Just like a bloody steam engine.'

When last I was in England I discovered that George had become an art dealer.

[George, a great conversationalist, wrote poetry, was passionate about art and later ran a small gallery at the back of his house in Dean Street, Blackpool.[6]]

I nearly bought a sketch by Matisse for Pat Skilleter (who will find her place in a later chapter) but unfortunately it had already been sold.[ix] He did not

[viii] Founded in September 1932 many of The Anonymous Players Dramatic Society's early productions were staged at the Jubilee Theatre in Corporation Street, Blackpool. Later moving down the coast the society, still in existence, was renamed Lytham Anonymous Players. [http://anonplayers.com]

[ix] Pat Bawcombe (nee Skilleter).

really like to sell anything and so was not making much money out of his ventures. All the best pieces he kept for himself. In his living room he had the head of a negro boy by Epstein. He said, 'You know, there's only two of those in existence. Paul Robeson's got the other; it's his son you know.[x] I picked it up for a hundred pounds, and was offered two fifty for it last week. But, Spine of God, I couldn't sell it...I'd rather sell my bloody soul.'

George's greatest coup in the art world was the discovery of an Elizabethan painting depicting two Moorish ambassadors at the Court of Queen Elizabeth. He was a fair way into proving that those gentlemen must have been the inspiration for Shakespeare's *Othello* when he died, regrettably young.

Life in the factory is hard to describe. It is difficult to disentangle one year from another; they were so much alike in their crawling monotony. I can never say truly whether an event occurred in 1941 or 1944. There is just an impression of dark winter mornings, going to work in the half light muffled to the eyes, of the agony of touching cold, frozen steel and the involuntary wincing as the milk-white lubricant, below the freezing point of water, washed over one's hands. There is an impression of endless snags in the work as new modifications came in, of constant bickering between the women on the section, and the cajoling one had to do to sort out personal differences and get the job going. There are half-obliterated memories of the code names of various components – Goldfish, Isle of Man, Pistol, Heart – now mere names, their deadly purposes forgotten. But there remains an overall sensory memory, beyond understanding, compounded of the acrid smell of hot metal, the sweet and sticky scent of cutting oil, the scream of metal tortured into shape on high speed lathes, the noisy clatter of bar-feeds, and the ever-prevailing sense of

[x] Paul Leroy Robeson (9 April 1898 – 23 January 1976) was an American bass baritone concert artist and stage and film actor who became famous both for his cultural accomplishments and for his political activism. The bronze portrait of his son, Paul Robeson Junior (2 November 1927 – 26 April 2014), American author, archivist and historian, was created by the sculptor Sir Jacob Epstein in 1931.

urgency, the overpowering urgency of too much to do in too little time, and all these things mean the War to me.

REFERENCES

[1] Le Vasseur, Linda: pers. comm. 2017-2019.

[2] Bagley, Desmond, 'Dissertation' pp.72-73; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, IV, manuscripts, B.

[3] Bagley, Hannah Marie, Last Will and Testament; probate register entry 8 May 1961.

[4] Bagley, Desmond, 'Biographical Details 12 February 1963'; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box ,5 III, A 4 *The Golden Keel*.

[5] Bagley, Desmond, autobiographical material written for the United States Information Agency 26 June 1967, from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, III, A 7 *Antarctica*.

[6] Harvey, Michael: pers. comm. 2 February 2018.

CHAPTER 3

Blackpool to Durban, South Africa (1946 – 1951)

After the war I foresaw a long period of austerity for England and decided to leave. A lot of other people had the same idea and the Union Castle Line to Cape Town was booked up for two years solid, and the air line – I think it was still Imperial Airways in those days – was booked up for a year and a half. So I went by road.

Why South Africa? Well, Australia and New Zealand were too far away, Canada was too cold, and Africa has sunshine. I was 23 years old, had been cribbed, cabined and confined during the war years, and wanted freedom and a chance to see the world. It was a toss of the coin where I went and a chance sighting in the local press of a report about a band of intrepid travellers intending to trek to South Africa settled the matter.

[The following reconstruction of Bagley's journey has been compiled from three main sources. The first was part of the initial draft of Bagley's debut novel *The Golden Keel.* This first chapter titled 'Halloran' was rejected by Bagley's editor as it was thought to contain too much biographical material about Bagley's protagonist Peter 'Hal' Halloran. In its writing Bagley had clearly used his own biographical information in creating Halloran's back story. The second source was an account of the journey from Blackpool to Durban written by one of Bagley's fellow travellers Dorothy Topping. This account was published by Dorothy's daughter Irene as *Legacy: Overland Trekkers – Blackpool to Durban 1947*.[1] The third source were the immigration stamps recorded on Bagley's Passport. Using this information, it has been possible to infill the gap left in *Writer* between the end of World War II and Bagley's departure from the group of trekkers in Nairobi on Monday 24 March 1947.

Contained within that first rejected chapter of 'Halloran' are the following two paragraphs:

> *All the friends of my youth were in the Forces, a few in England, the rest scattered all over the world. They wrote to me from Canada, from South Africa, from Rhodesia, telling of the space and sun outside England. When the war was finally over I decided it was my turn to travel and 1946 was my wanderjahr.*
>
> *I had plenty of money, there was not much to spend it on in wartime England, so when the sun came back to Scandinavia in the spring of 1946 I went to Norway with Bill Trevor. We walked from Oslo to Narvik, right up the spine of Norway, taking two months doing it, then came back to Harwich by sea. Bill had satisfied his lust for holiday by then, but I had not. I cadged a lift on a Fleetwood trawler going to Reykjavík and spent five weeks in Iceland among the glaciers and the hot springs.*[2]

The first paragraph replicates exactly biographical material sent to John Donaldson at Collin's in 1963, but the second paragraph is more difficult to verify. The author's first passport was issued in the winter of 1946, on 18 December, well after the spring visits to Norway and Iceland. The possibility of post-war travel without a passport may well have been feasible, however, there is one piece of supporting evidence for this trip. When Bagley visited Iceland in 1969 to research his novel *Running Blind*, he mentioned during an interview that he had previously visited the country as a passenger on a fishing trawler in 1946. The author said he had stayed for only a day and a half in Reykjavík and had never forgotten his visit.[3] Therefore the possibility exists that Bagley's later fondness with Scandinavia may have started as early as 1946.

The overland expedition, destined for Durban in South Africa, that Bagley had seen reported in the press, had been the idea of Frank Gorman. Gorman, ex R.A.F., together with seven others: Olive Woodman; Fred Stevens; Harry Burnett; Ron and Agnes Holden; and Syd and Dorothy Topping, had held their first planning meeting for the trip across the Sahara in mid-September 1946.

Dorothy Topping later recalled in her account of the journey the day the Desmond Bagley called at her house to apply for a place on the journey:

> *I went to answer the door, and stood there was a young man of about 20, unshaven, peering at me through 'bottle bottom' thick lenses, set in horn- rimmed frames, and wearing an oversized army great coat down to his ankles.*[4]

Stammering through his introduction, he would perhaps not have appeared an ideal candidate, however most of the passengers were selected for the various skills they could offer whilst on the journey, and Bagley was a trained engineer. Not only that but there may have been some sympathy as Harry Burnett, present at the time of Bagley's introduction, had a similar speech impediment when he got excited. Bagley was accepted into the group, which may well also have been influenced by a family connection, as his paternal cousin Margaret, had married into the Topping family.[5]

On Thursday 7 January 1947 a grand farewell was held at Blackpool Town Hall for the departing group, the *Blackpool Gazette* reporting that overall the organisers had received over 450 applications from people wishing to join the journey.

> *The travellers shook hands with the Mayor as they filed out to the trucks, and the Mayor wishing Mr. Gorman the best of luck, handed him a parcel of Blackpool's illustrated guides to give to the people of Durban.*[6]

In a snowstorm, on that bleak Blackpool morning, the group of twenty-five set off on the proposed twelve-week journey, in two adapted war surplus three-ton Chev army trucks and a trailer caravan, leaving behind the austerity of post-war Britain in search of a better life. By noon that day the group had travelled 35 miles and had arrived in Ashton-in-Makerfield, which was only five miles away from Ince-in-Makerfield, the home of Bagley's great grandfather, Patrick, following his own emigration from Ireland. Perhaps the spirit of his great grandfather ran deep through Bagley's veins.

The group continued their journey, parking overnight at Hyde Park corner in London, reaching Folkestone the next day. Gale force winds prevented them sailing from Folkestone on the 9 January so the group explored Folkestone and Dover, eventually making the crossing the next day. The vehicles, together with five people, sailed on a cargo ship to Boulogne and the rest travelled as foot passengers to Calais, where the group was reunited. Their journey took them through Paris, then onwards to Valence, Avignon and to Marseilles where they would make the sea crossing to Algiers.

On the 18 January the group again split, the drivers staying with the trucks, sailing on the cargo ship 'Ville Mangot' to Oran. The rest travelling by passenger ship 'Ville-de-Oran' disembarking at Algiers. The group would reform in Algiers and spend five days there preparing for their overland crossing of the Sahara. The group set off for the Sahara on 24 January travelling through Blida before crossing the Atlas Mountains, 4000ft above sea level, reaching their first oasis at Laghouat two days later. After a day's rest in Laghouat the group's journey continued through Algeria and over the next nine days they passed through Ghardaïa, El Goléa, In Salah and Arak, before reaching Tamanraset in Southern Algeria by mid-afternoon of 5 February.]

I am going to recount one episode of this hare-brained expedition which had an influence on my later work. We crossed the Sahara, going due south from Algiers across the Atlas and, in due course, found ourselves in Tamanrasset which is pretty much in the middle. Here we had arranged to have petrol waiting at Fort Lapperine but a French general had been around on a tour of inspection and he had taken the lot. When was the next consignment due? A Gallic shrug. Three days – three weeks – three months – who knows?

So we were stuck in Tamanrasset for an indefinite period. One day, when I was in the *souk* bending over to look at a basket of vegetables, I was poked in the ribs with a stick, and an educated English voice said, 'And who are you, young man?' I turned and beheld a grey-haired elderly lady who proved to be Dr Francis Wakefield. 'But call me Daisy,' she said.

Daisy Wakefield turned out to be, in the *Reader's Digest* phrase, My Most Unforgettable Character. She was a missionary and had lived in Tamanrasset for many years trying to convert the Targui to Christianity without notable success. Before that she had travelled extensively in the Middle East and was fluent in a dozen oriental languages. In Tamanrasset she was shunned by the small French community who considered she had 'gone native'. Not that it worried her.

More to the point, the Wakefields are a prominent Kendal family – Lord Wakefield and the Wakefield Oil Company come to mind – and Daisy knew my mother. I now permit myself one coincidence per book to bring it nearer to real life.

Daisy lived in a mud hut – what would be called adobe in Mexico – on the outskirts of Tamanrasset. It had recently rained, a rare event in Tam, and her home was the worse for it. Our group of twenty-seven encompassed all trades; we had cooks, bakers, carpenters, bricklayers, masons, engineers and so on. While we were waiting we set about and repaired the place for her.

In doing this I could not help noticing the wide variety of her interests. She took the London *Times* regularly, if late, and kept up a wide correspondence, noticeably with Oxford and Cambridge in England, and Harvard in America. She was avid for news of wartime England, wanting to know what had really happened. She told us that she had been a sort of spy during the war, keeping track of the movements of Vichy French aircraft and passing the information on to the British. On exactly how she did this she remained uncommunicative.

She introduced me to the Amenokal and his son. The Amenokal is the Chief of the Ahaggar Toureg Confederation. Now that the French have gone and the Algerians have command of their own destiny I fear that the authorities in Algiers, who would prefer that the Toureg did not exist, will destroy the way of life of the desert tribes in an attempt to urbanise them. That young man I met who was so proud of his horse – the only horse I saw in the Sahara – is probably the present Amenokal and possibly the last. In an attempt to destroy the very *idea* of an Amenokal the Hotel Amenokal has been renamed the Tin Hinan.

[It was whilst stuck in Tamanrasset, and short of reading material, that Bagley made an offer to the group that they might like to read some stories he had been writing along the way. Members of the group had seen him writing throughout the journey and believed that he had been writing letters home. Initially, due to his sense of humour and prevalence for fooling around, they thought he was joking. They soon realised he wasn't, as he produced a number of notebooks containing stories that provided enjoyable reading material for the group.]

Our petrol came when we had been in Tamanrasset just over a week, and when we left Daisy gave me a small stack of *The Gospel according to St John* which she had translated into Arabic. 'Hand these out as you go,' she said. 'Until you get to Agades. No further.'

‘Why not further?’

A smile glimmered. ‘You’d get your throat cut,’ she said matter-of-factly.

When I returned to England in 1952 on a brief visit I went to Kendal and saw her sisters, and we talked of Daisy. She was still in Tamanrasset but her sisters were afraid that she was becoming frail. I was in Tamanrasset again in 1970 and inquired about her and found that she had moved to El Golea some years previously and had died in the hospital there.

Daisy Wakefield was the nearest to a modern saint I have encountered, and I was pleased to pay her a small tribute in my novel, *Flyaway*.

[On 12 February the group recommenced their journey in the direction of In Guezzam. Over the next few days they crossed the border from Algeria into French Niger, travelling through Agadez and Zinder, crossing the border into British Nigeria arriving at Kano on 19 February. Five days later they set off again towards Maiduguri and then onwards to the border with northern Cameroon, reaching Fort Lamy (N’Djamena) in French Equatorial Africa around noon on 27 February. Their journey continued south east through French Equatorial Africa towards the Belgian Congo and the group worked their way through Bambari, Monga, Buta and Kole before reaching Stanleyville on 10 March.

The group had been travelling for two months and had travelled half way to their final destination of Durban without serious incident. They had planned to travel south through the Belgian Congo to Elizabethville, then onto Livingstone in Northern Rhodesia. However, on their third day in Stanleyville one of the men in the group accidentally discharged a shot from a rifle whilst cleaning it. This incident resulted in the local police ordering the group to pack up and leave the Congo by the shortest possible route. Tension was exacerbated by a number of other factors, which caused friction within the group. They discovered that one of the female trekkers was four months

pregnant and had not disclosed this before embarking on the journey, had they known this she would not have been allowed to make the journey. In addition, the group leader, Frank Gorman, was not in the best of health necessitating a change of leader to Ron Holden and inevitably a change in leadership style. The next bank planned for withdrawing group funds was to have been in Livingstone, which now became unfeasible due to the enforced change of route, and as a result of this the group were forced to sell off spare tyres for funds. The change of planned route also meant that those with pre-arranged jobs waiting for them in Rhodesia became anxious that they might not arrive in time, so some made the decision to fly rather than continue by road.

It was therefore a rather depleted and disheartened group that left the Congo and continued their journey overland, now towards the border with Uganda. On 17 March they reached the border post at Kasindi, crossing the ten miles of 'no man's land' to the Ugandan border post of Mpondwe. They travelled through Mabara, camping in the grounds of the police station, and onwards to Masaka where they met an ex-resident of Devonshire, Mr Ball, who invited the group for lunch. It was at this lunch that they were introduced to the exotic avocado pear for the first time. They reached Kampala the next day, stopping briefly at the picturesque settlement of Jinja nestled on the shores of Lake Victoria, before setting off towards Kenya.

The group crossed into Kenya at Busia, working down through Kisumu and Nakuru, arriving in Nairobi on Friday 21 March 1947. The stress within the group has taken its toll on Bagley and in preparation to leave the group he had managed to organise a job back in Kampala. On the 24 March Bagley left the group, who were still some three thousand miles from their destination.]

I dropped out of the expedition taking employment in Uganda, working there in an exceedingly small factory which made hardboard. Because the firm went right back to first principles and made the board from papyrus grass the

factory was situated about 15 miles outside Kampala on an island in the midst of a swamp. There were about 25,000 mosquitos per cubic metre of air, and in spite of taking enough Aterbine to turn my complexion into something that would pass unnoticed in Peking, I contracted malaria.

I still come down with the shakes and sweats and sometimes in the most unexpected places. To have a malarial attack amidst the icebergs of Greenland, for instance, does have a touch of incongruity about it.

So I left Uganda for a healthier clime, worked briefly in Kenya[7] - and then went to Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, where I worked as a stores clerk on an asbestos mine at Shabani,[i] in an office that might well have been designed by Dickens. A year of that was enough and so, in 1950, I found myself in Durban or, rather, just outside in Pinetown and running the stores office for the Pinetown Construction Company.

[Whilst working for the Pinetown Construction Company Bagley met Keith Royston, a fellow employee, who told him an intriguing story which was to become the germ of the idea for his first novel *The Golden Keel*.[8]]

It was then I met Pat and Philip Bawcombe and arrived at another turning point of my life. Pat and Philip are professional painters, Pat painting under her maiden name of Skilleter. I was sitting in an Indian curry house in Pinetown, reading James Elroy Flecker's *Hassan* and minding my own business, when in blew a crowd of joyous, boisterous people demanding lots of curry. I took no particular notice and carried on with my reading, but presently I was aware of a woman standing next to me. 'Won't you join us?' she said. 'We're having fun.'

That day had not been a good one and I was not feeling sociable. 'No, thank you.' I returned to my reading and she went back to her party.

[i] Zvishavane, a mining town in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe.

She came back a few minutes later. ‘What are you reading?’ I displayed the book. ‘oh!’ Then, ‘Are you sure you won’t join us? You look so lonely.’

I shrugged. ‘All right.’

The Bawcombes were celebrating the opening of an exhibition of their paintings in Kloof, a village nearby. With them was another painter, D’Oyly John,[ii] who fascinated me with the facility with which he drew sketches of greyhounds on the paper napkins. There were a few others there but I don’t remember them clearly.

Meeting the Bawcombes was the best thing that ever happened to me until I met my wife, and established a friendship that has lasted thirty years.

[Bagley dedicated his 1969 novel *The Spoilers* to Pat and Philip: *This one is for Pat and Philip Bawcombe and, of course, Thickabe.*[9]]

Looking back, I see Philip as a square, grey-bearded man with a deceptive air of helplessness; deceptive because he is the most competent man I know. During the war he was an official war artist with the South African forces in North Africa and Italy; he has been an art director for film companies and is an exhibition designer. Recently, when he produced a portfolio of paintings of Kimberley, De Beers bought the lot and built a hall to house them near the Big Hole of Kimberley.[iii]

Pat was something else. An extraordinary beautiful woman, she had big brown eyes which could melt any man into putty, and her strong feature was the warmth she radiated. She was impulsive and impetuous, as can be seen from the manner of our meting. She was also tempestuous at times and had a

[ii] John D'oyly (1906 -1993) was brought up in Durban, South Africa. His full name was Cecil Rochfort D'oyly John, although he signed his paintings as Doyly-John.

[iii] Philip William Bawcombe, FRSA (1906 – 2000). In addition to the paintings held by de Beers, a collection of 50 of his war paintings are preserved at the Ditsong National Museum of Military History in Johannesburg.

rare temper; if drawn as a graph our relationship over the years would resemble a switchback.

As can be seen from this account of my life so far I was an odd fish. Withdrawn and egg-headed, gauche and with few social graces, I wonder now why anyone bothered with me. The Bawcombes took me in hand and civilised me, something for which I can never thank them enough.

Pat and Philip ran the Art Engraving Company in Durban.[10] Pat once told me that she once tried her hand at engraving a pound note just to see if she could. The experiment was successful and she destroyed the plates immediately. It was at Art Engraving that I was introduced to the Ghandi family, the Mahatma Gandhi having been a lawyer in Durban before going back to India to free it from the British Raj.

We were much involved in the Indian community in those days. Konoperan Pillay, a Tamil lawyer, had got permission from the Durban Municipality to stage an Indian play in the City Hall, an unprecedented thing in those days, and he roped us in to help. Pat and Philip were to design and build the stage sets, of which there were ten, and I, with my experience of the Blackpool *Anonymous Players* coming to the fore, agreed to help with the makeup. Normally, in beginning to makeup, one slaps on a base layer of Leichner five and nine – but that is for white faces and those I had to deal with were brown. The second problem was that the economy of South Africa was rocky at the time and the government had cracked down on imports. There was no Leichner number anything to be had. I had to make do with ordinary cosmetics.

The third problem was the Lord Krishna, and that was more serious. Traditionally, in Indian lore, the Lord Krishna is blue – all over. What to do? I had a couple of blue eye liners but those were not nearly enough to cover a corpulent gentleman clad only in a loincloth. After much contemplation I took a couple of cubes of Reckitt's blue, rubbed them down to powder on Pat's

kitchen grater, mixed the result judiciously with cold cream, then hoped for the best.

Came the night of the performance. The play seemed interminable, though it lasted a mere four hours, and there was much dancing, singing and wailing, all in Tamil. The first scene was set in a grove of trees near the river Jumna. The scene shifters were by no means expert, and Philip's trees swayed ominously and were in imminent danger of collapse. The next day I wrote the following doggerel:

They say that only God can make a tree,
But I announce with glee
That Philip has managed to rob
Him of his job.
Of course, God's trees are stronger,
But, then, He takes the longer.

I know I promised not to inflict my poetry on you, but the above is definitely not poetry.

Philip was enraged when the scene shifters installed the pillars of his Indian temple upside down, and my turn for embarrassment was soon to come. Living in Durban in the summer is like living in a Finnish sauna, and the hot theatrical lighting did not help matters, either. The Lord Krishna was on stage most of the time and half way through the production I noticed, to my horror, large splodges of melting, blue cold cream sliding down his chest and down his stomach to reveal the very brown man beneath. He began blue but ended brown, and the quantities of slippery cold cream on the stage was a serious hazard to the other performers.

We went home and drowned our sorrows.

Konoperan Pillay, who organised this epic production, was an interesting man. He was a vegetarian because of his religious beliefs, but when we went

to his home for supper he would serve us a meat curry without a qualm while he stuck to his vegetable curry. He saw no point in inflicting his beliefs on others.

At this time the Nationalist government was busy segregating the races and the Durban Municipality were just about to introduce zoning laws. I asked Konoperan what he thought of it and, to my surprise, he said, 'I'm all for it. I wouldn't want to live next to whites; you have dirty habits.'

It was my first encounter with cultural relativism.

At this point I made my first dabble into journalism and, oddly enough, it was radio journalism. Once a week a talk was given on 'Popular Scientific Subjects' by a man who used the *nom de microphone* of 'Retort'. On the day when the 'popular' subject was *The Lesser Vegetable Acids* I blew my top, and next day went to Broadcasting house and asked to see the producer of the series.

I was shown into the office of Hugh Rouse, whom I came to know quite well in later years. He heard my objections and shrugged wearily. ''Retort' has been doing this weekly stint for four years,' he said. 'I think he's running out of steam.'

'Well, I could write better stuff with one hand tied behind my back,' I said roundly.

'Why don't you?' said Rouse. 'We could do with a fresh outlook.' [iv]

[iv] In 1950 Hugh Rouse was employed by the SABC as programme organiser for Durban A (the English programme). He also presented three newscasts for Springbok Radio, which launched on 1 May 1950, using his signature introduction 'The World at One, Seven and Ten-Thirty – Hugh Rouse reporting'.

So I went home and wrote a piece on the atomic tests at Bikini Atoll which were then in progress.[v] It was accepted and broadcast, and went down well except that the idiot reader pronounced Arkansas as spelled instead of Arkansaw. Rouse commissioned a series of thirteen.

['Retort' was the pseudonym for the well-known chemist, journalist and broadcaster Nigel Sutherland, who had been giving science talks on radio since 1925. Born in Scotland in 1895, Sutherland moved to South Africa shortly before World War I, where he joined the army in Cape Town and saw action in France, for which he was awarded the Military Medal. Returning to South Africa he was, for many years, connected with the canning industry and initially broadcast under his own name, Captain Nigel Sutherland, later in 1935, adopting the pseudonym 'Retort' (a device used for the distillation of substances in a chemistry laboratory). Returning to the armed forces he served in a technical capacity during World War II, broadcasting from both Egypt and Italy. [11]

Following World War II, Sutherland broadcast on the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), a series of 15 minute topical talks on scientific affairs in the programmes - *Science in Everyday Life*, *Science in the World Today, Science Review*, and *Science in the News.*

In November 1949 Sutherland took a nine-month leave of absence to conduct research in the laboratories and plants of big industry to find out, as he put it, *'what cooks in science'.* Returning to South Africa in June 1950, his series returned to the airwaves a month later on 24 July. The weekly talks were broadcast over all English transmitters of the SABC, in Durban on Mondays

[v] Nuclear testing at Bikini Atoll (one of the Marshall Islands in the Pacific Ocean located between Hawaii and the Philippines) took place between 1946 and 1958 at seven test sites, on the reef itself, on the sea, in the air, and underwater. Comprising of a series of 23 nuclear weapons detonated by the United States the tests produced a combined fission yield of 42.2 megatons of explosive power.

at 8pm, in Cape Town on Wednesdays at 8.15pm, and in Johannesburg on Fridays at 8.15pm.

In response to listener requests, *Radio*, the Journal of the SABC, published at regular intervals some of Retort's talks in the series *Science in the News*. These full-page articles commenced on 11 August 1950, three weeks after the start of his new series, with the articles being largely affected by his experience over the preceding nine months. They included such subjects as: Modern industry and the vacuum pump; Odd products from the sea; Ultra-violet light; The infra-red; The mould in daily life; Gallium and vanadium; The moon element; Gelatine in industry; The chemist and the 'pat of butter'; Glycerine; Alcohol in industry; Nuts in industry; and Odd soaps. Two of these articles published on 5 and 12 January 1951 named the author as Maurice Shipp.[12] For the broadcast week commencing 4 March 1951 Sutherland's article was titled 'The chemist and fruit',[13] which dealt with the subject of lesser vegetable acids. Sutherland's series concluded the following month and was replaced by a twice monthly 30-minute broadcast called *Science Magazine*. Running for 26 episodes the programme featured various contributors and was edited by Dr Arthur Bleksley, a South African astronomer and professor of applied mathematics.

Bagley noted two dates for his period of work with the SABC: In 1967 he listed it as between 1951-52;[14] and later in 1981 as between 1950-51,[15] the former mentioning he had written two series of talks. It is feasible, due to the timeline, that his scripts may have formed part of the *Science Magazine* broadcasts following the departure of 'Retort'.]

I was now working as a clerk for a firm of importers. The South African economy was deteriorating and the government tightened the screws still further with the result that a lot of import clerks found themselves out of a job, me included. I could not possibly exist on my broadcasting earnings which

were a munificent half-a-crown a minute. For the young and for those who have forgotten £:s:d that is one-eighth of a pound. The talks were ten minutes each once a week and I could not exist on that. Jobs were few in Durban, so I went up to Johannesburg.

I applied for a job at a firm selling scientific instruments. I was interviewed for the job of storekeeper by the manager who had a glassed-in corner of what otherwise was an open plan office. I gave him my qualifications and he looked a shade worried.

'But do you *know* anything about scientific instruments?' he asked. 'Do you know anything about *science*? It would help if you did.'

It was the perfect opening. 'Enough to have written a series for the SABC.' I retailed the story I have told above.

The manager's look of worry deepened. 'Stand up,' he said. So I stood and he pointed into the office beyond. 'Do you see that man standing there?'

'Yes.'

'That's 'Retort',' he said.

I did not get *that* job.

[Dr Arthur Bleksley's *Science Magazine* continued to be broadcast until 'Retort' returned to the air again with *Science in the News* in February 1953. On Friday 22 May 1953 Sutherland died suddenly after collapsing at the wheel of his car in Johannesburg.

Fellow trekker from Blackpool, Dorothy Topping, recalls a meeting with Bagley at this point in his life:

> *I can recall one incident when, after Syd and I had been settled in Durban for a couple of years, he arrived at our house without*

a penny in his pocket. He had worked his way down from Southern Rhodesia, had been living up in Johannesburg for a while and had managed to secure a job with a paper mill further up the coast to the north of Durban, but had no money for the train fare to get there. We were fortunately in a position to help him out of his predicament.[16]

The paper mill Dorothy refers to was Masonite located at Estcourt in Natal.]

REFERENCES

[1] Topping, I.M. & D., *Legacy: Overland Trekkers – Blackpool to Durban 1947* (South Africa: 2005 / CreateSpace: 2012).

[2] Bagley, Desmond, 'Chapter One – Halloran'; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, III, A 4 *The Golden Keel*.

[3] 'Einhver mun brjóta á sér ökklan í hrauninu ykkar': *Vísir*, 14 August 1969, p.16.

[4] Topping, I.M. & D., *Legacy: Overland Trekkers – Blackpool to Durban 1947* (South Africa: 2005 / CreateSpace: 2012) p.24.

[5] Topping, Richard, born 1921 died 1990; source: Topping Family History Tree.

[6] 'Blackpool trekkers set out in snowstorm for sunny Durban': *Blackpool Gazette*, 7 January 1947.

[7] If fictional material used in 'Chapter One – Halloran' is correct, it would indicate that Bagley was employed in farming: Bagley, Desmond, 'Chapter One – Halloran'; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, III, A 4 *The Golden Keel*.

[8] Bagley, Desmond, '*The Golden* Keel – A brief review from the decision to write to August, 1963'; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, III, A 4 *The Golden Keel*.

