

23 Luyt Street, Uitenhage
New Year's Day, January 1st, 1949

My dear All,

It is New Years Day, so I must wish you all the compliments of the Season. None of us went to Watch Night service; Harold has a cold, David, Jean and Charles spent the day at Humewood yesterday and Ted and I had quite a busy day doing some shopping for Dad. He wanted us to get a cake for the Nurses, and sweets for the patients, for New Years Day and evidently wanted to celebrate with them in suitable fashion because I got permission this morning for some of us to visit him and Ted volunteered to go and give him a shave and Jean went with him. They got busy, taking too long over the business for his liking then when they had finished, he asked for the nurses to come (which of course they could not) and he set about delivering himself of a speech, with his eyes shut, so was not aware that he lacked an audience except Ted and Jean, and the latter very embarrassed at that. When he had finished, he said he wanted to go to sleep so they came home. Ted, Harold and Charles and I went to see him at 3, found the Staff Nurse busy with him. He had got out of bed and she was busy putting him back again. He was in a terrible mix – said he wanted to go to the dining room – and was this part of Joe's house and was he to stay where he was and how had he got there? Dr Hull had been with him about lunch time and used the catheter again which he said was terribly painful and I think the pain must have upset him. The House Surgeon came to see him while we were there and said he would come again to talk to him when his visitors had gone but said that if he had difficulty about sleeping tonight, he would have to tell the nurse on duty who would give him something. I have tried to get into touch with Dr Hull but I know she has undertaken to relieve one of the local Doctors for this weekend so I expect she is doing double duty.

Later, after 6 pm visiting. When we got to the Hospital this evening, Dad was sleeping and hardly spoke to us all the half hour we were there. But when he did speak he was quite clear. I have had a talk with Dr Hull who went to him about 5, and says she was surprised when she asked him how he was to get a grumpy reply to the effect that he wished people would leave him alone – most unlike Dad who is always only too pleased to have someone to talk to. She said this morning he was quite chatty. She has left instructions that he is to be closely observed and she is to be called if there is any need. She does not think I will be able to leave Monday night.

Sunday afternoon. The heat today is terrific. We have all been up to see Dad. He has a small fan going near him but it's such a noisy thing that he is quite glad when it is put off. His condition is much the same as yesterday, very weak but his mind is clear. He wants to ask Rev Weavers to take him by car to Cradock so that he can go to the Hospital there. Of course it is out of the question for him to travel by car, even a train journey would be a complicated undertaking. While we were at the hospital, Dr Hull came and had a chat. When it is cooler this evening, she is going to take the water away from him again. This seems very soon after the last time - about 30 hours. Anyway Ted and I have decided to stay on here for the meantime. We have got all our things packed, Harold has been offered a lift by a friend in Bloemfontein, and he will be fetched here at about 4 a.m. tomorrow. Joe and family will arrive soon after, with their servant who went with them, and I will be glad to hand over housekeeping for a while. We have the use of a room next door, where Ted and I will probably both sleep. Uncle Owen offered me their spare room but they are so far out of town and no phone in the house so I am afraid it would be awkward. We have not seen any of them since Thursday but know they planned to go to Port Elizabeth for the day yesterday. David will travel as far as Fish River with Jean and Charles, and Ted and I will follow when it is convenient. The Salvation Army ladies came round visiting the patients this afternoon and the one who came to Dad recognised him, she have been in Cradock until fairly recently.

We intend having supper before visiting the hospital again, and will then go on to Church. So I will close this letter now, and post, as I think the mail is cleared at 6 a.m. and goes by air from Port Elizabeth. I hope to be able to report better news next time.

Yours with love,
Grace

Grass Ridge, Fish River
Sunday January 9th, 1949

My dear All,

I feel I must send off one more letter, in general terms, to report the last few days for the benefit of those who were not able to gather together at Dad's funeral.

