

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Wednesday January 1st, 1947

My dear Children,

I know you will be anxious to hear what report the Dr gave respecting Mom. He was not able to come before about 8 p.m. Mary came about four but could not stay as visitors were expected at 29 Market Street. Dr Oosthuizen made a thorough examination of Mom, tested her blood pressure, lungs, heart etc. When he came to her right side, he felt most carefully for the seat of the trouble and came to the conclusion that the liver or gall bladder was the cause. We told him that about 20 years ago, Dr Fuller at Observatory wanted to remove the gall bladder but Mom would not hear of an operation then. His reply was that had she had it then, she probably would have been in better health now. There was no suggestion of an op now. She must be careful what she eats, not fats or soups, nothing fried or greasy and must not have anything tight around her waist. The place is tender to the touch and she certainly has not looked so miserable in her life. How she is to carry out his instructions regarding eats under existing circumstances, I do not know. Food at Premier is mostly stews and such like. Aunt Rosa has always been a livery subject and has to be very careful what she eats. From a girl, she had avoided tea, coffee etc. I can remember at Grass Ridge she always had water at meals. Now she is quite stout. Mom is the reverse. Rosa says we do not have enough to eat. I don't know about that. Mom rests as much as possible. I give her her breakfast in bed and help all I can. The maid came at 8.10 this morning after we had finished breakfast. We let her go after washing up and going to the chemist's for medicine which Dr prescribed. We went to the Premier for dinner and at four we are going to Aunt Eliza for supper.

Dr also examined my nose, which at times continues to bother. He says it is partly due to old age but has given a prescription which may ease matters. I referred to the quantity of saliva which also bothers me. I frequently have to swallow which means stopping, if when reading or speaking. He says this could be rectified by means of X-ray treatment by shutting off one or more of the glands but does not recommend it. He has given some drops which may help but won't be permanent.

I drew him aside when letting him out and asked if he thought there might be something more serious the matter with Mom as I know she, as everyone else, has a dread of malignant growths. He could not say there was but it is quite possible. Of course I did not say anything to Mom about that.

I hope I have not alarmed you but I want you to know that I am doing all I can to keep her well and I hope to succeed. It is difficult at times, but difficulties are sent to be got over.

We did not go to watch night service, needless to say. Mary came down this morning to hear the result of Dr's visit.

Being a public holiday, we have not got any post today. Perhaps we shall get news tomorrow about Pam's plans for her holiday. We are still expecting Leslie and family on Saturday evening but have not heard from them recently.

Joe phoned from Kendrew yesterday afternoon and said they had had a nice holiday and were returning to Uitenhage that night so by this time, he is safely home.

I must go and change now as I have ordered the taxi to be here at four.

I do very sincerely wish you all the very best of all things for the coming year.

Love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Wednesday January 8th, 1947

My dear Children,

You will be sorry that I have to write again so soon after posting my regular letter yesterday afternoon but things are happening much quicker than I anticipated. We had a visit yesterday afternoon after I had posted, from Barbara, her husband and baby, Mr and Mrs Douglas and Uncle Gervase and whilst they were here, Dr dropped in. I had asked him to come when passing as Mom was complaining of increasing pain. He gave her another examination and saw that the swelling had increased in size and we told him of our contemplated plans. He at once said it was quite out of the question for Mom to travel either to Kroonstad or to Aunt Rosa. She was not in a fit state to go anywhere except, perhaps to Port Elizabeth to be X-rayed. The hospital here had not a large enough plant for proper examination. He would like, however, to take a direct photo with the machine here and so arranged for it to be done this morning at 10.30. Dr Scholtz is due back on 17th and will come along then but he was sure he would not differ from his diagnosis of the case. She need not stay in bed all day but should rest as much as possible and not worry about anything. After the examination, he called me aside and told me what was wrong, the gall bladder was enlarged, the liver too was not right. He also said that there might be other complications in the form of a growth such as cancer but nothing but an X-ray could determine that. The X-ray plant at the hospital was too small for what was really needed but he wished Mom to be there by 10.15 this morning and he would take a photo. Of course this has been very disturbing and upsetting to me but must hope for the best.

Well, I let Mary know last evening in a note I had written to Grace. The girls took the letter up. Mary came down before breakfast this morning and no doubt will come again. After having the X-ray, Mom seemed to collapse when she was lying down and started reaching, bringing up bile. Dr phoned saying that the photo was not a success as it was found that the plate had already been exposed for another patient so he wants her to go again tomorrow morning. I am not sure if she will. We are occupying the big spare room instead of our bedroom as it is quieter and cooler in the afternoons. Have arranged for all my gadgets in the spare room for making tea etc.

I am so thankful Pam and Jean are with me. Mary is a tower of strength and a great help. Mom is drowsy all this afternoon. I do not know what is in front of me but Pam and Jeans say they can stay a few days longer than the 18th. I had booked Mom's seat and everything for the 18th but all that is off.

Uncle Norman has been in this afternoon and going through Aunt Jessie's affairs. I have not time for more except to say that a letter from Dot this morning says she is willing to come down if needed. We shall see. I will try to write every day and will wire if there should be necessity. Excuse mistakes. I hardly know which way to turn. 3 p.m. Mom is dosing quietly.

Love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Wednesday January 9th, 1947

My dear All,

I hope it will not be necessary to post every day but I know *[two lines typed on top of each other]*... so you must

My dear Cousins,

The above is a combined effort of John (Dorothy's baby) and Uncle Charles. He says I may now continue on the same sheet.

I would like to write you a note of sympathy; I know you are all anxious and will be distressed about the old folk.

You know of course that for some months past Aunt Emma has been losing weight and her face has had a changed expression which gave the impression that there was something wrong somewhere but it was not evident just what or where. Within the past few days, Dr Scholtz's young partner, Dr Oosthuizen, has been called in and last night he pronounced the lump in the tummy was distinctly bigger and there are nodules on it – the liver and gall bladder are involved and he told me after he had examined Auntie that it was not possible to make a definite diagnosis without the X-ray, but in his own mind he had no doubt the growth was malignant (cancer). He would not suggest surgical interference.

Now I would like to suggest that we all try to rid our minds of the dread and revulsion that has been associated with that disease in the past. It does not always involve pain and sometimes is attended with very little discomfort and, of course, sometimes it is not the immediate cause of death. Concentrating on the immediate blessings from day to day will help a lot to keep them both happy and incidentally better in health.

Yesterday's experience after the X-ray (vomiting persistently all day), Dr Oosthuizen puts down to a nervous condition and gave her an injection which he hoped would settle the tummy and give her (and incidentally Uncle) a good night.

It is a great comfort having Pam and Jean here.

The above has been typed by Dorothy Murray by Mary's request whilst she (Mary) was making some fish nice for Mom. I started this sheet with Dot Murray's little boy on my lap, hence the line blotted out. I was saying that I know how anxious all will be to know how Mom is, being so far away.

It is dinner time and Mary has gone up to see to Aunt Eliza's dinner but will come back again later.

Later. Did I tell you that after having the X-ray taken, Dr phoned that two photos had been taken on the same plate rendering both plates useless. The nurse at the hospital was to blame. Mary was here in the evening and as Mom was so uncomfortable, we phoned for him again and he gave her an injection and she slept practically through the whole of last night. She is certainly brighter than yesterday but is not getting up. Now that we know the Doctor definitely suspects cancer, we must prepare for eventualities. You must excuse me not referring to matters in your letters, I am sort of stunned and cannot concentrate. It is strange that on 7th I wrote to Rev Ludlow asking for three months release from church duties – before I knew anything about the possibilities on Mom being laid up. I know I must not worry but trust, but it is hard to do so. Rest assured I shall do all in my power to make things as easy as possible for her. We re using the spare room, just at the back of the lounge as it is cooler than the front room. I have fixed up a bedside light and the electric kettle etc and brought in her spring mattress etc. For the future help I cannot see what to do but no doubt way will open. Rev Ludlow as here this morning and saw her and offered a beautiful prayer with us.

At present the plan is for Pam and Jean to return to Kroonstad on Saturday 18th by train. They have been a great comfort and help. Mary too has been invaluable. This is a funny letter but you must excuse everything. Pam can add a few lines if she lies. It is 4 p.m. Mom is still sleeping.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

Grandpa is very upset now, and I am afraid, looking at the very blackest side of it. We are trying to cheer him up, but I am afraid with little success. Of course, we all realise now that the old people can't be left alone, even if they do get their meals at the Premier. Granny has to diet, and the food from the Premier is sometimes, but not always, suitable. No more space now, so I must stop. Tons of love to everybody, Pam.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Saturday January 11th, 1947

My dear All,

I am 83 today and I feel about as helpless as I must have been 83 years ago. It is 8.45 a.m. and I have been up since five. The girls have gone to Fish River by train for the day and Joe dropped in about half an hour ago from Uitenhage. He has gone to the station to book his seat for tomorrow night. Well, I got as far as the first line before breakfast and now must try to retrace my history. Yesterday afternoon the girls had a swim at the park bath. Mr Stock called and did not know Mom was ill. Mary also came in the evening and discussed the possibility of getting the girls out to Fish River. Uncle Gervase sent message that his car was full, Barbara, husband and baby were also going to fish River for the day and had no room for them. We tried other possible opportunities without success. Mary thought it desirable for the girls to have the chance of seeing the relations and so did I. Mary phoned to Enid who assured us that they would give them breakfast and they could return by goods train if no opportunity offered by car. Vincent Crosbie is taking them to the bio this evening but now that Joe is here, I doubt if they will go. Mom sat out in a chair during the afternoon but in about half an hour, was glad to get back into bed. So far did I get before dinner.

It is now 3.15 p.m. A succession of phone calls and visitors has taken up time since then. Mom had a good night and about 2.30 a.m. woke and wished me many happy returns of the day. I told the girls that I had the impression that Joe might be coming for the weekend and that they should look out for him on the platform. Their train was about an hour late and I had given up the idea of seeing Joe when in he walked about quarter to nine. The girls had seen him but as they had bought their tickets and were on the train they went on, promising to get back as soon as possible from Fish River. Of course we were delighted to see Joe and he has booked to return on Sunday night. A few minutes after seven, the phone rang from Vryburg and I had the pleasure of hearing Douglas, Evelyn and Rex express their good wishes. The reception was very indistinct – other voices apparently on the line. Shortly after that the Johannesburg phone rang and I hear Reg and Dot quite clearly speaking from Potgietersrus. Dot said she could come later in the month when the boys had gone back to school. She had phoned to Grace and they thought it best for Dot to come first. That Pam and Jean were to return on 18th. Should she bring baby as well. I replied yes, it would be a good tonic. So we have that pleasure to look forward to.

Later, Lyne phoned saying she was coming over this afternoon by car, returning Sunday, so we shall have quite a large family gathering.

The Mayor, the Deputy, Councillor Stock and the Town Clerk and another Municipal official came round to the back of the house (so as not to disturb Mom) to offer their official greetings and to express regret at Mom's indisposition. Mr and Mrs Hultzer also called. I had remembered their anniversaries and they did not know of Mom's illness nor did they know the date of my birthday and were surprised that they should happen to be on a visit to Cradock on mine. The post brought quite a number of letters. Aunt Eliza sent some of her famous ginger cake and a nice birthday letter by Mary. Mary is coming down tonight.

4.15 Lynne and her friend have just arrived so I really must stop. I will try and keep up my daily letter but you must make excuses for all the mistakes etc as there is no chance of re-reading. The best news I can give you is that Mom is no worse but is still far from well. Pam and Jean are not back from Fish River yet.

Lots of love,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Wednesday January 14th, 1947

My dear Children,

I am trying another experiment today. I have got a small supply of white tissue paper and I want to see if I cannot do seven or more copies at one typing. I have not been able to keep a copy of what I do write but depend on Dot to return the copy I send to her – which she does – but my memory is such that I cannot remember what I wrote yesterday or the day before. Please say if this paper is sufficiently clear to be read. I am using new carbon paper since the first of January.

It is now 11 a.m., I had to phone for Dr earlier as Mom seemed so depressed and could not sleep last night. He says she must stay quiet in bed for a few days. The place in her side was throbbing more than usual and she was more restless. He is still of the same opinion as to what is the matter but nothing will be done until Dr Scholtz returns on Friday, when he will ask him to come and examine Mom.

Yesterday morning cousin Harry Collett phoned from his home in Middelburg that he was coming to see us and his daughter Mary was coming as well. They only arrived just after dinner as we were resting. We all had a chat before they too rested. They stayed to afternoon tea. It was very nice of them to come as we have so much in common. Harry is the same one that came to Cape Town years ago and had a very serious op for cancer. Now he is quite well, he builds houses, climbs windmills, does ploughing and in fact anything and everything on the farm. He said he had not an ache or a pain. Truly he has much to be thankful for. I think the conversation was too much for Mom and that may be the reason for having a bad night. So today we are not letting anyone – except Mary of course – see her.

Blodwen wrote and Joe also suggested when he was here, offering to come up and give a hand at nursing Mom. She has a good servant and could leave the children safely, until Dot was able to come or till school reopens. Mom thinks it might be too much to leave the children but evidently it is necessary to have some extra assistance. Pam and Jean leave on Saturday morning, 7 a.m. Perhaps Blodwen would arrive by the same train as they go on by. I asked Dr if he thought it possible for Mom to return with the girls but he was emphatic “not in her present condition”. Of course I would like to avoid the long journey for Dot coming down. Perhaps the ideal plan would have been if Aunt Eliza had been living with us then Mary might have been able to look after all three at a remunerative fee which would have been satisfactory to all concerned. But the ideal is often out of reach so the next best thing has to be adopted.

Douglas phoned early this morning from Vryburg but the reception was so bad that we could not make any sense out of the conversation and we hope he did not have to pay for the call. We did hear him say Kroonstad but that which he wanted to tell was inaudible. Since then we have a letter from Grace saying that Dot had phoned to her and she was coming down as soon as the girls left or shortly after. In the meantime, I had wired to Blodwen at 11.20 “accept kind offer to help, bring Dannie. Not much improvement.” So on this later news, perhaps it will be wise if we wait for the letters from Dot to arrive before Blodwen actually starts. If for instance, Dot should be arriving say, on Monday and the girls leave on Saturday, we can surely manage for the day or so.

I am glad to learn from Grace’s letter just to hand that David is really going to Rhodes University. The Governor General’s Fund has made him a grant and with the Military allowance of £250, his expenses for 35 months will be about provided for. We hope he will visit us on his way down. I am sorry to have to plead my inability to refer to the various matters in your letters. I know you are most interested in Mom’s condition. But I do thank you all for your letters. I realise that as a family we are passing through a very trying time. We must pray that we all may be sustained through whatever trials may await us in the future.

We have had a lovely rain all the morning and last night we had 10 points making a total up to noon of 1.05 inches. Most welcome. Vincent Crosbie took the girls last night to see “The Green Years”. They enjoyed it very much even in spite of the tears they shed. They were not home till about 11.30 a.m. Must say goodbye for today hoping you are all well. I will try to continue my daily reports but if you do not hear, do not be alarmed. Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Wednesday January 15th, 1947

My dear All,

The post only came to hand just at dinner time and it is now a few minutes after three. The girls are just going to see Mrs Saunders in Sprigg Street and I want to post the usual daily letter by them, unless they can get back in time for the 5.30 post.

Mom wanted to get back to her old room last evening so of course we trekked and after taking one of Dr's sleeping pills, she had a good night but of course it can hardly be called a natural sleep. She has been drowsy all the morning and is still sleeping. She seems a little brighter. I did not go to the Church quarterly meeting, I felt I could not stand up to it. I have not heard much of what transpired but of course my application for three months relief from service was granted me. Both Douglas and Joe phoned during the evening. Joe said Blodwen was ready to come by tonight's train but he thought that if Dot was likely to be here early next week, it was hardly worthwhile as the girls are here till Saturday morning. I promised to wire as soon as we had our post from Dot this a.m. Douglas said he understood from a conversation he had had over the phone with Grace that Dot was arriving on Sunday but did not know if it was this weekend or the 22nd. He also said he might be down at the end of next week (25th). So I have wired Joe that if Blodwen arrives by Saturday, it will be convenient. Dot's letter just to hand says she will come as soon after 22nd as possible. She has to get a permit from Headquarters to allow her nurse girl to travel in her compartment. This no doubt will be granted. We are indeed blessed with the devoted children who are eager and anxious to help us through the most anxious period of our life. Of course we have not said a word to Mom as to what Dr fears but I suspect she realises it. The girls also phoned to Grace last evening and they got through after I had gone to sleep. She could not give any later information so that is how matters stand at the time of this letter.

Mary was here for a few minutes this morning – just before dinner and our post was delivered after she left. Mom has not had any reaching since her first attack. She seems more comfortable now she is back in her old room and we are studying any wish she expresses. Again I say I do not know what I should have done without them. Aunt Emmie has written a very sympathetic letter and says the symptoms, as I have described them, exactly correspond to what my mother went through 40 years ago.

I must tell you the fright we had on Tuesday – I think it was Jean wanted to see Mary who was going to the bio that afternoon. Pam stayed at home with me. As Jean did not return as soon as Pam expected her, she wondered what had happened to her. She hastened up town and could not find her, I phoned to the hospital to see if there had been an accident and she had landed there but fortunately that had not occurred. I suggested that perhaps she had gone to Market Street to see Aunt Eliza and so Pam hurried off to see. In the meantime, Jean arrived back, having crossed Pam somewhere on the way. So alls well that ends well.

We had a lovely rain yesterday and it is nice and cool today.