[9] In correspondence Bagley notes that the dedication should read 'Tickabe'; Bagley, Desmond, correspondence to Knittel, Robert, Collins publishers, 7 February 1969; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, III, A 3 *The Golden Keel*.

[10] Art Engraving Co., (Pty.) Ltd., located at Centpress Buildings, 22 Melbourne Road, Durban. 'Situations Vacant': *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 August 1948, p.3.

[11] 'Death of Mr. Nigel ('Retort') Sutherland': *Rand Daily Mail,* 23 May 1953, p.6.

[12] *Radio* – The Journal of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, Vol 1, Nos. 13-49, 24 July 1950 – 30 March 1951; archived in The British Library under shelf mark: LOU.F2275A.

[13] *Radio* – The Journal of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, Vol 1, No. 45, 2 March 1951; archived in The British Library under shelf mark: LOU.F2275A.

[14] Bagley, Desmond, autobiographical material written for the United States Information Agency 26 June 1967, from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, III, A 7 *Antarctica*.

[15] Bagley, Desmond, author biography written in April 1981, republished as bonus material in *Wyatt's Hurricane* and *Bahama Crisis* (London: Harper, 2009).

[16] Topping, I.M. & D., *Legacy: Overland Trekkers – Blackpool to Durban 1947* (South Africa: 2005 / CreateSpace: 2012) p.103.

CHAPTER 4

African Gunshots and the Orange Free State (1951 – 1955)

Times were bad in 1951. Unemployment was rife in South Africa and you had to take what you could get. I got a job with Masonite at Estcourt in Natal;[i] another hardboard manufacturer, but on a far larger scale than the Ugandan operation, producing about forty million square feet a year. I was employed to make crates for the boards that were exported – hammering nails into pieces of wood at 1s/2d an hour, and glad to have the chance. When I left two years later I was Warehouse Superintendent.

[Bagley's passport was due to expire on 18 December 1951 and he returned to the UK on the Orient line's S.S. Orontes, arriving in Southampton on 20 November 1951.[1] The passenger manifest records his occupation listed as Engineer, with a proposed address in the UK of 48 Lord Street, Blackpool. By this time Bagley's parents had moved to 56 Fordway Avenue, Blackpool and the property at Lord Street was occupied by his brother, 'Jack' who's occupation was listed as boarding house keeper. Bagley's passport was renewed at Liverpool Passport Office on 26 November 1951, and he returned to South Africa, clearing immigration on 2 March 1952.[2]]

During my time at Masonite a rather pawky Scot worked in the quality control laboratory. Once, in his hearing, I casually mentioned that I had written a radio series for the SABC, and he flatly disbelieved me. Rising to the challenge I wrote a fifteen-minute piece and showed it to him before sending it to Rouse in Durban. Rouse obligingly broadcast it, and my stock went up.

---

[i] Masonite South Africa began in 1942 when US based company Masonite International first established a foothold in the African market. Over the course of 70 years Masonite South Africa became a trusted manufacturer of the original hardboard product known as Masonite.

I cannot remember the name of the Scot, but many years afterwards I heard that he had fallen heir to a baronetcy and is now pacing the ancestral acres in Scotland. If these words should come to his attention I would be glad if he would drop me a line *via* my publisher. I did not know I was rubbing shoulders with the aristocracy.

My immediate boss as Superintendent was Causton-Sansom, a refugee from the collapsed British Raj in India. He had a military air and Churchillian outlook and was addicted to issuing copious memoranda stamped ACTION THIS DAY. Hearing of my literary proclivities he put me in charge of the house magazine. Technically he was the editor, which meant that I did the work and he got the credit.

The house magazine was a typical product of its kind. Self-serving and parochial, it recorded the activities of the white staff of Masonite; their weddings, births and deaths, the rugger and cricket matches, and so on. It was issued quarterly on the best of glossy paper in an edition of 4,000 because a copy was sent to each of our bemused customers. What they did with it I don't know, but I suspect it found its way with great speed into the Universal file – the wastepaper basket. Still, I learned something about typography and layout.

[Masonite's in-house sixteen-page magazine was published by The Escourt Press, Natal, rather sporadically, under the title *African Gunshots.* Bagley appears listed as Associate Editor on the issue for March 1953 (Volume 2. No. 3), with F. Causton-Sansom (who was then Manager of the Orders and Distribution Division) listed as Editor. In that edition, Causton-Sansom's first issue as Editor, he writes:

> *This issue has been rather rushed and it is mainly due to the sterling efforts of the Associate Editor that we have been able to circulate it on time. Nevertheless, we are confident that the contents will prove good reading.*

On page 13 there is a poem credited to ‘D.B.’ titled ‘Cakes’.

Cakes

There are cakes and cakes,
And it takes
Skill and knowledge,
And maybe college,
To make a good one
And not a dud one.

First we may take
The French cake;
Meringues and éclairs,
Light as summer airs;
And if on one dark night,
All French cooks vanished from sight;
Quelle miserie!
‘Vive la patisserie!’

And then there is the Christmas cake,
Which one may take,
Always bearing in mind
That it has been designed
To assist in the sale to the nation
Of the stomach preparation.
So one takes as a coda
Bicarbonate of soda.

And then there is the Princely cake,
All others to forsake,
Wedding towers in white icing,
Crisp and enticing;
A cake truly puissant
But faintly reminiscent
Of the Place of Versailles, Bourbon,
Or the City Hall, Durban.

But the best cake
That anyone can make
Is frosted with pink ice
And is really very nice;
You can have it for lunch or for dinner,
It's alike for saint and for sinner,
Good for moralist and rake
Is a Happy Birthday Cake.

In March 1953, at the time Bagley was working on the magazine, he also wrote a nineteen page short science fiction story titled 'The Fledgling'.[3]

'The Fledgling' is the story of Bill Johnson, a U.S. Air Force pilot who is selected for the first manned rocket ship journey into space. A descriptive story that follows events from the take-off of the rocket to Johnson's successful return to earth. Given immediate leave to visit his wife in Pittsburgh following his return from the mission, Johnson is killed just twelve hours later by a drunk driver.

Undated, though likely written around the same time, was a short descriptive piece titled 'The Romance of Space Travel'.

The Romance of Space Travel

The war over, these men looked at the things they had made…the long, silver bullets…and then looked up at the stars. They looked at the sun and the whirling planets and the deep spaces, and turned to drawing board and slide rule, to intricate calculations and to laws of stress and strain. They coined strange new names for the things they were about to do; 'Brennschluss', telemetering, optimum orbit; the jargon of a new technology. The metallurgists shielded their eyes from the furnaces as they poured the bright new steels. The doctors whirled their subjects in centrifuges to find the limitations of the earthbound body. The astronomers polished their lenses with new hope.

When the nights were clear and dark or when the moon rose ripe and full, these men looked up into the darkness and held all of space in their envious eyes.

'The Romance of Space Travel.'

E.J. Myers (2032) [4]]

I had been running the magazine for a little over a year when I received a stiff letter from the Crown Agents. 'Why,' they asked severely, 'had I not been donating copies of the magazine to the British Museum as required under the Copyright Act, 1911?'

I blanched. Was I a lawbreaker? I rounded up as many back numbers as I could find and sent them off post haste.

It is a little known fact that British Writers and publishers are subject to a special tax just because they are writers and publishers, iniquitous though that may seem. There are six so-called copyright libraries; the British Museum,[ii] the Bodleian Library, the University Library, Cambridge, the National Library of Scotland, the National Library of Wales, and the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. It is to be noted that the last is in a foreign country which is not even a member of the Commonwealth.

Section 15 of the Copyright Act, 1911 states that the publisher of every book published in the United Kingdom *must* deliver at his own expense a copy to the Trustees of the British Museum. He *must* also deliver a copy to each of the other copyright libraries if they ask within a year of publication – and they do ask.

So the publisher loses the profit on six books and the author loses his royalty. I have no objection to these libraries stocking my books but I do think they ought to pay for them. It may seem a trivial matter but let us explore this a little further. I do not know what will be the list price of this book when published, but let us assume £6.50; I will therefore pay a concealed tax of

[ii] Known as legal deposit, which has existed in English law since 1662, this requires publishers to provide a copy of every work they publish in the UK to the British Library, which has now replaced The British Museum as a Legal Deposit Library. Since 2013, legal deposit regulations have expanded to include digital as well as print publications. The UK Web Archive, a partnership of the six Legal Deposit Libraries, collects millions of websites each year, preserving them for future generations.

£5.85, and it will cost my publisher roughly the same. And there will be more to pay when the paperback is issued.

Taken in aggregate large sums of money are involved. There were 38,000 books published in Britain last year [1979] at an average price of £4.95. A copy to each library gives the total sum lost as £1,128,600, and if the authors' royalties are assessed at a conservative 10% it means that British authors are losing nearly £130,000 – a damn sight more than the Arts Council is handing out to aid the cause of literature.

There are further iniquities. Take a fine arts publisher who issues a book priced at £75 in a limited edition of 500 copies. He is expected to give away £450 worth of goods before he even starts to sell. To push the matter to its ultimate conclusion I do not know if Irish publishers send their books to the United Kingdom in reciprocity for the largesse lashed out to Trinity College, Dublin. I think not. But if they did the Irish University Press would be in grave trouble. They published *British Parliamentary Papers of the 19th Century* in 1,112 volumes at £27,500 the set. To hand out £165,000 might be enough to bankrupt any publisher, but in making this effort the Irish University Press went bankrupt without licenced government banditry, and the project has been taken over by another firm.

NOTE: This is written on the 19 June 1980. Joan, my wife and indefatigable researcher, who dug out the above information, informs me that the price of *British Parliamentary Papers* is going up to £29,000 on 1 July, 13 days from now. I do not think I will avail myself of the present bargain.

The rationale behind this concealed tax is simple and was presented by Lord Curzon in 1911. He argued that '...publishers (and authors) gain enormously by the privileges conceded to them in the Copyright Act...it is, therefore, not unreasonable that they should make some return to the public for the privileges they enjoy.'

A.P. Herbert had a field day with that one, and proceeded to ask naughty questions. Did the landowners have to present six brace of pheasants annually to the Ministry of Agriculture in return for the protection of the anti-poaching laws? Did the motor manufacturers have to give six samples of their latest model to the Kensington Science Museum in gratitude for the patent laws? [iii]

Answer came there none, and the provisions were again ratified in the Copyright Act, 1956 as was also the status of Trinity College, Dublin.

The position of Warehouse Superintendent was a career dead end. The next natural step would have been to go on to the sales side, but there was the problem of the stammer, so I quit, and did a stint in the stores department of the Johannesburg General Hospital and then the Time Office of the Glen Harmony gold mine in the Orange Free State.[iv]

And all the time I was scribbling.

[By the time the next quarterly issue of *African* Gunshots was published in June 1953 (Volume 2. No. 4), a new Associate Editor had been appointed and Causton-Sansom writes in his editorial:

> *It is with regret that I have to record the departure from the factory of Mr. D. Bagley and the termination, therefore, of his brief, but successful career as Associate Editor. Mr. Bagley, we understand, has secured a position in Brazil, and I am sure everyone wishes him well. His stout effort in connection with the last issues of Gunshots is remembered and appreciated.*

[iii] Sir Alan Patrick Herbert CH (24 September 1890 – 11 November 1971), usually known as A. P. Herbert or simply A. P. H., was an English humorist, novelist, playwright and law reform activist who served as an Independent Member of Parliament (MP) for Oxford University from the 1935 general election to the 1950 general election, when university constituencies were abolished.

[iv] Harmony Gold Mining Co Ltd, Glen Harmony, Virginia, 9430, South Africa, City of Free State.

Bagley had in fact moved to the Orange Free State, and it was during this period that he borrowed a friend's typewriter (as depicted in the cover photograph) and started to write an autobiographical account of his life, which is filed in his papers under the title 'Dissertation'. The work is a 76 page (either unfinished or with pages missing) retrospective record of his life, interspersed with polemic essays on writing, philosophy, science fiction, and technology. It includes a two page descriptive narrative titled 'Hail' [5] - and a four page short story titled 'Terra Firma.' [6]]

REFERENCES

[1] UK, incoming passenger immigration list S.S. Orontes: 9 F&C -231, source: Ancestry, ref 30807 A001280- 00714.

[2] Bagley, Desmond, Passport: L0 69481 (1946-1951); from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 6, VIII.

[3] Bagley, Desmond, 'The Fledgling'; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 3, I, manuscripts V6.

[4] Bagley, Desmond, 'The Romance of Space Travel'; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, RR, envelope C.

[5] Bagley, Desmond, 'Dissertation' pp.30-31; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, IV, manuscripts, B.

[6] Ibid., pp.58-61.

CHAPTER 5

Misty Hill and the Short Story (1955)

By 1955 I had made the inevitable progression from bad poetry to indifferent short stories. The short story is not my natural mode of expression; I prefer the elbow room given by the novel form. Arnold Bennett disagreed; in one of his *Evening Standard* articles of the late thirties he stated that the effort of creative composition was as the square of the length, that is to say that comparing two novels, one of 100,000 words and the other of 200,000 words, the longer would not take twice the effort, but four times.

But Bennett was thinking only in terms of quantity and forgetting the qualitative aspect. In literature, all other things being equal, the shorter the harder. The beginning writer usually begins with verse, which he calls poetry. Because it is short he thinks it is easy. He is wrong. A good poem is thought compressed to its utmost, and every word has to carry an unnaturally heavy freight of complex meaning. I use the word 'unnaturally' deliberately because, in a poem, the choice of words and the construction is totally unlike our natural everyday demotic use of language.

Finding poetry more difficult than expected our writer moves on to story telling and picks the short story form. He fears, with some justification, the sustained creative effort necessary to write a novel, and argues that a short story is something that can be created over a weekend or in a week of evenings, and that it must be easier to write than a novel.

He is wrong again but for somewhat different reasons. Because of the short story's length, or lack of it, every word must count but, at the same time, the rhythms of the language must imitate our everyday speech. Combining the two requirements into a single package is exceedingly difficult.

Stanley Ellin is arguably the finest short story writer in America today. The short story is the natural form which suits his talents; he has written novels but his short stories are better. He has been writing for thirty years and has produced thirty short stories. His wife, Jeanne, once told me that she counted the number of times he re-wrote the opening paragraph to one of his stories – it was 42 times. Let no one tell you that the writing of short stories is easy.

There is another reason for not writing short stories; it is an economic lame duck and no one can make a living by writing short stories alone. There was a time when every magazine carried three or four short stories, and there were whole magazines which held nothing else, notably *Argosy* and *Men Only* in Britain and *Red Book*, *Argosy* and *The Saturday Evening Post* in the United States. It was television, I think, which put an end to that. There are few survivors but they are strictly specialist, printing crime or science fiction. And the publishers of hardback fiction are reputed to dislike collections of short stories. Yet the writing of short stories is a most valuable technical exercise and I would not discourage anyone from making the attempt.

Pat and Philip had bought Misty Hill, a small (175 acre) farm at Waterval Onder in the Eastern Transvaal. Most of it was steep hillside. There was an old barn on the property which I had helped them to renovate during my holidays; there intention was to use it to live in while they built a house. In the eaves there was a gap a foot wide through which the wind used to roar, and we filled it in with fieldstone cemented into place. I commented to Philip that it was the first time I had laid crazy paving in a roof.

When the conversion was complete they were still not ready to move in so they offered it to me for six months, the intention being that I get down to serious writing. Pat always had faith that I would turn out to be a writer one day.

[Evidently whilst living at Misty Hill, around 1955, Bagley wrote a 3,000 word short story called ‘It’s A Wise Child’ as the Post Office in Waterval Onder is shown as a return address recorded on the rear of the typescript.[1]

‘It’s A Wise Child’ is the story of millionaire businessman, Michael O’Halloran, originally from ‘Ballyhinchy’ in Galway, Ireland. O’Halloran returns to his home village wanting to settle down, find a wife, and have children. He marries Shelagh O’Toole, from a large local family, though the marriage doesn’t fare well as he is unable to sire children. Whilst he seeks advice from the local doctor his wife, being the sort to play the field, has an affair with the gardener and then goes travelling.

Realising he will not have a son O’Halloran seeks out his nephew, Terrence O’Halloran, having placed an advertisement in a newspaper. Terrence O’Halloran, then living in London, sees the advert and seeking advice from a friend local to Ballyhinchy, one of the O’Toole brothers, he travels there to claim his inheritance.

Whilst on the ferry he meets a woman and has a brief affair. Arriving at his Uncle’s house he is introduced to his Uncle’s wife, Shelagh O’Toole, who turns out to be the woman from the ferry. Shelagh falls pregnant, Michael is jubilant, thinking that he is the father. Thus, Terrence’s actions have negated his own inheritance.

Similarities in the name of the protagonist in this short story to the name of the main protagonist, Halloran, in his debut novel *The Golden Keel* will not be lost on Bagley aficionados. Neither also that this story is set in the county of Galway, which also features as a location in his novel *The Freedom Trap.*

Forming part of Bagley’s ‘Dissertation’ is an essay ‘On the Writing of Fantasy’[2] - and within this he mentions two characters within fantasy stories that he had written by that point: ‘Jeremy Wilde’ and a female narrator of a story called ‘The Good Blood-Line’. Jeremy Wilde is the protagonist of his short fantasy story ‘Immortality and Jeremy Wilde’, however his short story

‘The Good Blood-Line’ sadly does not survive in Bagley’s papers. What does survive in his papers is an untitled short story narrated by a theatrical agent (arrangements and records man) named Mr Masters and his meeting with a time travelling musician called John ‘Skinny’ Ferrers.]

There was one short story which made a stir in its time. Even after I had got five novels under my belt I would be introduced to someone as a writer, and the response would be, ‘Oh, yes; didn’t you write *My Old Man’s Trumpet*?’

I think it is time it saw the light of day again, so here it is.

My Old Man's Trumpet

It all started maybe three weeks ago. I keep a little music shop down in New Orleans. I don't do much business, just enough to keep the wolf from the door, but I couldn't be in any other work. I sell a few records and some sheet music, and condition a few instruments. I've got a good name for instruments; it's the one thing my old man taught me to do well, that and play a horn. I've conditioned instruments for some of the best. Johnny Dodds's clarinet, Fred Robinson's trombone, and once I did Satchmo's trumpet. I got a kick out of that.

Anyway, this day I was in the back room stripping a sugar stick, when I looked through my little spyhole and saw a white boy in the shop. He had my old man's trumpet in his hands and he was stroking it. I keep the trumpet over the glass case on the counter. It's by way of being my lucky piece.

I got up quickly and went into the shop. There wasn't many white folk came into my shop and those that did weren't up to much, and I didn't want one of that kind playing round with my old man's trumpet.

He was standing with his back to me and from the way he was standing I could tell he was pretty miserable. He was tall and rangy and I figured he was from Texas, where they breed them that way. I was going to walk up to him when he half turned and I saw his hands. He sure had a trumpet-player's hands with long fingers and he was cradling that trumpet like it was a new-born baby. His fingers played around with the pistons and his other hand stroked the horn. Back and forward it went, back and forward, stroking that horn.

Then he turned and saw me. His face was thin and he had the bluest eyes I've seen in a man. He smiled and it seemed as if the sun had broke from behind clouds. 'Just admiring this trumpet,' he said.

I said gently, 'Sorry, but it's not for sale.'

He looked at it and sighed. 'It's a good instrument,' he said.

I knew it was a good horn and I knew he must know something about music. ‘That was my father’s,’ I said, ‘I wouldn’t want to sell that.’ I paused. ‘I’ve got a couple in the back room to sell, if you want one.’

He looked at me. ‘But not as good as this.’

‘No,’ I said, ‘Not as good as that one.’

His hands tightened round it a little and then relaxed. He put it back on top of the glass case and stepped back, still looking at it.

‘That’s one of the best I’ve seen,’ he said.

‘It’s pretty good,’ I said. I thought a little. ‘Look,’ I said, ‘I don’t let *anybody* play that horn. I play it myself every Saturday night. Me and a few of the boys have a session. Louis Armstrong played that horn, too, when he was in New Orleans. We really went to town that time.’ I paused again.

‘You can play it if you want to.’

He was still looking at the horn, but he made no move to reach for it. He shook his head regretfully. ‘No,’ he said in a kind of sad voice, ‘I’d better not.’ Then he said, ‘Thank you,’ and was gone out of the shop.

I went to the door and looked up and down the street, but he was nowhere to be seen.

That was the first time I saw him.

In the next few days I saw him pretty often in the street. He must have been rooming nearby, which is pretty unusual for a white boy. He seemed to know his way around, too. He went for the music and knew enough to stay away from the tourist joints. He wanted music, my kind of music, and he knew he wouldn’t get it at the high-falutin places. They have written band parts there.

No – he stuck to the dives where they play for fun, not for a living, and he heard it hot and sweet and from the heart.

I didn’t speak to him because I figured he’d come in to the shop. He *had* to come to the shop. Anyone who handled a horn the way he had had to come back; he couldn’t stay away.

He came in four days later, so silently that he was standing in front of the glass case before I knew he was there. He looked at the horn a space, then looked at me, and said, ‘Still not for sale?’ He was smiling.

‘No, son,’ I said, ‘still not for sale. I’m sorry.’ And I *was* sorry. He wanted it so bad. But I couldn’t sell my old man’s trumpet. It wasn’t in me.

He reached up and took it down. His fingers wrapped themselves automatically round the pistons.

‘You can play it,’ I said.

He looked at me with a strange expression. Then he said, ‘I’d better not. I'm not allowed to.’

‘Oh,’ I said. I had him figured. ‘You must be like my old man. A doc warned him against it. Lung trouble.’

‘The white boy said, ‘Did he stop playing?’

I shook my head. ‘No, he went right ahead. He couldn’t not play the horn.’ I paused. ‘It killed him in the end.’

‘I’m sorry,’ the white boy said.

I said. ‘I don’t think he was. He’d rather have been dead than not play. He could have gone on to a clarinet, but he couldn’t leave the horn.’

‘It’s hard,’ he said. He put the horn back on to the glass case and walked out of the shop.

So that was it. A horn-player who wasn’t allowed to play, but couldn’t resist the chance of handling a good instrument. I felt sorry for the kid.

He was in again next day, looking at the horn. I left him alone for a while—I was busy assembling the sugar stick in the back room. After a while I went into the shop. He was standing with the trumpet in his hands, his fingers slowly pumping the pistons and his other hand gently stroking the bell of the horn, back and forward, back and forward. His eyes were closed. It gave me the willies.

I said, ‘Look, it’s none of my business, son, but why rile yourself? If you ain’t allowed to play it, leave it alone.’

He opened his eyes and looked at me with a blank stare. ‘It’s such a long time since I’ve played,’ he said softly, almost to himself. The way he said it made it seem an awful long time, which was funny because he was only a kid, not more than twenty-three, twenty-four.

Then he seemed to come out of his trance. ‘What did you say?’ he asked.

I skipped it. ‘Can you play the clarinet?’ I said.

He seemed doubtful. ‘I don't know,’ he said, ‘I think it would be all right.’

‘What did the doctor say?’

He looked at me. ‘What?’ he said.

‘The guy who said you hadn’t to blow a trumpet. Did he say anything about a clarinet?’

He smiled thoughtfully. ‘No,’ he said, ‘There wasn’t anything said about a clarinet.’

‘I’ve just assembled one in the back room. Like to try it out?’ He smiled. The world lit up. That boy had a nice smile. ‘I sure would,’ he said.

I went and got the sugar stick. When I got back I saw he had put the trumpet back in its place. I grinned to myself. I figured that what he wanted was something to take his mind off the horn. A clarinet might do it. I gave it to him.

He took it from me as though he was doubtful of something. Maybe he wondered if he could still play. But it couldn’t have been long since he had played. He was only a kid.

His hands set themselves on the keys and he raised it to his lips very slowly. He licked his lips and seemed almost afraid. And then he seemed to stiffen and he blew a riff. It was hot and I knew I had found me a player. I mean a *player*. A *real* player.

He had played the riff and stopped. He was holding his head on one side as if he was listening for something. Then he went to the door and looked up and down the street.

I said, 'What's the matter?'

He turned, and there was such a look of joy on his face as I've never seen on any man before. Joy seemed to spread all round him and suddenly I was feeling pretty good myself. Then he raised the sugar stick to his lips and started to play.

I've heard the clarinet played by some good boys. I've heard Johnny Dodds and Jimmy Strong. But I've never heard it played like this white boy played it. He took it low and he took it high and all the time so sweet. He had the Dixie beat so true that he must have been born in the South. I disremember what he played except that he ended with the *Empty Bed Blues*, and I'll remember that for ever. He dragged that blues from his heart and pushed it through the sugar stick and it sounded like all the troubles of the South since before slavery. I was nearly crying when he finished. Me crying!

And then I saw the shop was full.

Folk had come in from the street and were standing round looking at this white boy. They didn't clap or shout when he'd finished, but there was a sort of sigh like a sudden wind on the river in the morning. No one spoke to him. Some smiled at him as they went out and pretty soon the shop was empty again. I reckon that nobody wanted to break the spell he'd cast on them. They all wanted to keep what he'd given them as long as they could.

And what had he given them? I don't know. I've thought about it long and often and I reckon he'd given the soul back to my own people. Living in a white man's country isn't fun for a negro, and I reckon that when he played my folk's music better than we could, he had shown us that life isn't all kicks, and there's some things we can do together. But I don't know. I'm not clever enough to figure it out.

He was standing with the clarinet in his hands, ‘I can play!’ he said,

‘You can play,’ I said flatly; then I woke up. ‘My God, you *can* play! With that clarinet you can play in any name band in the States. What the hell are you doing fooling around here?’

He said, half to himself, ‘It’s not as good as a trumpet.’ He said it regretfully.

I said unbelievingly, ‘Do you mean you can play the horn better than that clarinet?’

He didn’t answer. He was looking at my old man’s trumpet on the glass case.

‘Look,’ I said, ‘my name's Williams. Joe Williams. Folks call me Fatso.’ I grinned and slapped my belly. ‘But that’s where the trumpet wind comes from,’

He looked at me. ‘My name’s—er—call me Jake,’ he said, and stuck out his hand.

That night Smiley Jones came to see me. ‘Hear you had a shindig at the shop this afternoon,’ he said.

‘Smiley,’ I said, ‘I’ve got hold of a boy who can play the clarinet. I mean *play*.’

‘A white boy,’ Smiley said, Smiley had some trouble in his life. He had no time for white folk. But this was different.

I said, ‘Look, Smiley, I want you and the boys to do me a favour. Tomorrow we have a session. I want the white boy to come.’

‘What kind of a white boy is that who’ll dig with us shines?’ said Smiley. He wasn’t asking a question. He didn’t want to know. He was just being down on the whites.

‘Just hear him, Smiley,’ I begged. ‘Just you hear him.’

After a lot of arguing, Smiley saw reason or, at least, he agreed that Jake should come with us. But I could see that it was against his nature and he was going to take Jake on his merits, not on my word. Which was a good thing, anyway.

Jake came to the shop next morning. Like all the times he came I never saw him come in. One minute he wasn't there and the next minute he'd be standing in front of the glass case looking at my old man's trumpet.

I said, 'Look, Jake, how'd you like to play in a session?'

His face lit up. 'I sure would,' he said. Then he frowned.

'Think I'm good enough for you boys?' he asked.

I swallowed. 'You'll do,' I said.

He lifted down the trumpet and fingered the pistons. 'Tell me about your old man,' he said, 'I'd like to meet him.'

I stared at him. 'But I told you my old man was dead,' I said.

He was confused. He said, 'I mean I'd have liked to meet him.'

'He died in '34,' I said, 'when I was sixteen. He was a good man, never harmed a soul.' I leaned on the counter. 'He was on the river boats in 1917. A feller who came down from New York said that was the golden age of Dixieland jazz. He said that jazz was made on the river boats. Well, my dad must have helped make it. He was a good horn-player, although he never made a name for himself like some of the others. But he could blow it sweet and true, and hot and true, and hold his own in any jam.'

Jake said, 'How did he die, Fatso?'

I said, 'It was like this, in '28 he was up in St. Louis playing in a honky-tonk. He used to get these pains in his chest so he went to the Doc. The Doc asked what he did for a living. My old man said, 'Trumpet-player.' The Doc said, 'That's out.'

'It nearly finished my old man. He'd been playing all his life. He couldn't stop now. Trumpet-playing was too great a strain on the lungs and the heart.

He could play a clarinet but not a trumpet. But he didn't. He figured that he'd rather play the trumpet. I remember the night. He suddenly got up from his chair and took the trumpet and played solid for three hours. Celebrating his decision. That was in '31.

'I think maybe I was the reason he started playing again. It was the depression. Jobs were scarce, but he could always pick up a few dollars with the horn.

'His chest got worse, but he carried on. It was New Year's Day, '34, that it happened. We were here in New Orleans. New Year's Day is a great day here. Everyone celebrates and there's parties all over the place. A good horn-player can really dig in at New Year. But Pa collapsed just after midnight. Just in '34. He was fifty-six.'

Jake didn't say anything for a while. He just looked at the horn, stroking it with his hand, back and forward, back and forward. Then he said, 'That was tough.'

I said, 'You'd better keep off the horn or maybe you'll end the same way.'

He looked surprised. 'How?'

'You'll die,' I said.

'Oh, that!' he said indifferently.

He put the trumpet back on top of the glass case. 'It would be worse trouble than dying,' he said.