I remember very well when last I posted, it was Tuesday night – because Ted and I went out to post the letters, I missed the bottom step and fell and sprained my ankle. Fortunately we had not gone further and I got back into the house and put the foot under the cold tap in the bathroom and Mrs Brunyee, where Ted and I had a room, gave me First Aid. I had got a sedative tablet from Dr Hull that day as I had been sleeping so badly and felt crooked up, so I took one and got into bed and had breakfast in bed. Then the Dr phoned that Dad was worse and had had a bad night, so we got a taxi and I went along to see him. He had lots of things he wanted to tell me but his strength was definitely failing and it was a strain on him. I did not go up in the afternoon but had some things of his to wash, so Joe and Ted went. Joe's difficulty was that he could not hear what Dad had to say but there was little we could do except fan him, wipe his brow and give him sips of water which he could barely swallow. He did not seem to be in pain and would have loved someone to sing to him; in fact Thursday morning when I was with him, he kept on saying that his daughter-in-law had sung to him and that it was too beautiful for words.

Dot wired that she would arrive on Thursday afternoon and Joe went to Zwartkops to meet her and very fortunately, the train stopped there and the suburban train to Uitenhage was waiting for it, so they walked across the platform and there was no delay whatever. They were at the Hospital very soon but I can't say that Dad really knew that she was there. Anyway we were very glad of her calm serenity and she and Joe stayed with him to the very end, which came shortly after midnight. Ted and I went home about 11 and got there just in time to speak to Douglas, who had got as far as Grahamstown, and were looking for sleeping accommodation. We had phoned Lynne during the afternoon and again in the evening that it was useless him coming further than Queenstown but he felt he must push on. Well they could not find anything in Grahamstown so eventually about midnight, Lynne phoned some relative of Gerry's 20 miles out and they were very glad to get to bed. They were up early Friday morning and by the time Ted and I got over to Joe's house, they had made most of the arrangements about the funeral already. Douglas arrived in Uitenhage about 10.30 with Evelyn and Lynne, having left Cicely and Emily and Baby with Emily's parents on the farm in Queenstown. There were wires to send off, train bookings to be made, packing to be done, as well as Joe's family to arrange for. It was only at 3 o'clock that Joe got any satisfaction from the Railways about seats for the night journey and then Douglas, Evelyn, Lynne, Ted and I set off for Cradock. I don't think I can ever remember such heat. We just about smothered. There was a following wind all the way and the only stop we made was at Zuurberg Hotel (sanatorium) for a cold drink. We got into Cradock just at 8 and it was still hot. We had wired for rooms at the Victoria Hotel but nobody wanted anything to eat. After a cup of tea, Douglas, Ted and I went down to Ernest's to hear if there was any news for us and to make arrangements with Rev Andrew Wilson, who is on holiday at Somerset East about the funeral. Joe had previously contacted him from Uitenhage. We were very glad of more tea there and left about 10 for the Hotel, hot baths and bed. We were all very tired.

Saturday 4 pm. was the funeral. All the arrangements seemed to have worked alright. The Bearers were Douglas, Joe, Arthur and Rex, Clifford Saunders and Mr Michau, Deputy Mayor. There were many relatives, Florrie, Alice, Kathleen, Alan Biggs and Boy Vorster from Graaff Reinet, Uncles Gervase, Bertie, Norman and Dudley with their respective wives and some members of their families, Moorcrofts, Joy at the organ, and she played beautifully, Mary sat outside in the car and went to the cemetery and there were many others. Ernest and Alison were very kind in offering to meet the early morning train with Joe and Blodwen, and Dan and Dot, giving them breakfast and inviting as many as wished to come to morning and afternoon teas, so that we saw as much as possible of each other in the short time together. Ernest even took some photographs. Ted and I came out to Grass Ridge, Douglas and family went on to Queenstown, Joe and family and Dot

caught the night trains to their respective homes. I am sorry I forgot to mention that several of us popped in to see Aunt Eliza during the morning, going two at a time. Maud Millar spent a good part of the day with her. Ruth and Denis could not come. We are grateful for much sympathy and many kindnesses.

Grace