The girls have gone to the Saunders and have promised to be back in time to take the post. I have not been out of the house since I took Mom to be X-rayed. Everybody is very kind and sympathetic and I am trying not to worry but it is very hard to keep smiling – but I am thankful I can wait on Mom as much as I do. My desk is littered up with letters which I cannot find time to answer as I would like to. I dare say Rev Ludlow will call later this afternoon. Please excuse all mistakes. I will continue to post a daily report so long as it is necessary.

Lots of love to all from
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Wednesday January 16th, 1947

My dear All,

Today, had Harold been alive, he would be 54 years old. How proud he would be to be a grandfather. Who know but he may be thinking of all the family.

It is a little after 11 a.m. Mom had a fairly good night without having to take a sleeping tablet. The girls spent the evening with the Fouries. They did not go out to the Warm Bath as previously intended. Dr Scholtz has been and examined Mom very carefully. He will discuss the case with Dr Oosthuizen and come again tomorrow. Incidentally he tells me there is a distinct hardening of the liver. Mom gave him to understand that there would no using of the knife but would be willing to have another X-ray taken if that was considered necessary. So we must wait until tomorrow for his verdict. He thanked me very sincerely for our Xmas card, he thought the words were so appropriate. You will be sorry to hear that he has suffered another tragic loss. On his return journey from Cape Town, he and others of his party, including a brother-in-law, stopped at Swellendam for refreshments at a café and whilst there, the brother-in-law had a heart attack and died on the spot. The body was sent direct to Arundel for burial where his wife was buried. We are very sorry for Dr, he is such a nice man. He expressed his sorrow at Aunt Jessie's death too.

A letter from Douglas this morning. He reports having a little rain but not enough. Arthur is busy getting his house in order. Lynne told us on Saturday that the wedding might be postponed for a few weeks as Emily would just miss her pension allowance if she was married on the date originally agreed upon. We shall hear in good time. Kingsley was due back from his cricket excursion to Cape Town. He had done fairly well and the experience will no doubt be good for him. Aunt Emmie says Kingsley spent a day with them. She does not remember having met him before. She says he is a fine fellow (and so say all of us).

Grace writes that she has consulted their doctor again about Ted's condition. He prescribed some tablets which induced sleep, which both of them took. Gay says she does not know when last she had such a good sleep. Ted is on twelve hours shifts again. They are looking forward to the girls' return on Saturday midnight. They have indeed been very useful and I hope they have enjoyed themselves as well. They went to see old Mrs Saunders yesterday afternoon. She has been suffering from rheumatism badly. Grace has sent us a sample of soap she has made. Will have the opportunity of testing it next Tuesday.

Blodwen will be arriving on Friday night, about 9. So she will only see the girls. We have not heard definitely when Dot arrives but she says as soon as possible after the 24th. Baby of course is coming with her and the nurse girl. Aunt Kate Dudley was in whilst Dr was here. She saw Mom and thinks she is looking better than when she was in last. She kindly brought us some eggs and butter, which were very acceptable.

I have not been able to refer in recent letters to many items of news which under ordinary conditions I should have done, so I have spent some time in re-reading them before destroying or otherwise disposing of them. I have not finished reading all of them but here are some notes I have made.

I don't think I have suitably thanked all of you for your kind greetings on my 83rd anniversary. I do appreciate your good wishes and hope they may be realised in due course. I am conscious that I do not deserve all the kind words and wishes that have been said but I will try to live up to them. Denis has passed 1st class and only two other students got that distinction. Good luck Denis, you have worked hard for it. Anthony weighs 10 lbs 6 oz. Good going. Denis sits for his M.A. this year and then goes teaching next year.

Roy's Aunts at Cape Town want to keep him and send him to Bishops School at Rondebosch, Joe and Blodwen are considering the cost. No doubt it would do him good. Blodwen had a queer turn last Monday, everything went dark whilst she was preparing the dinner. The maid rushed for assistance and fetched Dr Ruth. She soon recovered. She is due to arrive here Friday evening. In a birthday note from Aunt Eliza, she says "she can't get over the fact that she is as old as she is and she doesn't expect to die just yet."

Later. Lynne has just phoned asking how Grandma is and says perhaps she may come over again on Saturday but the car is not behaving too well. We shall see.

I had a Xmas card from Willie Saunders this year. He is working at one of the banks in P. as Superintendent of Messengers. He is not in very good health. His daughter is at school at Rocklands.

`3 p.m. Telegram just received from Dot "Could Blodwen come from 18th, trying train booking from Pretoria on 26th, much love Dot." So the plans are just working out quite right. Am wiring her accordingly. She should be here on Monday or Tuesday 27th or 28th. Mom says she is sorry to give so much trouble and does not think it necessary. Am very thankful to all for what you are doing for us. Must close with lots of love to you all and I hope to be able to give more definite news tomorrow.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Wednesday January 17th, 1947

My dear All,

I was only able to send you a postcard this afternoon as Dr Scholtz had not arrived. He came just at 5.30 pm. And so I want to get a résumé of his visit off tonight so that you can get it, I hope, on Monday a.m.

His examination as usual was very thorough. He caused a little pain now and then in the course of pressing the affected parts. He is not going to trouble about an X-ray as it would only show if a stone or stones were the cause of the trouble. He is still of the opinion that it is a malignant affection. He will call again about Tuesday. He says she need not stay in bed all day but must rest as much as possible. She is to have a dose of Epsom salts every other day. We have a long diet sheet which will require studying. Rev Ludlow called this afternoon. He and Mrs Ludlow are leaving on Monday for three weeks holiday. They will be absent for three Sundays but the holiday will practically cover four weeks.

The girls are already packed and may perhaps go to the station presently to meet Blodwen.

Mom says I must tell you that she is a very patient patient.

Mrs Ranier was here this morning and saw Mom. Mary has not been down for a couple of days but all is well at Market Street. Clifford will probably see the girls off tomorrow morning.

Later. Jean has done me one good turn by cutting my toenails. She says she does not cut her own but bites them!

Florrie Hall and May Saunders have just called. Their mother has been suffering from neuritis. The recent rains seem to have improved the complaint.

Must close now with very dear love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Saturday January 18th, 1947

My dear All,

There is not much to report this afternoon except that Blodwen arrived about 10.30 last night, the train being over an hour late. Pam and Jean went to the station to meet her. It was past 11 before we got to bed. The girls left this morning, the train being up to time. Clifford very kindly took them over.

Douglas and Evelyn phoned early saying they would be down for next weekend and later in the morning, Lynne phoned that she would not be over today but would come as soon as she could. Of course I told her of the possibility of her parents being here.

A postcard from Dot saying she was definitely coming, arriving here on Monday morning 27th came this morning. Blodwen has booked to return by the same train that she arrived by for Uitenhage. So it seems that all our plans are working out quite nicely and I hope there will not be any need to alter them. I fear the girls are having a very hot journey.

I was up town this morning. Uncle Gervase kindly took me by car – to have our hotplate repaired again.

I do not think it will be necessary to continue my daily reports after this unless there is any big change in Mom's condition. She had dinner with us and is now resting. Enid was in for a few minutes before dinner. They are all well at Fish River.

Beryl was on the same train as Blodwen last night on her way to Eric and Freda for a holiday. She has been working very hard during their moving into their new house – No. 5 Harper Street. You had better note the change of address. She looks to break her journey here on her return. Uncle Own and Aunt Kate are hoping to hear good news of Mom. Uncle wishes Eric had the piano up there and offers to pay cost of transport.

I notice an advert in the Midland News of a Chev motor car for sale which may interest Joe. He wanted to buy Aunt Jessie's but Uncle Norman is giving that to Mr Barnes. I will say goodbye until the next time, probably on Monday.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Tuesday January 21st, 1947

My dear All,

Today is the second anniversary of our youngest grandchild, Dannie. Blodwen has sent him a present from here and no doubt he will have a very happy day. Joe has phoned twice and says all the children are happy and there has not been any crying or trouble about Blodwen's absence. The Mrs de Beer who assisted Blodwen when Dannie was born is again acting as housekeeper and everything seems to be going according to plan. Roy is due home just at this minute (6 a.m.). He has had a nice holiday with his Aunts at Cape Town. He spent one day with Aunt Emmie. Talking of Cape Town, I see by the old Northern News that Kingsley had a good time there, playing cricket for the Griqualand West team. He scored over 30 runs in one innings and his bowling resulted in taking some wickets. Perhaps some day he will go to England or Australia to represent South Africa.

O course you will be anxious to hear how Mom is. I did not post on Sunday or Monday as her condition seemed just the same. We are very glad to have Blodwen with us. She is an excellent cook and Mom is doing well. Her tummy has been upset but not seriously I think. I am expecting Dr to come today so I must leave plenty of room for his report.

A postcard from Douglas says they will be down this weekend. He does not say if they are coming by train or car. Lynne also phoned that she will try to come over on Saturday. Dot says she has booked for Sunday's train from Pretoria for 2.15 p.m. due here Monday morning.

9.20. Blodwen has decided to go home by the morning train on Saturday. Ruth phoned on Saturday asking if there was anything she could do to assist. Of course she has her duties to perform at the Red Cross office every day. She and family are all going to the Kowie for three weeks from February 1st. It was very kind of her to offer. Both Kingsley and Cicely have both passed their exams. Kingsley may be going to Stellenbosch University. Why not Rhodes I wonder? Tom Webster is going to England in the Carnarvon Castle next month to buy goods for Fletcher & Cartwright. It has been suggested that perhaps Gladys might be able to come to Aunt Eliza for a time so as to allow Mary to get a holiday.

Has anyone still got the typed copies of Jim's Journal that I sent round some couple of months or so ago? It has not come back to me yet.

I have seen an advert in the Midland News of a second-hand motorcar for sale. Joe has asked me to get Douglas to have a look at it as he misses his car. I wish we could get a small car and give it to Mary, she does such a lot for everyone. She was here before 7 this morning to pick some figs for Aunt Eliza and ourselves. They are very nice this season.

After dinner. Dr has not come yet 3.30 and Blodwen is going up to see old Mrs Saunders. She will be back in time for post. May has come with the car for her. Mom enjoyed her dinner. I got Moorcrofts to send a tender chicken and Blodwen cooked it very nicely for her. I have just been to the Post Office and got such a nice parcel from Grace, a smart dressing jacket, an article Mom badly needed. There are also some packets of Rice Crispies, something new to us.

Dr just called, says there is no change but we can reduce the medicine a little. Will call again about the end of the week. Shall have a job to catch the post.

Love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Thursday January 23rd, 1947

My dear All,

You will be glad to hear that Douglas phoned from Queenstown on Wednesday afternoon saying that he and Evelyn would be coming across on Friday about five. They, including Arthur, had arrived by car. Arthur might be staying in Queenstown on special business but no doubt we shall know more about that in due course. Ruth also phoned enquiring how Mom was getting on and she would take any opportunity of coming up if a lift was available. Of course she has her Red Cross duties to perform. They are going to the Kowie on February 1st for three weeks. Joe has also phoned to Blodwen on three or more occasions and we are glad to know that all are well there. Roy is back from Cape Town safe and sound and has thoroughly enjoyed his holiday. Baby Dan has not given any trouble whilst Blodwen has been away. Dot too writes that she has let part of their house whilst she is away. We have no idea at present how long she is looking to stay with us but we shall find out in due course. Letters from Pam and Jean at dinner time reporting their arrival at midnight. Their train was reported to Grace as being due at 2.15 so no one was there to meet them but they rang them up from the station and of course Ted came in for them. Jean has decided to go back and take her matric and may take up nursing after that. Pam has been appointed on the permanent staff of the Land Bank in Kroonstad and is looking forward to her new job

We have all been upset by tummy trouble the last few hours, the possible result of having stewed rhubarb for dinner yesterday. Mom did not have any but her medicine may have been the cause in her case. Blodwen has a sore finger on her right hand and fears it may be a whitlow coming. I hope not. She is going to Uncle Gervase's tonight and giving them some music and songs.

We are expecting Dr to call again either Saturday or Friday. I do not see any change in Mom's condition. She is still very weak and one of us generally takes her arm whenever she moves from room to room. Her appetite seems good and Blodwen is following the Dr's diet scale as near as possible.

By the last English mail I received from the late Mr Milne's housekeeper a couple of photos of him and a pair of gold links with his initials engraved and a serviette ring. She has been very ill and promises to write to us. It is kind of her to have sent them.

By the same mail, I received a letter from my nephew Norman Butler saying how much he would like to take a trip to see us all but cannot do so at present but will look forward to it in the future. We should like to see him.

On 29th, Douglas and Evelyn will have been married for 29 years. Hope they will be here on the day.

I did not have time on Tuesday after Dr's visit to say all I should have said. It was such a rush to get my letter off at all. Dr told me that apparently the lump was swelling, or words to that effect. He did not anticipate that she would suffer much pain but if she did, there were means of relieving such. He did not think it would be advisable for me to go further up country if Mom should be able to go to either of the homes. I referred to the case of Major and Mrs Dennison. I said even if it did shorten my life.

My garage has been empty for all this month but today it is let again from February 1st so it will just fit in nicely for Douglas' car. Joe has asked Douglas to have a look at a Master Chev car advertised for sale here. He misses his car very much.

I must stop now and post up the lane and so save going up to the top Post Office.
Hope to hear that you are all well,

Love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Monday January 27th, 1947

My dear All,

Monday afternoon. Here I am surrounded by Douglas and Evelyn, Dot and Baby, all full of loving attention and anxious to do what they can to help. Aunt Eliza and Mary came down shortly before dinner, much to our surprise and pleasure. We took the opportunity of remembering that in two days time, it would be the 29th anniversary of their wedding day. Douglas reminded us of a conversation he had with a couple up in his district who had celebrated their Diamond Anniversary and replying to his question as to which he had found the most difficult, the old man replied that the last two were because he had had to cease working. We do wish them both much happiness in the future, be they many or few.

As you know, Douglas and Evelyn arrived on Friday afternoon. I don't think I wrote on Saturday but Blodwen left by train on Saturday morning, Douglas seeing her off. She has been a great help to us and been most attentive in every way. Nothing has been too much trouble and we have appreciated her help. She had arranged with Joe by phone to meet her with the children at Zwartkops Station but Joe phoned in the evening to say that her train did not stop but went straight through to Port Elizabeth. They had to wait for about three hours before they met. What a shame. However they did get home safely. No doubt we shall hear in due course how they got on.

Douglas went to service with me on Sunday morning and in the afternoon took us for a spin as far as the aerodrome. We stopped for a chat outside Uncle Gervase's house for a few minutes and I got off to see Aunt Eliza for a few minutes whilst he took Mom home as she was getting tired. We had asked Dr Scholtz, who came to see Mom on Saturday, if he thought that the shaking of the car would do Mom any harm and he said he thought it would do her good to have a change. That being so, we shall repeat the experiment so long as weather and Douglas being here makes it possible. Dr seemed satisfied with Mom's condition and did not make any appointment for his next visit. Mom is certainly brighter and I am very thankful to be able to state that she is not suffering much pain. May it long continue to be so.

None of us went to service last evening but Vincent Crosbie came in and had a chat with Douglas and Evelyn. He is some relation of Evelyn's cousin I think. He is getting married in Vryburg on March 4th. Uncle Gervase came in after service. Mom was very tired after the motor spin but has rested well today and as I write now (6 p.m.) she is out again for a little way. Douglas has taken Evelyn to see Mrs Radford and dropped me to see Aunt Charlotte. Some are going to the pictures tonight. I am not. Mary brought down Aunt Eliza before dinner in her wheeled chair and gave us all a very pleasant surprise. She had also paid a visit to the Poplars to see the new alterations that Ernest is making by converting some of his outside rooms and garages into a dwelling house for him and Alison. I have not seen the alterations yet. Whilst I was at the old ladies home, Douglas was at Radfords and heard someone tooting his car and going to see what was wrong, was surprised to find Mike Meyers and Dr Docherty who had spotted the car on their way to see Leslie Collett at Rooispruit. They had not time to call on Aunt Eliza.

Dot of course saw Grace and all the family at the station at Kroonstad on her way down and reports them all well. She brought a very welcome supply of soap, tea and other good things which are much appreciated. We are all very pleased to be able to congratulate Jean on having done so well in her J.C. exam. She obtained the following symbols: A for Maths, Arithmetic, English and Latin. B symbols for Afrikaans, Physics and History. Now she is going to take her matric which is a two year course. Well done Jean. I will try and write to her specially as soon as I can get the time. We are sorry to hear that Harold has had the misfortune to have his bicycle stolen from the Post Office yard at Johannesburg. The result of his exam will not be out till next month. In passing, it is indicative of his size that a pair of grey flannel trousers made to fit cost £5.10s.

Aunt Charlotte seems thinner than ever. It is pitiful to see her so helpless. She is wanting a new dress she says next month. She says she will be 93 in March. Her memory is still very good.

I have received by last mail from Mr Milne's housekeeper an old photo of Mr Milne and his three sisters and a brother. Also a pair of gold cuff links with his initials, also a pretty serviette ring. She says she is writing to me.

Douglas and Evelyn are taking May and Clifford Saunders to the bio this evening. They return to Queenstown on Wednesday morning and pick up Arthur and then home on Thursday. The wedding is fixed for April 5th in Queenstown.

Unless any sudden change should take place in Mom's condition, I do not expect I shall write daily as I have done of late. Very many thanks for all your letters, gifts, etc.