Shortly after that he went, leaving me to figure out what there was in playing a trumpet worse than dying.

That evening we picked up Jake. There were six altogether in my brother's car. Jake, my brother Jim, Smiley, Bill Patley, Little Joe, and me. We used to go up the river quite a piece, maybe fifty or sixty miles, find a quiet place, and get in the groove. It was real nice on those moonlight nights and we always had a few beers to help us along.

We parked the car and I got out the crate of beer and helped Little Joe set up his drums. It was cool on the river after the day and the moon was shining down through a few little clouds.

Smiley opened a beer and had a swallow, then set up his clarinet. I had brought another one for Jake, a real good instrument that a bum had hocked with me. Little Joe set up a rhythm on his trap and Bill joined in softly with his banjo.

I said, 'Let's go,' and swung into *Fireworks* with my old man's trumpet. Jim and Smiley followed in turn on trombone and clarinet. Jake didn't play. He just sat watching and listening with the sugar stick held loosely between his fingers. When we finished he said to Smiley, 'You played that real good.'

Smiley didn't say anything. He just looked at Jake and went and got himself another beer.

I signalled to Little Joe and he swung in on the drums and I followed into *Sugarfoot Strut* good and hot. I finished a riff and waved Jake in. As he played the first notes I heard Smiley give a sharp hiss as though the breath had been driven out of his body.

I looked at him. He was sitting there with the beer forgotten in his hand, and his eyes were wide.

Jake went crazy with that clarinet. The notes rang as clear as a bell over the water beneath the moon. He played it hot and he played it sweet, but mostly hot, and he did things with that sugar stick that I didn't think could be done.

Then he waved Smiley in and they played together. It was really in the groove, one following the other easily and effortlessly. We had something here that players from written music won't never have. I've never heard Smiley play so well, but he couldn't touch Jake.

We all joined in and it was real music. When we finished, Smiley went over to Jake and stuck out his hand. 'You're good,' he said.

Jake took his hand and grinned. ‘You’re not so bad yourself.’ After that we all had us a beer. We needed it. The boys were excited and everyone was happy. Jake said, ‘This is the music.’

I said, ‘The best there is.’ After a while I said, ‘You remember me saying about a feller from New York?’

Jake said ‘Yes.’

‘He said something about Dixieland jazz. He said, ‘You fellers down here are the cognoscenti of this music.’ I didn’t know what he meant, so I just said, ‘I reckon we are.’ I looked it up in a dictionary after he’d gone.

‘Smiley said, ‘What did it mean?’

I said, ‘It means that we’re the fellers in the know about music.’

‘Yes,’ said Jake, ‘I reckon you are.’

That was the first session we had with Jake. We had three sessions altogether.

The second session was like the first, only everyone was happy right from the start. Smiley had seen Jake two or three times during the week. They were real friendly now.

Jake had been in the shop every day. Every day he came in and took down the horn and stroked it, and him and me would talk about music and players. He knew a lot about it, did that boy.

We went to the same place. Going in the car, Little Joe said,

‘Say, Jake, don’t you work at anything?’

Jake said, ‘Sure do, but I’m on a vacation.’

‘What do you do?’ Smiley said.

Jake didn't answer for a minute, then he said in a soft voice,

‘I’m a trumpet-player.’

Nobody spoke, because I'd told them all about Jake and trumpets and not being allowed to play. Everybody shut up because somebody had said the wrong thing.

The week after, Jake came in to the shop every day. He just couldn't keep away from that horn. His attitude was funny. He loved it and seemed afraid of it, all at the same time. I had watched my old man and I knew just what was eating Jake.

Once I caught him just raising the mouthpiece to his lips. He saw me looking at him and grinned sheepishly. 'Just wanted to get the feet of it,' he said.

I took the horn from his hands and put it back on the glass case. I said, 'Now look here, son. Quit worrying about the horn. If you can't play, you can't play, and that's an end to it.' I paused and looked at him. 'Got a girl?'

He shook his head.

I sighed and said, 'Let's go into the back room. I've got a good collection of waxings.'

So we went into the back room and played records. He was taken by one of Louis Armstrong with Lil's Hot Shots. Armstrong on the trumpet, Kid Ory on trombone, Johnny Dodds on clarinet, Lil Hardin Armstrong on piano and Johnny St. Cyr on banjo. It was *Georgia Bo Bo*. When it was finished he sighed. 'That Armstrong sure can play,' he said.

I said, 'Jake, isn't there a chance you'll play again?'

He smiled. That wonderful smile. 'Sure, I'll play again. But I don't know when.' The smile went off his face. 'It's so long since I played.'

I said, 'Well, there's a chance. It may not be more than five years. You'll still be young.' He laughed outright. He bent over double, laughing. He couldn't stop laughing.

I didn't get it. I didn't see what I said was funny.

Come Saturday night we all piled into Jim's car and went up-river again. The last session we'd run short of beer, so I'd brought two crates this time. With us six in the car and the beer and the instruments, we were a tight fit. The drums were worst. We always used to kid Little Joe that a little guy like him should have stuck to the piccolo.

But we got there all right and pulled out the drums and the beer, and after I'd helped Joe set up the drums I sat on the river bank watching the water. Little Joe was strumming gently on the trap, and Jake picked up the clarinet and played something so soft and low you couldn't hear it. It was torchy and blue. It had sorrow in it and anger, and a queer kind of longing.

I picked up my old man's trumpet and broke in, switching from minor to major, and loud. He looked at me, his eyes glinting in the moonlight, and suddenly he laughed and, lifting his clarinet, swung it right up to the stars.

It was the same melody, but the mood had changed. Before it was sorrow; now it was joy and triumph. Smiley joined in, and we went to town. I was playing as if I was inspired. I know what Smiley must have felt like when he played with Jake the first time. I couldn't go wrong. The riffs came smoothly and the notes true. I felt my heart lift right up to that old moon.

Then we had finished. 'Zowie,' Smiley said, his chest heaving and the sweat shining on his forehead. 'That's music!'

We broke open the beer and then we played again. What we played I don't know. Jake was improvising as he went along, and we followed him. Yes, we followed him all the way. We played torchy and we played blue. We played it hot and we played it sweet. We played that jazz every way it could be played. The sound of it went echoing over the water and the night wore on and the moon drifted across the sky and still we played on and on.

Then I looked at my watch and it was midnight. I put the horn down and went and opened a beer. It tasted good; cold and good. Then I looked at them. They were drunk, all of them. Not on beer, but on music, on Dixieland jazz.

Then I saw Jake lift up my old man's trumpet. I thought quickly. I had come to like this kid. If he hadn't been white he could have been my own son. I knew he shouldn't play the trumpet and I remembered what had happened to my old man.

I can see Jake now. He lifted that horn to his lips. He was standing with his legs straddled and knees bent and he stooped to the horn, and started to blow.

He blew a note right from the ground floor, right in the bass. I hadn't known that horn could get so low. And he lifted it in a smooth curve of sound right to the moon. Higher and higher. It was the beginning of a riff to end all riffs.

He was standing there, looking at the sky, but with his eyes closed, pouring all his soul into that horn. And it was still going higher and higher.

I jumped over and slapped the horn out of his hands. He let it go and just stood there, looking at the sky with his eyes closed. As if he were looking at something in his own head.

And then the sun rose. In the *north*. It shone on Jake and got brighter and brighter until it was day. And he was looking at that sky right inside his own head. And it got brighter and brighter, this sun in the north, until you couldn't see. Then I figured what it was. The atom plant, a hundred miles clear up river, had blown itself to hell. The sound came, like thunder, like the anger of God, and the wind and sudden clouds and dust.

I saw the car pitch over into the river and I saw Jake standing there like a man in a trance. Then I didn't see anything more.

I was in hospital quite a time. They brought me my old man's trumpet. It's a bit battered but it'll play. And they tell me that Smiley and Jim, my brother, and Bill Patley and Little Joe are all dead. They found their bodies.

But they didn't find Jake's body.

I reckon he knew he'd done a bad thing. But he had to play the horn. It was such a long time since he played it. I don't think he'll be punished much, for

the Lord is an understanding and merciful judge. I guess that by the state of this little old world he'll be called on to play the trumpet again pretty soon.

I sometimes wonder what would have happened if I hadn't knocked the trumpet out of his hands.

I keep my old man's trumpet by my bed and polish it every now and then. Some good boys have played that horn...my father and Louis Armstrong.

But the best of them all was Gabriel himself, the Trumpeter of the Lord.[3]

There is a Yiddish word, *chutzpah*, which has a variety of meanings along the lines of sheer nerve, or unlimited gall. I have to admit that back in 1955 I had *chutzpah* to spare. I had taken a culture of which I had no direct experience, and a musical form of which I was totally ignorant, and had combined my ignorances to make a story which, I thought, was not half bad.

At any rate, later when I started in journalism and met H.H. Huxam, he liked it enough to act as my agent, and he sent it off to *Esquire*, the American magazine. *Esquire* kept it for six months, and then returned it with a cordial rejection slip - 'Thanks – but no thanks.' But they did something which no other magazine has done in my experience; with the rejected typescript they returned a sheaf of interoffice memoranda which had accompanied *My Old Man's Trumpet* on its journeyings around the *Esquire* office. These proved most instructive. I no longer have them but the flavour was something like this:

> Dear Joe,
>
> This came in unsolicited from some guy in South Africa. I think it's pretty good myself. Do you have any ideas on it?
>
> Harry.
>
> Dear Harry,
>
> I tend to agree with you, but what about the music. I suggest you pass it on to Pete. He is our jazz critic, and he might as well earn his keep.
>
> Joe.

Dear Pete,

Could you check this story for the music? Joe likes it well enough but he's slightly worried about the music angle.

Harry.

Dear Harry,

I think its a good story, but you're not asking me about that. I think the writer's is getting New Orleans mixed up with Chicago style. I would say thumbs down to the music.

Pete.

And so the story failed with *Esquire* on the advice of the music critic. Considering I knew nothing about either New Orleans or Chicago style jazz I think I got off lightly. But it taught me a lesson – always check the facts.

Hux sent it to the British magazine, *Argosy*, where it was published in the January 1957, issue. It earned me £36, the first money I ever earned by creative story telling.

He also published it in the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* where it necessitated a page turn, something frowned upon because the reader was not supposed to have the attention span for anything so long as to need a page turn. But Hux pushed it through.

And where did the plot come from? Well I was interested in African music. Not the music of the tribal African but that of the urbanised, detribalised African of the cities. They had developed a definite musical idiom called *kwela* which was later spread to Europe and America chiefly by Miriam Makeba who

became an international star. But she was not the only one; there was a thirteen-year-old, Lemmy Special,[i] who was a wizard on the penny whistle.

In parenthesis I noticed a sign of inflation in the window of Lincoln's, a Johannesburg music shop, about that time: 'Penny whistles – fifteen shillings each.' (Only to be rivalled by a sign in Edworks, a shoe shop; 'The Lifetime Shoe – guaranteed for six months).

Again, my own father, in his early and middle years, had played the trumpet but had to stop on medical advice. It seems that the recipe for a plot is to take varied ingredients, simmer gently in the unconscious mind for some years then serve hopefully.

[Bagley also wrote that the story had, in part, been inspired by the vision of the science fiction author Ray Bradbury. Quoting Bradbury, he wrote:

> *Thus writes Bradbury, and I think that he is a fortunate man. I think that all artists are fortunate, for though it is a debatable point as to whether they have this mystical insight more often than other people, at least they have the power to capture it, to mould it in paint or clay, stone or words, or in the rhythms of great or simple music.*
>
> *I, in my own writings, particularly; 'My Old Man's Trumpet', have managed to capture just a little of this vision, this reality behind reality, this strangeness behind familiarity. Not as much as I would like to, and that is the tragedy of the artist; he can never put down what he sees. Any canvas, statue, book, is merely a rough approximation of the vision seen by the artist. The rough*

[i] Lemmy 'Special' Masabo (d. April 2018 aged 69) developed a love for music after watching the Alexandra Bright Boys band rehearsing in 1956. Spotting his passion, his father bought penny whistles for Mabaso and his two brothers.

tools of his body, his muscles and hands, are so much inferior to his mind that his awareness of his inadequacies must be a constant source of frustration.[4]

Accompanying the piece in *Argosy* was a short biography of its author:

Desmond Bagley is an engineer, has worked in the Rhodesian asbestos mines and Orange Free State goldfields. He now lives in South Africa and cultivates orange trees; he likes good food, quiet conversation, W.H. Auden, and watching the sun go down over a cold gin. He is engaged at present in the study of symbolic logic and the training of an Alsatian bitch.]

Six months of solitude was a bit too much for me to take. I am normally a self-contained individual, and I tried, but I do like the stimulus of the company of my fellow men – and women. Misty Hill was isolated and I went broody. Pat sent me an Alsatian pup to keep me company and Ricky helped, but Ricky could not talk, and it was intelligent, rational conversation that I needed.

And about the dog. Some years later, when I had got into journalism, I came across a typescript in the office by a man called Harvey Day. It was called, *Dogs, faithful beyond death* and was an overly sentimental view of the canine world. I said as much to the Features Editor, and he said, 'Why don't you write the opposite view and I'll run the two together?' So I did and it was called, Oh Yeah?

[The following is the article as it appeared published in the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* on 30 September 1956. Although written whilst in Johannesburg

the text of the article is recalling events that took place whilst Bagley was still residing at Misty Hill in Waterval Onder.]

Oh Yeah?

Living alone, as I do on a rather remote South African farm, I decided that the thing to do was to get a dog. I pictured myself walking round the lands with my noble animal and man's best friend being my faithful companion day and night, occasionally looking up at me with adoring eyes and generally being a good chap all round. Pat and Philip said they would buy an Alsatian bitch puppy in Johannesburg and she duly arrived.

The first trouble she caused was that I had to get up at 4.30am and walk along a mile of dark, snake-infested road to meet the train. The dog was a frightened little morsel cowering in the bottom of a cage, an aspect well calculated to deceive the budding dog lover. I carried the 20-pound morsel all the way home while she industriously nibbled my ear; but it does not really matter – I still have the other one.

My day with Ricky – as Pat christened her – is an arduous one. It begins at 3am when I am awoken by Ricky chewing my toes. I lift her gently out of bed, wrap up my feet again and compose myself to sleep. At 3.15am Ricky stealthily parts the blankets and I feel a nip on my big toe. Her teeth are not as sharp as hypodermic needles, but not much blunter. I give a sharp kick which is answered by a yelp.

At 3.30am Ricky starts whining to which supplication I resolutely turn a deaf ear. I fall asleep. At 4a.m. I am awakened by a concrete mixer churning in the far corner. It is some time before I realise that it is Ricky gnawing a bone which she has illicitly brought in and stowed in some secret corner against the boredom of the night hours. I take the bone away and am bitten in the hand.

At 4.45am I hear Ricky gnawing something by the bed. I say, 'The hell with it,' and turn over. At 6.30am I hear an outcry in the kitchen and find Samson, my house-boy, rubbing a bleeding ankle with one hand while kicking

Ricky with the other foot – a somewhat acrobatic performance. I part the combatants.

I decide blearily that it is not much use going back to bed, so I get dressed. I find that Ricky has chewed the tongue from one of my shoes, so I put the pair of shoes aside for the cobbler, mentally adding it to Ricky's already large account.

I prepare Ricky's breakfast. She eats her own weight every day and agitates for more, making up the deficiency in her diet by such delicacies as my shoes, my beard and Samson's ankles. While she is eating her breakfast I think I have enough peace to have a cup of coffee. Having finished her breakfast in a gulping rush, she comes with her puppy run and launches herself at me like an erratic guided missile. Half a cup of strong, black coffee is spilt over the new shirt I bought yesterday.

I put on the old rag I was wearing last week and decide to look at the farm. Going out of the door Ricky thrusts herself between my legs and I fall, nearly concussing myself on the stone patio.

But it is no use going on with this tale of woe. Every hour of the day Ricky gets into some new trouble – trouble for me. For instance, when Pat and Philip came for the week-end, Ricky sallied forth on their arrival, smartly nipped Pat on the ankle, bit Philip's hand as he patted her, and trotted back proudly, tail waving triumphantly, to announce that boarders had been repelled.

My once neat – but not gaudy – beard is now a loathsome, tattered and unkempt mass of untidy hair, as Ricky likes to snap at it. The tip of my nose is scarred because she once misjudged the distance. I have not got a decent pair of shoes to my name. Samson has used all the mercurochrome in the first-aid box to apply to his ankles. My friends hesitate to come near the house.

In view of all this I have invented a dog-training costume. A corselet of barbed wire for myself, rather like the entanglements one sees round a pole

carrying high-tension electricity; and a pair of dog collars for Samson – of the Cerberus type with spikes – one for each ankle.

I have already ordered two sets of Sheffield-made, antique armour against the time when Ricky reaches her full bitch-hood.

(P.S.: Dear editor, please excuse the tattered condition of this manuscript — Ricky got there first.)

When the six months were up I had written little and had hardly anything to show. One of the reasons, I think, was that I then did not know how to get into the long distance writer's frame of mind. This led to a breach with the Bawcombes; they evidently considered that I had broken faith with them, so back I went to Johannesburg.

Again I had no job but I had a little money put by and was content to take my time and look around before making any hasty decision. And to become accustomed to a city again because, after being six months in the silences of Misty Hill, Johannesburg frightened me with its big city rush. I was scared to cross a street.

[It is worthy of note that in a codicil to his Last Will and Testament, dated 29 March 1974, Bagley expressed the following wish: 'I record my wish to be buried at Waterval Onder of which I have many fond memories'. Following Bagley's death in 1983 he was in fact interred at Le Foulon Cemetery in St Peter Port, Guernsey with his wife being interred in the same plot following her own death in 1999.]

While scanning the classified advertisements in the Johannesburg *Star* to see what jobs were available I came across an article with which I violently disagreed. It was about resuscitation from death. I slipped a sheet of paper into the portable typewriter and began a letter to the Editor in the best *paterfamilias* manner: Dear Sir…

I stopped, looked thoughtfully at what I had written, then took out the sheet and replaced it with another. Instead of writing a letter to the Editor I cast what I had to say in the form of an article. Later that day, when passing the *Star* office, I dropped it into the letterbox.

It was duly published and I thought no more about it until several weeks later when I received a cheque. I have forgotten the amount, but I looked at it with astonishment, very much as stout Cortez, silent upon his peak in Darien,

might have viewed the Pacific. ‘My God!: I thought. ‘This is money for old rope.’

I knew I was going to be a journalist.

[Bagley’s entry into newspaper journalism can thus be dated quite accurately when his article, ‘Through the Centuries they have been bringing people back from the dead – The advance of medical science’, was published in the Johannesburg *Star* on 21 August 1956.]

REFERENCES

[1] Bagley, Desmond, ‘It’s a Wise Child’; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 3, I, manuscripts, V5 Short Stories.

[2] Bagley, Desmond, ‘Dissertation’ pp.36-41; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, IV, manuscripts, B.

[3] Bagley, Desmond, ‘My Old Man’s Trumpet’: *Argosy - The Short Story Magazine* (London: The Amalgamated Press, January 1957), pp.7-16. Later republished as bonus material in *High Citadel* and *Landslide* 2 in 1 edition (London: Harper, 2009).

[4] ‘Bagley, Desmond, ‘Dissertation’ p.34; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, IV, manuscripts, B.

PART TWO

JOURNALIST

CHAPTER 6

Johannesburg and the *Rand Daily Mail* (1956)

'I think its a good idea,' said Pat.

The breach had been healed and all was well again. The Bawcombes were busy doing exhibition work for the Rand Easter Show, the agricultural and trade fair held annually at Milner Park. Pat was working, I think, on the Fison's exhibit and had laid out a miniature farm on a hundred square yards of hardboard, and I was helping by making what seemed to be miles of small scale barbed wire.

'I know a man on the *Sunday Times*,' she said, and paused to pick up the sheaf of papers I had brought along to show her. 'He might be interested in these.'

The previous day I had amused myself by knocking out a couple of dozen clerihews, that second cousin to the limerick. The form was invented by E.C. Bentley whose middle name was Clerihew, and good, pithy ones are as difficult to write as a Japanese haiku.

Of those I wrote that day only one has stayed in my mind.

Ivor Novello
Is getting rather mellow;
He finds it harder to recapture
That first fine careless rapture.

And that is not poetry, either. For the benefit of those who were born on the day that was written, Ivor Novello was an actor, a matinee idol still playing the dashing, young hero at the age of sixty plus. *Careless Rapture* was his greatest success. A knowledge of Browning would help too.

‘Do you think so?’ I said sceptically. I could not see the *Sunday Times* being interested in clerihews.

So it was that I met H.H. Huxham.[i] He was a pudgy, portly, twinkling man, and was Features Editor of the *Sunday Times*. I never found out what the initials stood for because he was universally known as Hux.

Pat stayed only a few minutes before departing for Milner Park and her farm, and Hux and I got down to it. He soon found that I had no newspaper experience, excepting a single article published in the *Star*.[1] I told him of the broadcast talks which had been commissioned by Rouse. He knew Hugh Rouse who had been transferred to Johannesburg, so that helped a little.

‘But what can you write?’ he asked. He waved the sheaf of clerihews. ‘Apart from this stuff.’ As I had anticipated the clerihews were of no use to him.

‘It depends on what you want me to write,’ I said.

‘You mean you can write about anything?’ His eyebrows rose.

‘All I want is the chance.’

He looked at me doubtfully and I could see that the damned stammer was getting in the way. At last he shook his head regretfully. ‘There’s no place for you on the staff,’ he said. ‘And we have all the outside copy we need right now. But I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll introduce you to the Features Editor of the *Rand Daily Mail*. He’s on the floor below. His name is Carel Birkby – perhaps you can do something for him.’

So we went downstairs. Birkby, a lean, dyspeptic-looking man, was sitting behind his desk, and Hux said, ‘This is Desmond Bagley. He reckons he can write about anything.’

Hux was too good a man to be malicious and I daresay he thought he was merely being funny, but I cursed him internally. Birkby tilted back his chair

[i] H.H. Huxham – Editor of Johannesburg *Sunday Times* 1958 -1961.

on the two rear legs until I thought he was going to fall over backwards. ‘Oh, he does!’ He put his hands to the back of his head and stared at me, and I could see every single thought that chased through his mind. ‘Who is this jumped-up little squirt?’ he was thinking.

He switched his gaze to Hux. ‘What can we find for such a man to do?’ he asked. The chair came forward with a crash and he leaned his elbows on the desk. ‘All right; I’ll take a piece from you. I want to know what happens to all the shit in Johannesburg.’

A suppressed chuckle came from Hux. I fumed, knowing that the mickey was being taken, but I managed to keep a straight face, and merely said, ‘How long?’

‘Oh, make it a thousand words,’ said Birkby casually. ‘And I want it by Friday.’ He turned to Hux. ‘Don’t you think it would make a good Saturday piece?’ Hux cheerfully agreed, and that was that.

It was Tuesday, so I hustled. I got on the telephone and made an appointment with the City Engineer for that afternoon, saying that I was a reporter for the *Rand Daily Mail*. Not true, but Birkby had, in effect, *commissioned* that article.

Now every journalist finds out, very early in his career, that there is nothing that the average person likes more than to talk about himself and his job. So I had no difficulty with the City Engineer or his department. Although I think he was vaguely puzzled by my assignment, he was quite prepared to bare his soul and I was given the full guided tour.

It is surprising what happens to Johannesburg’s excreta. Johannesburg is built on the gold mining industry, and the gold is extracted from the quartz base by the sodium cyanide process invented by MacArthur and Forrest back in 1890. Which is why it is difficult to grow anything on the waste dumps which surround the city like miniature flat-topped mountains. But where do you think the cyanide comes from? Yes, you guessed right first time. It is

ironic that such a precious metal be extracted by the means of such a base resource.

The Municipality of Johannesburg runs a herd of 3,000 prize cattle, and the lush grass of their pastures springs from soil restored by very fine fertilizer. The City Engineer's chief bane was the poplar tree; it seems that the poplar has such fine, hair-like roots that they can penetrate with ease the joints of the sewage pipes and, once inside, they grow and spread into a solid, matted mess. He had designed a special travelling auger to ream out the pipes.

All these and many other technicalities I put down in my notebook and, after drinking the obligatory glass of water from the clean end of the sewage works at the end of the guided tour, I went home to set it all down on paper.

I wrote the article on the Thursday, my chief difficulty being to find euphemisms for that four-letter word. On Friday morning I was back in Birkby's office and laid the article on his desk, together with half a dozen photographs. 'The piece you wanted,' I said. 'Illustrated, too.'

Birkby looked at me in slight surprise, then picked up the papers and began to read. About half way through he said, 'Not bad; not bad, at all.' When he had finished he said, 'In fact it's pretty good. Pity we can't use it.'

I knew that. In those days, and possibly still today, the South African newspapers were fairly puritanical, a subject I will discuss later. The comment Birkby had made to Hux about it being an excellent subject for the Saturday issue had been a twisting of the knife; the Saturday issue being the 'family' paper, as it were.

However, I had proved something to Birkby. I had proved that I could not be needled, and I could deliver the goods. After that he was always prepared to give me assignments and we became good friends. But he never paid me for the article.

A couple of years later there was a sequel. Birkby had moved on to another position and there was a new Features Editor on the *Rand Daily Mail* –

journalists are always playing Pussy-wants-a-corner. I don't remember his name, but I was in his office when he said, 'I've been going through the desk drawers, and I found this.' He tossed some papers across the desk, and echoed Birkby. 'Pity we can't use it.'

I grinned, took it away, and sold it to the *Municipal Magazine*, a technical journal for local government officials, for twice as much as the *Rand Daily Mail* would have paid me.

[Bagley's article 'Johannesburg's Sewage Disposal Problem' was published in the December 1957 issue of the *South African Municipal Magazine* under the name Denis Bagley.[2]]

And so I became a journalist. I was never on the staff, probably because of the stammer, and always worked as a freelance. Two or three years ago I was back in Johannesburg about the time that Joel Mervis, the Editor of the *Sunday Times* was about to retire. His colleagues were holding a dinner for the occasion, and a special spoof edition of the *Sunday Times* had been printed to be distributed at the dinner. I was asked to contribute, so I wrote a short piece into which I slipped the comment, '...and I would like to thank Joel for contributing to my career as a novelist by refusing to take me on to the staff of the *Sunday Times*.' There was a little touch of acid in there because I could have done with the steady salary which a staff job would have given me.

But in 1956 the Editor of the *Sunday Times* was Nag Caley,[ii] an Englishman who had been educated at Rugby School. He was the only man I ever knew who invariably wore two old school ties simultaneously – one around his neck in the normal manner, and the other around his waist to hold up his trousers.

It was Caley who gave me an early lesson in journalism. It was 2am on a Sunday morning, the paper had just been put to bed, the first edition scanned

[ii] N.A.G. Caley editor of the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* from 1947-1958.

over a welcome cold beer, and the journalistic staff was preparing to go home, leaving the production staff to get on with it. Caley, whom I hardly knew at the time, an Editor being akin to God, said, 'Where do you live?'

'Abel Road.'

'It's on my way; I'll give you a lift.'

So we drove through Hillbrow and into Berea and I directed him to *Carse O'Gowrie*, [16 Abel Road, Berea, Johannesburg [3]] the small private hotel where I lived. I got out of the car, closed the door, and Caley said, 'What the hell is a carse?'

'I don't know,' I said.

He grunted. 'You live there and you don't know? Find out, and let me know on Tuesday morning.' I watched his rear lights receding along Abel Road.

I walked into his office on Tuesday morning. 'About that carse,' I said. It's a Scottish word, meaning a bank of alluvial gravel along a river. The Carse O'Gowrie is in Perthshire, along the Firth of Tay and not far from Dundee.'

Caley nodded briefly. 'Never be willingly ignorant,' he said. 'If you don't know, find out. You never know when it will be useful.'

Well, I have never found a use for the Carse O' Gowrie yet but, if I do, I will know what it is.

There was no shortage of others to give me advice. Terence Clarkson, a grey-haired, veteran reporter, once said, 'Young Bagley, the only way a reporter can look upon a politician is down.'

It might seem strange to outsiders but there is no connection between the political beliefs of a newspaperman and the political complexion of the paper for which he works. The *Rand Daily Mail* was a liberal newspaper and soon

to become more so under the crusading zeal of Laurence Gandar,[iii] but quite a number of staff reporters supported the governing Nationalist Party.

Few newspapermen have strong and over-riding political convictions; they see too much and tend to be cynical about the aspirations of professional politicians, and the likelihood is that they know more about what is really going on than the politician isolated in his seat of power and relying on advisors. What you read in your newspaper is but the tip of an iceberg, only that which can be *proved* and proved, if need be, in a court of law. But behind it there is a vast amount of information which the journalist knows, in his heart of hearts, to be true but for which he has no hard proof. Frederick Forsythe, a one-time international correspondent, has made a small fortune out of taking those unprovable and unprintable stories and dressing them up as fiction.

And newspapers in South Africa have more reason to be careful about what they print than in, say, Britain or America. The freedom of the press has not yet been abrogated but there have been some narrow squeaks, and thus the amount of undisclosed information is larger there than in other countries. To find out what is really going on in South Africa have a heart-to-heart private talk with an experienced journalist of long standing.

As for me, I was, and still am, apolitical. There might have been here some relevance to the fact that I soon found that I was not a reporter. Newspaper journalists may be loosely divided into two broad groups – the reporters and the features men. Reporters are the men who write what is known as the 'hard' news; they go out and get the current, day-to-day facts of what is happening in the world and turn them into stories, preferably with large headlines. Speculation is discouraged; facts are what matter, and no one wants to know the opinion of a reporter.

[iii] Laurence Owen Vine Gandar (28 January 1915 – 15 November 1998) was a South African journalist and newspaper editor. He was appointed as editor at The *Rand Daily Mail* in October 1957.

I could no more go out and, say, watch a fire in the city and then dash back to the office and write it up in half an hour than I could fly. My words on paper concerning that fire would be more likely to be distilled over weeks, months, or, even, years. This foible comes out particularly strongly in the writing of my novels. My book, *Flyaway*, was largely written around my own personal experience of the Sahara. I have been in the Sahara twice, the crossing I described earlier which was in 1947 and another, double crossing, which I made with my wife in 1971.[4] But I wrote *Flyaway* in 1977 and it was published in 1978. Others of my books have been marinated for even longer in my unconscious mind.

I was a terrible reporter so I became a features man. The features man *is* allowed to speculate; in fact, he is encouraged to do so. Some feature writers specialise in political comment and the most specialised of these political writers are those who write the editorial leaders setting out firmly the political stance of the newspaper. I refrained from politics and became a generalist.

Looking over my scrapbooks I find articles on the high cost of marriage, on the manufacture of neon signs, on divorce, on allergies, on the censorship of books in South Africa, on the need for a civil defence organisation, on the growing use of microfilm, on computers as applied to chess and war, on office automation, on the connection between sport and finance in South Africa, on fencing (the kind with swords, not barbed wire). As it turned out it seemed that the comment Hux had made to Carel Birkby, 'This is Desmond Bagley. He reckons he can write about anything', was turning out to be reasonably true.

But I did turn out one hard news story which hit the headlines, and which needed a fair bit of investigative journalism, although that phrase was unknown in those days. I knew a man called Mommsen, the grandson of Mommsen, the German historian, who won the Nobel Prize for his *History of Rome* in 1903. (You can see I am following Caley's advice).

My Mommsen was incongruously occupied, in view of his grandfather's occupation, in inspecting meat in the Johannesburg abattoir. We were having a drink one day when he let something slip concerning the high throughput at the abattoir and how the meat inspectors were unhappy. Not long before there had been cases of measles being found in the flesh on sale, so I decided to follow this up.

It was difficult to get anyone to talk, which I found odd in view of the fact that most people like to talk about their work, thus displaying their skill. No one at the abattoir was keen to get his name in the paper which I found understandable when I elicited the following facts.

The Johannesburg abattoir was built to serve the city but then became a regional abattoir and, later, a national abattoir, killing beasts for export from the country. The point was that the facilities had not been commensurately increased. The average daily throughput was 1,100 cattle, 400 calves, 3,000 sheep and 1,000 pigs – 5,500 beasts in all.

By law each animal had to be inspected by a veterinarian surgeon before being killed. There were three vets working a nine-hour shift, so simple arithmetic told me that the inspection of an animal lasted 20 seconds. Also by law the animal had to be inspected when dead. A meat inspector had to look at the viscera as soon as the carcase was cut, to make cuts in certain parts of the carcase himself, and to inspect certain glands. There were 21 inspectors and again simple arithmetic came into play. An inspector was allowed two minutes per carcase.

When this was published in the *Sunday Times*[5] - it caused quite a stir. Leslie Hurd, the Chairman of the Health and Social Affairs Committee had a great deal of explaining to do; a municipal enquiry was made and, hopefully, Johannesburg was on its way to getting a new and more hygienic abattoir. But two weeks after publication Leslie Hurd was set upon by some louts and beaten

so badly he spent several weeks in hospital. I hope my story had nothing to do with that.

REFERENCES

[1] 'Through the Centuries they have been bringing people back from the dead – The advance of medical science': Johannesburg *Star*, 21 August 1956.

[2] *The South African Municipal Magazine*, Vol. 40, No. 484, December 1957, pp.17-18, archived in The British Library under shelf mark: P.P.3611.tka.

[3] Bagley, Desmond, address noted in scrapbook; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 6, VII A: Scrapbook 1 Aug 1956 – Feb 1960.

[4] 'Sahara itinerary 16 January – 14 February 1971'; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, III, A: 6 *Flyaway*.

[5] 'Inquiry into Rand Abattoir Called For - 'Highly Insanitary' Conditions Alleged': Johannesburg S*unday Times*, 20 January 1957.

CHAPTER 7

The Federal Hotel, Journalistic Pseudonyms and Joan Brown (1958 – 1960)

No account of journalism in the Johannesburg of the fifties and sixties can leave out the Federal Hotel and some of its more idiosyncratic habitués. The Federal was situated equidistant from the building occupied by South African Associated Newspapers and Broadcasting House, and so it was a favourite rendezvous of journalists and broadcasters. There was also a scattering of advertising types.[i]

The Elizabeth Hotel, on the other side of town, served the same function for the Argus Press, a rival newspaper group. The journalists of Johannesburg had never got around to forming a Press Club, although the idea had often been mooted, and so these two hotels served as informal clubs, rather like El Vino's on Fleet Street. But it did mean that the two groups of pressmen kept apart, which was a pity.

South African Associated Newspapers ran a clutch of papers; the *Rand Daily Mail*, the *Sunday Times*, the *Sunday Express*, and the *Financial Times*. Most of the journalists who worked for these papers could be found at one time or another in the Federal Hotel where they congregated to compare notes and discuss the events of the day. If you telephoned a man and he was not in his office, it was an automatic reaction to ring the Federal. But, Mossie, the black head waiter, was tactful. He would take the call, then come into the bar, and say, 'A telephone call, Mr Bagley – are you here?' A lot of the chaps were taking refuge from their wives – or mistresses.

[i] Completed in 1938 the Federal Hotel, located at 68-70 Polly Street, Hillbrow, Johannesburg, is now Grade A listed by the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation.

The Federal was by no means a grand hotel. It was run down and a little shabby, like a fair number of those who drank there, including me. It was owned and managed by Dick Lourandos, a Greek, who was the kindest and most trusting of men. Anyone who would extend credit to a bunch of journalists *must* have been trusting. In later years, and until I married, I lived in the Federal and when I left I owed Dick £50, a not inconsiderable sum in 1960. He shrugged aside my apologies for non-payment. 'Pay me when you can.' I did.

But journalists are incorrigible jokers and had no mercy on Dick. Once, when trouble between Greeks and Turks had flared up yet again on Cyprus, someone wrote in lipstick on the mirror in the antiquated lift the words, 'Dick Lourandos is a Turk.' Dick, who had the misfortune to be born in Smyrna in Turkey but who was a Greek of the Greeks, came into the bar fairly gobbling with rage. 'What for you call me a turkey?'

In the lobby of the Federal was a notice announcing that dogs were NOT permitted. Douglas Laws, a popular broadcaster of that period, brought into the hotel a baby hippopotamus on a leash. Dick did not think that at all funny but, in his rage, could only splutter speechlessly and wave at the notice, whereupon Laws said, quite reasonably, that the notice mentioned nothing about hippopotamuses.

Eric Cordell was a news reader for the South African Broadcasting Corporation. He ran a vintage Rolls Royce and, when he came into the Federal, he unscrewed the Silver Lady from the bonnet and brought her in with him. It was that kind of neighbourhood.

The boys decided to play a joke on Cordell. They concocted a story purporting to come from New Zealand and smuggled it into the sheaf of papers from which he read before the microphone. The story concerned an incident in the New Zealand town of Taumatawhakatangihangakoauau-

otamateapokaiwhenuakitanatahu,[ii] and the name was repeated three times in the report. Cordell had a hell of a struggle.

Ian Reid had a dog, a nondescript mongrel and the only animal licenced by Dick Lourandos to frequent the Federal. Reid was about to leave for England and another reporter agreed to look after the dog while he was away, but before he left we discussed the possibility of playing a trick on the London *Times*. That august newspaper is noted, on occasion, for the remarkable silliness of its correspondence columns, something Reid thought he could exploit.

'That,' he announced, pointing to his dog, 'is an *aardvarkhond*. That sounds good. An inquiry into that breed should bring results.'

If the correspondence flags you can always keep it going by writing it under another name,' I said.

He nodded, and proceeded to embellishments. 'The breed was first developed in the eighteen hundreds by Mkilikatze, chief of the Ndebele in Rhodesia.'

'About the same time that the Rhodesian ridgeback came up,' I suggested, adding verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative.

'That's about it,' said Reid. 'It was, of course, bred for hunting aardvarks. Now, what we want to know is why the breed is not recognised by The Kennel Club. That should stir things up.'

Reid left for England, but I do not know if he went through with the project.[iii]

If we played hard, we worked hard and, it must be admitted, we drank hard. In those days the bars were shut on Sundays and public drinking was only permitted to a hotel resident or his guest. One Sunday afternoon, when I lived

[ii] A hill near Porangahau, south of Waipukurau in southern Hawke's Bay, New Zealand. The hill is notable primarily for its unusually long name, which is of Māori origin and is often shortened to Taumata for brevity.

[iii] Unsurprisingly The Kennel Club does not currently list aardvarkhund in its Breed Information database.

in the Federal, I inspected the visitors' book and found to my surprise that I had had no less than 36 guests. It was a good thing I did not have to pay for their drinks.

[In 1958 Bagley started to experiment with novel writing and archived in his papers are two novels written in longhand each in three Eclipse 'skryfboek' exercise books:
'Ex Machina' dated 2 -26 January 1958 (52,263 words – an incomplete work).[1]
'Clare' dated 1-17 December 1958 (49,011 words – a completed work), which also bore the working titles of 'The Hydrophobic Triangle' and 'For a Pastime'.[2]]

Stan Hurst came into my life. He became Features Editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* some time after Carel Birkby, and we became good friends. He taught me a lot about writing, mainly by wielding a blue pencil, and kept me well fed with assignments.

[A close friendship developed between Stan Hurst and Bagley, with Hurst acting as mentor to the fledgling journalist. During an interview Bagley said of Hurst:

> *I'm writing my autobiography at the moment. I'm about 177 pages in and I've dedicated it to Stan. He helped me enormously, when I became a journalist Stan took me in hand and taught me how to string words together to make approximate sense,' Bagley chuckles at the memory, 'Stan taught me mainly by throwing stuff back at me and making me re-write it. He's a professional to his fingertips, Stan, one of the best newspaper editors in the game.* [3]

Hurst was to later fulfil the role of best man to Bagley at his wedding to Joan Brown. Referring to his friend as 'Baggers', he is also mentioned in the dedication of Bagley's novel *Night of Error:*

For STAN HURST, at last, with affection

Bagley had first attempted *Night of Error* in 1963 and then put it aside, it was finally published the year after his death in 1984, 21 years later, following completion by his widow, Joan. It is probable that Joan, aware of the dedication to Stan in the unpublished manuscript 'Writer', included the dedication to Stan herself in *Night of Error.*]

There was a time when I was writing so much for the *Mail* that I had to develop a stable of pseudonyms otherwise it would have appeared that the whole newspaper was written by one man. Looking at my scrapbooks I find John Reid (no relation to Ian Reid), Anthony Cantrell, Simon Brockhurst and John Lackland, as well as Desmond Bagley.

[The Cantrell articles had the series title 'The Cost of....', and dealt with the financial aspects of events in everyday life, such as 'Getting Married', 'Having a Baby' and 'Getting Divorced'. Interestingly the first of this series was published under his own name and the others under the pseudonym.

Excelling at writing articles on topics of a technical and scientific nature, one feature titled 'A magia do Micro-filme' was published in Portuguese under his own name, however the English version also appeared in the *Rand Daily Mail* in English as 'Microfilm – A Modern Miracle', credited to his pseudonym 'John Reed'.

Simon Brockhurst was occasionally abbreviated to 'S.B.' and in later years Bagley was to use 'Brockhurst Publications, Ltd.' as his copyright company. Amongst Bagley's collection of press cuttings are two small articles from the

Rand Daily Mail, published under either the pseudonym or column name of 'Justin Pound'.

Appendix I records a list of published South African newspaper articles authored by Bagley. The list, though not definitive, details articles retained by the author in his personal papers together with those identified through additional research. Bagley wrote many more articles often uncredited or under generic journalistic bylines such as 'Staff Reporter' or 'Own Correspondent'.]

The John Lackland pseudonym came almost by chance. Hurst had been promised a series of six articles on hydroponics, the technique of growing plants without soil. He had announced the forthcoming series in the *Mail* but he was nearing the deadline and had been let down – he had no articles. I think it was in desperation that he turned to me. 'Can you do something about this?'

Knowing nothing whatsoever about hydroponics, I said, 'I'll give it a bang,' and got to work. In the event I wrote seventeen articles for that series. They were illustrated by Winder, the staff cartoonist, and the series proved a success.[iv] The only problem I had was the flood of letters asking for further advice; those queries not directly concerned with hydroponics I passed on to the regular gardening correspondent.

It was this type of assignment which taught me much about research and how to go about it, and that training stood me in good stead in later years when I was writing novels, but what I learned then about hydroponics has vanished

[iv] Henry Edward 'Ted' Winder, born in London on 18 March 1897, served in France during the First World War as an Officer in the East Surry Regiment and was wounded at Ypres. Following his convalescence, he attended the Slade School of Fine Art at the University College London. In 1920 he moved to South Africa and began working as a sports cartoonist for the *Rand Daily Mail*. During the Second World War Winder lectured on the making of sketch maps, the use of natural features, night navigation and survival. He worked for the South African Newspapers Group as a cartoonist, cartographer and as art critic for the *Rand Daily Mail*.

from my mind. Still, if I want to do a bit of soilless gardening I can always go back to the scrapbooks. It seemed highly appropriate that I should choose as a pseudonym for the series the nickname of King John of England, but no one commented on it.

[The first of these regular Friday articles, 'Teach yourself Hydroponics — No. 1 Grow fruit, veg., and all in your own flat!', was published in the *Rand Daily Mail* on 29 April 1960, with the last article published on 26 August 1960.]

Barbara Moore, a Russian in spite of her name, was then causing much comment by her vigorous and lengthy walks around England to promote her somewhat cranky views on fitness and diet, and others were beginning to imitate her.[v] Stan Hurst, in his search for ways to increase the circulation of the *Rand Daily Mail*, had a different kind of promotion in mind. 'Do you think people would go for some sort of walking race?' he asked.

'They might. How far?'

'It's got to stretch their legs,' he said. 'This bloody Moore woman is walking hundreds of miles. What about from Parys to Pretoria?'

Parys is in the Orange Free State and Pretoria is in the Transvaal, and some 130 miles of hilly country separates them. 'Their legs will be stretched,' I said sardonically. 'How many entries would you expect?'

'Thirty, perhaps.' Hurst rubbed his chin reflectively. 'Maybe forty.'

Never did a man make such a disastrous miscalculation or under-estimate so seriously the temper of his public. With the first announcement on December 31, 1959,[4] the entries started to roll in. At the 200th entry within 48

[v] Dr Barbara Moore, born Anna Cherkasova, died in 1977 aged 73yrs, was a vegetarian and breatharian, believing it was possible for people to survive without food. In December 1959, she walked from Edinburgh to London and in early 1960 she walked from John o'Groats to Land's End in 23 days. She then undertook an 86-day, 3,387-mile walk from San Francisco to New York City, where she arrived on 6 July 1960.

hours Hurst hastily closed the competition – but the public took no notice. Letters poured into the office pleading, cajoling and even offering bribes. It seemed as though the entire population had been awaiting the chance to walk over a hundred miles in the broiling South African summer.

Hurst had a crisis on his hands. There was no existing organisation to cope with an operation of such increasing magnitude. Within four weeks such an organisation had to be created, and created it was out of blood, sealing wax, sweat, string and tears. Mitchell, the Circulation Manager, saw the potential, but asked plaintively, 'What Circulation Manager in the world has ever had occasion to order four dozen gross of safety pins, a thousand lead seals and umpteen hundred feet of Scotchlite.'[vi]

Commercial films also weighed in; we had lashings of Coca-Cola and Fanta, a pharmaceutical firm provided hundreds of packets of keep awake tablets guaranteed to be safe, and a local car firm provided the first prize, an Austin Mini which must have been one of the first Minis off the production line. Parys, a small holiday town, also offered numerous prizes of free holidays. Their Chamber of Commerce also saw the advantages of publicity.

But curiously enough, when things came to the push, the competitors were not particularly interested in the prizes – they were walking for the hell of it. Hurst had laid down conditions. 'This is for ordinary people,' he said. 'And so professional athletes are not eligible for prizes. Or gifted amateurs, come to that.' But when it came to the actual Big Walk many professional athletes did compete even though they knew they would win nothing. It seemed as though insanity had come to South Africa.

Hurst thought it wise to organise the Big Walk into at least two divisions, and so [on Friday 29 January 1960 [5]] 215 set out from Parys in the first division. Hurst said worriedly, 'How fast can a man walk?' Being crafty he

[vi] Reflective tape.

wanted to time the start so that the competitors would tie up the shopping traffic in Johannesburg the next day which was Saturday. In the event he underestimated the speed and the main body passed through Johannesburg in the darkness of the early hours of Saturday. In addition, the field became spread out and the winner walked into Church Square, Pretoria, as the stragglers were crossing the Vaal at Vereeniging, 65 miles to the rear. The winner of that first division was Bill Jones, a bricklayer, and I think he did it in about 36 hours. [27hrs 33min 13sec. [6]]

The Reverend Longstaff, on the other hand, took five days and would not be dissuaded from completing the course. Apparently his parishioners were sponsoring him at so much a mile, the money going to the church fund. When I asked him to retire on the grounds of his physical welfare he was adamant. 'Young man, I *promised* to walk to Pretoria,' he said gravely. 'I am thinking of my spiritual welfare.' A staff car had to be allocated to him to protect him from the traffic.

My part in this was to act as sheep dog guarding the stragglers and I reckon I must have covered the course at least sixteen times in a car. The competitors were required to wear a large numbered card fore and aft which was bordered with brightly reflective Scotchlite. At three a.m. on Saturday morning I saw a man walking along wearing a singlet and shorts but with no card. I pulled up alongside. 'Where's your card?'

'Oh, I'm not competing in this division,' he said. 'I'm practicing for the next one.'

That was my first meeting with Tom Doig who was a big, rawboned Australian, out of work at the time. He used the opportunity of the Big Walk to put himself next to the top brass of the *Rand Daily Mail* and promoted himself a job in the Advertising Department for which he worked for many years.

It was Doig who, several years later, saw a *tsotsi* – a young, black scallywag – snatch a bag from a white woman in a Johannesburg street. The *tsotsi* ran towards Doig which was a mistake because Doig had a big fist and knew how to use it. Putting his foot on the prostrate *tsotsi*, he handed the woman back her bag, and then looked around. 'Why are the coppers never around when you want them?' he asked.

'Oh,' said the woman. 'I don't want to get mixed up with the police. I might get my name in the paper.'

Doig gave her a disgusted look and, picking up the *tsoti*, he shook some sensibility into him. He plucked the handbag from the woman's hand and pressed it on to the bewildered lad, saying, 'Run, you little bastard!'

But I digress.

Entries were still pouring in for the second leg of the Big Walk and Stan Hurst was at his wits' end. He saw a bleak future where the Features Editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* would be doing nothing but organising sporting events. He decided to put the genie back into the bottle. 'How many buses can we hire?' he asked. 'Damn it, we'll throw the whole thing open to all corners.' So it was on the morning of the second leg of the Big Walk [Friday 5 February 1960 [7]] that 11 buses outside the *Rand Daily Mail* office were filled with 550 people to be taken to Parys.

Meanwhile the organisation had been jacked up by capitalising on our mistakes. The Vespa Club, which had provided marshals for the first walk, was joined by the Lambretta Club; the Red Cross, which had given priceless service, was fully alerted; control cars were fitted with radio communication, and there was a mobile office.

Hurst, surveying the scene at the starting line in Parys, commented, 'This looks like the beaches at Dunkirk.' And indeed it did. There were the same sinuous lines of hundreds of men and the same air of military operation. We

sent them off in batches of 20 at 30 second intervals, and the timekeepers were kept busy checking numbers.

The scene I remember most from the second Big Walk was at midnight just outside Vereeniging where the Red Cross had set up a first aid station. The Red Cross looked upon the Big Walk with favour because it provided them with a full scale training exercise and this looked like a dressing station on a battlefield. Bodies lay all about in contorted attitudes under the mobile lights while calves were massaged and blisters dressed, and the casualties were packed into buses like stacking cordwood to be taken back to Johannesburg.[vii]

Bill Jones' time set in the first Big Walk was beaten by just over four hours, and the race was won by Wally Hayward, [with a time of 23hrs 21min 15sec. [8]] but he did not get the prize. Hayward was a runner; he had won the Old Comrades' Marathon from Durban to Pietermaritzburg, he had won the London to Brighton race and, at the time of the Big Walk, he held the world record for distance run in 24 hours with 159 miles and 562 yards. [The official winner of the second leg was therefore Alan Ferguson, with a time of 24hrs 45min 30sec.[9]]

I interviewed him [Hayward] immediately after the race as he was having his legs massaged in the mobile hospital in Church Square, Pretoria. He confessed that the Big Walk had been the toughest race of his life because he was naturally a runner and heel-to-toe walking was not his metier. Wally Hayward was then 52 years old.[viii]

[vii] Cordwood – wood that has been cut into uniform lengths, used especially as firewood or for building.

[viii] Wallace ('Wally') Henry Hayward (10 July 1908 – 28 April 2006) was a South African endurance athlete with a 60-year career. He won the Comrades Marathon five times and completed the distance of around 90 km the last time just before his eighty-first birthday.

All those who finished the course were given a medal to commemorate the event. I awarded myself a medal because I thought I deserved it, and it is before me on my desk as I now write.

All this to say that there is more to journalism than writing.

But writing there was. I became a film critic for the *Rand Daily Mail*, not the chief critic, it is true, but the second string critic. There was no television in South Africa in those days and there were queues outside the many cinemas, something not seen in Britain since the war. And there were many films because Hollywood was still churning them out for those benighted countries to which the goggle box had not yet penetrated.

The first line critic was Dora Sowden who got the pick of the films while I was stuck with the 'B' movies. Dora was an idiosyncratic reviewer; she once raved in public print about a long-forgotten epic called *The Beast of Budapest*, considering it as possibly the finest drama since *Hamlet*. But Dora had some percipience because this was one of Charles Bronson's early films, and he has emerged as a very bankable film star, if not actor.[ix]

The natural home of the 'B' movie in Johannesburg was the Plaza outside which cinema could be found, on any given evening, a hundred motor cycles parked, while the leather-jacketed riders and their birds were inside enjoying the delights of *I was a Teenage Werewolf* or *Abbott and Costello go to Mars*. I saw so many third-rate Westerns that Audie Murphy nearly became my favourite film star.

It was now that I encountered a point of moral principle. I was, at the same time, film critic for the Johannesburg Film Society, which was criticism of an

[ix] A 1958 melodrama produced by Allied Artists Pictures Corporation exploiting the 1956 Hungarian uprising. Charles Bronson, born Charles Dennis Buchinski, is not credited as appearing in this film and by 1958 was an established television and film actor credited in his own right. It is possible Bronson has been mistaken for the similar looking actor Robert Blake, who played the part of Karolyi in the film.

entirely higher order. How to reconcile the two? To clear my mind, I wrote the following essay purely for my own information. Incidentally the Johannesburg Film Society is the only organisation I know whose journal changes its title annually.

The Function of the Film Critic (1960)

This essay is a result of several conversations I have had with other film critics in Johannesburg about the professional standards of the critic, but should rather have been titled – *The Function of the Newspaper Film Critic*. The working journalist has neither the time nor space for deep analysis and leaves the 'higher criticism' to such specialist journals as *Cinema 59*.

There are three types of review to be read in our newspapers. The first is quite frankly a 'blurb'. The public relations departments of the large film companies are assiduous in pushing puffs, and it is quite understandable that they should want the best possible light thrown on their own films.

Into the office of the film critic there pours an unending stream of glossy art paper, sometimes expensively printed in full colour, and always containing laudatory praise of the films concerned. The Public Relations Officers even go to the length of including a review of the film with a blank space left where the name of the cinema can be inserted. It goes without saying that no matter how bad the film nothing derogatory is said in *that* review. I do not know why they bother because I have never known a newspaper critic to palm one of these puffs on to the public as a genuine review. The situation is, of course, quite different with the popular film magazines which are filled with little else and which are, in effect, the house magazines of the film companies.

The working critic has little time for deep thought. Take the reviewer for a morning daily who sees a film in the evening; he emerges from the cinema at 10.45pm, dashes to his office and scribbles a review which has to be set in type and on the presses before they roll at midnight for the first edition. He is lucky if he can spend even half-an-hour in the writing.

Thus we have the second type of review which can be called descriptive. The critic, unable to spend time in analysis, confines himself to a mere

description of the action and maybe a brief comment to the effect that he liked or disliked the film.

Lucky is the critic who has a regular column of his own in which to spread himself. This critic usually works on a weekly newspaper, has time to think and space to spare for a somewhat lengthy review of at least one film each week, and should approximate in his work to the higher criticism of the specialist magazine. It is unfortunate that this does not always happen, because the reviewer on a South African weekly newspaper is not normally allowed to devote himself to film criticism as a full-time job. He may combine criticism with feature editing during the week and is usually a sub-editor at weekends. Thus he may have as little time to spare as the hard pressed daily critic. This situation does not obtain on the larger newspapers overseas.

There are critics and critics. It might be thought that in view of an article I wrote which has appeared in a previous number of *Cinema 59* that I have little time for critics. I dislike those critics who set themselves up as gods who are always right, whose standards are excessively finical and who are determined not to give anyone an even break. Too many critics use the space at their disposal as a means of displaying like a peacock their wit and knowledge.

In other forms of art such as painting, a masterpiece is not produced each year, nor each decade. We are lucky if a truly great painting or musical work is produced each half century, so why should film be any different? But the super-critic judges by impossibly high standards and damns any film falling below, no matter how entertaining or technically sound that film is. It is so easy to blast a film from the detachment of Olympian heights; so easy to hurl those shafts of wit which delight the reader into saying, ‘So-and-so has done it again; he’s a damn fine critic.’ But the hardest of all films to review is that which is moderately good and the critic should not hesitate to praise it in due measure. After all, we get so few films which are even good.

In my opinion the film critic is no better than anyone else as a judge of films. In fact, he might be worse, for the ordinary cinemagoer can choose the films he sees while the critic is duty bound to see them all and his critical sense may be atrophied by the sheer quantity of badness which is thrust upon him.

However, the critic should have certain qualifications. He should be knowledgeable about the history of the film; he should have a rough working knowledge of how a film is made, and he should keep a careful eye on the technical film credits – everyone can assess the worth of a star, but how many follow the careers of the technicians, the camera operators and editors.

There are many pressures put upon the critic. There is the pressure of time to which I have referred, but equally constricting is the pressure of space. The critic may have seen the world's finest film and arrives back at his office to find that the Night Editor has allocated him a mere two column inches – about 80 words – in which to laud it. Or he may have seen the world's worst film and be obliged to fill up nine inches with a lot of nonsense.

The next time you read a review in a South African newspaper which does not meet with your approval do not condemn it out of hand. Think first that the critic has his own opinion, and secondly that his job is by no means as easy and enjoyable as a lot of people may think.

In 1960, the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Union of South Africa, Johannesburg went into competition with Cannes and organised an International Film Festival. It was no contest. Still we had fun; invitations were issued, entries were received and, in due course, the judges met to pick the winners.

There were five judges; the film critics from the *Star* and *Sunday Express* whose names I now forget, James Ambrose Brown from the *Sunday Times*, myself from the *Rand Daily Mail* and someone from the Film Society. We all assembled early one Sunday morning, together with various hangers-on, in a far-flung suburban cinema and prepared to have our eyeballs stretched.

The procedure was simple. Each judge had a push-button which, when pressed, lit a lamp in the projectionist's box. To push the button was a vote *against* the film, and if the projectionist saw three lamps lit he stopped the film and went on to the next one. Thus the voting was secret. No judge knowing which of the others had given the thumbs down.

Those push-buttons worked overtime. We had not expected an entry of the level of Cannes or others of the great film festivals, but we certainly did not expect the abysmal quality of the films we saw. True, no one could fault the work of Bert Haanstra of Holland whose documentaries on glass and the canals of Holland are among the finest ever made. The rest were something else again. We had primitive cartoons from Czechoslovakia, didactic propaganda films from the Soviet Union and various other horrors.

The *pièces de résistance* came from Japan – a four-hour-long turgid, historical costume drama called *The Mask of Destiny*. Many fine films have come from Japan, *Rashomon* and *Seven Samurai* for instance, but *The Mask of Destiny* is not to be counted among them. And the damned thing went on and on for the full four hours. After it was over each judge swore that he had

pressed his button and the general opinion was that the projectionist must have liked it.[x]

The Johannesburg Film Festival could not be regarded as an unqualified success.