Much love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Monday February 3rd, 1947

My dear All,

I have not been writing as frequently lately as before as by this time you all will have known the state of Mom's condition. This has not changed materially in the past week or so. She has breakfast in bed every day and get up about ten, rests before dinner and has dinner with us in the dining room, sleeps until about 3.30, then afternoon tea and another rest before supper which we have about 6 or 6.30 and to bed shortly after. Dr Scholtz called on Saturday afternoon and thought the gall bladder was a little less enlarged and were to continue with the same medicine. As a rule, Mom sleeps fairly well and seldom requires attention during the night. Mom's appetite remains good and she sleeps fairly well. She enjoyed a couple of spins in Douglas' car but got tired by the time she got home. Douglas gave Aunt Eliza and Mary a trip that they will never forget. He took them up to the top of Oukop one afternoon. Neither of them had been there before and they were charmed with the view as they could pick out the various points of interest in town. Eliza paid Douglas the compliment by saying she would never go up again unless he was driving. Maude Miller was also in the same car. This trip will no doubt go down in history as one of the great events in Auntie's life. During the morning, Aunt Kate called to greet Mom on her 85th anniversary. Mr and Mrs Douglas also called with the same object in view. Kate brought some eggs and butter which were very welcome. In the evening Aunt Rouena and Hope came. A wire from Reg showed that Mom was not forgotten.

Tuesday morning. February 4th. At a few minutes past midnight, Mom happened to be awake and I took the earliest opportunity of congratulating her on her great age. How many more anniversaries she is likely to see no one knows. We must be thankful that she has been spared to us for such a long time. The seven o'clock news has just come over and am glad to hear that the Royal party is making good progress towards South Africa though the sea is very rough. No doubt the telephone and telegraph lines will be busy during the day bringing messages of love to Mom. A card from Douglas reports their safe arrival home on Thursday night after a safe journey. Blodwen's whitlow has improved without having to be lanced. Her brother Billy, who was taken suddenly ill in Cape Town, was able to go home.

Last Wednesday afternoon I went to see Son of Lassie at the bio. Of course I took the afternoon performance and went late on purpose so as to avoid the long performance of the supporting programme. The place was packed and consequently the heat was intense, there being no ventilation. I was wet through with perspiration and wondered how I would get home if there was a cold wind on coming out of the hall. I am thankful to be able to say that I have suffered no ill effects but I do not think I shall ever patronise a bioscope again. The atmosphere was decidedly unhealthy. The picture was good and shows how a dog can be trained.

We are pleased to hear that Jean has done so well in her J.C. exam and is now going on to the matric exam. She is taking music as one of her subjects and no doubt she will do well. Pam started on her new job at the Land Bank on Saturday.

We had 157 points of rain during January on five days. Grapes are ripening and there are plenty of figs still. Gladys Webster is due at Market Street on 11th and Mary goes on holiday to Bushmans River the following day. I did not attend Maurice Webb's lecture as it was a cold evening. I have read the report of same. The attendance was not large but about nine pounds was collected.

Grace has just phoned. All well there. Greetings to Mom. Ruth has sent some hankies and Gwen Hudson some soap and the order boy tells us that the shops can supply some today. I wonder! Mr and Mrs Douglas sent some lovely flowers and hankies and Mrs Rainier has brought flowers as well. This has all happened before 10 a.m.

Later. Mary has called and brought Mom some powder and a parcel of Aunt Eliza's famous gingerbread. Post came whilst Mary was here and there are letters from Joe and Blodwen, Denis, Olive and a card from Aunt Eliza. Joe mentions the possibility of his paying us another of his flying visits shortly. They are very welcome. Uncle Owen and Aunt Kate had been to see them. Denis says baby is growing fast, weighs 12½ lbs at 3 months which is more than the average child.

They were all going to Port Alfred in a 3-ton lorry as it was more convenient and cheaper than by train. They hope to come and show us the baby when he is older and an opportunity offers by car. Everyone sends loving greetings to Mom and all. I expect we shall hear from Douglas and Evelyn and Lynne this evening. Olive writes that she may be coming down again from Johannesburg.

No room for more, Love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Monday February 10th, 1947

My dear All,

Dr Scholtz was here again this morning and gave Mom another overhauling. She has been complaining of pains in her right shoulder and at the back of her neck. He does not attribute these to her present trouble, it is nevertheless painful and may have its origin in sitting in a draft and getting a common stiff neck. He has prescribed a lotion which I hope will produce relief. The main seat of trouble, he says, is enlarging and he does not suggest anything that can be done in the matter. This is not encouraging but I am thankful that she is not suffering any acute pain though it is sore when she moves about. Of course she rests practically all day but is not sleeping too well at night. Last week when Dr was here, I was out of the room for a few moments and Mom asked him if her trouble was cancer. Mom says he said no. She told me this after Dr had left. I told her that was what we all hoped.

Last evening after Dot had been playing the piano, Mom started playing some of her old favourites. It is a long time since she has tried to play.

This morning when I gave her a cup of morning tea and a rusk – about five a.m. – inadvertently I gave her one of my false teeth with hers. She could not make out why she could not get it in. She had a good laugh over it.

Lynne has just phoned up to say that she has answered an advert in their local paper from an elderly lady looking for work such as is needed here. She has asked the party to reply direct to us. Dot had a short conversation about the matter so we must wait her reply. Gladys Webster is due at 29 Market Street this evening and Mary leaves tomorrow night for a well earned holiday. There is a possibility of Aunt Letty paying Cradock a visit later on. She expects to see the Royal party in Grahamstown and I have offered to see if arrangements could be made for her to be introduced to the King. I am sure she is as worthy as anyone to receive such an honour.

Lynne also said that the Mrs Wainwright, who it was thought might be able to come, was not available, having secured another position. She is still hoping to get a lift over to see us.

I had a call from John Wilmot and his wife. He was running the Fish River shop and later the shop at Dwaal. He remembered Harold and Douglas very well. Their visit was interrupted by the Dr's visit. They were pleased to have a look round the Church and Sunday School. They were also struck with the way the town has grown.

We are hoping to have a visit from David shortly when he goes to Rhodes University. He will be 21 next month. Pam seems happy in her new job and Jean is hard at work in her new standard. We heard over the wireless on Sunday that there had been a severe storm at Kroonstad and that the roof of a house was blown off into the river. I hope it was not Grace's. We experienced a regular old fashioned dust storm yesterday afternoon. Had to fly round and shut all the windows. However we had 66 points of rain and it looks as though we may get some more this afternoon or evening. Lynne said they were at Emily's farm yesterday and they had two inches there. Dot hired a boy on Saturday to do some cleaning up in the garden and he worked very well. He even came on Sunday morning to know if he had to work but of course we did not want him. However he has not turned up today so do not know if he will come tomorrow. There is a good deal he can do under supervision and Dot can give him that. He cut the grass nicely. I have got an extra 15 feet of garden hose which is a great help in the watering. Furrow water is very indifferent and often the furrow is dry. The Town Engineer came last week and has drawn the plan for our sewage scheme. The plan cost £2/2s. The necessary equipment is not obtainable yet. Shall be thankful when everything can be fixed up. Perhaps by the end of the year it may be.

Joan often goes to the Poplars to play with Dorothy Murray's little boy who is about the same age. He too often comes here and they play very happily together. Ernest has converted some of his outside rooms – garages – into a new dwelling house for himself and Alison. Now that all their children except Joan are married, they will let their present house and live in the new rooms. I have not seen them yet but understand the new part will be very nice.

Our next door neighbour, Mrs Kruger, has decided to give up taking boarders and is converting her house into three flats. Vincent Crosbie, who is getting married in March, has taken the middle one.

Ruth and family are having a good time at Port Alfred. They expect to be back in Grahamstown about 22nd. If an opportunity offers, they hope to bring the great grandchild up to see us. We shall be pleased. He is growing fast and is a great treasure.

No more for this issue. Will keep you informed of any changes in Mom's condition.

Lots of love to all and thanks for all letters etc.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Thursday February 13th, 1947

My dear All,

I know you are all anxious to be kept in as close touch as possible regarding Mom's condition. My last was posted on Tuesday. Since then there has not been much change but Dot thinks she is certainly weaker than when she arrived. There are certainly some indications in this direction. For the first time she has spoken of the "gnawing" pains and pains resembling rheumatism in her arms, shoulders and neck. She finds it more difficult to lie in a comfortable position. She is still very drowsy, especially I notice it in the daytime. It seems more difficult for her to get off to sleep in the evenings and says she has not slept before 11 or 12. I have applied the hot-water bottle when necessary, sometimes she says she is too hot and at others wants more covering.

The daily round is more or less the following, goes to bed about eight or nine, has a drink of warm barley water or Milo and tries to sleep. Sometimes I retire about eight and seldom later than nine. Generally we are both awake about 11 or midnight and if she has not slept, I give her half a sleeping tablet Dr prescribed for her. Awake again generally about four when I make a cup of weak tea for her and have a cup of early coffee myself. The Railway starts their blasting between five and six – sometimes earlier. I rise at six and set the machinery going for the day and try to do a spot of work as well. Have arranged with the milkman to give one ring at the front door when he delivers the three pints of milk. This saves many fruitless walks along the long passage to see if the milk has come. Mom generally sleeps until about 7.30 or so and Dot has her breakfast ready by then. About 9, Dot sees to her washing and generally Mom gets up about ten. A rest in the lounge follows and a walk about the house and morning tea. Sometimes a visitor may call. Post does not come until about 12.30, sometimes later. It is rare occasion that there is nothing delivered – thanks to so many of you writing. These I read to Mom as she finds it difficult to concentrate. A rest is generally indulged in before dinner which the maid goes for about one. I try to get the 1.15 news which is followed by another rest until three or later. Afternoon tea is ready by four.

Most days someone calls. For instance yesterday Mrs Wittall came. She was spending the night at Grass Ridge. Winnie and Harvey Brown and their little girl were here. Mrs Campbell, a former member of the W.A. but now living in Port Elizabeth, dropped in. Her late son was secretary of the Sunday School. Alison, Dot Murray and Gladys also came. So you see we are not lonely. After supper Vincent came for his usual telephone chat with his girl in Vryburg. Mom had retired by then and Dot helped her to have a warm bath. I often wonder how I would manage without our electric kettle at night time.

We very seldom hear baby during the night. She is very sweet and loves running up and down the long passage. She does not approve of my beard and so far I have not had a kiss from her. She had a fall off the dwarf wall yesterday. She was playing with Dorothy Murray's little boy. No serious damage was done. The two children play very nicely together.

Grace writes that the hailstorm on Friday did a lot of damage, her garden was flattened out, four panes of glass broken, etc. Ted and Pam were on their way home in the car and water got to the machinery and the car stalled and they had to get assistance before they could get home. We had a terrible dust storm on Sunday afternoon, fortunately it was followed by about 60 points of rain. David will be 21 next month. We are hoping he will spend a few days with us on his way to University.

Ruth phoned saying she and John had to hurry back from their holiday at Port Alfred as John had a sudden attack of appendicitis. Two doctors attended him. Denis and family are still at Port Alfred.

We are expecting Rev and Mrs Ludlow back after their holiday between now and Sunday. He is due at Fish River on Sunday morning and in town the same evening. Mary got away on Tuesday night.

A very nice letter written by Uncle Owen about a week before Aunt Jessie's death addressed to his five sisters came to hand yesterday from Aunt Agnes. If I have time, I will reproduce it in my next letter.

A twelve page closely typed letter has come from Mr and Mrs Wyatt, Friends in Natal, written as a Xmas letter. I have not read it yet. I guess I will have to take it in instalments. When we were in Cape Town, he came to see us and Reg took them for a motor spin round the Peninsular and they nearly missed their boat. He is now the Principal of Adams College near Inchanga.

It is now 8 a.m. and must stop for breakfast. Later. Dot has had a touch of sore throat for a few days but it is better this morning. Baby keeps very well. Maggie, her maid, is very good to her and manages her so nicely. She talks nicely and can say almost anything. It is now after dinner time and must close for the 4 p.m. post. Letter from Joe says he may perhaps come up for the weekend at the end of this month. I see by the Midland News that Amy Collett that was, has a son born in England. Mary did see Ruth in Grahamstown.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Monday February 17th, 1947

My dear All,

In my last letter I said I would try to copy the nice letter which Uncle Owen wrote to his three sisters before Aunt Jessie passed away. Here it is:

"Uitenhage December 15th, 1946. My dear Sisters (All), As writing is such a difficulty these days with me, you will, I know, excuse me writing to all at once. I am nearly 80 so most of you must be over that and life at that age is difficult. Well, to begin with you have one and all been good women, and except Jessie, have reared big families of competent children as well as clever ones, and thank God, as far as I know, good Christian ones. To go back to the old Grass Ridge days and to our dear and capable parents, we are indeed lucky to have had such strict parents. How stern was our Father and how sweet was our good Mother, their yes was yes and no was no and they expected obedience and no question, so different to the modern children. I expect your grandchildren will not like this! Yes, life was hard in those days, but surely it was hard life (work) that made us all so strong and resourceful and stood us in good stead in rearing our families. The old (or new) world is a very different place today, it is going at such a rate that I fear it will tip over. Well, so far as we old ones are concerned, we must be satisfied, we have had a good run for our money, and must not resent the passing on, in fact we must look forward to meeting our Maker when it comes. There are quite a lot of old people in this street, so we are trying to hold each other up. Our neighbour (a lady) has sat in her house for seven years and yet is the most bright soul of us all. We are leaving this house and going to our own in the new part, we have a big garden and lots of water, with over 600 rose trees and my busy Bee (Beryl) has all other varieties. This keeps us busy and I think well for without work and water, I can't live. I trust you are all well and holding up your end of the load, but we must be content to live on our good reputation. My little wife joins me in good wishes for the festive season just ahead of us. Dear old Jessie has had quite a knock but I hear she is no better and that she desires company in a general ward. I quite agree with her, it is lonely in a room alone. I wonder where our sister Rosa is? The last I heard of her she was in Natal! I will send this poor epistle to Letty and she will forward it to Jessie, Emma, Rosa and Agnes. Wishing you all good cheer and God bless you all, Amen. Yours lovingly, Owen."

Note. The letter never reached Jessie and only arrived here on February 12th, 1947. I hope Uncle Owen will not be vexed with me for reproducing this letter.

I typed the above on Saturday. Now it is Monday noon, 17th, Pam's 18th anniversary. I hope she is having a happy day and will be spared to see many more. Yesterday, Sunday, I went to service in the morning after having taken Joan for a walk to the Park. She was very good and walks well. Dot went to church in the evening and Uncle Gervase brought her home afterwards. Joan had a big cry when she found that her Mother was not on hand when she went to bed.

Rev and Mrs Ludlow called on Saturday afternoon. They called to see Ted at his office on their way home. They only had a few minutes with him as it was business hours. He seemed well.

From 6.15 a.m. I have been listening in to the description of the landing and reception of the Royal party. It came over wonderfully well and was most interesting. I am sorry to say Mom was too unwell to listen in. Last night was the worst she has had so far. The pains in her neck was very severe and she asked if Dr could not give her injections to ease same. She tried to vomit but had nothing to bring up. Dot came into our room and gave her some of Dr's medicine but it did not seem to have any effect. Dr has just phoned that he has to go to Hofmeyer this afternoon and cannot say when he will be back but is sending some different sleeping medicine which I hope may give her relief.

During the evening, Douglas phoned from his farm to enquire how Mom was. We must wait until tomorrow for later news. A nice letter came on Saturday from Lynne. She still looks to come over as soon as she can get a lift. This is as far as I got on Monday evening.

It is now Tuesday morning and I am thankful to be able to start on a more hopeful note than yesterday. Mom has had a better night after taking the fresh tablet Dr sent down in the afternoon. It must, however, not be overlooked that the resultant sleep was the result of artificial treatment. Mom slept right on to three a.m. and after a cup of tea and a biscuit, dropped off again till nearly

nine. She has now had breakfast and probably will have another nap before getting up. Dr, I expect, will be down before 11 as he was not able to come yesterday.

It was 103 in the shade here yesterday, 100 in Cape Town. Uncle Gervase and Clifford came in during the evening and enjoyed listening to the description of the festivities in connection with the Royal visit. I am so sorry that Mom was not well enough to listen to any of the day's proceedings. Dot had a chat with Grace during the evening. David had arrived home and might be coming to us next week on his way to University. Douglas phoned on Sunday night, all well but no rain.

We have a garden boy now and Dot is keeping him employed and the result is a great improvement in the look of things. We have received an invitation to Vincent Crosbie's wedding.

Love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Monday February 24th, 1947

My dear All,

I am late in starting my letter. One reason is that David Irons turned up about 10 from Kroonstad. We did not know for certain that he was going to break his journey here but hoped he would. He goes on by the same train tomorrow to start a four year's course at Rhodes University which opens this week. He wants to take his B.A. Degree and then take a theological course. We wish him every success in his career. He has brought an interesting parcel from home which Dot no doubt will duly acknowledge. He has shown us some very interesting photos from Italy and told us of some of his experiences at the front. This is the first time we have seen him since he returned from the war. He is looking very well. He is only six feet three inches tall and it is to be hoped he does not grow much taller.

I must not forget to tell you about an experience Reg had a week or so ago. He was going to his Bioscope about 8.30 one evening and saw a lady come in from the Post Office premises who seemed in trouble and walked in front of him. She disappeared out of his sight and he, thinking she was ill or in distress, walked on a few paces and saw her sitting on the pavement with her head in her hands. He asked her if she was ill and could he help her. Suddenly from the shade a man accosted him with "what are you following my wife for?" Reg explained and the man, who was in liquor, assaulted him, breaking his dental plate and fisting him causing bruises etc. Reg, not being a fighting man, naturally withdrew. He went into his bio and fortunately a Dr was there who took him in hand and took him home. The next morning his assailant was at Reg's house and apologised for what he had done and promising never to touch liquor again. Mrs Watts, Dot's neighbour, writes that everyone there thinks Reg should lay a charge of assault but so far as we know, he has not done so. The man has been discharged from the garage where he was employed and ordered to clear out of the town. Needless to say the assault might have been much more serious. It appears that the man had had a row with his wife and misjudged Reg's kindness.