And so there I was, turning my hand to anything that came along. I reviewed records of classical music on a regular basis, a task which had its own peculiar hazards. If I was not in the office when the week's consignment arrived the records would mysteriously disappear into thin air before I could review them – there were a few light-fingered folk about. Many of the discs now in my own cabinet have stamped on the sleeve: FOR PROMOTIONAL USE ONLY.

I regularly went with Lean Bennett of the *Sunday Times* on the late 'disaster round', an 11pm Saturday night tour of the police stations and the casualty wards of the hospitals to see if any last minute murders had occurred. There was always something to do and new things to hear, the best of which could not possibly be printed in a family newspaper. All in all, it was good training.

[Later commenting on this period of his life Bagley said that his 'one aim in life in April 1960 was to cover the Union Expo' held at Milner Park in Johannesburg. Not only did Bagley manage to achieve his aim, but it was at that event on Saturday 9 April, marking the Golden Jubilee of the founding of the Union of South Africa, that he was to witness an assassination attempt on South Africa's Prime Minister Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd.

The Rand Easter Show, organised by the Witwatersrand Agricultural Society, was originally intended as an agricultural show, but was taken over by industry, becoming a showplace for nearly every industrial country in the

[x] It is unclear whether Bagley is referring to *The Mask of Destiny* – original Japanese title *Shuzenji monogatari*, released five years earlier in 1955. With an unsuccessful Golden Lion nomination for best film at the 16th Venice International Film Festival in 1955, IMDB shows the film's run time as 1hr 45min.

world to display their innovation in agriculture, industry and commerce. The emphasis was on international trade and around this time the British were showcasing their atomic power plants, and ZETA (Zero Energy Thermonuclear Reactor), built at Harwell laboratory, the Atomic Energy Research Establishment.

With Bagley's love of science fiction and his background as an engineer he was clearly in his element and he continued to report on the Rand Easter Shows for the following three years. He was appointed as News Editor for the *Rand Show Supplement* in 1963 and in January of that year, in some early correspondence with his editor Robert Knittel, he mentioned the following possibility:

> *I have another type of book in mind which I would very much like to write. For the last six years I have covered the Rand Easter Show as a newspaper reporter and it is my ambition to do for the International Show or Fair what Arnold Bennett and Richard Llewellyn did for the luxury hotel (Imperial Palace and Chez Pavano) and what Norman Collins did for the department store (Bond Street Story).*[10]

Bagley also wrote articles for inclusion in *The Manufacturer*, the official journal of the South African Federated Chamber of Industries,[11] The journal included annual reviews of the Rand Easter Show published under the byline 'by a Correspondent'.]

I took up the sport of fencing in 1940, regarding it as a form of high-speed chess, and when I went to South Africa I kept it up, joining clubs in Durban and, later, Johannesburg. My *maitre d'armes* was Ugo Monticelli. Count Ugo Monticelli di Veroli, a Genovese nobleman was usually known as Monty and, naturally enough, taught a variant of the Italian school of fencing. He was a

fine fencer, although not as good as he thought, and was an ideal master for the beginner but never succeeded in bringing any of his pupils up to championship class.

Because he was a respected member of the South African fencing community, when he had gone back to Italy and the news came through that he had died, the Ugo Monticelli Memorial Trophy was established and was won in the first year by, I believe, one of the Burger brothers from the German Club. During the Memorial Trophy match the following year, in the middle of a particularly tense bout, who should walk into the *salle* but Monty with the announcement that, like Mark Twain, the report of his death was greatly exaggerated.

It was at a fencing club party that I first met a girl with the romantic name of Joan Brown. At least, it was the first time to my conscious knowledge. She worked in a book shop which I frequented and, no doubt, had sold books to me from time to time. We got on well together at the party and I invited her to dinner the following Sunday. On the Monday I took her to the circus.

I was covering the circus for the *Rand Daily Mail* and Joan discovered that there were perquisites to journalism. At the end of the performance, when the audience was departing, Joan made to rise, and I said, 'Stick tight,' so she relapsed, wondering why. She soon found out because a backstage party was laid on, inasmuch as a circus can be said to have a stage, and Joan was delighted to meet Tickey, the clown, a childhood idol, and was mildly surprised to discover that he was an Afrikaner with little English.[xi]

[xi] Tickey the Clown, born Eric Hoyland, (1916-1988) was a circus performer for more than 50 years, and was perhaps South Africa's best known and loved clown. In 1960 he was performing with Boswell's Circus at Milner Park, and in common with the founder of the circus for which he worked, James Boswell, was born in Yorkshire later relocating to South Africa.

On the Tuesday I proposed marriage. I had known Joan for ten days. It took her two whole weeks to say ‘Yes’, but because neither of us had much money we decided to defer the wedding until we had accumulated a stockpile.

REFERENCES

[1] Bagley, Desmond, 'Ex Machina'; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, IV, manuscripts C.

[2] Bagley, Desmond, 'The Hydrophobic Triangle' / 'For A Pastime' / 'Clare'; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, IV, manuscripts D.

[3] Wells, Keith, 'A Conversation with Desmond Bagley': *Arab Times* Supplement, 30 October 1980, pp. 10-12.

[4] 'Marching to Pretoria – for a big prize': *Rand Daily Mail,* 31 December 1959, p.1.

[5] 'They're off… on the first Big Walk today!': *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 January 1960, p.7.

[6] 'Full results of 107-mile marathon': *Rand Daily Mail*, 9 February 1960, p.3.

[7] 'Almost ready to leave': *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 February 1960, p.9.

[8] 'Full results of 107-mile marathon': *Rand Daily Mail*, 9 February 1960, p.3.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Bagley, Desmond, correspondence to Knittel, Robert, Collins publishers, 21 January 1963; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, III, A 4 *The Golden Keel*.

[11] Bagley, Desmond, 'Notes on Desmond Bagley'; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, II, Envelope A, A.

CHAPTER 8

An Assassination at Milner Park (1960)

Once separated from their typewriters or quill pens writers are a gregarious lot. I am a member of the Detection Club and the Crime Writers' Association of Britain (CWA), and the Mystery Writers of America (MWA). While I do not write specifically about crime we writers of novels of action seem to find a natural home among the crime writers.

[Whereas the Crime Writers' Association was seen as the professional body, the much older Detection Club had been established as a private dining club for authors of detective stories, which set puzzles for the reader to solve (if they could) before the fictional detective, but by 1978, many thriller writers such as Eric Ambler, Gavin Lyall and Len Deighton were established members.]

Each national organisation usually has its own annual conference, but it was decided to hold the First Crime Writers' International Congress (CWIC-1) in London in 1975.

The event duly took place, delegates coming from as far away as Japan, and the Americans and Scandinavians were particularly strongly represented. The Americans elected to be hosts for CWIC-2 which was to be held in 1978 in New York. Such a congress takes a long time in preparation and so it was that in 1976 I received a rather curious letter from Brian Garfield of the MWA.

He had a bright idea. In order to keep down the expenses of CWIC-2 the MWA were going to publish a book; a publisher had been lined up and the $5,000 advance on royalties was to go to meet the expenses of the Congress, and any further royalties would be distributed among the contributors to the

book. I was to be a contributor and what Garfield wanted were accounts of *real life* crime in which writers of fiction had themselves been involved.

I looked at my wife blankly. 'I'm a law-abiding citizen,' I said. 'I haven't been involved in any crime. I'm afraid Brian is going to lose out on this one.'

Joan said, 'Oh, yes you have. What about the shooting of Verwoerd?'

'That's an idea,' I said, and got down to the typewriter.

The piece duly appeared in the anthology, *I Witness*, published by *Times Books* of New York in 1978.[1] I feel privileged to have appeared in the company of such a group of distinguished writers. While written long after the event I think that this account of the work of a newspaperman finds its natural place here.

[The Third Crime Writers' International Congress, CWIC-3, was held in Stockholm under the auspices of the Swedish Academy of Detection in the week preceding midsummers day of 1981. Bagley wrote a piece for the CWIC-3 brochure in which he mentions his friendship with Iwan Hedman-Morelius and his own predilection for the Northern European countries, having written novels set in Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland.[2] The Academy organised a short story competition for which there were over 400 entries. The cream of entries in the collection were published later that year as *Crime Wave* – for which Bagley wrote the introduction.[3]

The Bagleys' connection with the CWA and CWIC was later recorded in the book *Meeting with Authors and other people in the Book World* written by their close friends Iwan and Margareta Hedman-Morelius.[4]]

The Circumstances Surrounding the Crime (1977)

Nineteen-Sixty was not a particularly good year for South Africa. January was not too bad, but on 3 February Harold Macmillan, the British Prime Minister, made his famous 'wind of change' speech to the South African Parliament in which he warned of the storms to come. This did not sit well with South Africans, particularly those of the ruling Nationalist Party, who regarded it as an interference in South African internal affairs.

Then on 21 March an inexperienced police commander made a grave error of judgment when he gave the order to fire with machine guns on a crowd of demonstrating black Africans in the small town of Sharpeville.

Within thirty seconds the death toll was sixty-nine and many of those killed and wounded were women.

On 30 March a State of Emergency was declared in South Africa, and on 1 April the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution deploring the shootings at Sharpeville which were categorised as a massacre.

On 4 April the Union Expo at Milner Park opened its gates to the public.

By this time Johannesburg had become a magnet attracting the journalistic hot-shots – the international leg-men. World news is where you find *Time* magazine rubbing elbows with *Paris-Match*, both of them trying to get a beat on *Stern*. Noel Barber was there from London, and Robert Ruark represented Scripps-Howard. This was Ruark towards the end of his life – the famous hard-drinking, best-selling novelist and old Africa hand. At this time his idea of breakfast was half a bottle of Scotch and a couple of lightly boiled aspirins. I read one of his two-thousand-word cables and wondered how the desk man back in Chicago was going to make sense of it.

Then there was the brash character who entered the bar of the Federal Hotel, a drinking hole favoured by newspapermen and broadcasters,

announcing, ‘I’ve come to interview your Prime Minister – Forwards or Backwards or whatever his name is!’

And, of course, there was the home-grown newspaper talent such as James Ambrose Brown. After Sharpeville all the surviving wounded had been put into Baragwanath Hospital around which the Army had thrown an iron cordon. Jimmy Brown penetrated the ring by wearing a white coat, an ostentatious stethoscope, and a preoccupied medical expression. He got his exclusive eyewitness interviews and duly made his scoop. Early 1960 was an exciting time for newsmen in Johannesburg.

And where did I come into all this? I, too, was a newspaperman, freelancing for the *Rand Daily Mail* and the Johannesburg *Sunday Times*, and my one aim in life at the beginning of April 1960 was to cover the Union Expo. I was not interested in political matters and scurried about the feet of the journalistic giants doing my own thing. So let us take a look at the scene of the crime, the Union Expo, which was my beat.

Every year at Milner Park in Johannesburg there is an event called the Rand Easter Show. Originally it was an agricultural show – indeed it is still organised by the Witwatersrand Agricultural Society – but it has been overtaken by industry and taken on an international flavour because a dozen nations have built permanent exhibition halls which are brought into use only once each year for about ten days around Easter.

Here the French push their wines, perfumes, military helicopters, and minor guided missiles; the Germans display Bavarian beer and heavy machinery; the British offer Harris tweed, Scotch whisky, and Stilton cheese; the Japanese are there with transistor radios, the Czechs with Bohemian glass, and the Belgians with Browning rifles. The cattle, sheep, pigs, and goats are still there but somehow they seem lost among all the machinery.

Ironically, 1960, the year of disaster, was the Golden Jubilee of the founding of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The Government had decided

that this was an occasion for celebration, so a couple of new exhibition halls were built in Milner Park, artists and sculptors were commissioned to decorate them, and the Rand Easter Show was lengthened to three weeks and rechristened the Union Expo, a coinage to chill the blood of anyone who respects the English language. Attendance was expected to top the million mark.

Long before the gates opened on 4 April I had been busy. The *Rand Daily Mail*, Johannesburg's English morning newspaper, was to run a special daily supplement on the Expo and there were many pages to be filled. And I had hopes of pushing material to the *Sunday Times*, the *Mail's* stable companion. So I was kept busy interviewing exhibitors and anyone else who would provide a good story.

Among these was Kobus Esterhuysen, a relaxed Afrikaner who was an exhibition designer of no mean talent and who was responsible for the Combined Provinces Pavilion. He admitted rather shamefacedly that it was he who had coined the term Expo, and added that he was having trouble with the bats in the Transvaal Pavilion. It seemed he had an animal exhibit and the bats would not hang upside-down properly. It made a paragraph.[5]

By the time the Expo opened I was so busy that I drafted my girlfriend, Joan Brown, into helping me. All that first week we scurried about, me working full time, and Joan in the few hours she could spare from her job in a city book shop.

I had no time to think of the political scene but the politics were there and would not go away. The international pressmen were at the Expo in strength on Saturday, 9 April, because Prime Minister Vervoerd was to be guest of honour and was due to make a speech in the Main Arena, supposedly a 'keynote' speech on the State of Emergency.

Just before three I joined them in the arena, standing before the VIP box where C. J. Laubscher, the general manager of the Expo, was sitting with the

Prime Minister, the Mayor of Johannesburg, the President of the Witwatersrand Agricultural Society, and a dozen assorted visiting firemen, including my designer friend Kobus Esterhuysen. Behind us, in the arena, were about 500 prize cattle. There were thirty thousand onlookers in the stands.

I was with Stan Hurst, Features Editor and principle layout man of the *Sunday Times*. Stan was a good friend and was to be best man at the wedding when I married Joan later that year. He looked at Vervoerd, and said, 'He's got to pull a rabbit out of the hat today. He *must* – the country can't go on like this.'

Vervoerd made his speech in both English and Afrikaans, the two official languages of the country. It was of mind-numbing dullness, much to the disgust of the visiting newsmen who were not as hardened as were we locals to the stupefying qualities of South African political discourse. There was not a word spoken that was newsworthy, so when the speech ended they vanished from the arena, some going direct to the airport where they had booked flights for the Congo which was due to erupt at any moment, others back to their hotels, but most drifting into the bar, that haunt of all good newsmen, to swap lies and steal stories from each other.

But for Joan I would have joined them; South African barrooms were for men only.

The next item on the program was for Vervoerd to come down into the arena and inspect the cattle. 'A lousy speech,' Hurst commented. 'Nothing in it for me. I'm going home; maybe I'll take a nap.' He looked at Vervoerd who was chatting with Alec Gorshell, the Mayor of Johannesburg. 'Are you covering the cattle?'

I shook my head. 'I leave that to Terence Clarkson.' Clarkson was an elderly reporter on the *Rand Daily Mail*; he knew less about cattle than I did, but he could disguise his ignorance better. I grinned. 'He'll look up what he

wrote last year and rejig it.' I checked the time. 'I promised to meet Joan in the Members' Pavilion after the speech.'

Stan nodded. 'Okay; I'll see you in the office tonight.'

He went away, and I walked towards the Members' Pavilion which looked out on to the arena. The only newspaperman left was the photographer from the *Farmer's Weekly* who was stuck with the job of following the Prime Minister as he inspected the bovine regiment in a timeless ritual of South African life.

Joan was lucky enough to have found a table in the crowded Pavilion so I ordered strawberries and cream, dropped a few acid words about Vervoerd's speech, and then we got down to figuring the work plan for the rest of the day.

Less than five minutes later there was a slight disturbance in the arena, merely a couple of shouts and nothing more. None of us heard the gun. A man at the next table stood up and craned his neck, then sat down again. 'Nothing much,' he said. 'I think a bull got loose.'

The thought struck me that a bull loose in the same arena as a Prime Minister might prove interesting and, after all, I was a reporter. 'I'll be back in a couple of minutes,' I said to Joan.

I got into the arena by showing my press tag and headed towards the VIP box fifty yards away. There was a small crowd of perhaps a dozen men at the bottom of the stairs and the people who should have been seated around the box were standing and staring. There was not much noise; just a hum of conversation and the lowing of cattle from the arena.

As I got closer a struggling man was hauled away by two policemen. He was not being handled gently. Another man, a stranger, was lying on the steps, dead or unconscious, with someone bending over him. I touched the elbow of an onlooker. 'What's happening?'

'He *shot* him!'

'Who shot who?'

‘The bastard shot Vervoerd.’ The man’s tone was incredulous.

There wasn’t another reporter in sight. ‘*Who* shot Vervoerd?’

‘Someone called Spratt.’

‘Where is Vervoerd now?’

‘Lying on the bottom of the box there.’

The photographer from the *Farmer’s Weekly* was busy taking pictures. He had problems – three of them. The first was his camera. It was an elderly Speed Graphic five-by-four, cut-film camera, a type I thought was obsolete in the 1930s. Slow to load and heavy to hold. His second problem was that the VIP box was too high for him to see into. He was holding his camera above his head with stiffened arms, leaping into the air, and opening the shutter at the top of each leap in the dim hope of getting a useable picture.

His last problem was the Mayor of Johannesburg who hit him on the head with a rolled-up newspaper every time he leaped up.

I turned and ran back to the Members’ Pavilion and unceremoniously scooped up Joan from her table. I said in a low voice, ‘Vervoerd’s been shot; we’ve got to move fast.’

She got the point. ‘Where to?’

‘The press room.’

The press room at Milner Park offered jail like accommodation for frequently protesting reporters. There were a few battered and ink-stained deal tables, a few rickety chairs – and four telephones. In the bar of the Members’ Pavilion were half a hundred news-hungry reporters, each of whom would cheerfully give his arm for a telephone in the next fifteen minutes, and I was determined to get mine first.

The press room was empty. I said, ‘Ring *Sunday Times* editorial and tell them Vervoerd’s been shot by a man probably called Spratt. There’ll be more to follow as soon as I can find an eyewitness. And don’t let go of that bloody telephone no matter who wants it.’

On the way back to the arena I passed the door to the Members' Bar and hesitated. Maybe I'm not competitive enough and maybe I'm a damned fool but I pushed open the door and went in. There, bellied up against the bar counter, were the Fourth Estate's finest – the international team. Now, because I have a stammer, journalistic legend in Johannesburg has it that I went into the bar and shouted, 'Ver-Ver-Ver-Ver-voerd's b-b-b-been sh-sh-sh-sh-sh-sh-shot!'[6]

My version is that I caught the eye of Bennett, a reporter for the *Rand Daily Mail*, went up to him and said, not too loudly, 'Ver-Vervoerd's been shhhot.'

He grinned at me. 'Pull the other leg – it's got bells on it.' He went on drinking so I shrugged and left them to it.

I needed an eyewitness and then I remembered that Kobus Esterhuysen had been in the VIP box. He and I had got on well together so I elected him as my eyewitness and went in search of him. He was not hard to find because he was standing just by the VIP box.

'Hi, Kobus; hoe gaan dit?'

'Kannie kla nie.'

I switched into English because my Afrikaans, while serviceable enough to establish rapport with an Afrikaans speaker, was certainly not good enough for detailed discussion. 'Got anything to tell me?'

'What do you want to know?'

'Who shot the boss?'

'Pratt,' said Kobus. 'David Pratt.'

'Not Spratt?'

Kobus shook his head. 'I know him. David Pratt of Moloney's Eye.'

That brought me up short. 'Of *what*?'

'Moloney's Eye Trout Farm in the Magaliesburg. Pratt supplies all the Johannesburg restaurants.'

'Spell it,' I said, and Kobus obliged. 'Did you see it happen?'

‘Couldn’t help it,’ said Kobus. ‘We were just getting ready to go down into the arena when that *skelm*, Pratt, came into the box, said something to the Prime Minister and then shot him in the head twice.’

‘What did he say?’

‘I don’t know, he didn’t speak loudly. Anyway, I grabbed him, and …’

‘*You* did?’ Kobus was not only a model eyewitness but a participant.

‘That’s right. He was waving the gun about and struggled a bit. Then someone helped me and we got the gun off him – then the cops took him.’

The public address system blatted out, ‘Clear the arena of all those cattle. Will everybody leave the stands in an orderly manner and don’t panic – don’t PANIC – DON’T PANIC.’

Kobus looked across the arena to the stands on the far side. A restlessness was sweeping across the multihued crowd, and he said dispassionately, ‘Bloody fool! That’s enough to put anyone into a panic.’

I said, ‘Where’s Vervoerd now?’

Kobus jerked his thumb. ‘Still in the box. A doctor’s having a look at him.’

‘Then he’s alive?’

‘Only just.’

‘Know anything about Pratt?’

‘A bit. He …’

‘Save it,’ I said. ‘I have to get this back to the office. Where can I find you in the next half hour?’

‘I’ll be here, or in the Members’ Pavilion – upstairs.’

As I went back to the press room the loudspeakers were still blaring, ‘DON’T PANIC – DON’T PANIC,’ until suddenly the voice was cut off in mid-shout. I later discovered that some resourceful soul had pulled the plug on the idiot at the microphone.

The press room was bedlam, crammed with shouting reporters fighting for telephones. Fortunately, Joan had valiantly defended hers against all comers

although she must have had a tough time. I had not known her long and her introduction to the newspaper world had come through me, so she had very little knowledge of how to telephone in a story.

She had rung the *Sunday Times* and, luckily, got hold of Maggie Smith, a reporter whom she knew quite well. She said to Maggie, 'The assassin's name is Spratt.'

'What assassin?' asked Maggie.

'The man who shot Vervoerd.'

'Are you trying to tell me the Prime Minister has been assassinated?' said Maggie incredulously.

It was only then Joan realised that she, Joan Brown – intrepid, amateur girl-reporter – was scooping the world press. She froze solid. It took Maggie some time to unfreeze her, and then she had to cope with the thundering herd of reporters who charged into the press room, but by the time I got back she had regained her efficiency.

I set myself in front of her, fending off the flailing hands trying to grab her telephone, and fed her the facts a line at a time which she passed on to Maggie. Then I said, 'Tell Maggie I'm going to get more from Esterhuysen and some background stuff on Pratt. It'll be about half-an-hour. Then you can give up the phone.'

That telephone was seized very quickly.

When Joan and I left the press room two ambulance men went trotting by carrying a stretcher. On the stretcher lay Hendrik Vervoerd, his hands held to his face. There was a lot of blood. His eyelids flickered and then opened, and I could see that even with two bullets in his head he was quite conscious.

Again, there was not a reporter or cameraman in sight – and I had no camera.

We watched the men carry the stretcher until they turned a corner, then went in search of Kobus Esterhuysen. We drew a blank at the VIP box so we

went upstairs in the Members' Pavilion where a reception had been laid on for the Prime Minister after he had made his speech. The black waiters were still ladling out free booze because no one had told them to stop, and every freeloader in Johannesburg seemed to be present. Joan and I took a welcome brandy each, I scooped up a plate of canapés, and we went looking for Kobus.

We found him with a glass in his hand standing by a window. I asked him if he had spoken to other reporters and he smiled and shook his head, so I did my best to drain him of all he knew, glad that the immediate pressure was off and I had reasonable time to spare.

I asked him what it felt like to tackle a man who was waving a gun. He shrugged and said that Pratt did not wave the gun for very long.

'What kind of gun was it?'

Kobus said, 'A .32 automatic pistol.'

'I've just seen Vervoerd,' I said. 'He's still conscious.'

Kobus stared at me. 'He ought to be very dead. One bullet went in at the right cheek; the other went into his ear.'

He did not really know much about Pratt apart from a few general facts. Pratt was reputed to be quite wealthy, was a strong supporter of the United Party, had gone through two wives and had the reputation of being an odd-ball. That bit about the United Party made the questioning a shade delicate because the United Party was largely supported by English-speaking South Africans while the governing Nationalist Party, of which Vervoerd was the leader, was favoured by the Afrikaners. Kobus was an Afrikaner and his leader had just been shot by an English speaker.

But Kobus let me off the hook. 'Hell, man,' he said. 'I have no politics. I'm a painter and a sculptor and have no time for those things.' He paused. 'I'll tell you one thing, though; I'm glad Vervoerd was shot by a white man and not by a black Kaffir. All hell would have really broken loose then. Natives have been beaten up in the show grounds already and the army is moving in.'

That was serious. We already had a state of emergency and we were but one step from martial law and army rule.

There was one point left which puzzled me. I said, 'I saw Pratt being hustled away by the cops, and Vervoerd was in the VIP box. You say Pratt fired only two shots, both at Vervoerd. Right?'

'Right.'

'So who was the man lying on the steps, and how the hell did he get that way?'

Kobus grinned. 'That was Major Richter, Vervoerd's bodyguard. He fainted when he saw the blood.'

I thanked Kobus and we went in search of a telephone and found one in an empty office. I rang Maggie Smith, gave her what I had, and said we were returning to the office but not to expect us immediately. I had a feeling that getting to the centre of Johannesburg was not going to be easy.

There had been 120,000 people at Milner Park that day and they were being shepherded out by the police and the army. The traffic jams were catastrophic. Not that it worried us because we had no car and were resigned to a long walk, but we spotted a *Sunday Times* staff car and hopped aboard.

It was dusk before we got to downtown Johannesburg and it would have been quicker to walk, although not as restful. I used the time to sort out my impressions of the day and to lay out a story in my mind. Driving down Commissioner Street we saw that Broadcast House, the city radio centre, was ringed with armed troops, and so were the offices of the *Sunday Times*. There were also armoured cars parked at strategic intersections.

Because I was a freelance I had no official press card, but we still wore the press tags accrediting us to the Union Expo. Those, some fast talking, and the fact that we were able to give authentic news of what had happened at Milner Park got us into the building.

One of the first persons we saw was Maggie Smith. ‘Where is Stan Hurst?’ she demanded. ‘I thought he was with you.’

‘He went home after Vervoerd’s speech.’

‘Oh, God!’ she wailed. ‘Half the paper is being remade, everyone is screaming for Hurst, and he has to go home.’

‘Ring him.’

‘Can’t,’ said Maggie. ‘He’s just moved house and his telephone hasn’t been installed.’ More telephone trouble. Maggie hurried away to give someone the bad news.

Joan said suddenly, ‘I know his next door neighbour – she has a telephone.’ I stared at her. That was the first coincidence; in a city of over a million people Joan just happened to know Hurst’s next-door neighbour.

I took her by the elbow, steered her into Hurst’s office, and pointed to the telephone, then I appropriated his typewriter and began to put words on paper. Ten minutes later when Stan came on the line he sounded muzzy and was disgruntled at being woken up. ‘Stan, you’d better get back to the office. Vervoerd was shot this afternoon and the paper is being remade.’

He didn’t believe it.

More urgently. ‘Stan, you must get back. You have your own cables to get out to Australia.’ Hurst was the Johannesburg stringer for a chain of Australian newspapers.

‘Is this straight?’

‘I wouldn’t joke about a thing like this.’

‘When did this happen?’

‘Five minutes after you left.’

‘Who shot him?’

‘A fellow called Pratt – David Pratt.’

Something happened to Hurst; his voice was suddenly alert. ‘Not David Pratt of Moloney’s Eye?’ he said incredulously. There was a lot of incredulity about that day, but Stan had real reason for his.

‘That’s right.’

‘My God!’ he shouted. ‘Pratt’s mistress is my ex-mistress. I’m going to see her.’

That was the second coincidence. Who in hell would ever suppose that the Features Editor of the *Sunday Times* and a political assassin could be linked in such a way? If I put a thing like that into a novel my publisher would scream.

‘Aren’t you coming into the office?’

‘This is more important.’ He slammed down his phone.

I looked at Joan and grinned. ‘It’s a small world.’

To everybody who asked we said that Hurst was on his way back to the office. It was true, even though he was taking a detour and, after all, it was his exclusive story. The groundwork he had laid must have been delightful even though it was damned fortuitous. He strolled into the office three-quarters of an hour later and beamed at me. ‘Good lad!’

‘That didn’t take long.’

‘I went up to her flat,’ he said. ‘I supposed you can call it her flat even though Pratt pays the rent. I hadn’t been there more than twenty minutes before two very tall, very broad, Afrikaner Special Branch cops pitched up and tossed me out on my can.’ He winked. ‘But I got what I wanted.’

‘What did she tell you about Pratt?’

‘He’s bonkers,’ said Hurst. ‘A nutter who is really round the twist but I knew that already. She told me that he took her to Klosters in Switzerland where they were hob-nobbing with Aly Khan, among others. Then suddenly he announced that he was broke, so they went to London. Pratt booked in at the Savoy and then told her to go out and get a job. What do you think of that?’

‘Was he broke?’

‘Of course not. Just bloody eccentric.’ Stan shook his head. ‘Pratt won’t hang for this – I don’t think he’ll even stand trial. And there’s a hell of a lot of juicy stuff we won’t be allowed to print.’

He sat at his desk and started work.

I was pretty busy myself and Joan was drafted into a strange job for a newspaper office. The news of the shooting had been telephoned to the airport and most of the newsmen who were on their way out cancelled their flights and came streaming back into town. The chattering telex machines also told of others who were flying in.

All these men had to be found hotel rooms; and hotel accommodations in Johannesburg during the Union Expo were as scarce as hen’s teeth. So she sat with the telephone book open at the yellow pages and rang every hotel in town and got most of the boys a room. Someone ought to have thanked her for what she did that night but I can’t recall that anybody did. She certainly was not paid for it.

In spite of the strange hazards associated with the project the photographer from the *Farmer’s Weekly* had got his picture – just *one* good picture. It showed Hendrik Vervoerd, Prime Minister of South Africa, sitting on the floor of the VIP box and leaning into the corner. Blood streamed down his face.

That night, in a bedroom in the Langham Hotel, the picture was auctioned off by Terence Clarkson, acting as a disinterested neutral. The bidding was brisk but too rich for local blood, and at last there were only two bidders left in the ring – *Time* magazine and *Paris-Match*. The price crept up by jerks to R2,000 (about $2,800), then *Time* shrugged, looked at *Paris-Match* and said, ‘What say we split it?’ *Paris-Match* agreed and so the *Farmer’s Weekly* photographer was a good deal richer than he had been that morning. I hope he bought himself a new camera.

The presses rolled at midnight and five minutes later the first copies were distributed around the *Sunday Times* newsroom. This was a time for relaxation; the first edition was out and away and the pressure was off. Stan brought out a bottle and we drank brandy from paper cups while scanning the front page.

Someone had written an atmosphere piece, the first paragraph of which read:

> All is peaceful as the sun sets redly over the Main Arena at the Union Expo. The crowds are gone and all is quiet, and there is nothing to show of the tragedy that happened here this afternoon; nothing, that is, but the Prime Minister's head which still lies on the floor of the VIP box.

I pointed out the error to Joan and she shared my laughter, then I said, 'Hey, Stan; here's something that needs changing. There's a clown on the staff who can't spell hat.'

I turned back to Joan. 'You know; we never did get to eat those strawberries.'

'Which strawberries?'

'Those we ordered in the Members' Pavilion.'

EPILOGUE

Hendrik Vervoerd survived the half-centenary of the founding of the Union of South Africa. And so did the Union – but just barely. The following year, by referendum of the white population, the country voted by a narrow margin to leave the British Commonwealth of Nations and became the Republic of South Africa.

Stan Hurst was right; David Pratt never stood trial. He was found unfit to plead by reason of insanity, and placed in the Old Fort, the high-security section of the Oranje Mental Hospital in Bloemfontein. There, on the evening of 1 October 1961, he took a bed sheet and tied it to the leg of a bed in two places. Inserting his neck in the loop so formed he rotated his body, thus committing suicide by strangulation.

Hendrik Vervoerd, still Prime Minister of what was now the Republic of South Africa, lived until September 1966. In the House of Assembly in Cape Town he was stabbed to the heart four times by a Greek immigrant named Dimitrios Tsafendas, also known as Tsafendakis, Stifianos, and Chipendis. Tsafendas ascribed his action to a huge tapeworm inside him which he variously described as a demon, a dragon, and a serpent.

He did not stand trial, either, being ‘detained at the pleasure of the President of the Republic.’ He is now in the psychiatric wing of Pretoria Prison, studying computers and computing, and still complaining about his tapeworm.

Desmond Bagley - April 1977

REFERENCES

[1] Bagley, Desmond, 'The Circumstances Surrounding the Crime': *I, Witness: True Personal Encounters with Crime by Members of the Mystery Writers of America*, edited by Brian Garfield (New York: Times Books, 1978) pp.151-165. Later republished as bonus material in *Flyaway* and *Windfall* 2 in 1 edition (London: Harper, 2009).

[2] 'On the CWIC-3' in *Crime Writers 3rd International Congress* brochure (Stockholm: Swedish Academy of Detection, 1981) p. 7.

[3] *Crime Wave*, edited by John Wynne (London: Collins, 1981; New York: Riverrun, 1981).

[4] Iwan and Margareta Hedman-Morelius*: Meeting with Authors and other people in the Book World,* DAST Dossier No. 10, 1997.

[5] 'Bunch of furry fellows' *Rand Daily Mail* Union Exposition Supplement, 4 April 1960).

[6] Later recounted by Benjamin Pogrund in his book *War of Words – Memoir of a South African Journalist* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2000) p. 88.

CHAPTER 9

Scriptwriting for Filmlets in Johannesburg (1960 – 1961)

There was not much money in freelance journalism and what there was tended to come in spurts and the financial condition was either feast or famine. I decided that if I were to be a married man I had better get a steady job. [Desmond Bagley and Joan Brown were married on 2 September 1960].

I was in the Federal – as usual – talking to a man called McGaw who told me that he had been working for a firm called Filmlets as a scenario writer but had just resigned. He thought that if I wanted a job there could be one going there, so I went immediately and saw the boss.

Filmlets (SA) Ltd., [the advertising arm of African Consolidated Films [1]] - was a subsidiary of Twentieth Century Fox and made short advertising films which were inflicted on the luckless, captive audiences of cinemas during the interval. The General Manager was Pax Moran. Pax was so called because he had been born on November 11, 1918, but his name was the only peaceful thing about him, as I was to discover.

No, I had not written film material before. 'Well, go away and write something,' he said. 'Bring it to me tomorrow.'

I went home and concocted a script lauding the virtues of a totally fictitious Japanese camera, and took it to Moran next morning. The corners of his mouth turned down as he read it, but he said, 'You've got a job. Report on the first of the month. Salary – a hundred pounds.'

'A week?'

'A month,' said Moran uncompromisingly.

Well, that was not too bad. A hundred pounds a month went a long way in the Johannesburg of 1960 and it was more than I made in journalism, but my

hackles did tend to rise when I discovered later that the salesmen in the next office, who sold the stuff I wrote, were making ten times that amount.

So I joined Filmlets and learned a new way of writing. The chief scenario writer was Charles Eglington, a South African poet of some distinction. Since there is even less money in poetry than in freelance journalism he, too had to find other ways of shaking the money tree. There was also Aidan Higgins, a gloomy Irishman who had been on tour with a puppet theatre and was saving up to go back to Ireland.

Years later, in 1973, when I was in Ireland for a PEN conference I was in a Dublin book shop and picked out a slim volume published by Calder and Boyars called *Images of Africa* by Aidan Higgins. On opening it I was mildly astonished to find myself described in its pages. It is a salutary experience to see oneself through the eyes of another.

[In *Images of Africa* Higgins describes the Filmlets office as being located on the sixth floor of an office block building near the junction of Market Street (now Albertina Sisulu Road) and Kruis Street. With Kruis Street below, the office offered a view of the clock mounted on Mosenthall Brothers Ltd., (91 Market Street).
Seen through Higgins' eyes Bagley was described thus:

> *A small faded person in sagging trousers. He seems to be covered in a kind of grey lichen. Short strutting walk, Precise manner, partly bald, with a rash of eczema on his temples, impossible to say whether his hair is his own or not; wears the one dark morning suit, bi-focals, sports a goatee beard. A look of Trotsky. Very muddy complexion, and a fearful impediment in his speech.*
>
> *Bagley's tics: one leg crossed over the other in a fussy way, agitated in the air, humming. Picking his thoughtful upper lip with*

a thoughtful thumb and forefinger and letting it smack back into place (signifying what?). Clicking in and out (sometimes at twenty minutes at a stretch) the retractable point of his BIC pen. Very cross-looking when contradicted – a myopic glare directed at me. Small somewhat conceited man. Omnivorous reader. A book always on his desk. 'Atlas Shrugged', by Ayn Rand.[2]]

Higgins, by then, had written *Langrish Go Down*, a novel which had considerable critical success, and it is odd to reflect that *Langrish Go Down* and my own *Running Blind* were both dramatised on BBC television in the same week in 1979. Let no one who is a novelist be afraid of coincidences; they occur more often than we think, as Arthur Koestler constantly reminds us.[i]

I have kept all the film scripts I wrote for Filmlets. I have written much and thrown nothing away, which goes towards explaining the uncanny total recall displayed in the book. I see that the first script I had accepted was written on June 6, 1960, and was for Barclays Bank DCO (Dominion, Colonial and Overseas), made to induce black Africans to put their money in the bank instead of keeping it in an old sock under the mattress. It was quite dramatic.

Pax Moran was a perfectionist who could drive one crazy by his insistence on rewrite after rewrite. He also had odd ideas about writers. He would not, for instance, allow any of his scenario writers to visit the studio where films were made. That would, he said, corrupt our innocence. When I pointed out that I could write better scripts if I knew how certain special effects were obtained, he replied, 'You're a writer, so write what you want and let the special effects man drive themselves crazy solving your problems.'

[i] Arthur Koestler, CBE (5 September 1905 – 1 March 1983) was a Hungarian born author and journalist who relocated to Britain. Diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease in 1976 and then terminal leukaemia in 1979, both he and his wife committed suicide together at their home in London in 1983.

He could not write a line himself and freely admitted it. ‘If I could I wouldn’t be employing you,’ he said acidly. He was hell to work for and worse to work with, but he taught me a lot.

The scripts were many and various; anything from Johnson’s ‘Pledge’ furniture polish to BP Petrol. When we did the ‘Pledge’ film Pax called Charles Eglington and myself into his office, and held up an aerosol can. ‘This is the next one,’ he said. ‘Let’s have your thoughts.’

We kicked it around for a while, during which I came came up with the immortal words, ‘Pledge and your duster go together.’ Then Pax said, ‘Let’s see if the damned stuff works. Anyone got a cloth?’ He looked at Charles expectantly, and Charles reluctantly produced his handkerchief.

Pax cleared the top of his desk, sprayed liberally, and then rubbed vigorously with the handkerchief. Not only did the polish come off his desk but the varnish came off, too.

Pax was enraged and rang Johnson’s. ‘But this is a new product,’ protested Johnson’s man. ‘We just sent the can to show you the packaging. I have no idea what is really in the can.’

Pax was not assuaged.

The BP film was made when BP, having bought out Atlantic Richfield in South Africa and painted all the service stations in the green and yellow BP livery, were busy explaining to the great South African public just who BP were. It was probably the most expensive short advertising film made up to that time and I had fun writing it. In rapid succession came shots of New Guinea, the Canadian Rockies, rural England, the Persian Gulf, the Isle of Grain, Le Mans, Australia, Sweden and back to Canada and South Africa. And those were not stock shots, either; the cameramen really went on location.

The scripts I wrote fell loosely into two groups – hard sell and soft sell. I much preferred the soft sell because it gave more scope to the imagination. The pioneer of the soft sell film-ad was Anton Ruppert, an erstwhile academic

who built up Rothmans into a multinational corporation, but later other companies jumped on to the soft sell band wagon.

Two hundred feet of Cinemascope film runs for two minutes, thirteen and one-third seconds. It was Ruppert's idea that the two minutes be devoted to a mini-documentary, and that the product be sold only in the final few seconds. At least it gave the audience a break from the relentless commercial hammering prevalent at the time.

I wrote many scripts for Ruppert and they fell into series. In the 'Craftsmanship' series came scripts on model railway engines, antique glassware and vintage cars. Ruppert was a connoisseur of the arts and commissioned mini-studies of the William Humphreys Gallery in Kimberley and the Fehr Collection.[ii] In the 'Painters of South Africa' series came Pieter Wenning and Vladimir Tretchikoff. Tretchikoff then lived in Cape Town and I had the idea of him doing his own commentary, but Pax would not have it. 'Puts the costs up,' he said gruffly.

No doubt he was right. Tretchikoff, a kitsch painter, was then at the height of his success and no doubt he would have asked for a substantial fee.

For the Caltex petrol company, I did a series 'Travel the Caltex Way' which covered Scotland, London's Bridges, the Tower of London, Copenhagen, Hollywood, Majorca, Sicily, Athens – the Acropolis, Spain, Berlin and Vienna. All this without leaving central Johannesburg. It was while writing these scripts that I really learned how to do library research, something that was to stand me in good stead in the future.

I think the best script I ever did while at Filmlets was for the Allied Building Society on the Orange River. I traced the Orange River from its beginning at Mont aux Sources in Basutoland to its entry into the Atlantic at Alexander

[ii] William Fehr (17 April 1892 – 2 April 1968) was a South African businessman and art collector noted for his acquisition of famous artworks, known as The William Fehr Collection, now on display in the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town.

Bay. A thousand miles in two minutes flat. To be successful that kind of thing needed tight writing and taut visualisation.

Aidan Higgins did not stay long, departing within a couple of months of my arrival, and we were now a scenario writer short. One day a man ascended to the sixth floor of the building and attempted to sell Pax Moran an encyclopaedia. Predictably he did not succeed, but unpredictably he left with the job of scenario writer. Pax was an opportunist who was a man short.

Our newcomer's first task was to write a script advertising Suchard chocolates which were imported from Holland. After due consideration he decided to do a song and dance number with Dutchmen in baggy pants and clogs and lots of girls. He laboured over the script for a week, writing and rewriting, and at last brought it to me. 'What do you think of it?' he asked anxiously.

I read the script, smiled internally, and handed it to Eglington. 'What do you think of it, Charles?' I winked.

Eglington read it and, like me, managed to keep a straight face. 'Not bad,' he said. 'You'd better show it to the boss.'

Our encyclopedist departed towards Pax Moran's office and Charles and I sat back, waiting for the explosion which duly came. In the Suchard script was a voice over line from the commentator, 'Look at all those girls wearing Dutch caps.'

The hard sell scripts irritated and bored me. It was bad enough when Pax Moran insisted on having a truly original idea for selling Grandpa Headache Powders, and worsened when I had to find ways of selling a motor oil no different than any other motor oil. I wrote scripts for shoes, knitted suits, paints, a face cream sold to African women intended to lighten the complexion which worked by taking off the outer layer of the epidermis, and other oddments.

A year with Pax Moran was more than enough and so I left. Pax and I parted amicably enough. Many years later I returned to South Africa just before the introduction of television, and I spoke to Pax, asking how it would affect his business. 'We're booming,' he said. 'We're into commercial television.'

'What will South African television be like?'

'Technically, it will be the best in the world.' He laughed. 'I won't guarantee the content, though.'

I do not regret the time I spent with Filmlets. I learned a lot about the weird business of putting words on paper, but enough was enough and I went back to journalism, still on a freelance basis, but this time as a sub-editor on the *Rand Daily Mail*.

[Appendix II lists film scripts retained in the Bagley collection written between 6 June 1960 and 9 March 1961. The scripts are accompanied by a three-page article written by Bagley explaining the various formats of advertising films, titled 'Bagley – Film & TV scripts.']

REFERENCES

[1] Gainer, D.J. (2000) University of Cape Town: *Hollywood, African Consolidated Films, and Bioscope Culture: Aspects of American Culture in Cape Town, 1945-1960*' 31 January 2000 p. 34.

[2] Higgins, Aidan, *Images of Africa* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1971) pp. 57-58.

CHAPTER 10

Sub-Editor at the *Rand Daily Mail* (1962)

A sub-editor on a morning newspaper is a troglodyte who lives a night time existence in an illuminated cave called the Subs' Room. His duties are to take the type-written stories of the staff journalist and whip them into shape for the composing room, correcting the spelling, grammatical and other errors which abound in hastily written work, invent the headline, indicate the type style and size, and execute all this while indulging in erudite badinage with his fellow subs. He does the same with the agency stories which come from the Telex machines in a steady flow.

The age of the average sub is greater than that of the average reporter. He has usually been through the mill as a reporter and has now settled down to a more sedentary life. He is a man of experience, has seen it all, and exhibits a weary cynicism. To listen to the talk in the Subs' Room when things are slack is to receive a liberal education. There is not a question that can possibly come up but that someone in the room will know the answer – and it will be the right answer.

All stories coming into the Subs' Room go immediately to the aptly named copy taster who sits next to the night editor. The copy taster in my time was Rex Gibson, now Editor of the Johannesburg *Sunday Express*. It is his job to decide what will go into the paper and what will be left out, and there is much more left out than goes in. To go into the Telex room and see the battery of machines spewing out paper is to realise that if it were all printed your morning newspaper would be as thick as a family Bible.

The copy taster works in close conjunction with the night editor who figures out if he is going to use the whole story or just part of it. He decides where in the paper to put it, how long it will be, over how many columns it

will be spread, how many lines of headline it will take and in what type size and style. The story then goes to a sub-editor who carries out the night editor's instructions.

One of my first jobs as a sub was to be given 17 pages of Telex – about 25 feet of print-out – of a report of a United Nations debate, with the curt command, 'Boil that down to six inches.' The academics know it as précis writing, and there is no finer training in the economic use of words.

Another place where one must be economic with words, but which has had an unfortunate effect on the English language, is the creation of headlines. I use the word creation advisedly because writing headlines is an art in itself and some subs are better at it than others. I shall outline the problems involved.

A given type style such as Bodoni, which was designed by Giambattista Bodoni in 1765, comes in a variety of sizes and designs. The designs may be normal, bold or condensed, and size is counted in points. Four point might need a magnifying glass, while 72 point would be used to announce the Second Coming.

The width of a letter is counted in ens and ems. An em is two ens wide. The letter 'm' is, naturally an em wide, but so is the letter 'w'; the letters 'i', 't' and 'l' are each half an en. All this is known as proportionate spacing which is not normal on a typewriter but which I have available on the machine I am using now.

[This machine was a Xerox 860 stand-alone word processor and text-editor. Bagley purchased this machine in May 1980 to replace a previous machine, and *Writer* was the first work he undertook on it. Writing to his editor Robert Knittel on 30 May 1980 he commented:

> *You will no doubt have seen, by the layout of this letter, that I have acquired a contraption. It is called a word processor and text editor and I wish to God I had had it before writing CRISIS...*

I can get a complete novel on two small discs, and since I can hook up with a computer, I can see the time coming when I will be shooting them up to Glasgow at GPO night rates, possibly straight into a photo-composing machine. My God, the speed of progress! [1]]

So a sub might be given a story with the instruction, 'Two lines of Bodoni 18 point over two columns.' He subs the story and then begins to write the headline. He wants something that will adequately describe the story and, if the story will bear it, he wants to add a spice of wit. The problem comes when he counts up his ems and ens and finds that his witty headline will not fit into the confined space he is allowed. He might ask plaintively if he can use Bodoni condensed because the ems and ens are smaller. Permission is rarely given and, even then, grudgingly. The sub is supposed to know his job.

There was a sub-editor called Jack Kelly who, in spite of his name was neither Irish nor Scot but American. I watched him slave for half an hour over a headline before he raised his head and addresses the room - 'Does anyone know a short word meaning sex?'

This quest for brevity in headlines has had a deleterious effect. Ambassadors are no more and are replaced by envoys; an election becomes a poll, any verbal disagreement becomes a row, any investigation is a probe. In the days when I troubled to learn English people were jeered at, now they are transitively jeered. Any day now I expect to see the sentence: 'The dog barked him.'

Hard pressed sub-editors are responsible for much of this linguistic sloppiness, but there has, in late years, been an increase in errors of production in newspapers, at least in Britain. There is a story concerning *The Times* which is of interest. In the 1890s Queen Victoria opened a bridge across the Thames, and the incident was reported thus: 'Her Majesty took the golden scissors, cut

the silken ribbon and, to the acclamation of cheering thousands, she pissed over the bridge.' The error of the one letter was attributed to deliberate malice by a compositor who had been fired and was working out a week's notice.

Apocryphal though that anecdote might be, the reason given for the error rings true. In those days it was unheard of for such errors to sully the pages of *The Times*. These errors are known in the trade as 'literals'. Consider the following literal which appeared on the front page of *The Times* not many years ago. Under a photograph was the caption, 'The Queen and the Duke of Bedford at Ascot eye the hors with a knowledgeable eye.' (Try saying that aloud).

I make the point that in this second example there was no malice involved but just plain sloppiness of proof reading, a sloppiness which is becoming increasingly prevalent. On my desk I have *The War Despatches – 1939 to 1945*, being 140 representative pages, mostly front pages but also from the inside of the paper. The reproduction is in reduced facsimile, and I have gone through those 140 pages and found but *one* literal in a newspaper produced in arduous wartime conditions.

Also on my desk I have three of today's (July 14, 1980) so-called quality newspapers. Taking the front pages only, between them they share 10 literals. *The Times* has one; *The Guardian*, which used to be a sad joke on Fleet Street, also has one; *The Daily Telegraph*, which has been rapidly outstripping *The Guardian* in this matter, has eight literals on its front page alone. I have not the patience to check the inside pages but no doubt internal affairs are just as bad.

I leave it to the reader to explain this phenomenon but one thing is certain. It cannot be blamed on that ubiquitous scapegoat, the computer, because, as is well known, Fleet Street has closed its mind pretty firmly to modern technology.

All newspapers have lists of words which are banned from their pages. These lists vary from place to place and time to time, and on South African newspapers in the 1960s the lists tended to be excessively prudish. For instance, on the *Rand Daily Mail* the word 'stomach' was banned. One did not use the childish' tummy' but the pedantic 'abdomen', thus 'a sharp blow to the lower abdomen' was a euphemism for a kick in the balls. All our readers were aware of this convention, very much as the reader of an English newspaper knows very well what is meant when he reads that a 'man is helping the police with their enquiries.'

Sub-editors are normally intelligent and thoughtful men who delight in wordplay and thus it was the ambition of any good sub to smuggle into the newspaper any of the banned words. One such achievement was magnificent. There was a butcher named Bates who lived over his shop. One evening his young son, aged about thirteen, descended into the shop and caught a burglar with his hand in the till. The thief was caught and in due course there was a court case in which the boy had to give evidence. In the newspaper report the sub-editor put a cross head into the column just before the boy's evidence:

MASTER BATES

His ingenuity was toasted next day in the Federal Hotel.

Some sub-editors tended to be eccentric and one such was Gordon Saunderson. The *Rand Daily Mail* ran a weekly competition called the Jackpot. The cash prize, if not won, was added on to the following week's prize money and sometimes, after a succession of such losing weeks, a considerable sum was accumulated. The competition was popular and there were several thousand entries weekly, most of them coming by post.

Saunderson had the novel idea of collecting the stamps. These were the normal low valued postage stamps of the day which Saunderson was saving by the thousand. He considered it a hobby and a hedge against his old age. 'By

the time I retire,' he said, 'those stamps will be worth money.' He was reputed to keep millions of stamps packed in tea chests in his garage at home, but of that I cannot vouch for out of personal knowledge.

So far so moderately eccentric, but it was his ingenuity in separating the stamps from the envelopes which demonstrated how really off centre he was. He had three or four daughters and every night, when it was bath time, a box of envelopes was tipped into the bath with the child and she had to occupy herself with soaking off the stamps and pasting them on the side of the bath from where they would be retrieved by Saunderson.

To my untutored eye sub-editors appeared to be most philoprogenitive. At a sub-editors' party I counted the children and came up with 3 ⅓ children per man, much higher than the national average, and I know not why.

REFERENCES

[1] Bagley, Desmond, correspondence to Knittel, Robert, Collins publishers, 30 May 1980; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, III, A 13 *Bahama Crisis*.

CHAPTER 11

Fantasy and Science Fiction Writing (1962)

[Bagley's mother, Hannah Marie, passed away aged 81, on 20 March 1961, at Moss Side Hospital, Wrea Green, Lancashire.[1] She was buried at Carlton Cemetery, Blackpool together with her husband John, who had passed away on 20 January 1954. On 8 May 1961 probate was granted to her eldest son John 'Jack' Bagley, who acted as executor of his mother's estate. Hannah's estate included the freehold dwelling at 48 Lord Street, Blackpool, in which 'Jack' was then residing. Like his mother, 'Jack' ran the property as a boarding house and solely inherited the dwelling. In addition, he inherited all articles, domestic or personal, from his mother's residence at 56 Fordway Avenue, Blackpool. His brother Desmond inherited the remainder of her estate.[2]

In January 1962, now living with Joan at 101 Amberley, 4 O'Reilly Road, Berea in Johannesburg, Bagley focussed on producing a batch of short fantasy and science fiction stories. He had produced six that were in a state ready for submission to a publisher, with a further dozen stories plotted ready to write. In seeking an agent to represent him he chose the prominent New York based Scott Meredith Literary Agency, founded by Scott Meredith and his brother Sydney in 1946.[i] Their first client had been P.G. Wodehouse and they were to later represent many prominent writers including the science fiction writers J.G. Ballard, Arthur C. Clarke and Philip K. Dick.

On 21 March 1962 Bagley had written to Meredith using the pseudonym Simon Bagley, submitting six stories: 'Welcome, comrade'; 'Lost Contact'; 'Thrill Arcade'; 'Commissariat'; 'CATaclysm'; and 'Immortality and Jeremy Wilde' (the latter story written around 1955 at the time Bagley was writing

[i] Scott Meredith, born Arthur Scott Feldman 1923 – 1993.

'Dissertation'). Bagley described himself as 'a professional writer of some ten years standing, a newspaper man and freelance feature writer'.[3] He included international postal vouchers for return of his work by sea mail, should it not be accepted and also included further vouchers for Meredith's reply by air-mail.

Bagley had previously used the pseudonym of Simon whilst writing for the *Rand Daily Mail*, albeit Simon Brockhurst. The forename was to be a nickname he used, particularly with his friends, for the rest of his life. Its origin, initially unclear, was later clarified by Joan Bagley in correspondence with the author Michael Davies in 1999.[ii] Joan stated she had been told that an unknown war-time friend of his was addicted to *The Saint* stories, written by Leslie Charteris, and took to calling everybody 'Simon' after the protagonist of the novels, Simon Templar. In Bagley's case the name stuck, and for reasons unknown, he decided to use it when corresponding with Scott Meredith.[4]

The manuscripts arrived with Meredith a week later and Meredith invoiced Bagley $67 to evaluate the manuscripts, which Bagley duly paid. Meredith wrote to Bagley on 27 May 1962 with the following comment:

> *These are very impressive stories, especially since they're your first real attempts at fiction. Even if they were the work of an experienced fiction writer, they'd still be impressive. This is partly due to your years of writing experience in other areas, but a great deal of the credit has to go to your highly imaginative approach to fiction.*[5]

[ii] HarperCollins Publishers charged author, playwright and Bagley admirer Michael Davies with the task of 'curating' Bagley's unpublished thriller 'Because Salton Died' prior to its publication in 2019 as *Domino Island*.

That being said, Meredith commented that fine writing was not enough to sell a story, the plotting of a story was an important consideration, as was the subject matter and the market at which it aims. To varying degrees Bagley's stories had not made the grade, that was, apart from one, 'Welcome, comrade'. Meredith thought that 'Welcome, comrade' was ready for market other than requiring a name change, as he thought the title gave away the ending of the story. Meredith went on to give quite detailed constructive criticism, seven pages in fact, on the five other short stories, pointing out where he felt Bagley had gone wrong. Offering advice on plot construction and characterisation, he gave Bagley the opportunity to purchase his own book *Writing to Sell*, a practical guide on the technique of magazine writing, the literary market and the business problems of the author.[6]

Meredith submitted the 'Welcome, comrade' manuscript to the American based publisher Mercury Inc., for their *Magazine of Fantasy & Science* periodical. It drew a favourable reaction with only two small defects, the exaggerated use of 'Americanisms' and they thought it required a swifter stronger ending, which would require minimum rewriting. Following the rewrite Meredith still found the ending lacking, however by removing the last page Meredith found the story came to a swift, surprising finish. The magazine offered 2 cents a word for the story, a novelette, and on 14 September 1962 Bagley received a cheque for the sum of $137.15c, which included a deduction for the price of a copy of Meredith's book *Writing to Sell*.[7] Taking into account the original $67 manuscript evaluation fee, and other costs, the six stories had not been very profitable.

In October 1962 Bagley was asked to provide some biographical information to accompany the story, which he duly supplied whilst also informing Meredith that he had read *Writing to Sell* and had enjoyed the book. He also informed Meredith that he had been working on a mystery novel,

which he might sell to Gold Medal Books, and also a novel which he would try to sell to William Collins Publishers.[iii]

'Welcome Comrade' was published in the April 1964 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* under the pseudonym of Simon Bagley. An accompanying introduction described Bagley as a freelance technical/scientific journalist living in Johannesburg.[8]]

In 1961 my mother died, my father having died some years earlier, and I inherited a little money. It was not much but after I had cleared my debts I was left with £300 in hand.

I regarded this windfall thoughtfully and estimated that, with good husbandry, I could live on it for three months. Joan's salary was not too bad, and when I suggested that this was the time to tackle a novel she did not disagree, as I thought she might. She read the fumbling first chapter I had banged out and said, 'Why not?'

It was not the first novel I had attempted, but my first three books had been written in my spare time, and they were so bad that even I knew enough not to send them to a publisher. What I wanted to do was write a novel giving it my full and undivided attention. I had given up on the short stories because a series of six had brought in the total sum of £5 which Joan and I promptly blew on an expensive meal in an expensive restaurant.

The time had come to write a novel, so I sat down and wrote *The Golden Keel.*

[iii] Gold Medal Books, an imprint of the American based Fawcett Publications.

REFERENCES

[1] Bagley, Hannah Marie, Last Will and Testament; probate register entry 8 May 1961.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Bagley, Desmond, correspondence to Meredith, Scott, Scott Meredith Literary Agency Inc, 21 March 1962; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, RR, Envelope C: Correspondence with Scott Meredith.
[4] Bagley, Joan: pers.comm. 13 April 1999 with Davies, Michael; via Foston, Lecia: pers.comm. 3 May 2016.
[5] Meredith, Scott, Scott Meredith Literary Agency Inc, correspondence to Bagley, Desmond, 27 March 1962; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, RR, Envelope C: Correspondence with Scott Meredith.
[6] Meredith, Scott, *Writing to Sell* (New York: Harper & Brothers 1950, revised and enlarged edition 1960).
[7] Bagley, Desmond, Barclays Bank credit note - South African Permanent Building Society, Hospital Hill, Johannesburg, 20 September 1962; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, RR, Envelope C: Correspondence with Scott Meredith.
[8] Bagley, Simon, 'Welcome Comrade' *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (New York: Mercury Press Inc., 1964), Volume 26, No.4, whole No. 155, April 1964, pp.38-55.