Yesterday afternoon (Sunday) Uncle Gervase, Rouena, Hope and Beryl came to see us. Beryl had arrived that morning from visiting her brother, Leslie, at Rooispruit after spending some time with Eric and Freda and friends in Vryburg and district. She goes home to Uitenhage by tomorrow mornings train. Mom was much brighter than usual and enjoyed their company. Beryl is looking forward to working in her new garden.

Rev and Mrs Ludlow came to see us the day after they returned from their holiday. They were away for four weeks all but three days and had enjoyed the change. Mom cannot stand having many visitors, she gets very tired. Last night was one of the best she has had but this morning, she is not so well and had to leave the table at dinner time. She generally goes to bed about eight or earlier. Dr has been again, in fact we have asked him to drop in whenever he is passing. Really there is nothing that he can do at present. We are writing to Mrs Mayhew to see if she will not come again, at present she is on holiday at Port Elizabeth. The family think that we should always have someone extra to help us but I feel that each of you have your own homes and family responsibilities to look after and that it is too much to expect you to leave them to look after us. Dot has been writing to one and another and I understand that Evelyn may stay a while after Arthur's wedding (April 5th). Grace is also contemplating and Blodwen has done the same. Mom said the other day that it was hard not to think she would never see Agnes again. She has been looking through some of her treasures and allocating different articles to one and another. She soon gets tired and flurried and of course has to stop. It shows the trend of her mind. I have no doubt in my own mind that she realises what is the nature of her complaint. Mr Denis Mahon's stepmother has just been to Port Elizabeth for an operation but when the surgeon opened up, found that it was useless to proceed. We have no idea of submitting to such a course. We are hoping that Joe will be here for the coming weekend, perhaps Lynne may also come over. I have given up the idea of going to Graaff Reinet tomorrow to see the King and Queen. If I had a chance of going to Queenstown, I might accept.

Dot has got the garden boy to cut down the Jasmine from both the arches in front of the house. He has left some of the long shoots to start again and I expect that this coming winter, it will

be growing quite nicely again. The quantity of dead wood removed was astonishing. David is doing some pumping whilst I am typing this on the back stoep. We have had some funny weather lately, excessive heat, cool nights, storms but very little rain. Douglas has had some rain but not enough. Grace has had some too. Ruth has phoned saying her husband is getting on nicely. The Dr who committed suicide and killed his wife and four children was attending him and at their house the day before the awful tragedy. Dot and David are going to the pictures this evening.

Tuesday 25th 6.30 a.m. David went to see Aunt Eliza yesterday afternoon and enjoyed his visit. I think I forgot to mention last week that Dot took Joan to see her the Sunday before. Baby was thrilled with the doll, cradle etc, also the pigeons. I have not much space left so must be brief. Aunt Emmie was 81 on Sunday, she is the youngest of my generation. The average of the three of us is practically 84 years. Not a bad record.

David tells us that his plan is to take a four year course at Rhodes in order to take his B.A. degree and study for his theological qualifications as well. Harold has two years of his apprenticeship still to do and after that, he also hopes to go to Rhodes for his theological training. He has done well in all his practical work in the engineering branch of the Post Office so far. The war bonus and Governor General's fund has made it possible for David to go to University. He has now definitely left the Civil Service. It will be nice for us, his being so near for the short holidays and we hope he will spend as much time with us as possible. Of course he will see a good deal of Ruth and Denis and he has a number of introductions to other people.

Kingsley, too, has started on his career. I wonder if he was in Stellenbosch in time to see the Royal party. He is taking a course in Agriculture which is only available at the Stellenbosch University. No doubt he will do well. Arthur has been busy altering his house and generally getting the nest ready. They have the phone already fixed up so they will not be lonely. The phone reception from here is not very good but it is very nice being able to hear them at all. We do not know definitely when they will come down for the wedding but I understood from Douglas that the whole family would be down. They will come via Cradock in two cars. Lynne says she has been sort of living at the dressmakers lately. I do not know if we shall be able to go to it.

Vincent Crosbie leaves on Friday night for his wedding at Vryburg next Tuesday. We have had an invitation but of course shall not be there. They will be living next door to us as Mrs Kruger has given up her boarding house and has turned the place into three flats. Crosbie has the middle one, Mrs Kruger one and another boarder who is married has the other. Vincent has been phoning every Wednesday evening from here to his fiancée. He has a month's leave and a free pass over the Railways (which is probably worth £50). They are going to Cape Town first and then along the Garden Route etc.

Grace writes that she looks to come down early in April. 9 a.m. David is on his way to the station and Joan has gone as far as the bridge to see the train. She has taken a very great liking for David. We have fixed him with an attaché case which will be useful for his books etc. He is thinking of getting his pushbike down so that he can ride up here for the short holidays.

Joe still looks to come up on Friday night. His weight has dropped to 124 lbs which is far too low.

Stores in town today are closed so as to allow townsfolk to go to Graaff Reinet to see the Royal party. I hope there will not be any accidents. They are due there at ten this morning. What a splendid reception they have had so far. I listen in to all the news and should like to see the illustrated papers as well. I expect they will be issued in book form at the conclusion of the tour.

Did I mention the fact that at last the Jasmine on the two arches in the front of the house have been trimmed down to the roots and the iron framework of the arches repainted. Some of the long branches have been left and I expect it will soon grow out from the roots again. The Jacaranda tree we planted in front has grown so big that I expect it too will have to be topped one of these days. I notice that it is raising the tiles round its stem. The garden boy is not working this week, he has done very well and tidied up the garden so that it looks quite nice. We have bought 100 cauliflower plants for 2/- and we are going to try our luck with them. We shall let Uncle Gervase have half the number and see how he gets on with them.

It is quite cold this morning and my poor nose is troubling again. Dot had a touch of sore throat but that is better. She and David enjoyed themselves at the bio last night. Baby did not cry but Maggie was on hand in case she did need attention. We went to bed early and did not hear them come in at 10.30.

We have had cards from Mary and she seems to have had a nice time at Bushmans River mouth. I guess they are in position at Graaff Reinet watching for the Royal train to arrive. I heard that Ernest has bought a piece of ground at Bushmans River so suppose he will be retiring there or hold it as a summer resort. He has been making alterations at the Poplars, converting some of the outside rooms into a new house for himself and Alison and will let the old Poplars. There is still a big demand for houses. My garage is being used for storing furniture for people who cannot find houses.

It is nearly 11 a.m. and I have just been listening to the train pulling into Graaff Reinet station and heard the names of various people being introduced to the Royal visitors. Amongst the names I heard was Mr and Mrs Cull, Mayor and Mayoress of Cradock. That was all the broadcast gave of the reception but I expect there will be a lot more this evening at 7.30. Mom is not well enough to be interested in listening and is resting in the lounge. I take the typewriter on to the back stoep when Mom comes into the dining room. She did not have too good a night last night. At 12.30 she was disturbed and again at 3.30. I gave her some liquorice powder, followed by a cup of tea but no sleep after that until I got up at my usual time.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Tuesday March 4th, 1947

My dear All,

The past week has been a very busy one. We had the pleasure of a 24 hour visit from David Irons on his way to Rhodes University, this was followed by a visit from Joe and Merle on Saturday morning to Sunday afternoon and on Saturday, about 6 p.m., Lynne and Emily Miles arrived by car from Queenstown with Jerry McDougall. They returned on Sunday afternoon about five. On Saturday afternoon, we received a phone message from Denis that Mr Kelly was bringing him and Dorothea and baby Anthony by car due to arrive about dinner time and would leave by train on Tuesday morning. Needless to say there has been no time to do any typing on Monday but I am hoping to be able to post same as usual this afternoon.

Vincent Crosbie is getting married this morning in Vryburg and I want to get a wire off to him as soon as possible. It should have gone yesterday.

It has been very nice having all these visitors. Am glad to say Joe was looking better than I expected. His weight is down to 126 lbs – far too low – but he is looking well. Merle is growing quite tall. We made up beds for them in the lounge whilst Lynne and Emily occupied the room Pam used to have. Dot and Joan of course have the spare room. Jerry always stays with a friend of his at the Victoria Hotel. He had supper with us on Saturday and tea on Sunday. They had some trouble with the car in coming over and Lynne and Emily had to walk up some of the hills as the car would not pull properly. However, before they reached here, the car had righted itself. Joe and Dot had not met Dorothea before so it was an added pleasure. In addition to all the excitement of their visit, we have had the pleasure – or more correctly I should say, I have had the pleasure of listening to the wireless accounts of the Royal progress through the country. It has been a magnificent welcome that has been accorded them. The weather too has been very trying, it has registered over 100 more than once and no rain. We had hoped that Aunt Eliza would have been able to come down but she was not able to do so.

Of course you will all want to know what we think of baby Anthony. Well, he is a proper baby, just over three months old, has no dummy to suck, no feeding bottles, have not heard him cry and is very friendly. He smiles occasionally and has had a very warm welcome. Both Mother and Father are very proud of their boy and have every reason to be so. Joe left one of his cameras with Dot so as to secure some snaps and Denis also brought his as well. We hope the result will be satisfactory. Joe also took some movie ones. I have suggested to Denis that if any are a success, we get a photo of Harold and insert it in the group and so have the four generations in one. Both Joe and Denis have picked a quantity of grapes to take home with them. Am sorry Joe left the sandwiches Dot prepared for their journey but hope they did not suffer in consequence. It is breakfast time and must stop. I understand neither Denis nor Dorothea have had good night, one of them moved into the lounge during the night so as to get some rest. They did not disturb us at all.

After breakfast. We have just said goodbye to Denis, Dee and baby. Mr Kelly is taking them round by Market Street on their way to the station so Auntie and Gladys will just have a glimpse of them. It was 101 here yesterday and it looks as though it will be as hot today. They are due in Grahamstown about 4.30 this afternoon. Mom got up extra early in order to see them off.

Uncle Gervase has kindly offered Dot a seat to Queenstown to see the Royal party there but she has declined. Uncle intended going over on Wednesday so as to avoid the rush and come back the following day. Dot says she will be able to see them in Pretoria or Pietersburg. I have decided not to go.

Of course there is the forthcoming wedding of Arthur and Emily on April 5th. I would like to go and Emily says they would also like me to, so would Joe. I am suggesting that if possible, he could come here and we could hire a taxi to take us over on Saturday morning and back the same evening. We do not know definitely what Douglas and Evelyn's plans are but we understand that Evelyn at any rate wants to be in Queenstown a few days before the 5th so perhaps she would go by train direct there. I understand all the family are going to the wedding so perhaps a car from here might be some help in getting the crowd over.

We are hoping to hear if Frank Short's wife will agree to come and help, if so, we should not require Mrs Mayhew supposing she was agreeable to come. She is due back in Cradock in the next day or two. Dot says she wants to return, leaving here on April 1st, picking up her boys in Pretoria and on home. Grace says David has settled in at Rhodes and met quite a number of old friends. He may be coming to us for the short holidays in April, which will be nice. We wonder if Ruth and John would be able to come as well. The nephews and nieces were surprised to see Mom so brisk and able to walk down the passage etc as she does. The excitement of seeing so many visitors tells upon her. For instance on Saturday morning last, Enid, Mrs Hartman and Miss McLeod called at the same time. They enjoyed eating grapes on the lawn. Mom gets very tired. She has been sleeping better the last few nights but that is because we always give her a sleeping tablet. . (The top sheet of my letter got badly torn so have had to put in new sheets.)

A phone message from the Poplars came over just now announcing the arrival of a daughter to Dorothy Murray during the night. A taxi had to be sent to Fish River to bring in Nurse May Saunders. All is well and there is great rejoicings as it is a girl. We heard at the same time that Gladys was there that Denis and family did see Aunt Eliza and the report was that the baby is really a beautiful baby. We quite agree.

Aunt Letty and Mary were in time to see the Royal family at Graaff Reinet. I do not know if they were introduced to the Queen. Mrs Fletcher, a lady of 101 was introduced. Mary is expected back here about the end of this week. Gladys has booked to return to Mowbray next Monday.

Mr Lidbetter has sold his business to a returned soldier who has taken over the concern as a going concern as from March 1st. I wonder what hobby Mr Lidbetter will take up now?

Mrs West called recently. She says she may have to give up her job at Watersons as she finds the strain is too much for her. Her husband has got a good job in connection with the rationing of food.

I am glad to hear that the Government is going to reduce the postage rate from 2d to 1½d per oz and a 1d for every additional oz. This will be a welcome saving for me. I wish postcards were also to be reduced to their former charge of ? I use hundreds of cards. My postage account for January was over 22/-.

One of my teeth has been giving me trouble this morning and I have an appointment with the dentist at three this afternoon. It may mean an extraction or a filling.

Dinner time has brought us only one letter from Cape Town telling me that Rev Barr has left South Africa for overseas and that he did not prepare any scripture readings as last year. I am sorry as they were very helpful. I am sure he will be greatly missed in Cape Town. He was a great power. Unfortunately his health broke down.

Sunday is thanksgiving day and special collections are asked for. We have spent over two hundred pounds in renovating the parsonage and about one hundred on the School room.

It is now after dinner and I had a rest before so must close now and post as I go up to the dentist. So goodbye for the present.

Much love to all and hoping to hear good news tomorrow.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Tuesday March 11th, 1947

My dear All,

Let me correct a mis-statement in my last letter. It was Dot and Joe who had not met Emily Miles before. Lynne says they had a safe trip back to Queenstown, reaching their destination about nine p.m. I don't suppose they will be able to come over again before the wedding on April 5th. I hope to be allowed to attend. A note from Denis this (Monday) morning says they had a fairly comfortable journey but the heat was very trying for Baby. We have not got prints of the snaps that were taken yet. I guess all the photographers in the country have been overworked with developing prints of the Royal tour. By the way, we listened in to the Royal reception at Kroonstad. We did not recognise any of the shouting as coming from the Irons portion of the huge crowd which the announcer was present. No doubt they were there and did their bit.

An airmail letter is also to hand from my friend Galloway who is still in the land of the living in Scotland. He would like to be back in Cradock by April but can't get shipping. He says he is standing the cold better than he expected.

Evelyn writes that Douglas has arranged for Irene Short to come to us in April and we hope the arrangement will work to the satisfaction of all concerned. We have not fixed on any plan to fill the gap after Dot leaves on April 1st but no doubt we shall find that way opens as it has done before. No rain in Vryburg yet but they are still hopeful. Wonderful pluck farmers possess.

Joe writes that Roy had a nasty accident whilst riding his bike. A school chum whistled to him and he turned to see him and in doing so collided with a motor lorry. So far no serious injury is reported but it might have been much worse. He also says Trevor has veldt sores and will have to have his tonsils removed.

Yesterday (Sunday) was thanksgiving day in the church. Rev Ludlow gave two excellent sermons and the collections for the day amount to over £46. More is still to come in.

Uncle Gervase took a carload, including Alison, to see the Royal Family at Queenstown. They were held up at one spruit for a couple of hours by storm water. Another party had a serious accident on the return trip when their car collided with a buttress on a culvert and the car capsized injuring three of the four occupants – some very seriously. About 20 cars were held up when another car got into a deep mud-hole. These are some of the "pleasures" of motoring.

Neville and his wife, Nancy, have moved over into Saltpansdrift house and Mr Barnes, who stayed at Saltpansdrift Drift has moved over the river to where Neville and Nancy started their married life. We have not been to Saltpansdrift Drift since Aunt Jessie's death, and it was quite a long time before that that we were there.

I walked to Market Street and back last week as I had not seen Aunt Eliza for some time. Gladys was there as well. All were well. Gladys left for Cape Town by the early train which was an hour late. May returned from Graaff Reinet with Alice and Alan Biggs yesterday. She came to see us in the afternoon. She is proud of her grandchild. She had not seen Dot since she was quite young, they were pleased to meet. Clifford took me up to see Aunt Charlotte who passed her 92nd anniversary last week. She is to be pitied being blind and having no relatives who can look after her. Talking of anniversaries, Evelyn had a birthday recently. I am not giving away any secret but she says the older one gets, reminders of the event are increasingly appreciated. Mr Metcalf would have been 94, I think, on 1st and dear old Rev Hornabrook will be 97 tomorrow, 11th.

Dot says I must make a special appeal to all my readers to see if they can procure a supply of nux vomica pills as none are obtainable here and our chemist say they are not obtainable anywhere in the Union. The only chance of getting any would be from scattered chemists in various parts of the country. Dot feels confident that before long I shall be receiving supplies from all of you. It would be a calamity to the family if the one stock medicine which I have relied upon for so many years should fail me at this time of life. So what about it? (I will pay for supplies sent.)

We presume that Vincent Crosbie was married last Tuesday. There is no reference to it in the Stellander which came today.

We are glad to hear that David has settled down to his new studies at Rhodes. There was no initiation ceremony. Perhaps he will be coming up for the short holidays. Pam writes that one of her late bosses was killed in an aeroplane crash recently. She is taking lessons at the Technical School after office hours. David's address is Graham House, Rhodes University College, Grahamstown.

Yesterday afternoon (Sunday) I got a taxi and took Mom to see the decorations in the church, the taxi then took Dot and Jean up to Market Street and returned to the church and brought us home. It is the first time Mom has been out for many weeks. Mom is complaining lately of shortness of breath and it is not easy to find a suitable diet for her. Am thankful to say the pain is not increasing much except that she is suffering from pain in her neck. Dot is a great help in every way. We have not seen Mary since her return yesterday.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

14th March 1947

Supplement to my next Dear All

Uncle Norman, who has inherited all Aunt Jessie's estate, has brought me a tin box containing old letters, accounts etc which he wishes me to look through and destroy what may be of no value or interest. Amongst the letters is one from Mr James Collett which I think is worth preserving. I am sending the original to his son, Charles, who lives at Maritzburg.