AFTERWORD

AFTERWORD

Bagley's Legacy Continues

Desmond Bagley went on to become one of the world's best-selling novelists, which was remarkable considering he left school at the age of fourteen having failed to pass any exams, suffered a life-long speech impairment during an era when it was generally perceived as a social stigma, and was two weeks shy of forty years old when his first novel, *The Golden Keel*, was published.

On Monday 4 April 1983 aged fifty-nine, Bagley collapsed after suffering a stroke, and was transferred from Guernsey to Southampton General Hospital. Sadly, he passed away on Tuesday 12 April 1983 never having regained consciousness with the cause of death certified as a 'left middle cerebral artery infarction.' At the time of his death he was reputed to be one of the highest paid writers of fiction novels in the world.

Not many days before his death both he and Joan were working hard on plans for a Crime Writers' Association weekend in Guernsey, due to take place in the autumn of 1983. His friend and fellow author, John Broxholme (aka Duncan Kyle), then Chair of the CWA recalled:

> *He had the hotel organised, and the speakers, and the trips. Plus, he said, 'a river of good Scotch. Writer's deserve the best!'* [1]

Bagley's generosity extended to many, including his publishers. In early 1983 William Collin's moved from the building they had occupied for more than a century in London, to new premises in Grafton Street. It occurred to Bagley to mark the event somehow and Joan recalled:

...no gift seemed adequate until he hit on the idea of sending a large quantity of champagne so that every department could celebrate with a drink on the completion of the move, from top management right down to the packers and cleaners.

He therefore arranged for a London wine company to deliver 6 or 8 dozen bottles of good quality champagne to the firm, charging the managing director, Mr Ian Chapman, with the task of distributing it to the various departments.

The distribution had already been made when word came to Collins that DB had collapsed with a stroke and was extremely ill. This was on the 7th or 8th April (he collapsed on the 4th) and on the 12th they were told that he had died in Southampton hospital, never having regained consciousness.

The champagne was still used; it was opened in all departments within a day or so and was drunk as a toast and a memory to DB - not quite the use he had intended it for.[2]

Writing in a brief obituary in *Red Herring's* the Bulletin of the Crime Writers' Association, in May 1983 John Broxholme wrote:

In his early life, he experienced a good deal of hardship. But when, in South Africa, he met and married Joan a transformation began. He said many times, 'Joan made me a professional writer'. For twenty years the two of them greatly enjoyed his increasing success — and shared their pleasure. CWA has had no greater friends.[3]

One cannot underestimate the importance of Joan Bagley's influence in her husband's career as a novelist. In setting out to write that first novel Bagley realised he needed to conduct some market research in order to decide what genre of novel to write. It was his wife, Joan, who was to be instrumental in this market research. As manager of Exclusive Books in Hillbrow, Joan was well placed to know what books were popular.

The bookshop, Exclusive Books (Pty) Ltd., had started as a small secondhand bookshop in King George Street, Johannesburg in 1951, owned by Mr Bernstein. In 1952 the capital and ownership were acquired by Philip Joseph, his wife Pamela, and his mother Pauline Joseph. In 1954 Philip Joseph sought new premises and opened a new shop at 73b Kotze Street in the Hillbrow district of Johannesburg. In addition to secondhand and antiquarian books Philip decided to deal in new books and, establishing a link with William Collins, Sons & Company, placed an order for £500 worth of new stock. Philip Joseph had pioneered the first general booklist shop in Hillbrow, which became a mecca for book lovers.[i] The company had employed the young Joan Brown, who was to work for the company for eleven years both as Manager, and later Director. The knowledge of the book trade that she had gained during her term of employment became particularly useful to Bagley, who also later sought the advice of Philip Joseph himself when negotiating a contract with William Collins Publishers.

Joan's knowledge and advice pointed her husband to the novels from the house of Collins, who were publishing successful authors such as Agatha Christie and Ngaio Marsh under their Crime Club imprint. But it was the adventure novels of Alistair MacLean, Hammond Innes and Geoffrey Jenkins that were proving most popular at the time, which fitted an idea that Bagley

[i] Philip Joseph sold 'Exclusive Books Pty Ltd.' in 1978, moving to London and creating the successful book retail chain 'Books Etc.'– 'Backgrounder to Exclusive Books 50th Birthday' (2001) *Artslink*.co.za, 8 March 2001.

had formed in his mind from that conversation with his work colleague Keith Royston, back in 1950 in Pinetown near Durban.

During an interview with Keith Wells, writing for the *Arab Times Supplement*, in October 1980, Bagley said of Joan:

> *I owe much of my success to Joan. She peps me up when I feel bad and then when I begin to think too much of myself she sticks a pin in my ego and lets me down again.*[4]

The Afterword of *Writer* was to be written by Joan, allowing her to, in her husband's own words, '*assassinate my character.*' As the work was unfinished it is perhaps fitting to learn more of the woman behind the man, the woman Bagley thought made him a *professional* writer.

The following biographical piece was written by Joan Bagley following her husband's death after her revision work on *Night of Error* and *Juggernaut*, and whilst she was still living at Câtel House in the parish of St. Andrew, Guernsey. This is Joan Magaret Bagley in her own words.

Joan Magaret Bagley

I was born (nee Brown) in Johannesburg, South Africa in July 1934. Both my parents were born there, of mixed English-Polish stock, and we are Jewish. This did not in any way impede my marriage to Desmond, who was by birth a Catholic. Both he and I were practicing agnostics.

I was taught at a co-educational day school to University Entrance level but did not attain University as my parents could not afford to send me there. I was enrolled by the Johannesburg Public Library, the idea being to work there while studying for my Librarianship degree. Unfortunately, I had to leave after a very short period as I failed the compulsory municipal medical examination, due to having recently had pneumonia.

After spending some time in desultory jobs, including a year as lab technician in a flour mill, I finally got the work I wanted, which was bookselling. I was fortunate in being taken onto the staff of a then small, now leading, South African bookshop. I worked there for 11 years, ending up as a Director of the company. The knowledge of the book trade that I learned there was to stand me in good stead in the future, and I remain permanently indebted to my then boss, who is now still active in the London book trade.

In 1959 I met and in 1960 married Desmond. He was then a free-lance journalist, but in 1962 wrote what was to be his first successful novel, *The Golden Keel*. In 1964 we left South Africa, first to try and live in Italy (a futile experiment), and then came to Devon, where we lived for 12 years. In 1976 we moved to Guernsey.

For all that time I worked as my husband's partner and secretary, research assistant, file clerk, P.R., and No. 1 critic. It proved to be a totally absorbing life for both of us, and together we made it a point to get to know the book trade in all aspects, something which again has served me well in recent times. We travelled together always, except for the visit my husband made to the

Antarctic and the South Pole; I was unable to go with him though I would have given anything to do so.

We had no children, through our own choice. Neither he nor I discovered in ourselves any paternal or maternal urge, and I have never regretted the decision – nor, I am sure did he. From the time we moved to England he always worked at home, and we both found this arrangement entirely congenial. We were never bored in each other's company.

Since Desmond's death I have carried on as Director of our company, and as manager of his affairs, which still of course continue. To my earlier duties I added that of editor, bringing two of his finished but hitherto unpublished books to a state of readiness for publication. It has been a rewarding but sobering and taxing experience.

My personal interests include the sport of fencing, in which I have been active for 30 odd years; in fact, I met Desmond at a fencing club, as that was his only active sport. As he was, I am a very fast and voracious reader, though our reading tastes differed to a degree (we agreed in many ways, especially in both being avid science-fiction buffs.) We shared an interest in films and classical music, and in keeping abreast of modern developments in science, though he outstripped me here. But I could never show an interest in mathematics or military history, two subjects which absorbed him. We did some sailing but have not done so for quite a few years now.

I have continued Desmond's interests in technology in some ways. I took over his Xerox word-processor and after a short course to familiarise myself with it I have used it regularly, for editing the two novels, and for several other purposes. And in October I bought myself a Macintosh computer, which I find both very useful and a lot of fun. Desmond had been using a computer since 1972, but the Macintosh updates his old one.

I enjoy cooking and don't mind housekeeping, but I neither sew, knit nor use a needle for anything if I can avoid it. I have no artistic or musical talent.

We were both interested in what used to be called natural history (our favourite holidays were safaris in Kenya), and I now take an active interest in my local zoo and am both a committee member and a volunteer warden for the local Animal Shelter, the GSPCA I try to keep a dog and three cats under control at home. I have also worked actively for the RNLI for many years.

I still live in the large and lovely Georgian house which we bought in Guernsey and have no present desire to move.[5]

Many know of Joan Bagley's work in completing and overseeing the posthumous publication of her husband's novels, *Night of Error* and 'The Road' published as *Juggernaut*. However, less commonly known was that Joan had also written, under her husband's name, many of the introductions requested by Odham's Books for their club bulletin, publicising their Companion Book Club editions. Claiming no official credit for these, Joan's input started in October 1966 with a piece for *Wyatt's Hurricane*. Joan explained that, although requested of her husband, she had written the piece instead as her husband was '*deeply engrossed in his war.*' In clarification to the publishers three years later Joan wrote:

> *I must mention that it has been a polite fiction for the last four books that Simon writes these things himself. In fact, I do them myself, subject of course to Simon's approval of the end product. Mr Haywood knows of this and doesn't seem to mind, it relieves Simon of a mild burden that he doesn't much enjoy, and gives me a chance of playing at being a real writer, so everyone is happy.*[6]

Joan had been an integral part of her husband's work from the very first novel until the last and faithfully preserved her husband's literary legacy until her own death on 30 June 1999. A legacy that is now continued by the Estate Trustees, Moore Stephens, Bagley's publishers, HarperCollins, and the loyal readers of his work.

On Friday 11 May 2018 the Bailiff of Guernsey, Sir Richard John Collas, unveiled a Blue Plaque at the Bagley's former residence Câtel House, now renamed Bagley Hall, in the Rohais de Haut, St. Andrew, Guernsey. The plaque, issued under the auspices of Guernsey Museums and due to the generosity of the owners Deryck and Melissa Mourton, was only the second on the island to honour an author. The plaque bears the names of both

Desmond and Joan Bagley recognising both their literary and philanthropic contribution to the island, which continues to this day.

Desmond Bagley - first, last and always a storyteller.

REFERENCES

[1] Kyle, Duncan aka John Broxholme 'Desmond (Simon) Bagley'; *Red Herrings* (Bulletin of the Crime writers' association, 1983) No. 321 May 1983.

[2] Bagley, Joan, 'Bubbly for Collins'; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 6, IX, B.

[3] Kyle, Duncan aka John Broxholme 'Desmond (Simon) Bagley'; *Red Herrings* (Bulletin of the Crime writers' association, 1983) No. 321 May 1983.

[4] 'A Conversation with Desmond Bagley' by Keith Wells: *Arab Times Supplement*, 30 October 1980, pp. 10-12.

[5] Bagley, Joan, 'Joan Magaret Bagley' from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 8, IX, Correspondence.

[6] Bagley, Joan, correspondence to Major, Eric, Collins publishers, 15 September 1969; from the Desmond Bagley Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, ref: Box 5, III, A 15 *The Spoilers*.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

South African newspaper articles written by Bagley (1956 – 1962)

This appendix records a list of published South African newspaper articles authored by Bagley. The list, though not definitive, details articles retained by the author in his personal papers together with those identified through additional research. Bagley wrote many more articles, often uncredited or under generic journalistic bylines such as 'Staff Reporter' or 'Own Correspondent'.

The Star Johannesburg Article

'Through the Centuries they have been bringing people back from the dead – The advance of medical science': *The Star*, 21 August 1956.

Johannesburg *Sunday Times* Articles

General articles retained in Bagley's personal cuttings book directly attributable by byline

'Dogs Faithful Beyond Death, says Harvey Day – But cynic Desmond Bagley says – Oh Yeah?': *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), 30 September 1956.

General articles retained in Bagley's personal cuttings book under byline '*Sunday Times* Reporter'

'Inquiry into Rand Abattoir Called For - 'Highly Insanitary' Conditions Alleged': *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), 20 January 1957.

‘Best Beef ‘Left at Abattoir’’: *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), 3 February 1957.

‘Did Native Rifles Cause Floods? - Hippos Helped to Stem Flow of Zambesi’: *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), undated.

‘Girl Hopes to Break Jinx in S.A’: *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), undated.

‘Man Shudders Over Cost of His Wife’s Beauty’: *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), undated.

‘Cut Price Swearing’: *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), undated.

‘Big Need for Scout Leaders’: *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), undated.

‘Rand Yachting Spills – After the Calm Came the Gusts’: *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), undated.

‘Bedouin Tent is Mobile Shop of Nomad Potters’: *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), undated.

‘Outlook for the Office Clerk in S.A. is Bleak’: *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), undated.

‘‘R’ n R’ Has Hypnotic Effect’: *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), undated.

‘Trickle of Immigration’: *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), undated.

‘Invents new Lamp’: *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), undated.

‘£164,000 Will Double Queenshaven Capacity’: *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), undated.

‘Just Like Dad – When You Get Insured’: *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), undated.

‘Ex-Fighter Pilot Mr. Kuiper Succeeds Mr. Dawson’: *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), undated.

General articles retained in Bagley's personal cuttings book directly attributable by byline

'A Peep Behind the … Bright Lights of Johannesburg': *Rand Daily Mail*, 28 August 1956, p.6.

'The High Cost of Marriage – A *Rand Daily Mail* Investigation': *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 September 1956, p.14.

'It's Spring! Have You an Allergy?': *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 September 1956, p.15.

'A magia do Micro-filme': *Rand Daily Mail*, circa November 1956.

'They cross swords without shedding blood at this week's National tournament': *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 July 1957, p.7.

'Foot-and-Mouth How It Began': *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 August 1957, p.9.

General articles retained in Bagley's personal cuttings book with no named byline

'The Ground Floor – Model-maker Paul': *Rand Daily Mail*, 8th October 1956, p.10. [Justin Pound column]

'Found: An Unusual Job': *Rand Daily Mail*, 8th October 1956, p.10. [Justin Pound column]

'South Africa Needs a Civil Defence Organisation': *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 November 1956, p.14.

'Learner Swordsman Deceives Master Fencer with 100 M.P.H. Thrust to the Body': *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 July 1957, p.10.

'When in Rome or any other place abroad': *Rand Daily Mail* Travel Festival Supplement, 12 March 1960, p.2.

Arts review articles retained in Bagley's personal cuttings book directly attributable by byline (1959 – 1960)

'Dashing Greg in sea saga; Empire cinema Johannesburg, film review *Captain Horatio Hornblower, R.N.*': *Rand Daily Mail*, 9 July 1959, p.6. [Byline D.B.]

'Same Old Gary; Plaza cinema Johannesburg, film review *Dallas*': *Rand Daily Mail*, 28 July 1959, p.6.

'Now it's 'le Western; Plaza cinema Johannesburg, film review *Thunder in the Sun*': *Rand Daily Mail*, 18 August 1959, p.6.

'Splendid Shylock; College of Education, theatre review *The Merchant of Venice*': *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 August 1959, p.8.

'This has 'em baffled; Colosseum cinema Johannesburg, film review *This Earth is Mine*': *Rand Daily Mail*, 5 September 1959, p.6.

'Fonda-Caron dialogue worth an Oscar; 20th Century cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Man Who Understood Woman*': 7 September 1959, p.6.

'Tax squeeze on film societies': *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 September 1959, p.6.

'Murder is such a laugh; Monte Carlo cinema Johannesburg, film review *Horrors of the Black Museum*': *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 September 1959, p.8.

'Where a killer is hero; Plaza cinema Johannesburg, film review *No Name on the Bullet*': *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 September 1959, p.6.

'A Happy Breath of Paris; Colosseum cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Black Orchid*': *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 September 1959, p.2.

'Fabulous big top; Monte Carlo cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Big Arena*': *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 September 1959, p.6. [Byline D.B.]

'Such flimsy whimsy; Piccadilly cinema, Johannesburg, film review *Women at Sea*': *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 September 1959, p.6.

‘Pint-size Lanza; City Hall, Johannesburg, concert review ‘African Jazz’’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 30 September 1959, p.8.

‘Still the Tops; Plaza cinema Johannesburg, film review *Shane*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 30 September 1959, p.8. [Byline D.B.]

‘She played almost too well; Zion Hall Johannesburg, concert review ‘Marianne Probst’’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 October 1959, p.9.

‘Lyrical life in Japan; Victory cinema Johannesburg, film review *Tokyo after Dark*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 2 October 1959, p.3.

‘Earl and Taylor film; Plaza cinema, film review *The Hangman*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 October 1959, p.6.

‘What do you say: Should this film be shown?’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 October 1959, p.10.

‘Wolves on the hunt; Clarendon cinema Johannesburg, film review *Men and Wolves*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 October 1959, p.6.

‘They laughed too much; Plaza cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Golden Age of Comedy*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 14 October 1959, p.6.

‘L.A.M.P.S. shine with a variable light; Library theatre Johannesburg, theatre review *All My Sons*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 October 1959, p.8.

‘Sterling – by Banks; Library theatre Johannesburg, theatre review *The Secret Tent*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 21October 1959, p.10.

‘An amateur assassin; Piccadilly cinema Johannesburg, film review *West of Suez*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 October 1959, p.10.

‘The beat was missing in the ‘band battle’; City Hall Johannesburg, concert review ‘The Battle of the Bands’’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 October 1959, p.3.

‘A devilish ball game; Empire cinema Johannesburg, film review *What Lola Wants*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 October 1959, p.8.

‘Portrayal of Tolstoy’s Life; Monte Carlo cinema Johannesburg, film review *Resurrection*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 November 1959, p.6.

‘Laugh Crisis in Diplomacy; Empire cinema Johannesburg, film review *Carlton-Brown of the F.O.*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 12 November 1959, p.10.

‘Cupid in the typists’ pool; 20th Century cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Best of Everything*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 November 1959, p.8.

‘Mamie’s talents (all curved) obscure the Texan bull; Plaza cinema Johannesburg, film review *Born Reckless*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 20 November 1959, p.10.

‘Some jolly good wheezes; Piccadilly cinema Johannesburg, film review *Carry on Teacher*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 28 November 1959, p.3.

‘Hayseed hits West; Plaza cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Wild and the Innocent*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 3 December 1959, p.9.

‘Magic in this bag of tricks; Library theatre Johannesburg, theatre review *The Great Marco*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 December 1959, p.9.

‘*Genevieve* is back; Empire cinema Johannesburg, film review *Genevieve*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 12 December 1959, p.2.

‘Translations; 20th Century cinema Johannesburg, film review *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth*’: *Rand Daily Mail* 18 December 1959, p.10.

‘Wife hunt complex; Empire cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Bridal Path*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 December 1959, p.6.

‘Good clean fun; Metro cinema Johannesburg, film review *Tarzan, the Ape Man*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 December 1959, p.6.

‘Little of the feminine; Metro cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Wreck of the Mary Deare*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 January 1960, p.4.

‘Life in a back street; Piccadilly cinema Johannesburg, film review *No Trees in the Street*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 16 January 1960, p.9.

‘It’s got lots of fiction; Plaza cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Mysterians*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 January 1960, p.6.

‘‘Dog’ saved by actor; 20th Century cinema Johannesburg, film review *A Dog of Flanders*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 28 January 1960, p.8.

‘Old Elixir New Style; Plaza cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Man Who Could Cheat Death*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 4 February 1960, p.6.

‘Pretoria goes in for Opera; University Hall Johannesburg, theatre review *Madam Butterfly*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 February 1960, p.6.

‘It’s all so improbable; Clarendon cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Rookie*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 February 1960, p.6.

‘And this is glossy; Colosseum cinema Johannesburg, film review *Pillow Talk*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 February 1960, p.8.

‘The censor goes all adult; Pigalle cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Rough and the Smooth*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 March 1960, p.6.

‘The loneliness of individuals; Monte Carlo cinema Johannesburg, film review *Gate of Lilacs*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 7 March 1960, p.6.

‘Shrunken plot; Piccadilly cinema Johannesburg, film review *Escapement*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 7 March 1960, p.6.

‘Three old ladies go gay; Piccadilly cinema Johannesburg, film review *Alive and Kicking*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 March 1960, p.6.

‘Pioneering days on the air routes; book review *The Seven Skies* by John Pudney’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 12 March 1960, p.4.

‘Lakeland finest of all beauty spots; travel review’: *Rand Daily Mail*, Travel Festival Supplement 15 March 1960, p.2.

‘Sophia has a wooden lover; Colosseum cinema Johannesburg, film review *That Kind of Woman*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 March 1960, p.2.

‘H-bomb muffled by plot; Plaza cinema Johannesburg, film review *SOS Pacific*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 21 March 1960, p.6.

‘‘Shaggy-dog’ story of robbery; Piccadilly cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Flying Scot*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 March 1960, p.6.

‘A real bit of Irish; Pigalle cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Other Eden*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 March 1960, p.3.

‘Audience Chilled; Pigalle cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Trollenberg Terror*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 18 April 1960, p.4.

‘Another sex kitten; Empire cinema Johannesburg, film review *Upstairs and Downstairs*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 20 April 1960, p.4.

‘The old ‘carry on’ – in different uniform; Pigalle cinema Johannesburg, film review *Carry On, Constable*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 April 1960, p.8.

‘Cardiff ‘The Camera’ steps up to Director; Piccadilly cinema Johannesburg, film review *Beyond This Place*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 April 1960, p.6.

‘Rooney and some; Plaza cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Big Operator*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 April 1960, p.8.

‘The Manhattans Together Again; Selborne Hall Johannesburg, concert review *In Township Tonite*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 April 1960, p.11.

‘This animal film could win an award; Monte Carlo cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Last of the Few*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 28 April 1960, p.6.

‘When the Bible is used in Hollywood; His Majesty’s cinema Johannesburg, film review *Solomon and Sheba*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 3 May 1960, p.6.

‘Blood and thrills; Plaza cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Bat*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 3 May 1960, p.6.

‘Authentic – Hell!; Plaza cinema Johannesburg, film review *Surrender – Hell!*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 May 1960, p.8.

‘Ageing Audie on the run; Plaza cinema Johannesburg, film review *Hell-Bent for Leather*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 May 1960, p.6.

‘Ach – it’s ze Gestapo and Resistance again; Metro cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Face of the Cat*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 20 May 1960, p.8.

‘Gable acts his age with an ‘It’ girl; Empire cinema Johannesburg, film review *But Not for Me*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 May 1960, p.6.

‘A ghastly joke on a wife; Monte Carlo cinema Johannesburg, film review *There’s Always a Price Tag*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 May 1960, p.3.

‘Record choice by Desmond Bagley – 12 collector’s pieces from Gigli’s golden period’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 11 July 1960, p.4.

‘Record choice by Desmond Bagley – Ormandy conducts a rare work’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 August 1960, p.10.

‘Roll on the next episode; Piccadilly cinema Johannesburg, film review *The Tiger of Eshnapur*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 4 August 1960, p.9.

‘Record choice by Desmond Bagley – Edgar Cree with London Orchestra’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 August 1960, p.6.

‘Triumph for young Rand orchestra; Jewish Guild Memorial Hall Johannesburg, Jubilee Concert review’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 August 1960, p.6. [Byline D.B.]

‘The New Shows – Another EOAN triumph!; Great University Hall Johannesburg, theatre review *Cavalleria Rusticana*’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 August 1960, p.6.

‘Desmond Bagley on the New Records – The mighty organ of Paris’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 September 1960, p.6.

The Rand Easter Show 'Union Exposition' (1960)

The following collection of articles, directly attributed to Bagley, relate to the *Rand Daily Mail's* coverage of the Union Exposition, which took place between 4 April – 23 April 1960 at Milner Park, Johannesburg.

4 April 1960 – Rand Show Reviews *Rand Daily Mail* Supplement
p.1: 'A Million Gate for The Expo?' [Byline Desmond Bagly]

9 April 1960 – Rand Show Reviews *Rand Daily Mail* Supplement
p.3: 'The Gold Medal Stands – South Africa shows she's on trade map.'

13 April 1960 – *Rand Daily Mail*
p.5: 'Show designing is FUN to versatile Kobus.'

19 April 1960 – *Rand Daily Mail*
p.4: 'Around the Expo stands - £500 rifle with a 4-ton hit.'; 'Around the Expo stands – Just one big party…'; 'Around the Expo stands – At your service – better and faster.'

21 April 1960 – *Rand Daily Mail*
p.4: 'Around the Expo stands – Do-it-yourself on versatile machines.'; 'Around the Expo stands – Ancient craft.'; 'Around the Expo stands – A revolution in the office,'; 'Around the Expo stands – Steam power – quick.'; 'Around the Expo stands – Shirt launderer invented in S.A.'

The following collection of articles were retained by Bagley in his personal cuttings book and have no byline.

4 April 1960 – Rand Show Reviews *Rand Daily Mail* Supplement
p.2: 'A war-time link brought to light.'; 'Ah, the publicity in just one word - 'Dior'.'; 'Bunch of furry fellows.'
p.4: 'On parade.'; 'One of the finest murals on exhibition at the Union Expo has been painted by Russell Harvey.'; 'That Gallic touch has been changed – This year the fashion is Industry.'; 'What a RUSH it has all been!'

5 April 1960 – Rand Show Reviews *Rand Daily Mail* Supplement
p.1: 'At the heart of the show – The 'mushroom' building put up in a month.'
p.2: 'Israel brings two winners'.; 'The cream of Italy's industry picked.'
p.4: 'From razor blades to fertiliser…'; 'Pack your own 'hotel' on wheels.'

6 April 1960 – Rand Show Reviews *Rand Daily Mail &* Supplement
p.4: 'It looks just a decoration - but Germany's land mark is strictly for use.'; 'Slip-up in ceramics.'
p.10: 'Fancy … they make church organs here.'; 'First South African all-timber house designed for free state.'
p.11: 'Drinks Hot or Cold by Automat.'

7 April 1960 – *Rand Daily Mail*
p.4: 'Free film shows galore'.; 'Racing - by push-button.'
p.5: 'South Africa's own plane – Aeriel is an eye-catcher.'; '300lb of engine bounced about.'

8 April 1960 – *Rand Daily Mail*
p.4: 'A sale before first day.'; 'Czechs have studied a farmer's needs.'; 'The old soldier's parade.'

p.5: ‘A double dream for housewives.’; ‘All done by paraffin power.’; ‘Brightener for outside walls.’; ‘Gimmicks and Gadgets - Beamed on better living.’; ‘Super salesman in a 13lb, box.’

9 April 1960 – Rand Show Reviews *Rand Daily Mail* Supplement
p.1: ‘From line of champs.’; ‘Lady be good!’
p.4: ‘Plastic aid saves water.’; ‘Tricks by ‘Black Light’.’; ‘Working models show off Krupp wares.’

12 April 1960 – Rand Show Reviews *Rand Daily Mail* Supplement
p.1: ‘Gruesome but good.’
p.3: ‘Do-it-yourself kit to build a house.’; ‘Odd one among 43 kinds of proteas.’; ‘30 years in the kitchen.’
p.4: ‘Everything electrical.’; ‘Pirate’s cave catches the children’s eye.’; ‘Trapped before your eyes.’

13 April 1960 – *Rand Daily Mail*
p.4: ‘Full meal done in 15 minutes.’
p.5: ‘What a change in 30 years.’

14 April 1960 - *Rand Daily Mail*
p.4: “SERVICE’ the Transvaal theme.’; ‘Vanished Giants.’
p.5: ‘Cameras and scalpels.’; ‘Water, water everywhere — the theme Natal.’

15 April 1960 – *Rand Daily Mail*
p.4: ‘Mattress with built-in board.’; ‘The vast variety of South-west on display.’
p.5: ‘Breakaway Oudtshoorn has two highlights.’

18 April 1960 – Rand Show Reviews *Rand Daily Mail* Supplement
p.7: ‘A record player you can use in the car.’; ‘Small projector for big screen.’; ‘Story of townships.’

The Rand Easter Show (1961)

The following article, directly attributed to Bagley, relates to the *Rand Daily Mail's* coverage of the 50th Rand Easter Show, which took place between 23 March – 3 April 1961 at Milner Park, Johannesburg.

22 March 1961 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Supplement
p.1: 'The Battle for Business … everybody is out to get their own preferences.' [Byline D.B.]

The following collection of articles were retained by Bagley in his personal cuttings book and have no byline.

21 March 1961 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Supplement
p.5: 'Speed and safety on the water.'
p.6: 'The problem which can be shelved.'

22 March 1961 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Supplement
p.2: 'Grass 'in the pink' of condition.'
p.4: 'Ersatz? — Now it's better than real thing.'; 'S.A. pavilion's 'Family' Theme.'; 'Well, who would have thought it — A Scooter- size tractor.'