The letter is dated from Wonderheuvcl, May 15th 1869. To Mr John Collett, Grass Ridge. He says: *"we heard before leaving that poor sister had got over her trouble so nicely, what a wonderful woman she is, in fact one does not know what to make of it. The Collett constitutions are a mystery to many."* And still are a mystery even 80 years later. C.B. Continuing he says *"I thought Father looked so well this time, I am sure his trip did him a world of good both in health and spirits. I suppose there are very few men with so many friends and few enemies, he seemed welcome wherever he went. When we think that he spent most of his life amongst those he has just visited, it is gratifying to know how much he is respected. I suppose the reason is obvious, he has been a most upright and honest man, especially one virtue we all may copy, he never returned an injury and was so forgiving. Poor Mother does not seem well, and I fear her days are short. (As a matter of fact she outlived her husband by 19 years. C.B.) After referring to his brother William's sheep he says "can't you make an offer for Hamels at Saltpansdrift, about seven hundred with six months wool. I am still so much annoyed by the leopards, they are constantly killing my sheep, lately three of my thoroughbred rams, there seems no way of destroying the pest."* Continuing his letter, he says *"How is Mr T's case going? I do hope somehow he will get through. I detest such malice and persecution, can't help sympathising with him. My motto is let him that is without fault cast the first stone. Any man can be a merchant, but it takes a whole man to be a merchant and a Christian. The letter is signed "Affectionately your brother James".*

The above letter is beautifully written in ink on both sides of a sheet of paper. There were no typewriters in those days. I am sending the original to his son as stated above.

In the same box was a letter written by Douglas to Aunt Jessie from Germany East describing some of his experiences during the Great War I when all their horses died at the Front. This I have sent to Douglas. There was also one written by Uncle Gervase in pencil during the Boer War in 1901. Uncle Gervase now has that.

There was also a promissory note dated 1865 which had had a Cape three corner stamp on it but the stamp had been cut out. This would have been valuable to a stamp collector.

A number of certificates from different Agricultural shows to the effect that Uncle Herbert had won certain prizes at shows for his exhibits. Amongst them were some bearing my signature as Secretary to the Bechuanaland Agricultural Society. I have suggested to Uncle Norman that these might be framed and hung in the Herbert Collett Memorial Hall. I do not know if it will be done. There are a lot of old Newspapers still to be looked at and probably destroyed.

Yours affectionately

Uncle C.

34 Dundas Street Cradock
Tuesday March 18th, 1947

My dear All,

We are sorry to hear that Merle has been down with enteritis and Trevor is to have his tonsils out, the operation to be performed by Dr Ruth. I hope this will mean an improved condition of health. Blodwen was able to get one bottle of nux vomica for me which was very welcome. Dr Ruth's husband was in charge of the returned soldiers at Uitenhage and was introduced to the Royal party. Princess Margaret however had not shaken hands with him and he mentioned the fact to her. She replied "put there" and shook hands. Joe says some of his cine film was quite blank after it had been exposed. I have not heard if he entertains the idea of coming up for Arthur's wedding and going over by taxi. So far the plan is for Douglas and Evelyn and Cecily to come here by car, arriving on 28th. Arthur to come by lorry and is bringing Vincent's wife's goods and chattels and then he goes on to Queenstown. Rex is going direct to Queenstown with the Hudsons. Arthur is having the car for the honeymoon and Douglas and Evelyn and others go back from here by lorry. They may perhaps change this and go back direct from Queenstown. Douglas has fixed up with Irene to come here about 9th April at a certain fee plus return rail ticket. We have received the invitation for the wedding. Emily's full name is Emily Zilpah Miles. The reception is at the S.O.E. Hall and telegrams to be sent to Waverley House. The wedding is at 2.30 so if any of you want to send congratulations, now you know what to do. Florrie Bigg's eldest son, John, is getting married the same day at Cape Town.

I had a nice letter from Mr Galloway from Scotland. He hopes to be back in April if he can get shipping. He has not suffered in health but the winter has been very severe.

Mom has given her silver serviette ring to baby Anthony. It will be a long time before he can use it.

Tuesday morning. Last evening I attended the annual meeting of the Hospital Board. Gervase went with me. It was over in less than an hour. The Chairman stated that the Government had taken over the financial control and that no contributions had been made from local Councils or the public and that a new hospital building would be erected – possibly in the next few years.

Whilst I was away, Joe phoned to say that Blodwen, Merle and Dannie would be coming up the day before Dot leaves – April 1st – and Joe would come the morning of Good Friday. He did not say if he entertained the idea of going to Arthur's wedding. After all had gone to bed, Grace phoned saying she would come when necessary. Douglas wrote that he must be in Queenstown on Friday 4th. He, Evelyn and Cecily were coming by car and would arrive here on the 28th. Arthur was coming by lorry and was bringing Vincent's goods with him. Douglas and Evelyn will return by lorry leaving Queenstown on Sunday as they have to be in Gwelo on 11th.

Mom had two sleeping tablets, one when she went to bed about 7 and the other about 2 a.m. She has slept on till about 7.30. She complains that her breathing is difficult. Her tummy is also upset. Quite a number of friends drop in to see her. Rev and Mrs Ludlow often come, Mrs Roderick Douglas, the Kellys and yesterday, Miss Booth came. Mr Stock often comes to see me and Mom. Douglas has arranged that we pay Irene £2/2- per week, plus rail fare. Everyone says she is most capable. We hope the arrangement works well.

Later, after dinner. Letters from Joe, Blodwen and Merle to hand. They confirm the message by phone that Blodwen and two children arrive here on Tuesday and Joe on Good Friday. He is willing to go to Queenstown with me if we go. Will decide this when Douglas and Co arrive. Uncle Jack and Enid were here this morning. They say Agnes is not well. It is very hot today again. The weather has been most changeable for the past week.

I shall be passing round some snaps taken of Denis and Co when they were here. For the most part they are good. Joe has not developed the cine ones he took yet. I don't think I can add any more this week. There are times when one's heart is too full to put words to paper.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street Cradock
Friday March 21st, 1947

My dear All,

I am sorry to say that I have not good news to tell you this morning. It is seven and the last two nights have been very anxious times for us. For some days, Mom has been complaining of shortness of breath so early on Thursday morning, I phoned Dr to come and see her. This was before he went on his rounds to the hospital. He came about 10.30 and at once realised the situation and saw that the pressure of the liver, which had become further enlarged, was pressing on her heart. He at once gave her an injection which had the effect of reducing the contents of the bladder and eased the situation. He also prescribed two sorts of pills to be given together every six hours.

I must go back to Wednesday night when Dot, took over duty from me, as she thought the strain was getting too much for me. Mom was very bad then and said she did not think she would live to see the morning. She has been very uncomfortable and restless for some time. Mom gets up each day about ten and sits a while here and there, lies down for a while again and sometimes it seems as though her mind is wandering. Wednesday night was the first night that Dot took duty for the whole night. Last night I was in Mom's room until one a.m. when Dot took over and I rested in the little room. Fortunately Baby slept all through the night and is as bright as a new button. Mom has been vomiting during the early hours of this morning and is very restless. I am afraid of Dot knocking up so we shall try to get May Saunders to come in tonight as she has no case on at present. We have been in communication with Grace and she is standing by to come at a moment's notice if necessary. Blodwen is due on April 2nd. Douglas still looks to be here from 28th to 4th. Evelyn and others go to Queenstown before that. Nothing decided about my going over.

Later. Dr was here before 8.30 this morning. He wants Mom to stay in bed for a few days. Her heart is a bit easier but she has had a bad night. Have wired to Grace to come as soon as she can as she will be a great comfort and help. If necessary will wire all of you.

Dr Scholtz will be away for two or three days but his partner, Dr Oosthuizen who attended Mom at the beginning of her illness will attend her. Both are very good men and I have every confidence in them.

This is a copy of the wire we have sent to Grace. 9.15 a.m. Come soon Mom not too bright, wrote yesterday, not serious, will be great comfort. If Grace can come, this will be a relief to Blodwen as she has undertaken to take charge of Dr Ruth's little girls whilst she is laid up with another baby shortly. Dot has just gone up to see if May Saunders can help us for tonight. Dr has left instructions as to what is to be done. Mrs Stock has just called but of course could not see Mom.

Later still. Dot saw May Saunders and she is not very well but will try to help us by coming tomorrow night.

Mary has been down and brought a few carrots from their garden at 29 Market Street. It is very kind of Aunt Eliza to think of us. Dot has planted out about 50 cauliflower plants we bought for 2/- a 100 recently.

After dinner. Have had a good rest and now for finishing my letter. Mom has had a quiet morning, no visitors or serious disturbances. Her heart has been thumping a good deal she says. The vomiting she experienced a day or two ago has ceased but she is far from settled internally. A card from Blodwen this a.m. says Blodwen will arrive by the same train that Dot goes on by. Dot has got permission from the South African Railways for her maid, Maggie, to travel in her compartment which will be a great help to her. Joe and all the family except Roy, who is going to a scout camp, will return to Uitenhage together on Monday evening, April 7th. Joe also made enquiries from the people they stayed with at Kendrew who offered to help, but for the present and immediate future, I think we are well provided for.

David writes that he would like to come for Easter. We must see what plans we can make. House room may be the problem. Today is Denis' birthday. The 31st is the anniversary of Joe and Blodwen's and Reg and Dot's wedding days. Good luck to all concerned.

3.10 p.m. a wire just to hand from Ted "Grace leaving tomorrow afternoon, expect Sunday morning Love". We had thought we might have got some help from George Byrne's widowed

daughter, Mrs Fitchet but she is not available. Mom has just had a slight return of vomiting, apparently the new medicine is affecting her. We are having an anxious time but am thankful to be able to say strength sufficient for each day is vouchsafed to us. Everyone is very kind and sympathetic. Aunt Eliza was planning to come and see us on Wednesday but as Mom was so ill that day, we asked her to postpone the visit. She has kindly sent some of her famous ginger cake which we are enjoying.

I am sorry to say that my leaky nose has been giving me lots of trouble lately but I have a good stock of hankies. Now it is tea time and we are having it in her bedroom. I am going to take this up to post presently. I will keep you all posted in connection with Mom's condition and hope she may recover soon.

Much love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street Cradock
Tuesday March 25th, 1947

My dear All,

Since my letter of Friday last, Mom's condition has continued to get worse. I sent a postcard on Saturday which brought you up to date. We wired to Grace to come and she arrived on Sunday morning and we are glad to have her help and Mom is glad that she has come. I cannot be too thankful for the great help Dot has been. She has grasped the doctor's instructions and carried them out to his satisfaction. Since Wednesday last, we have been sharing the night duty but the last two I have not been called in but have been to the room to see how Mom is. Dr spent quite a time here on Saturday evening trying a new treatment and waited to see the effect. In course of conversation, I found that he knew Dr Dommiss and Mrs Hurndall and other Cape Town people I knew. The treatment Dr is giving does not seem to relieve Mom much.

Tuesday morning. I got so far yesterday and could not seem to get a move on. We had a number of callers. Mr Ludlow had made special reference and prayers during both services. Neither of us went to service all day. Dr was here both morning and evening and gave injections on both occasions. The District Nurse was also called in. Mary spent some time in the afternoon and so afforded an opportunity for Grace and Dot to go for a walk. Dulcie and Mrs Stock also called. Dulcie saw Mom for a very short while. In the evening, Gervase, Rouena and Mrs West also called. Ted phoned during the evening and was glad to hear that Grace had arrived safely.

Douglas had put through a call for 7.30 but it was nine before he got through. He says they will leave early on Thursday morning and get half way here and arrive early Friday morning. We had wired to him first thing in the morning that Mom was getting worse but hoped they would not change their plans. Joe we got in touch with on Sunday evening through Dr Ruth. He will come at short notice if necessary and is looking to come at Easter or the weekend. Now that Grace and Dot are here it is probable that Blodwen will not come. She has promised to take Dr Ruth's little girl for a while as another baby is expected there. Lynne phoned during Monday morning to enquire how Mom was. Dorothy has decided that she cannot leave on April 1st as arranged but must await developments. Ruth sent her an advertisement of a place at Port Alfred which sounds very nice for their Xmas holiday. They are looking to take a motor trip to the coast for three or four weeks during the school holidays. The advertisement sounds very nice and the fee is reasonable for holiday time. We may have a visit from Ruth and "Uncle" Mac as Denis calls him. Mr Kelly is going to Grahamstown to fetch his son who is at University and perhaps there will be room in the car for David. It will be nice if it can be managed as Grace will be here. There is to be a Local Preachers Convention here at the same time and perhaps David might get a lift with one of them. If I go to the wedding, I should of course miss some of the meetings. Ted phoned about seven this morning saying he had finished churning the butter and everything was going on alright at home.

Since writing the above, we have had a visit from Uncle Bertie and wife, May and Iris, Ina McLeod and Mrs George Rayner and Mary. This was after we had had our morning tea and whilst we were having our tea, dear Mom fell out of bed. Apparently no damage was done and Grace and Dot managed to get her back. Mary took her pulse and pronounced it as being the same as it was yesterday. Dr has not been today so far but no doubt he will be here before evening. As I watch her breathing, it seems to me Mom cannot last much longer, especially as she is taking practically no nourishment. She lies very still – not as restless as she was, seldom opens her eyes or speaks. It is indeed sad to see her so. Blodwen wants to come for Easter and we must see what accommodation we can find. Of course it mostly depends on how Mom keeps. Grace and Dot share night duties and I sleep in the smaller room. Of course I am on the alert all the time. I am very thankful that we have had sustaining strength for the daily task.

Thanks for the supplies of nux vomica which have come to hand. One from Uitenhage, one from Aunt Emmie and one from Kroonstad. I am sure we shall have enough to last for years.

Since writing the above, I went to the room and Mother just passed away quite peacefully. I am broken hearted.

Dad

34 Dundas Street Cradock
Sunday April 13th, 1947

My dear All,

My last dear all was dated March 25th, the date dear Mom was called away. Much has happened since then but I feel that I should record some of the happenings for the information of those who were not here at the time. Needless to say, the going over of those sad days will not be an easy task. You must please excuse me if my letter is disjointed. I have not been able to keep my diary of visitors etc up to date. Everything has, of necessity, been so rushed that it has been difficult to keep pace with what has been happening.

I cannot be thankful enough that all the family was able to be together. We wired for Grace to come down on Friday 21st, not thinking that the end was so near at hand. She arrived on Sunday morning about ten and Mom passed away at 2.10 on Tuesday afternoon. Mom was very quiet and hardly spoke. Neither Doctor expected the end would be so sudden. Mom only took to her bed on Friday 21st. Grace, Dot and I had our morning tea in the lounge and whilst there, they heard a fall, which I did not hear. Mom had fallen off her bed but did not seem any the worse. After dinner we all noticed a distinct change when we phoned for Dr who came at once. Dr examined her heart and she passed away quite peacefully. I was holding her hand at the time. A few moments before the end she opened her eyes but did not speak. Everything was so tragically sudden. Rev Mr Ludlow came along almost at once and was most sympathetically helpful. He suggested that the funeral should be held the following afternoon but on consulting the Undertaker, he agreed to my suggestion that it would be safe to keep the body until Thursday morning so as to give Douglas and Joe the opportunity of being present. We wired and phoned to Douglas and he and Evelyn left by car early on Wednesday morning and arrive about six 30 the same evening. We wired to Joe at his works and he at once communicated with Uncle Owen and they both left by the evening train arriving about 7 a.m. on Thursday. We had arranged to have the service in the Church at 10.30 a.m. but on Uncle Owen's suggestion, we changed it to having the service on the lawn. Mom was so fond of the garden that the idea appealed to us all. The setting was such that I am sure had Mother had the choosing, she would have been quite satisfied. The coffin was removed to the funeral parlour on Tuesday afternoon, which seemed so sudden to me. It was brought back about ten a.m. on Thursday and the setting was most touching. We had plenty of seating accommodation and the attendance was very representative, though perhaps not so many attended as we learned afterwards that they thought only members of the family were intended to be present. I was very sorry that Aunt Eliza was not present. The day was perfect. She was the only member of my generation who could have been with me. Everyone was most sympathetic and helpful. All five of Mom's brothers attended but neither of his sisters could come. Aunt Letty was in Graaff Reinet and her age was against her taking such a journey. Aunt Rosa too had been down only a few weeks ago but was unable to come. Aunt Agnes was too ill to travel but many of the relations did come. Mr and Mrs Dodd were there but my eyes were too full of tears to be able to recognise people. All the brothers and Ernest acted as pallbearers. Over 50 wreaths were sent and telegrams and letters of sympathy soon came pouring in. I will give you a list of these later when I have got time to type it. So far I have sent about 150 cards expressing the thanks of us all to our sympathetic friends.

The evening after the funeral, we all met to consider future plans. Mom had expressed her wishes as to the disposal of most of her valuables etc and her wishes were carried out to the letter. All the family urged me to get away as soon as possible. They realised that it was not possible or desirable that I should keep on the house so I decided to sell the house and what furniture I do not want on May 3rd. They each want me to go and spend as much time as possible in each of the homes. I felt that I must have place which I can call my headquarters and to which I can always come whenever I feel I want to. I advertised for a large room or two smaller one but there was no response. I enquired at Mrs Booth's if they had any rooms I could occupy, also without success but Miss Booth suggested that perhaps Mrs van der Vyver, who had just come to occupy the house just opposite to theirs (Booth's), might let a room. The van der Vyvers bought the house some years ago and let it but had only just got rid of the tenants. Mrs van der Vyver is very deaf so Miss Booth went across and interviewed her on my behalf. She was quite agreeable and I returned with Miss

Booth. She showed me an outside room with door opening on to the front stoep which I could have unfurnished for £2 per month. She would also supply my meals in the room at 7/6d per day as required. This seemed very reasonable. Later in the day, Miss Booth informed me that as another door opened from that room into their dining room, it would be better if I had an inside room next to the front door, which was approximately the same size. I would have preferred the opening on to the stoep but for obvious reasons, it was better to comply with their suggestion. The house is a large one and she is having all rooms recoloured etc. There is a picture rail in each room and Joe has drawn a plan as to the placing of such furniture as I require. The room may be a little cramped but I shall only have my desk, wardrobe, bed and the long cupboard, wireless and a small table for my meals and the four fold screen and a couple of cupboards which usually stand by my writing table. I hope it will all work out according to plan. Time will show. I must make special mention of the stoep. It is very wide and is paved with beautiful flagstones. I am taking my deckchair with table attached and the round table from the back stoep which give me the opportunity of doing my typing outside when conditions are favourable. The veranda is very wide and I hope it will not be too public.

It is now Monday evening and I am sitting in Aunt Eliza's front room which has been made very comfortable. I went down to Dundas Street soon after breakfast and shortly afterwards, David came in to say goodbye. I must try to retrace my story of recent happenings but I fear I cannot put them into proper chronicle order. The evening after the funeral, we all met in the lounge, Mr Ludlow being present. He led us in prayer, commending us all to the loving kindness of our Father in Heaven for needed strength and consolation. We spent most of the evening in discussing plans for my future. It was the wish of all that I should get away from Cradock as soon as possible. Each home was ready and anxious to receive me. It was agreed that the house should be sold as soon as possible, that it would not be wise to engage a housekeeper or to let the house but rather get rid of the responsibility of letting it. All were most kind and thoughtful for my comfort. It was a great source of comfort that all the family was with me. I cannot speak too highly of the wonderful way all have helped. The biggest strain has fallen on Dot who has been with me for two months. She managed everything so well. Grace, too, has carried on in the same competent manner. Blodwen spent the Easter weekend and was very helpful. Evelyn of course went over to Queenstown as soon as possible to help with the wedding arrangements. The girls saw to the distribution of Mom's clothing and have gone through my clothing as well. Each member of the family has had the choice of what they wanted in the way of furniture and the house is looking somewhat bare. Hyams have had a lot of packing to do. The wall of my one room will be adorned with family photographs. It is going to be a slow and tedious business to sort out all that is left.

I have this afternoon handed over the Treasureship of the Boy Scout Association to my successor, and tomorrow the Church books are to be taken over. The Church business meeting was held at Fish River last Saturday afternoon when my successor was appointed. A very sympathetic Minute was adopted with reference to Mom's passing – she was only confined to her bed for five days. Mary, too, has been a great help. I was wrong in stating she was with us at morning tea on 25th but she came shortly afterwards and attended to many details which her nursing experience qualified her for. It was comforting having some of the grandchildren with us too. David spent the Easter holidays here and Cecily, Arthur and Rex and Kingsley as well as Trevor and Baby Dan. Dot and Joan and Ted left by car with Reg and slept at Kroonstad.

Grace left by train on Saturday evening and a wire from her today says she arrived in rain and found all well. Now I am all alone and had dinner at the Premier. Clifford has been a great help with his car and I have arranged to engage him to help with the moving etc on a payment basis. For some days last week the only remaining back tooth gave me considerable pain, so much so that I could hardly eat or sleep. The tooth has to come out but the Dentist says the inflammation must stop before anything can be done. This may interfere with my plans for going away. Mary Collett, Middelburg, came down for the Agricultural Show and spent a night and a day with us. She wants me to go and spend a time with them before going north. Nothing so far is decided. I cannot entertain the idea of going to Cape Town in the winter and I have been thinking that it would be better for me to join the train for Potgietersrus at Port Elizabeth at 2 p.m. than get in the train here at

11 p.m. and perhaps have to wait an hour or two on the platform if the train is late. Mrs van der Vyver says I can move in any time but they cannot get tradesmen to do the room which means everything would have to be shifted again later on when labour is available. I must see her tomorrow and decide one way or another.

I find I have forgotten to mention that Reg and Ted arrived in time for the funeral. Ted tried to get into touch with Reg by phone but was informed that he was in Pretoria seeing a dentist about his plate. Ted then phoned the boys' hostel to find out where their Dad was and to his surprise, Reg answered the phone himself. Reg decided to push on at once and pick up Ted and then travel through the night here. They both got tired and pulled out of the road and slept for an hour and then pushed on again and arrived about 8 a.m. That was good going.

We have not heard many particulars about the wedding except that it was very jolly. Evelyn and Cecily kindly showed us their wedding dress which looked very nice. A note from Emily today says I may expect them on Tuesday. They seem to have had a very nice time at Knysna and I expect they will be in a hurry to get settled down in their new home. We hope to see some report of the wedding in the Queenstown paper. Ted gave us a surprise on his arrival that he had purchased a house in Kroonstad and Grace of course was anxious to see it. The bedroom accommodation is, she says insufficient and they will have to build another room. There has not been time for her views on the subject. Douglas and Evelyn motored back to Vryburg on the Monday after the wedding and arrived safely about ten p.m. Reg and Dot slept at Kroonstad and then on to Pretoria where they saw the Royal party. The next night they were home and the following day they all went to Pietersburg to see the King and Queen again. They picked up their boys in Pretoria for the Easter holidays. Douglas and Evelyn and Rex pushed on to attend Evelyn's sister's son's wedding at Gwelo and slept at Potgietersrus the first night. They expect to get home about the end of this week. Then they look to come down for the sale. Under these conditions, I do not think it would be necessary for Grace to come as well. She will have more than enough to see to in moving to town. She has left everything as ready as far as possible for the sale and I do fear she may have a breakdown if she does much more.

I finished page two about 9.30 p.m. yesterday after attending the Scout Committee. I was tired then and slept well till 4 a.m. when I rested until my usual time of rising, 6 a.m. I have just had early coffee with Mary. We have been talking over plans again and Mary thinks I should not go to Uitenhage at this stage but join the train here for the north. I am going to see Mrs van der Vyver today and tell her that unless my room can be ready by the end of this month, I will give up the idea of taking it and instead shift my belongings to the room opposite the Vic Hotel, with Mary's furniture and wait developments which may occur during my absence up north. This plan would certainly be less expensive than paying rent of £2 per month and not using the room. What I do not like about it is leaving everything, my belongings, in such an untidy state. It is just 7.30 a.m. and the sun is shining brightly on to the table in front of the window. Auntie has made the room very comfortable for me. I notice the noises in the street more than at 34 and the house is quite close to the foot-walk so one hears much of the conversation of passersby. I sleep well, have the hot water bottle every night and other comforts. After breakfast I shall take the typewriter with me to 34 and get a new ribbon cut in ready for when I leave.

Later. It is now noon and I am at Market Street and want to finish this so that I can post just after dinner at the Premier. So far no word has come either from Queenstown or Grahamstown so I don't know which way Arthur and Emily are coming. I am not worrying as they were not sure when they would arrive.

Everything is as ready as it can be for the sale and Mary is going to see how soon she can get possession of the room opposite the Vic. The owner is away from town at present and Mary may wire to her about it.

A nasty tragedy occurred on Saturday when the body of Frank Roberts was found hanging outside his bungalow on the bowling green. He has been the caretaker of the bowling club and was an expert player. For a long time he has been in very indifferent health and has followed another brother in doing away with himself. He was buried on Monday. I did not go to the funeral. He was not married.

Letters of sympathy still continue to arrive. One came from Charlie Collett at Maritzburg and another from Rev Evans, formerly minister here.

I am sorry my letter is so disjointed but I cannot help it. I must now write to Mrs van der Vyver about the room and shall wait her reply.

Lots of love to you all and hope to hear from you soon. The trains have been running late so the posts are late in delivery.

Dad.

3 p.m. 15th April 1947. Arthur and Emily just left for Grahamstown. They saw Joe and Co yesterday and Ruth and Co this morning. Joe is in hospital again.

19 Dundas Street, Cradock

21st April 1947

My dear All,

You will notice that this is the first time I have used my new Address. After many delays, I was able to celebrate Princess Elizabeth's coming of age by moving in. The room is smaller than I desired but it was a case of making the best of what I could get. I think I shall be as comfortable as I can reasonably expect to be under the circumstances. At any rate, I shall try to make it so. I am not going to sleep here until I return from up north as I cannot possibly get everything straight before I leave. I have got more than enough things over there and it will take some time to decide what is what. Mr and Mrs van der Vyver are very nice. They have no children of their own. There is one boy adopted, about nine years old, who I think will be very friendly. He seems very interested and wants to help where he can. They offered me a much larger room, in fact two rooms made into one, quite as large as our dining room but they want four pounds a month for it. Mrs van der Vyver is very deaf but reads the lips and eyes and is anxious to please. He was in the last war and sold his farm some years ago but could not get possession until recently. It is to have an electric hot water system in the bathroom and inside lavatory when the new system comes into operation.

Dot has written suggesting that I arrive in Pretoria on Sunday May 18th as Reg will be taking the boys back to school after a few days holiday at home. Strange to say, a letter of mine has crossed theirs suggesting that I should go to Fish River after the sale – say about Tuesday 6th and then leave Cradock on Saturday night, 17th, two days after the Fish River Fete. I am therefore accepting Vincent Crosbie's offer to see that my seat is properly booked. No doubt someone will see that I do get off safely. It leaves here about 11 p.m. if up to time. I fear I shall have an enormous lot of luggage but I may send some of the heavier stuff by goods train direct. These plans seem to be amongst the many things of "way opening" or in other words, All things working together for good. I trust it may be so. Clifford has been most valuable in assisting with his car, shifting things etc. We only had to engage a couple of boys to carry some of the heavier things across. Quite a number of people have been to see the house as well as the furniture. I anticipate there will be good competition. It is wonderful how things have accumulated in the course of 55 years.

I am taking some of my hobbies with me and shall soon find if the climate is going to agree with me. I got Dr to overhaul me recently and he thinks it safe. I fancy I told you this last week.

Grace writes that Ted has bought the piano which Aunt Eliza willed to Eric and which I have been storing for a couple of years or more. So that will be out of the house before the end of the month. Mary's furniture will be stored in the room opposite the Victoria Hotel. Then we can arrange the furniture in each room ready for the sale. I shall be very glad when it is all over. It is hard to break up a home.

A strange thing happened here (I am now writing from 29 Market Street) on the Princess' birthday whilst Mary and I were having breakfast in the little room (Aunt Eliza has hers in bed). We heard a crash and found that the whole length of cornice in the front room which I am occupying had fallen down. There were two oblong pictures from the ceiling and they were not broken. It fell over the table by the window without doing any damage except bringing down a lot of dust and tearing a bit of wallpaper with it. We found that the nails used for fixing the cornice were far too short. I wonder how many years it has been hanging. It is a good job it did not fall whilst Joyce and Ray were using the room. It has not been replaced yet.

I have seen very little of Aunt Letty yet, all my time is taken up between the three houses. She is very thin but appears in fairly good health. She had been along twice to 34 and Clifford has motored her to spend a morning with the Saunders, has also been to see Aunt Charlotte and of course Mary. As Clifford was taking me to Market Street, we met Aunt and Mary walking to the Poplars. Of course she goes slowly but at 91 years, it is splendid that she can walk so far.

Christine Moys has a second son born at Fort Beaufort. I had a nice letter from Nelly Rickett (now Bouley). She calls to memory the happy days spent in Vryburg.

It is now ½ past 8 Wednesday morning and Clifford will be here at nine to take me to No. 19 so must be ready. I have left my notes of what I wanted to write about in my room. When I get straight, I hope to be able to concentrate better. Meanwhile I will not add more except to say I will do my best to keep you all informed of plans and happenings as best I can. I am very appreciative of all the thoughtfulness bestowed by you all on my behalf and will try to reward you by being as good as I can under very trying circumstances. No fresh news so far regarding Joe. May hear today.

Lots of love to you each and all,
Dad

19 Dundas Street, Cradock
Sunday afternoon April 27th, 1947

My dear All,

On this date sixty years ago, it was a Friday, I sailed from London on board the Drummond Castle for South Africa arriving in Cradock on May 27th about five p.m. On that occasion, I commenced another chapter in my life's history, which I never regretted. It is exactly a calendar month today that we laid dear Mother to rest in the local cemetery, thus starting a very sad chapter in my history. Much has happened in these past sixty years, some I shall never forget, others I wish could be forgotten. Such is life. God has been very good to me in the past, more than I deserved no doubt and I have much to be thankful for, and am thankful. Some things I might have wished had been different but for all His mercies, I can truly say "Yes, God is good". This past month has been a new experience – a sad one – yet I would not wish Mother back again to suffer as many do from that dreadful disease. I have received much comfort and help from all the family and many outside the family and things have worked out more easily than might have been expected. As you know, I had planned to go to Fish River from Tuesday 6th to 15th and leave for Potgietersrus on Saturday night 17th. Uncle Norman will be in for the Stock Fair on Tuesday and has offered to take me out.

Yesterday I had a wire from Dot asking me to leave here on Monday morning, 19th, arriving Pretoria on Tuesday 20th about 7.30 a.m., there being no train from here on Sunday. Reg will meet me and we get to Potgietersrus the same afternoon. Unfortunately I shall miss seeing Kroonstad folk as that train passes that station during the early hours in the night. Douglas and Evelyn and probably Rex will arrive here by car about Thursday or Friday. Joe hopes to come if he is well enough. Grace does not see her way to come as she too is in the midst of moving. I have no doubt that plans will work out satisfactorily.

Tomorrow week, May 5th, will be Dot's birthday and Beryl's this Saturday. I am afraid I have overlooked some anniversaries, if I have, I hope I may be forgiven, as I know I have not been able to keep up to date. I have not been able to refer to many happenings of interest to one and another branch of the family, such as Douglas and Evelyn's wonderful trip to Serowe and Victoria Falls, the Royal visit which most of you have seen, Arthur's wedding etc. I have not spent one night at No. 19 but have nearly finished getting all the things over from 34 that I want to keep here. This has created a lot of muddle accumulating in the room. Nor have I got my wireless going or the lights in proper order. I am taking some old correspondence with me to Fish River to look through and destroy. After the end of this week, you can post to Fish River and I will advise the Post Office there which box to put letter in there. Mary will redirect any that may come to Cradock. The phone I am not retaining as there is one in the house here which I may use but I shall not be here much after the end of this week.

I had a strange experience one day last week. I had shown a party over the house and shut the door when I went to dinner at Premier and when I returned, could not think what I had done with my keys. All the windows were bolted and I could not get in. Then I went to Vincent and he put on old clothes, thinking he might have to force the bolts or windows. Then it struck me that I had unlocked the coal room door and left the bunch of keys in the door. How forgetful I am getting!

I do not know what actually I had done which caused the rupture on Tuesday or Wednesday but by afternoon I was feeling so uncomfortable that Mary phoned for Dr to come at once. He soon spotted the trouble and as Clifford has been operated on for the same trouble, successfully, he had no further use for his truss. This Dr fitted to me and I have suffered very little inconvenience since, but Dr warns me that if the swelling should recur and refuse to yield to treatment, I must send at once for a Doctor. I could not be operated on as my age would be against me. It was most uncomfortable at the time.

I have not referred to the kindness and comfort I am receiving from Aunt Eliza and Mary. The front room is quite comfortable and as a rule I sleep well. Mary brings me a cup of coffee about seven, Clifford comes for me at nine, and we come to 34 and 19 as required. The car is most useful and Mary finds it saves a lot of her time getting to see people on Red Cross work. I get dinner at the Premier. For some time they placed me at what I call the "Isolation" table, all by

myself. Now they have moved me to Mr and Mrs Campbell's table. This is much nicer. Clifford generally calls about 5.30 or six and takes me home to 29. I seldom go out except to church in the evenings. Yesterday afternoon, Mary and I went with Clifford to call on the Douglas's who have moved into 53a but they were out in their car, so we went and called on the Webbers, near the gaol and walked back from there. I do not know how I am going to say goodbye to all my friends but that cannot be helped. Letters of condolence continue to arrive. The sheet is full,

Love to all,

Dad

29 Market Street Cradock
Monday evening, May 5th, 1947 - Dot's birthday

My dear All,

It is a quarter to eight and Mary is doing some Red Cross typing and suggest that we have a race and see how much we can get finished before 8.30. I fear I shall not win although I have brought up sufficient paper to do three sheets. However I must not waste time in "frills".

The sale took place on Saturday as planned. There was a large attendance of buyers and those who simply attended out of curiosity. The house was offered first and after the reading of the conditions etc., bidding started at £1200 and ran up pretty quickly to £1800 when there was a bit of a lull. Bidding resumed in smaller figures until £2000 was reached and after another bid of £25, it was knocked down to a Mr Jonker, a tailor. I approved as I did not see any use in holding on to the property as I thought it had reached its limit. The members of the family and others thought that it would be wisest for me to go to the Poplars and rest instead of seeing the furniture sold. The sale was not over until nearly two p.m. Alison and Ernest asked me to stay to dinner and I enjoyed a good chat with Letty, who is staying there for a while. Dorothy Murray and her two children are there until the end of the week when they return to Upington with Bill who is coming down to fetch her.