23 March 1961 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Supplement
p.1: 'Now – The first big day for the public.'; '…and another little miracle — of producing order out of chaos.'
p.2: 'Britain shows off its engineering triumphs for the land, sea and air travellers.'
p.3: 'Leadership in bicycle-making goes a long way back.'; 'New light on the braaivleis.'
p.4: 'A desk tailor made — to suit a man's figure and personality.'

24 March 1961 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Supplement
p.2: ‘Arabian Nights in Diamonds.’; ‘Furniture as you like it with a new look.’
p.3: ‘Modern ways come to an old business.’; ‘The firm that has taken 15 stands.’; ‘They don’t talk in those out-dated cents.’; ‘You, too, can have your own cow in Hillbrow!’
p.4: ‘Pavilion that keeps growing fast.’; ‘The toughest test - by children.’

27 March 1961 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Supplement
p.3: ‘Caravanning – Ingenious ideas for the open-air life.’; ‘Lucky dip…in a pot of paint.’
p.4: ‘Coffee girls.’; ‘Magazine for art minded.’

28 March 1961 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Supplement
p.2: ‘Stripped! – for prize.’; ‘Speciality.’
p.3: ‘Courteous, efficient…the brain behind the Show.’; ‘Firm’s signs to be seen everywhere.’; ‘20-guinea ties!’

29 March 1961 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Special Pages
p.14: ‘Organ-playing by battery power.’

30 March 1961 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Supplement
p.13: ‘Gas tanks shed light and heat.’; ‘No more a rush for the bathroom.’
p.14: ‘Pressmen were grateful.’
p.15. ‘Mr Paddy Meenehan.’

31 March 1961 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Supplement
p.10: ‘Home in a tram.’; ‘Those were the golden days for motorists.’

The Rand Easter Show (1962)

The following articles, directly attributed to Bagley, relate to the *Rand Daily Mail's* coverage of the Rand Easter Show, which took place between 10 – 23 April 1962 at Milner Park, Johannesburg. Bagley's cuttings show column inch holograph annotations.[i]

10 April 1962 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Special Supplement
p.2: 'The secrets of making a dream home.' [30" & 1"] [Byline D.B.]
p.4: 'Holland looks to our future.' [21"] [Byline D.B.]

11 April 1962 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Special Page
p.6: 'The Italians do things in a big way.' [18.5"]
p.7: 'Germany shows master craft.' [20"]

12 April 1962 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Supplement
p.2: 'The story of South Africa's advances — The accent is on our country.' [18"]

13 April 1962 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Supplement
p.2: 'France shows.' [33"]

18 April 1962 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Special Page
p.16: 'Safer to live with.' [3"] [Byline D.B.]

19 April 1962 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Special Page
p.15: 'Kruger was there when it started.' [15"]

[i] A column inch was the standard measurement of the amount of content in published works that use multiple columns per page. A column inch is a unit of space one column wide by 1 inch (25 mm) high. Noted in Bagley's own hand.

20 April 1962 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Special Pages
pp.6-7: ‘They want you as a tourist.’ [14”] [Byline D.B.]

The following collection of articles, showing column inch holograph annotations, were retained by Bagley in his personal cuttings book and have no byline.

10 April 1962 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Special Supplement
p.1: ‘Much more for you at the show – Business first but a feast of entertainment as well.’ [22”]; ‘The first two days.’ [2”]; ‘Towards New Heights.’ [6.5”]; ‘Valerie Crawshaw.’ [1”]
p.2: ‘A heart’s delight for the kiddies.’ [4.5”]
p.3: ‘From Belgium – Modernity and quality.’ [26.5”]; ‘For ladies only – or pretty nearly.’ [5.5”]

11 April 1962 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Special Page
p.6: ‘A two-type typewriter.’ [2.5”]; ‘Bank to lend a hand.’ [4.5”]

12 April 1962 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Supplement
p.1: ‘Business good’ — now for some fun, too.’ [22.5”]; ‘Services laid on for you.’ [6”]
p.2: ‘An easier way to see it all.’ [2.5”]; ‘He likes our country.’ [3”]
pp.2 & 3: ‘Oh what a glorious sight to see.’ [17.5”]
p.3: ‘They’re striving to even up the trade balance.’ [11.5”]
p.4: ‘Now whatever is she doing in mid-air?’ [3”]; ‘The problem is on the carpet.’ [3”]; ‘R 24,000 for a knitter.’ [8.5”]

13 April 1962 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Supplement
p.4: ‘The man who works for you 24 hours a day.’ [9”]

16 April 1962 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Supplement

p.1 '51st Show heads for the record.' [26"]

p.3: 'South Africa shows she can 'make it' - It's our shop window for the world.' [15"]

p.4: 'Inside the building pavilion – The 'biggest boss' in the country.' [17"]

17 April 1962 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Special Page

p.16: 'Israel puts spotlight on clothes.' [12"]

p.17: 'What is it they saw? From huge trucks to fine glass…' [8.5"]

19 April 1962 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Special Page

p.15: 'Come to Springs' is what they say.' [9.5"]; 'Motor run will end in ballroom.' [4.5"]

20 April 1962 – *Rand Daily Mail* Rand Easter Show Special Pages

p.7: 'Canada back again – with the goods.' [14"]

Articles written under a pseudonym

Writing as John Reed

‘Microfilm – A Modern Miracle’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 2 November 1956, p.15.

Writing as Anthony Cantrell

‘Divorce is here to stay – let us face it’: *The Star* (Johannesburg), 12 September 1956.

‘Book-banning in South Africa’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 5 October 1956, p.8.

‘The Cost of Divorce – A *Rand Daily Mail* Investigation’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 October 1956, p.6.

‘Machines, Chess and War’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 14 November 1956, p.15.

‘Homes in the Sun – Campaign to Aid Stricken Children’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 November 1956, p.10.

‘Sport is Big Money in S.A.’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 February 1957, p.15.

‘Legally Divorce is an Act of Revenge’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 May 1957, p.9.

‘The traffic problem: What is being done in the city’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 11 September 1957, p.9.

Writing as John Lackland

‘Teach yourself Hydroponics — No. 1 Grow fruit, veg., and all in your own flat!’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 April 1960, p.10.

‘Put your plants on diet – The 2nd article on Hydroponics’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 May 1960, p.12.

‘These plants need good drainage – Teach yourself Hydroponics – III.’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 May 1960, p.10.

‘Dish out plant rations by spoonfuls’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 20 May 1960, p.12.

‘Fresh salad – all grown in a flat – Another lesson in Hydroponics’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 May 1960, p.13.

‘Lesson in Hydroponics – Big, fat tomatoes’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 3 June 1960, p.10.

‘Strawberries grown on balcony – Gardening page course in hydroponics’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 June 1960, p.10.

‘Have a garden in your flat’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 June 1960, p.14.

‘So many bulbs you can grow’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 June 1960, p.6.

‘Strong seedlings in a vermiculite bed – Hydroponics’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 July 1960, p.12.

‘Cuttings in vermiculite – Hydroponics’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 July 1960, p.10.

‘Feed the family from a tank’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 July 1960, p.12.

‘A 10-day routine to get ‘tank garden’ primed – John Lackland’s series on Hydroponics’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 July 1960, p.14.

‘Chemistry of a tank garden Hydroponics by John Lackland’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 5 August 1960, p.12.

‘A chance to get rid of your old rubble – Hydroponics by John Lackland’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 12 August 1960, p.13.

‘Hydroponics – Potatoes are well suited for this sort of cultivation’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 August 1960, p.12.

‘Watch your tanks when the heavy rains come – Hydroponics by John Lackland’: *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 August 1960, p.13.

Press Advertising and Radio Review

‘733 RDM Readers walked for the hell of it’: *Press Advertising and Radio Review*, February 1960, Vol.4 No.12, p.3.

Miscellaneous

‘Blame it on Marco’: *Rand Daily Mail* 12 March 1960, p.4. [Byline J.B. (Joan Bagley)]

APPENDIX II

Filmlets (SA) Ltd. Film and TV Script Scenarios

(1959 – 1961)

DATE	SPECIAL LIBRARY SUBJECT	SPEC., L.K.	LENGHT [ft]
1960, 6 June	Barclays Bank DCO	Eastman Colour Conventional	120’
1960, 15 June	Rembrandt Van Rijn Treasures of the Nation No. 4 ‘The Fehr Collection’	Eastman Colour Conventional	180’
1960, 1 July	Central African Airways – Flame Lilly Holidays	[Not listed]	180’
1960, 5 July	Fibreglass	Eastman Colour Conventional	120’
1960, 6 July	Opti-Lon Africa (Pty) Limited.	Eastman Colour Conventional	90’
1960, 7 July	Travel the Continent with Caltex ‘Spain’ (Final Scenario Revision. After Shooting)	Eastman Colour Conventional	200’
1960, 7 July	Painters of South Africa No. 7 Vladimir Tretchikoff	Eastman Colour Conventional	120’
1960, 8 July	Rembrandt Van Rijn ‘Treasures of the Nation’ Series No. 3 The William Humphreys Art Gallery, Kimberley	Eastman Colour Conventional	180’
1960, 13 July	Five Roses Tea	Eastman Colour Conventional	60’

DATE	SPECIAL LIBRARY SUBJECT	SPEC., L.K.	LENGHT [ft]
1960, 15 July	Nivea Shampoo – Featured Artiste: Loretta Weldon	Eastman Colour Conventional	90’
1960, 22 July	Nivea Cream ‘Miss Nivea goes to Zanzibar’	Eastman Colour Conventional	120’
1960, 25 July	Newfields Furnishers (Revised)	Eastman Colour Cinemascope Flash	20’
1960, 1 August	Central African Weaving Mills	Eastman Colour Conventional	60’
1960, 1 August	Plein Street Garage (Pty) Ltd.	Cinemascope Flash	20’
1960, 10 August	Night Watchman Service – Port Elizabeth	Black & White Conventional	60’
1960, 12 August	Rex Trueform Suits	Eastman Colour Conventional	210’
1960, 12 August	Rodney Shoes – Morris and Ashmore	Eastman Colour Conventional - Non-European	60’
1960, 17 August	BP Oil Products	Eastman Colour Conventional	200’
1960, 18 August	First Lord Cigarettes Television Spot No. 1	Black & White	30 second
1960, 18 August	First Lord Cigarettes Television Spot No.2	Black & White	30 second
1960, 18 August	First Lord Cigarettes Television Spot No. 3	Black & White	30 second
1960, 25 August	Pfaff Sewing Machine	Eastman Colour Conventional	90’

DATE	SPECIAL LIBRARY SUBJECT	SPEC., L.K.	LENGHT [ft]
1960, 25 August	Rex Trueform – Rex Royals Trousers Television Spot	Black & White	30 second
1960, 25 August	Rex Trueform – Superknit Jackets Television Spot	Black & White	30 second
1960, 26 August	Consulate Cigarettes No. 2 'The Tower of London'	Eastman Colour Conventional	120'
1960, 30 August	Barclays Bank DCO	Eastman Colour Conventional - Non-European	120'
1960, 8 September	Consulate Cigarettes No. 1 'London's Bridges'	Eastman Colour Conventional	120'
1960, 9 September	Super Caltex Petrol Television Spot	Black & White	30'
1960, 13 September	Travel the Caltex Way – Overseas Series - 'Majorca'	Eastman Colour Conventional	180'
1960, 14 September	Travel the Caltex Way – Overseas Series - 'Sicily'	[Not listed]	180'
1960, 14 September	Caltex Continental Series – Athens 'The Acropolis'	Eastman Colour Conventional	180'
1960, 20 September	Pride Polish – American Production	Eastman Colour Conventional	90'
1960, 26 September	Oude Meester Brandy. Craftsmanship Series – Vintage Cars	Eastman Colour Cinemascope	200'
1960, 26 September	Travel the Continent with Caltex 'Copenhagen'	Eastman Colour Conventional	180'

DATE	SPECIAL LIBRARY SUBJECT	SPEC., L.K.	LENGHT [ft]
1960, 3 October	Travel the Caltex Way – Overseas Series - 'Berlin'	Eastman Colour Conventional	180'
1960, 4 October	Pledge Television Spot	Black & White	30 second
1960, 5 October	Grandpa Headache Powders Television Spot	Black & White	30 second
1960, 5 October	Pride Polish – Television Spot	Black & White	30 second
1960, 6 October	Travel the Continent with Caltex	Eastman Colour Conventional	180'
1960, 6 October	Oude Meester Brandy – Craftsmanship Series – Model Engines	[Not listed]	200'
1960, 18 October	Vacuum Oil Company - Mobilgas Tetramel	Eastman Colour Conventional	90'
1960, 19 October	Avon Cigarettes	Eastman Colour Cinemascope Flash	20'
1960, 21 October	Lion Export Ale – Rhodesian	Eastman Colour Conventional - Non-European	60'
1960, 21 October	Vacuum Oil Company - Mobilgas Tetramel	Eastman Colour Conventional	90'
1960, 24 October	Herbert Evans and Co. Ltd. Parthenon P.3. Television No. 1	Black & White	60'
1960, 24 October	Herbert Evans and Co. Ltd. Parthenon P.3. Television No. 2	Black & White	60'
1960, 24 October	Herbert Evans and Co. Ltd. Parthenon P.3. Television No. 3	Black & White	60'

DATE	SPECIAL LIBRARY SUBJECT	SPEC., L.K.	LENGHT [ft]
1960, 28 October	Herbert Evans and Co. Ltd. Parthenon P.3. Television No. 1	Black & White	60’
1960, 28 October	Herbert Evans and Co. Ltd. Parthenon P.3. Television No. 2	Black & White	60’
1960, 28 October	Herbert Evans and Co. Ltd. Parthenon P.3. Television No. 3	Black & White	60’
1960, 1 November	Bell’s Asbestos and Engineering (Rhod) Ltd. Bulawayo – Amana Room Air Conditioners	Eastman Colour Conventional	20’
1960, 1 November	Life Cigarettes	Eastman Colour Conventional Flash	20’
1960, 1 November	The Little Gem House (PVT) Ltd.	Eastman Colour Cinemascope	20’
1960, 3 November	Oude Meester Brandy – Antique Glasses	Eastman Colour Cinemascope	200’
1960, 7 November	Allied Building Society – Orange River (Discussion Draft)	Eastman Colour Cinemascope	200’
1960, 7 November	Rene Cortez – Placentali Cream	Eastman Colour Conventional	60’
1960, 14 November	Caltex 5-Star Multigrade Oil No.2 Paddle Wheel Test	Eastman Colour Conventional	180’
[undated]	Teppaz Disc Players Television Spot Adaptation	Black & White	30 second

DATE	SPECIAL LIBRARY SUBJECT	SPEC., L.K.	LENGHT [ft]
1961, 9 March	Peter Stuyvesant 'Vacation in Scotland'	Eastman Colour Cinemascope	200'
[undated]	Caltex Spectacular Note: From an original idea by Bill Brewer [Freelance]	Black & White Conventional	90'
[undated]	Delinquent Parents Based on a true story by Ken Park Directed by Bagley [Freelance]	[Not listed]	[Not Listed]

Bagley – Film and TV Scripts

1. The Cinemascope Flash.

This, the cheapest form of film advertising in Southern Africa, consists of 20 feet of Cinemascope lasting 13 seconds. There is no spoken commentary or music, any accompaniment being given by whatever record is being played in the cinemas at the time. Sales points are made by words on the screen and by the picture.

Inevitably, the client wants the earth. Most, but not all, of the clients utilising this type of film-ad are small businessmen and, to them, the production cost of £52 is a large slice of their advertising budget, therefore they want to cram as much into their 13 seconds of screen time as possible and have to be talked out of it.

Ideally, considerations of audience comprehension limits the number of words to 13 - that is, one word per second of screen time, and inevitably the client has to be fought on this issue. Mr. Lightfoot assures me that this is pretty good training for an exhibition scripted. I might add that I have done a stint as a sub-editor on the *Rand Daily Mail* and the writing of newspaper headlines is an even better training.

Samples submitted:

Amana Room Air Conditioners.

Newfields Furnisher – a horrible example of what happens when the client gets his own way.

2. The Television Spot.

The writing of films for TV differs from the film intended for screen presentation in ways that are technical in nature. The most important point to

be watched is that the TV screen has a considerable degree of curvature, therefore the action must take place in dead-centre screen to avoid distortion.

The Parthenon P.3 film was one of a series with no commentary. Shot 6 is an adaptation of the subliminal technique used in the cinema series for this firm.[i]

First Lord was the second of a series complete with spoken commentary, music and sound effects.

Samples submitted:
Parthenon P.3.
First Lord Cigarettes.

3. The Explanatory Film.

When BP petrol was first sold in this country this film was commissioned to explain to the South African public who BP were and what they were selling. It is more of a documentary film rather than a 'hard sell' and gave me a lot of joy to write. The film was to last 2 minutes, 13 seconds, was to tell the public as much about the BP organisation as was possible in that time, and there was no budgeting ceiling. I had fun with this one!

4. The Prestige Film

Certain South African firms, notably those controlled by Mr. Anton Ruppert, lean heavily on the 'soft sell' prestige film. These are usually 200 feet long,

[i] Advertising based on subliminal perception is considered to be particularly dangerous in that it is virtually imperceptible to the final consumer. The practice is now widely banned in many countries.

last 2 minutes, 13 seconds, of which only the last 13 seconds are used for the 'sell'.

In essence, these are short documentary films and in certain cases the film has to tie in, at least roughly, with the product to be sold; for example, the film 'Antique Glasses' for Oudemeester Brandy.

While not too stingy on the budget there is a ceiling, hence a certain amount of subterfuge. You will note that, in 'Antique Glasses', only the arms of the artistes are used. It was cheaper to show an arm than a complete figure in historical costume and, of course, had the advantage of not diverting attention away from the subject – the glasses.

The scripts I send as samples deal mainly with English subjects but I have written many others — Sicily, Athens, Stockholm, Berlin, Rome, Madrid in the 'Vacation' series, and Vintage Cars, Model Ships, Model Railways and Ancient Weapons in the 'Craftsmanship' series. Other series of a like nature are 'South African Artists' - Tretchikoff, Peter Wenning, Nils Andersen and so on - and the 'Art Galleries' - Cape Town, Kimberley, Johannesburg, etc.

I liked writing these little documentaries but I wasn't too happy about the bludgeoning 'hard sell' film-ads, so I parted company with Filmlets amicably enough, and have subsequently done scripts for the firm on a freelance basis.

MOON FANTASY

Moon Fantasy ©1980 Peter Le Vasseur, www.peterlevasseur.com.

In 1980 Desmond Bagley commissioned the Guernsey based artist Peter Le Vasseur to paint his portrait with a view to including it in *Writer*. The portrait, titled *Moon Fantasy*, is currently stored at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center in Boston, USA.

Peter Le Vasseur is an artist of international recognition, his paintings depict strong images linked to environmental themes, and are characterised by their incredibly intricate level of detail. Peter's early surrealist work, once described as being in the style of Hieronymus Bosch, developed in the mid 1970s into his current style when he began to concentrate on nature, the environment and the wanton damage man causes to both. That obsession with the subject has been the focus of his work for the last four decades and the environmental message in his intricate artwork is beautiful, powerful and prophetic.

Read a feature article about Peter Le Vasseur and *Moon Fantasy* on thebagleybrief.com.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following for their generous assistance with the research for this publication.

Jean Turnbull of the Kendal Oral History Society; Trevor Hughes and his excellent record of the yards of Kendal; David Blair of the Bolton History Centre; John Ward for his knowledge of St. Joseph's College, Blackpool; Lesley Jarvis of the Lytham Anonymous Players; Michael Harvey for his recollections of George Higgins and the Blackpool Anonymous Players; Joseph Lobeko of the SABC; the staff working in the British Library archives and reading rooms; HarperCollins Publishers; Nigel Alefounder and Veronica Matthews for their unwavering support; and all my friends in Guernsey, particularly Peter and Linda Le Vasseur for allowing me to reproduce *Moon Fantasy*.

Mike Ripley, not just for kindly agreeing to write the foreword for this publication, but also for his guidance, ongoing support and coverage in his excellent column *Getting Away with Murder*.

To all, past and present, at Moore Stephens Fiduciaries in Guernsey, who act as trustees for the J. M. Bagley Settlement, for their long-term support. Finally, a special thank you to all the staff at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University U.S.A., in particular J.C. Johnson, Manager of Digital Archival Resources. They are the great secret-keepers of history who help bring the past alive.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Philip Eastwood

Philip Eastwood is a researcher who runs the website *thebagleybrief.com*, promoting the legacy of Desmond Bagley. Since 2007 Philip has worked in remote areas of Iceland on behalf of the Icelandic environment agency, and has also mentored and led volunteer conservation teams. His interest in Iceland was originally inspired by Desmond Bagley's novel *Running Blind*, and he has become a leading authority on the author's life and work. In 2017 Philip rediscovered Bagley's unpublished manuscript 'Because Salton Died', writing the afterword for its subsequent publication as *Domino Island*. In 2018 Philip curated an exhibition in Guernsey on the life and work of the author and established a Desmond Bagley archive collection at the Priaulx Library in Guernsey.

Mike Ripley

Since the publication of *Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang: The Boom in British Thrillers from Casino Royale to The Eagle Has Landed,* which won the H.R.F. Keating Award for non-fiction, Mike Ripley has enjoyed the title 'the historian of the British thriller'. He has written 28 novels, including the 'Angel' series, which twice won the Crime Writers' Association's Last Laugh Award for comedy, and worked as a scriptwriter on the BBC series *Lovejoy*. As the crime fiction critic for *The Daily Telegraph* and then the *Birmingham Post*, from 1989 to 2008, he reviewed more than 950 crime novels and thrillers. For twenty years he has written his *Getting Away with Murder* column, which now appears in *Shots Magazine* (www.shotsmag.co.uk) and he is a member of *The Guardian's* Obituaries team.

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

This book is published as a non-profit publication by Philip Eastwood. If you enjoyed reading it, and would like to show your appreciation, you might consider a donation to one of the registered charities supported by Desmond and Joan Bagley.

RNLI Lifeboats

'The RNLI was actually founded as the Royal National Institution for the Preservation of Lives and Property from Shipwreck in 1824. Thirty years later in 1854, we changed our name to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution - the RNLI - as we are known today.

With our wealth of experience and expertise, we are proud to be a world-leading modern emergency service, separate from the coastguard and independent from government.

Every day of every year, people of all backgrounds get into danger in the water. It's a problem that we're here to tackle.'

https://rnli.org/support-us/give-money/donate

GSPCA Animal Shelter Guernsey

'With 148 years of caring for animals in Guernsey, the Guernsey Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is growing to meet the demands of the modern world with enthusiasm, optimism and energy. The role now, as in those early days, of preventing cruelty and promoting kindness to animals, through education, is as strong as ever. So

much is achieved - through qualified and dedicated staff, our own welfare officer, friends and supporters throughout the island and through our association with the other animal welfare organisations around the world.'
http://www.gspca.org.gg/fundraising

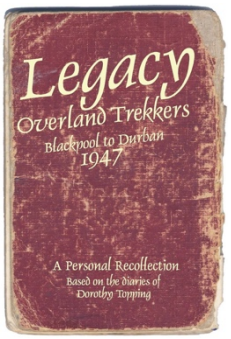
La Société Guernesiaise

'La Société Guernesiaise was founded in 1882 to encourage the study of the history, natural history, geography and geology of the Bailiwick of Guernsey, the conservation of the Bailiwick's natural environment and the preservation of its historic buildings and monuments. In many respects, La Société Guernesiaise is similar to the UK Wildlife Trusts. However, its activities extend into many other areas, including history, archaeology and astronomy.'
https://societe.org.gg/wp/donate/

Thank you

Philip Eastwood

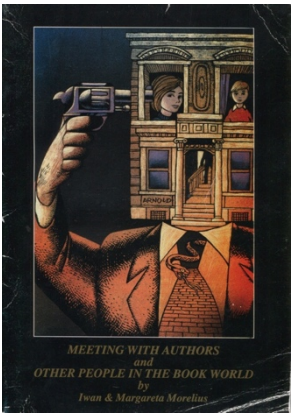
FURTHER READING



Irene M. Topping & Dorothy Topping: *Legacy – Overland Trekkers Blackpool to Durban 1947*; CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012.

A personal recollection of the journey from Blackpool to Durban in 1947, written by Irene Topping on behalf of Dorothy Topping. The book, which mentions Desmond Bagley, is a detailed account of the trekkers journey, including a rare photographic record.

Iwan and Margareta Hedman-Morelius*: Meeting with Authors and other people in the Book World,* DAST Dossier No. 10, 1997.

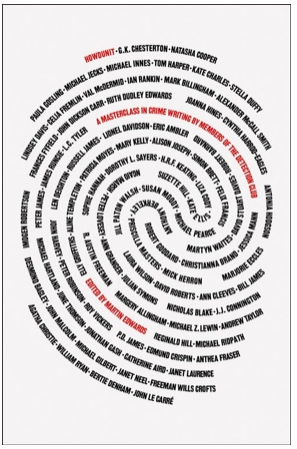


Written by Desmond and Joan Bagley's close friends Iwan and Margareta Hedman-Morelius, this out-of-print book includes biographical details of Iwan together with his recollections of the CWA and the CWIC conferences. The Bagleys feature a number of times throughout the book and it is an excellent record of both the conferences and their friendship.

Iwan (1931- 2012), a Captain in the Swedish Army, founded the Swedish crime fiction publication *DAST-magazine* in 1967 and had started to correspond with Bagley in 1969. Bagley, together with his wife Joan, visited Iwan and his first wife Inga Morelius at their home, Flodins väg 5, Strängnäs for the first time in May 1972 and became close personal friends. Morelius was to feature as a character in Bagley's 1977 novel *The Enemy.*

‘Writing Action Fiction’ *The Writer*, 86 (Boston: The Writer Inc., 1973), Volume 86, No. 5, May 1973, pp. 11-13. Republished in Techniques of Novel Writing, edited by Abraham Saul Burack (Boston: The Writer Inc., 1973), pp. 248 – 253. [Note: An undated draft of this article was titled ‘The Beginning, the Middle, and the End’].

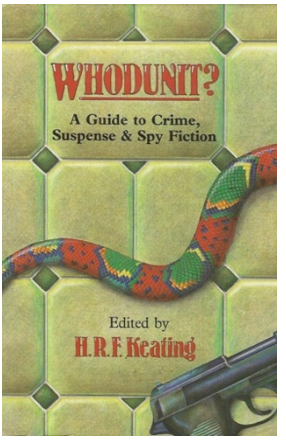
‘Modern Backgrounds for Today’s Novels’ *The Writer*, 92 (Boston: The Writer Inc., 1979), Volume 92, No. 10, October 1979, pp. 18-21. [Note: An undated first draft of this article was titled – ‘Science, Technology, and the Novel’, and a second draft was titled ‘Contemporary Themes in the Novel’.



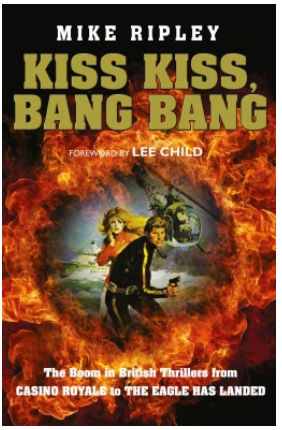
In both of *The Writer* articles Bagley explains his personal approach to novel writing. These articles were recently revisited by Martin Edwards in his book *Howdunit: A Masterclass in Crime Writing by Members of the Detection Club*, HarperCollins, 2020.

Ninety crime writers from the world’s oldest and most famous crime writing network give tips and insights into successful crime and thriller fiction. Edited by Martin Edwards, this book contains an abridged version of 'Modern Backgrounds for Today’s Novels’ and quotes from ‘Writing Action Fiction’.

H.R.F. Keating (Ed): 'Unprocessed Idea to Processed Word' in 'How I Write my Books' *Whodunit? A guide to Suspense & Spy Fiction*; London, Windward, 1982 / New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1982, pp. 87 – 89.



Edited by H.R.F. Keating, this book contains an essay by Bagley in which he explains the importance of research and how he approaches the plot of a novel.



Mike Ripley: *Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang: The Boom in British Thrillers from Casino Royale to The Eagle Has Landed*; London, HarperCollins, 2017.

Mike's book contains an extremely well researched and informative biographical guide to the leading players and supporting cast of authors in the world of adventure and spy fiction from 1953 to 1975. This page-turner, filled with factual gems, incisive observations and humorous asides, is without doubt, required reading for the thriller enthusiast or literary researcher.

More information and feature articles on Desmond Bagley can be found on Philip Eastwood's website *thebagleybrief.com* and Nigel Alefounder's site *desmondbagley.co.uk*.

A rare insight into the early life and formative influences of Desmond Bagley – the boy from Kendal who became a master of the adventure novel.

'Painstakingly and lovingly reconstructed –
I was both fascinated by it and grateful for it'
MIKE RIPLEY
author of *Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang*

'This is a must-read for anyone who has ever enjoyed Bagley's work – and a primer on life as a writer'
JEREMY DUNS
author of the acclaimed Paul Dark spy novels

'Desmond Bagley was one of the authors whose work inspired me to become a thriller writer.... brand new material - what a treat!'
PETER JAMES

ISBN: 978-1-5272-8391-6