The Auctioneer is not ready with the financial statement of the sale as he has a large sale of stock tomorrow and may not have it ready until the end of the week. He thinks I shall be satisfied with the result. Some say it may be about £200. Time will show. The Mr Jonker who has bought the house bought quite a lot of the furniture. Our bedroom suite, which I bought at the same time as Bert Fear bought his (Burma Teak) Douglas bought for about £16. The Chesterfield in the Lounge was about £20. The Stinkwood settee and four chairs went over £26, the large sideboard about £16, I paid £5/5- for it on a sale years ago. Of course until I get the detailed statement, I cannot give absolute detail. There had been quite a number of people to see the house but the actual buyer had only made up his mind about ten minutes before the sale to have a look at it. The house he has been living in for some time was only sold over him on Friday and he was desperate. He and his wife are quite pleased and satisfied that he has got a bargain. The house is quite empty and I shall have a good deal to get through before I can start for Potgietersrus on 19th.

Let me go back a bit. Grace wired a week ago that she could come down if necessary but I wired that if she arrived by Friday, I thought that would be time enough. Then she phoned to Douglas and later decided not to come as they were starting moving into their town house the next day. I fear she is pretty well knocked up with all the work. Douglas and Evelyn arrived by car just after breakfast on Friday and what with Mary's help and Joe's on Saturday morning, everything was ready well in advance. I was relieved of all work or trouble in connection with the sale and I cannot be thankful enough to one and all for what they have done for me. Special mention must be made of the splendid help Clifford gave in moving things and taking one and another about. We did not have to hire a lorry except to convey all Mary's goods and chattels to the room she has hired opposite the Victoria Hotel. Two small tables and a stoep chair of mine are there also. Douglas and Evelyn had dinner with me at the Premier on Friday and Joe and I had dinner with them at the Vic on Sunday. They got cold lunch on Saturday as dinner was "off" by the time they got to the hotel. Douglas and Evelyn spent Friday evening with Eliza, Mary and me and Joe was with us as well on Saturday evening. Douglas and Evelyn left by car about three for Kimberley and Joe left by train at 7.10 pm the same evening. The Saunders kindly asked Joe and I to supper.

We all went to church in the morning but none of us went in the evening. It had turned very cold during the afternoon. One night last week we had just a touch of frost. Clifford has been helping Fenner Moorcroft with sorting some of his sheep near town on a farm which his son, Billy, is managing. Just after five this afternoon, Vincent came along and finished fixing up my electric lights in my one room so when I come back from Fish River, I shall be able to have three points of light – one in the middle of the room, one in the table lamp on my desk and one fixed to my bed. In addition I shall be able to switch on the electric kettle if I want to, also the wireless – without masts – and the electric clock. I do not expect many have so many gadgets as that. (We had much the same at 34). Of course it is going to be terribly lonely but that cannot be helped. I look to be back

in town on the afternoon of 15th and leave at 7 a.m. on 19th for Pretoria where Reg will meet me. My address then will be Box 16, Potgietersrus, Northern Transvaal. I shall endeavour to keep you all posted up in what happens and hope to hear regularly from you all. It is 8.45 so must stop.

Love to all,

Dad

Kat Kop, Fish River, Cradock District
Friday evening, May 9th, 1947

My dear All,

A lot has happened during the last week and it is difficult to exactly know where to start my journal. Sometimes I feel like making my weekly epistle in the form of a diary, and writing each evening about the happenings of the day. This course might be advantageous if I were likely to be always on a farm, as at present, where opportunities of posting are more or less only occasional. When I get more settled, as I shall probably be when I get up further north, it will be different. However I have been here just over two days and have not written more than a postcard to each home stating the bare fact that I had arrived. I will see how I get on. It is nine thirty a.m. and the sun is shining brightly as I am sitting in the beautiful lounge. By the way, the way the sun rose at 7.10 yesterday and set at 5.20, how does that compare with you? Yesterday morning it was very cold and I had my heavy overcoat on almost all day. Today it is not so cold.

This day last week Douglas and Evelyn arrived by car from Vryburg, having left the previous afternoon and getting as far as Middelburg that night. A lorry arrived to remove Mary's furniture early and with the addition of a few of my belongings, is now stored in a room opposite the Victoria Hotel. Douglas and I visited the Attorneys and saw that the conditions of the sale of the property was in order and the household goods were soon arranged as was thought most suitable for sale. This I may say was mostly altered when the Auctioneer's men came the next morning and arranged things as they thought they should be. Douglas and Evelyn got fixed up at the Victoria Hotel and we all spent the evening at Aunt Eliza's and enjoyed hearing about their journeys to Arthur's wedding and then to Seroue and the Victoria Falls etc. They covered over 4000 miles and only had two punctures all the way. They were charmed with the scenery and the country and were away from home about a month.

Joe arrived on Saturday morning and came to breakfast at Market Street. He was looking a little better I thought but is still very thin. The actual sale was timed for 11 and there were no lack of people to see the house and furniture. Unfortunately a paragraph was inserted in the Midland News the evening before stating that the sale was at 10 so a number of people were disappointed in having to wait an hour before commencement was made. No one had any idea as to who was likely to be the purchaser of the house, which was of course put up first. About ten minutes before the sale started, a Mr Jonker and his wife came hurrying along and to the surprise of most, eventually was declared the purchaser. He is a tailor who has only been living in Cradock for a few years. I had never met him before. Douglas showed him over the house. He told us afterwards that the house he was living in had been sold the day before and he had nowhere to go, so was in a way forced to buy. Bidding started at £1200 and quickly rose to £1800 when there was a lull and then went on again to £2000 and when it reached £2025, the Auctioneer referred to me as whether he should declare it sold or not. I had hoped it would go to £2500 but thought it best to sell and I don't think I, or anyone else in the family will regret it under the circumstances. I understand the buyer will pay cash by making arrangements with the Alliance Building Society. They all thought it best that I should then go and rest at Ernest's as the strain and disappointment in seeing the household goods being scattered would be too much for me. At the time of writing, I have not received the account of the sale but from what one and another have told me, some things went high and others very low but they think that on the whole it was quite satisfactory. In any case, it cannot be altered and I am satisfied. When I get the account, no doubt I shall give what information may be of interest to you. The sale was not over until nearly two and the arrangement was that Douglas and Evelyn and Joe would call for me at the Poplars but as Letty was there and Alison kindly asked me to have dinner with them, I did so. Douglas, Evelyn and Joe got a cold lunch at the Vic. Aunt Eliza kindly invited Joe to stay at 29 and a bed was made up for him in the front room. Douglas and Evelyn came along after their dinner at the Vic and we all had a pleasant evening together. We all attended morning service and about 2.30 to 3, Douglas and Evelyn and the native boy they brought with them left for home. Mrs Saunders kindly invited Joe and I to supper at their house and Clifford motored me back to 29 and took Joe on to catch his train back to Uitenhage by 7.10 p.m. So ends the history of the disposal of No. 34 which we have occupied for over ten years or more. It has been a happy home

and resting place for many and as Joe says, Cradock will never be the same place to any of us. It is inevitable that changes must come and we must face up to them.

The plan which I had made was that Tuesday, being Stock Fair Day and as a rule someone from Fish River came in for the sale, that if convenient, Uncle Dudley would take me back with him after the sale. Uncle did not come in but I got a message that someone would call for me, where was not stated. I was ready by two and no one came. I rested at 29 for a while but had to sign a number of papers in connection with the transfer of the property at the Attorneys and after doing that, waited at No. 19 to be called for. At five I was just about giving up the idea of going when Godfrey arrived with his motor lorry and my luggage, having collected it from 29 and in a few minutes we were off. As he was late in starting, Uncle Dudley and Aunt Kate, who had waited for his return at Fish River, had returned to Grass Ridge and word was left at the Station that I was to be brought on here and to stay until Saturday when the usual monthly tennis day would be held. Then Dudley and Kate would be there and I could return with them and go to the Fete next Thursday and on to Cradock as arranged.

We arrived here just at six, Godfrey soon buzzing off to his home where Joan and his baby were awaiting him. The furniture which his parents had purchased at our sale on Saturday was offloaded. This consisted of the dining room and kitchen tables, kitchen stove, curtains from our bedroom and dining rooms and the stand for the rain gauge. There may have been some other things as well. Thus ended Tuesday.

Wednesday was bitterly cold and a nasty wind. I wore my heavy overcoat all day. My nose was very uncomfortable but Mary had put in my medicine and it is gradually yielding to treatment of bi-carbonate of soda. We had about ten points of rain during the night and we expected to see snow on the mountains yesterday but it did not materialise. In the afternoon Uncle Norman took me to Godfrey's new house. It is situated about a mile from here and within sight of each other. I understand that Joan is responsible for the design and very conveniently arranged it is. Of course a flower garden has yet to be made and electric light and other modern extras to be supplied, which no doubt will arrive in due season. As to Elizabeth, named after the Queen, it needs the pen of a mother or grandmother to declare her many good points. She is perfectly good child, no dummy dangling from her pretty mouth, good tempered, very friendly and did not cry all the while I was there. I am told she does not disturb the house at night and is in fact as good as any girl baby could be. I hope this is not a disturbing qualification! I understand that the furniture that has been purchased is for Keith who at the end of the month is leaving his job in Port Elizabeth and returning to farming at Grass Ridge. He will be on his own the other side of the river.

Shearing is the order of the day here at present and it is interesting watching the operation. The native shearers are very smart at the job and earn about 20/- per day. They sharpen their own shears on stone found near Cradock and provide their own food except a ration of coffee twice a day. I have been watching the sorting and bailing of the wool. Portions of the shearing sheds are partitioned off for the various qualities. This work is done by the sons who seem fully qualified for the job. There is no more tramping the wool in the bales by natives – as used to be done in the old days and when stones were sometimes added to increase the weight of the bale by unscrupulous farmers. It is all done by machinery and very neat bales are the result. I understand that Uncle Bertie's daughters are experts at sorting the wool. By the way, they are both on a visit to their sister in South West Africa. Yesterday afternoon Joan brought up her baby in the pram – about a mile, and not a tarred road by any means. She was perfectly good and stayed in her pram with me whilst her Mother was helping Aunt Gladys making a dress. Godfrey makes a very good father. Neville, Godfrey and Dick are all within a radius of about five miles of the old home and are all connected by telephone. Aunt Gladys' sister is keeping house for Dick at Glen Alpha at present. Mrs Wilson is almost stone deaf but is quite happy and of course they all see each other very often.

This morning a message was phoned from the Station that Ethlene is coming up for the weekend and will be arriving tomorrow morning. All are going to the station tomorrow afternoon for tennis and also to make the preliminary arrangements of laying out the Hall for the Fete next Thursday. They have a very happy crowd of workers. I understand that the Hall will not be curtained off for the lunch as formerly but the tables arranged the whole length of the hall. This is

thought will save trouble and make it more attractive. I hope they will have a fine day and satisfactory financial results. This will be the 31st Fete and the average takings – so far as church funds are concerned – is £194 per year for the past 30 years.

I brought out with me one of my small puzzles, which after two evenings trial, we each managed to put together. Last evening, Gladys brought out a jigsaw puzzle of the world and we expect to finish putting it together tonight. It contains some hundred or more pieces.

Yesterday post came and brought news of the safe arrival of Douglas and Evelyn so far as Kimberley and Douglas going and Mike going on to Bloemfontein and Evelyn going home. Grace wrote that the sale of their plot was taking place this Saturday. I hope they realise a good price. Some building has still to be done to their new home. I shall be interested in seeing it after I have been to Dot's. I don't know when that will be. Douglas did not get the vacuum cleaner or the curtains Grace wanted, both went over her limit. Pam has a cold and has spent two days in bed. We have had a fire here each evening and also have a hot water bottle at night. Dot reports that they have a probation minister coming to them so they have to provide a house and furniture for same. They have been wanting a man for their own work for a long time. The weather has been glorious there she says. I think I have written enough for this post. Will try to write again when I get to Grass Ridge.

Love to all,
Dad

Grass Ridge, Fish River
Monday May 12th, 1947

My dear All,

There may be an opportunity of posting tomorrow so I must get a letter ready. I hardly expect to post another before I leave this day next week but will do so if I can. On Saturday morning it turned very cold and about dinner time, it turned to rain and the plans which had been made for me to go to Fish River Station to spend the day there whilst the Hall was being prepared for the Fete had to be abandoned, at any rate for the time being. Ethlene and Miss Jones (Dick's friend) arrived about dinnertime and brought a parcel from Mary for me. It was eventually decided that as Uncle Norman and Aunt Kate had already gone to the Station to bring me here, that we should carry out the original plan, so Norman and Ethlene took me down, which meant that I changed from one car into a Grass Ridge car and came straight here. It rained all the way but no one suffered any harm. Only about 15 points of rain were registered. I was given the "school room" which has been very comfortably furnished as never before. Carpet nearly covers the whole room, electric light etc and convenience so that it is not necessary for me to leave the room. I am typing this at a table close to the window and the bed with vi-spring mattress was most comfortable. I am sorry to say I was rather done up on arrival and excused myself for wanting to go to bed early. Dudley very kindly helped me with a warm bath and I slept soundly until about 3 a.m. Aunt Kate had suggested on Saturday evening that if the day was fine, we all might go to Cradock to attend the morning and afternoon Sunday School anniversary services but the weather was far from favourable so we did not go anywhere. We listened in to the wireless and of course Aunt Kate gave us some music. My nose was less troublesome during the day than it has been and this morning it is practically normal. I tried to adjust my bottom plate this morning but without success.

The sun shone out a little during the afternoon and I took advantage of same to have a little exercise on the back veranda. My thoughts naturally went back over the sixty years I have known the dear old homestead. How on my first visit, instead of coming to the main door on the east side of the house, I went round to the proper front door, which as you know, is at the back of the house. I looked at the garden which has grown tremendously in those years and the spot where 55½ years ago, the double wedding was photographed and also the steep steps which we had so often trodden on. A group of the wedding was also taken whilst we stood on the very spot. The old tree under which the Golden Wedding group of Mom's parents was taken is still sanding. The rocking horse – with the tail Douglas supplied, is still on the back stoep. How many children and grandchildren have enjoyed riding upon it. It is usable though it appears to be about on its last legs. Then my mind turned to 83 years back when Mom was a little toddler like Dot's Joan, about two years old and the first of the family to come to live in what was then the new house. I called to mind the occasion of our Wedding Day (October 14th 1891) as we walked in procession from the wagon house to the house and were met by an enormous swarm of hopping locusts. The many happy visits we as a family have paid and the hospitality which has always been so lavishly shown to us individually and collectively will never be forgotten. Such is memory, and I am devoutly thankful for all the blessings of the past.

By this time (10 a.m.) next week, I suppose I shall be well on my way northwards. I have written to Clifford asking if he will accompany me by train as far as Fish River. The train leaves so early – 7 a.m. that I fear I may not be able to get settled in my compartment with all the luggage before the train starts so if he could be with me and help settle me in for the day and night, it would be a great help. The morning down train to Cradock is due to pass here about the same time so he would not be away from Cradock more than an hour or two. I shall look out of the train as it passes Collett Siding and also at Naauwpoort on the chance of seeing any of the relations. I do not know when anyone will get this letter owing to Thursday being a holiday and posts will no doubt be disorganised. So far I have not had any letters from Cradock but of course we are twelve miles from the Station and do not send to the Station every day. I have left instructions at the Cradock Post Office for letters to be forwarded to Box 16 Potgietersrus. I guess I shall long for letters even more than ever.

I have not been to Saltpansdrift yet but hope to do so on Thursday, also Uncle Jack's and Aunt Agnes and other relations. It is tea time and I want to do some more work that I brought out with me. I have made a list of all the letters and telegrams received since the funeral. I will send them round to the family after I get to Dot's. Whilst I think of it, Aunt Letty is so sorry that she has not seen Grace or Doris – as she always calls Dot. She says it seem that she is never to see them. I don't expect to add to this sheet, so will say goodbye.

Much love to all,

Charles

29 Market Street, Cradock
Sunday May 18th, 1947

My dear All,

This will be my last letter from this address for some time. Tomorrow morning I entrain at 7 a.m. for Pretoria and from thence by motor to Potgietersrus and commence another chapter in my life history. How long or short this chapter may be I have no idea but am content to live at the rate of a day at a time.

I am sorry to say I was not able to continue my letter on Sunday, there was far too much to do and not only that, but I could not concentrate. Now it is Wednesday May 21st and I am writing from Potgietersrus, having arrived here yesterday about 2.30 p.m. almost exactly eight weeks after dear Mother's death. What a tremendous change has happened in that short time. No one could have foreseen that I would be about seven hundred miles from Cradock, that the home and furniture would be scattered all over the country and that my long wish to visit the family would be in course of being fulfilled. Such is life, changes are sure to come about and often without warning. Only at the beginning of March, I got 500 postcards printed – the quantity I usually use in twelve months. Now I must alter the address as required. If this were the only change, it would be as nothing with the upheavals that have also come about. More and more do I realise that here is no abiding city and we must be prepared for those changes which are sure to come and which I must be prepared to face up to with all the courage which God gives me. Shortly after my arrival yesterday, dear little Joan asked me "where is Ganma?" Oh that she was here with me. How she would have loved to hear her happy chatter.

I must try to retrace my steps and recount some of the recent happenings. It has been a great rush, encountered under great difficulties but overcome by the great help of Mary and Clifford who have been towers of strength. Aunt Eliza has also been ever willing but owing to her disabilities, could not do as much as her spirit would allow. It has been difficult to sort out what to pack and what to leave and I expect I shall find that I have erred in both directions. On Saturday we railed three packages by good strain of stuff I want to look through before destroying anything. Four suitcases and my attaché case have come with me. The large American holdall is also with me so when everything is here, there will be a varied assortment of clothing etc to sort out. I went to service both in the morning and evening so was able to say goodbye to many of my friends. I also called on as many others as I could during the week. Saturday I said goodbye to Aunt Charlotte who is 92 and it is not likely we shall meet again. Aunt Letty remained in Cradock until Sunday morning when she returned to Graaff Reinet by car. She is wonderful how she gets about. She remembers everyone and is interested in all.

Clifford motored his mother and May to Middelburg on Sunday morning to be with Eileen who is expecting to go to the hospital very shortly. He returned about six p.m. and after changing, took Mary and I to church and back. He had supper with us. Mary and I were up by 5.30 a.m. Monday and Clifford was on the spot in plenty of time. He had called at the station and found the train was about a quarter of an hour late so we had plenty of time to wait. Rev Ludlow came to see me off and as the train was not crowded, there was plenty of room. However we found that my seat had not been booked but I had a compartment with only one other gent in it and he only occupied it as far as Naauwpoort. I had the whole of the compartment to myself all the rest of the way to Pretoria. I had promised not to go out of the compartment so had what meals I required brought to me from the dining car. I slept well that night and was up early. Coffee was served at five. I looked out of the window at midnight and believe it was Kroonstad Station but am not sure. As we approached Johannesburg, it was a pretty sight watching the miles and miles of electric street lights from the train. I was surprised to note that the sun rose at 6.45 and incidentally, set here at 5.25. Reg was on the platform to meet me. The saloon was quite empty except for myself as all the other passengers had got off at Johannesburg.

After breakfast Reg took me to see Norman and Alan at the Boys High School. It is a very fine building and the grounds are very extensive, and all forms of sport are provided for. The boys are doing well and the Housemaster speaks well of their conduct and behaviour. Norman leaves at the end of this year. He may go to Rhodes next year.

We left by car at 10.30 and stopped for coffee at Neilstroom where Mom and I were held up owing to the car giving trouble. The road was very dusty in parts and my dust coat was packed away in the holdall. We arrived here at 2.30 and were heartily welcomed. I was very tired and enjoyed a warm bath and to bed. Everything for my comfort has been thought of and I have one of the rondavels to spread about in. Letters from Evelyn, Joe, Dr Fox, and Mr Cocking were awaiting me. One from the Postal Department thanking me for offering No. 34 to the Government stated that the offer could not be entertained.

I must not write more as the post closes at 4.30 and it is just on 3 now. Only a postcard from Aunt Emmie came this a.m. I noticed my left ear popped this morning but I hope that does not indicate anything wrong. I shall feel more rested in a few days time.

Lots of love to all and hoping you are all well,

Dad

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
Sunday May 25th, 1947

My dear All,

It is exactly two months to the day that dear Mother passed to her rest and in two days time, it will be the sixtieth anniversary of my arrival in Cradock. As I lay awake at four o'clock this morning, I seemed to hear her say that she was quite happy where she was. How everyone wishes they could commune with their loved ones who have gone before. However we can look forward to a reunion later on.

It is Sunday afternoon and I have just got up from my nap. It has been quite cold and dull and this is one of the Sundays – the 5th in the month – that no service is held locally. Reg has had a cold for the past couple of days and was not fit to go to his Sunday School so Dot took it for him. Next week he is down for service in Pietersburg. Stanley Gilbert and his wife, Mick, and Miss Legg came along to see us before dinner. Of course they were old friends at Vryburg and I had not seen them since my last visit here at the time of the Johannesburg Exhibition about ten years ago. Their little boy is about three months younger than Joan. They play very nicely together.

I have done very little since my arrival last Tuesday afternoon. A number of friends of Dot have called and I suppose in time I shall get to know them all. The Watts family are all away on holiday but are expected home about the end of the month. They are next door neighbours. So far, I have not heard a word from Cradock but the holiday may be responsible in some measure. I am sorry to say I left my hot water bag in the bedding on the train but am hopeful of getting it back. Dot has an extra one and I have been glad of it each night so far. I am very comfortably fixed up in the boys' rondavel. It has two windows and a door and faces east. It has a Vi-spring mattress, plenty of blankets, wardrobe, chest of drawers, a writing table Norman made, an easy chair, a spare bed etc. It is a nice bright room and leads off the stoep between the two rondavels. The stoep is bright and sunny in the morning but the granolithic floor is cold and I have to be careful not to slip on it. The house has been altered since I was here last. The lounge is the same except that the fireplace has been improved as it used to smoke before. The addition of electric light all through the house has greatly improved every room. We have had a fire each afternoon and evening. The wireless is on a good deal and usually the reception is good as we are so near to Johannesburg. The boys have made for themselves a gramophone and case and with their own money are building up a fine collection of classical records. Dot does not use the piano as much as she would like. I hope Joan will be musical. The kitchen has been converted into a nice dining room. When the boys are home for the holidays, it may appear a little bit on the small size but it is nice and cosy. It has a sliding window which opens into the newly built kitchen with pantry adjoining. A new stoep has been added, underneath which a cellar was excavated which is used for a storeroom. A dwarf wall has been erected for safety so as to prevent Baby from falling down and this is covered over so forming a useful table on which to work. The pantry that was, has been made into a small spare room or "prophets" room and is frequently occupied by visiting ministers. Those of you who have visited Reg and Dot will, I hope, be able to picture my comfortable surroundings. Dot and I have been round the block and inspected some of the new sub-economic houses the Council have erected. I think they are superior to some of the Cradock ones. I have not been to the business part of the town yet but expect to do so this coming week. Three packages I railed from Cradock on Saturday morning 17th have not come to hand. I am using the last sheet of letter paper I brought in my suitcase and unless the other packages come, I shall be held up.

In sorting out some papers, I found the following record of pictures that were hanging on the walls in 34 Dundas Street on 5th October 1941. Drawing room: 23, passage 23, our bedroom 18, work room 17, dining room 30. Total 128. A good many of these must have been sold. I have not attempted to arrange those that I have taken to No. 19 but must do so when I get back. Another record is also of interest. Aunt Letty had 7 children, 21 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren. Total 34. We have 4 children living, 18 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Total 23.

Dr took my blood pressure on 23rd April 1947 when he said it was high. It stood at 165 over 85, whatever that may mean. I am glad to say that the cookery book that Mom was so anxious

about and could not be found I discovered when sorting out things in the play drawer - it had been put in there.

I am glad to say that my nose has not been giving me so much trouble since I arrived. My bottom plate I have also been able to get in and out with less difficulty and pain. The rupture which took place the same day is not any worse but the truss sometimes gives a little trouble. I am very sorry I did not give all the old cutlery to the Fish River people for the Fete instead of selling it. Since writing the above, we have been for a short walk and I see the paper is about finished. Grace's new address is 47 Reitz Street, make a note of it.

Love to all,
Dad

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
Wednesday May 28th, 1947

My dear All,

My Sunday's dear All, 25th, was incomplete owing to the fact that I had run short of paper. I had packed in my suitcase what I thought would last me until the bulk of my supply, which I forwarded with other things that I was not likely to want before they reached here. Three packages were sent by goods train so as to save cost in transit, on May 17th. It is now 28th and the Railway now informs me that I may expect either the end of this week or next. This is disappointing but cannot be helped so this morning I went to the local printers with some tissue paper I was able to buy locally and they cut it down into a smaller size. Unfortunately they did not know the proper size of foolscap so I have now a mixed assortment of sizes but shall be able to make use of them in time.

I commenced by giving you some account of my surroundings. Reg has been occupying the spare room since I arrived as he has a touch of flu which he has not been able to shake off. He should stay in bed but like most men, prefers being up and about. He goes out to his farm to see what his workmen are doing. His time is his own and he has a competent assistant at the hospital to do the secretarial work.

The new kitchen is an improvement and opens into the new pantry which could not be avoided. Hot and cold water is laid on to the bathroom and as there are no washstands in the bedrooms, it is in great demand. The front stoep between the two rondavels is very nice in the morning with sun shining in. The floor is polished granolithic so one has to be careful not to slip on it. Electric light is installed in all rooms and outside as well. The lawn is a grand place, especially as a play place for Joan and her many friends. The garden swinging lounge with canopy is a great attraction for all. There are other garden seats as well and flower beds more or less stocked. I have not seen the fish pond illuminated but can imagine the effect must be very pretty. There is plenty of Golden Shower still in flower but it is now going off. Poinsettia is still in flower. At the back of the house there is plenty of shade but the great attraction for the children is the sand heap.

Reg is having a quantity of white bricks made in cement for building additional store rooms etc. The native who makes them seems good at the job. The sand is pure white and looks very well. Dot's canaries – about 20 of them – and a few local wild birds are caged near the back stoep and are a source of interest. Their food is placed in shallow containers which are generally covered so that they cannot get into them and scratch the seed all over the place. Half a dozen round holes are made in the covers so that they can put their heads in and eat the food. They are supplied with the usual perches, swings etc and seem very happy. Baby is very fond of them. I must not forget to mention the cat and Bonzo. The grey Persian cat made friends with me from the start and is very fond of sleeping on my lap. Bonzo, too, is great fun. He is very fond of Joan. He never jumps onto anyone but is very playful. It is amusing to see him play with any old empty tin that Dot kicks to him. He has a wonderful way of poking it about and racing after it. I wonder he does not cut his mouth with it. He is a good watchdog.

Dot leads a very busy life. I am keeping a record of the callers who have been since I arrived. Four came yesterday whilst she was at a sewing meeting, another day one came wanting her assistance in organising a function for the hospital. They have started sewing meetings for raising funds for furnishing the manse as later in the year they are to have a minister residing here. She is always knitting and between whiles she looks after my creature comforts. Reg is by no means forgotten. Instead of me making the early coffee (as I used to do) she brings me a cup about seven each morning. I do not get up so early now – about 7.30 – breakfast about 8 or 8.30. I sleep well but my nose is still leaking, especially as soon as I get up. It improves as the day gets warmer. The temperature for the past 24 hours at 8.30 was 80 maximum and 46 minimum. That was in the open, under the back veranda. I often find myself gasping for long periods. I do not know if it is because my lungs need more air or if it has anything to do with a sickness of the same name which often affects fowls. The remedy in the latter case is said to be to wring the fowl's neck.

We hear, and sometimes see, aeroplanes overhead. Far more numerous than in Cradock. Pietersburg Air School is only about 50 miles north of here. The snaps and Douglas' family group that I brought up are greatly admired.

News came from Alan this week that he was involved in a football accident. He fell and sprained his right arm and Dr has put him off playing anymore this season. He is very fed up about it as he was to have played against a school team in Johannesburg. He is very fond of cricket and has purchased a new bat with the proceeds of his birthday money. The boys are due home in about a month's time. Whilst in Pretoria, on my arrival, Reg took me up to the school. They have a lovely place and they are very happy. We have had very interesting letters from Ted and Joe. Ted gives a sketch of his new house. He has not sold the plot yet but hopes to do so soon.

Have you seen the book "Royal Visit to South Africa"? It is well got up and is only 1/6d. I am sending one to Cradock, it can be kept for my return. My sheet is full so must stop.

Love to all,

Dad

Supplement to Dear All, 28th May 1947

Saturday being a holiday and having written one sheet full yesterday, I may as well get this off so that most of my readers may get something to read by Monday. Not that I have any special news to convey but just to let you know that everything is going on according to plan. This week I have had a number of letters, the contents of which may interest you. I think I reported on one from Ted, seven pages. They spent last Saturday's holiday at Parys (where Mom and I went with some of the family years ago). The day was fine and they had a good time. Pam and Jean had tennis with some of the Saunders in town. Ted thinks that Parys would be a nice place to return to when the time comes. It is a much frequented spot by Johannesburg people. They have not sold the plot yet but hope to do so. They will have to build another bedroom in their new house and other alterations as soon as possible. Ted is now only 8 minutes walk from his work and there is a bus stop at their front door so in bad weather, they can get to town in a couple of minutes. I shall be interested in seeing everything when I move on. The house faces north. Charles also sent me a well written letter. He is looking forward to my visit, so am I.

Douglas and Evelyn have both written. They all went over to Kuruman for tennis recently – incidentally they were beaten. Arthur and Emily and Rex and Vivian also went. Douglas says I must let him know when I am ready to visit them. He will arrange to meet me at either Johannesburg or Kroonstad if I give him sufficient notice. I am not contemplating shifting at present. The three packages of luggage I sent by goods train on 17th have not come to hand yet. They met the Postmaster of Kuruman who used to work under Ted. Douglas is now drilling for water for the Railway at Pudimoe.

Joe and Blodwen write in good spirits. Joe has put on six pounds in weight recently but is not yet free from his trouble. They have charge of Dr Ruth's ex baby whilst she is in hospital at Port Elizabeth with her new son. They have the use of her car whilst she is away. Uncle Owen and Aunt Kate have gone to see Joyce in Rhodesia and Freda is with Beryl. Freda is far from well, she had all her teeth out recently. Blodwen complains of the heat lately. It has been hot here in the sun but cool in the shade. The maximum for yesterday was 80 and minimum 80. It has looked as though we might get some rain but I do not know conditions here yet sufficiently to make any forecasts. A neighbour of Dot's knows an old friend of Joe's when he lived in Kimberley and enquires about a number of them. This afternoon Dot has gone to play tennis-quoits and Joan is out with the nurse girl so I am alone to look after the house. Yesterday two of their church friends called and I was pleased to meet them. Reg and Dot came back before the visitors left. I am getting to know quite a number of new folk but cannot remember their names. Trevor, in a recent prayer, asked God to give Daddy a nice farm some day and horses and a .22 rifle and a balance dagger for himself!

I must close now or I shall be late for post. It closes at 4.30 p.m. We get post any time after 8.30 a.m. by sending for it from Reg's box. Lots of love to all, Dad

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
Monday June 2nd, 1947

My dear All,

My last dear All was dated May 28th and so far as I know, one was placed in an envelope for each household as usual but after they were posted, I found I had one copy over beside the file copy for future reference which I keep. If anyone did not receive their copy, please let me know.

It was a fortnight last Saturday when Clifford and I left three packages at Cradock goods shed and up to the present, I have not heard anything about them except that they will be delivered as soon as they arrive. This is very unsatisfactory but the Railways, being run by a Government monopoly, there is nothing that can be done about it. I managed to get an additional supply of paper from the local newspaper and now I am short of envelopes.

It is 3.30 and Dot has gone to tennis, Reg has been to his farm all the morning and has gone to his office. Joan and her maid, the same one that was with her in Cradock, are staying here with me. Joan has just had her tea in the sweetest little cup and saucer and plate to match. She is missing today two little playmates from next door. They are children of a Chemist and his wife who has been supplying for Mr Watts who has been away on holiday for a two months motor holiday to the Cape and back via the Garden Route, Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown, Cradock, Bloemfontein etc. They have been living here almost for the month with only a hedge between the two houses. There is a small baby as well but that does not count. Mr and Mrs Watts returned about six last evening and they, together with their locums, came in after church for tea and chat. They spent a night in Cradock at Victoria Hotel and went to the Metro. Mr Watts drove along Dundas Street to show Mrs Watts where we lived. He had been to see us on his last trip and I showed him the way to the Egg Rock. They noticed that furniture was being taken into No. 34. They enjoyed their trip. Mr Watts says he has never had a four weeks holiday before. Their locum left by car about noon for the Eastern Transvaal where he is going farming. Mr Watts has moved his business into the main street since I was last here (about 10 years ago) and now has a most up to date stand. Next to their shop is a Greek café which far surpasses anything we have in Cradock. I took advantage of weighing myself there and found I am exactly the same as when I weighed in the goods shed at Cradock – 146 lbs. The last time I weighed myself at Watsons, I was 142½ lbs.

I have been favoured with a nice lot of letters during the past week. Taking them at random, Grace reports the safe arrival of the piano and hopes that the tuner will give a good report on the instrument. The plot is not sold and Ted is trying to let it for a period as building material is scarce and dear at present. They have to make some additions to the house in town. Jean has come first in her division in the Scripture examination in the Kimberley and Bloemfontein Districts. She has a class of small boys in the Sunday School now and is interested. David hopes to go to Johannesburg during the University holidays. I do not hear of any of the others going away.

Lynne asks when I am likely to be going to Vryburg as she wants to arrange her annual leave. She suggests December but so far I have not decided anything. Douglas has kindly written saying he will fetch me either at Kroonstad or Johannesburg any time if I give him due notice. Dot has suggested my joining them at some seaside holiday resort during the December school holidays. She has been making enquiries from different places but nothing definite is arranged. Norman and Alan will be home during the latter part of this month. I do not feel happy about occupying one of their beds in the rondavel but Dot says she can arrange that alright. The accommodation at Kroonstad too is limited. I must wait for way to open. Reg and Dot have me very comfortable here, even to the providing of a wooden watch stand. I have been typing this on the front stoep – which is completely enclosed with wire gauze and I look out on to the lawn which is kept in excellent order. Every vehicle that passes I hope may be the lorry bringing my luggage.

Douglas and family all went over to play tennis at Kuruman recently, incidentally they were beaten, but they enjoyed the trip. Arthur and Emily also went and a friend of Rex. Lynne remarks how much she misses Emily when she goes to her parents home for the weekend. Lynne is hoping to be in the hockey team that may be going to play in Kimberley in July.

Joe met Freda when she arrived in Uitenhage and is staying with Beryl. Owen and Kate are away in Rhodesia and will call at Vryburg. Dr Ruth was expected home from hospital last weekend

and no doubt the ex baby will be going back to her mother soon. No word of the children going away for the holidays.

At Cradock, Aunt Eliza is having the house repainted and generally done up so there is a good deal of extra work going on there. I notice a house two doors from 29 is advertised for sale. I wonder what it is like. Whilst I have been typing this letter, a nice shower of rain has fallen but not enough to do much good. There has been a good stream in the water furrow but householders may only get it into their gardens once a month. Leaves are falling rapidly but there has been no frost yet. We have a fire in the lounge every evening. Reg took the service last evening and gave a helpful address.

If any of you get the South African Weekly, read the article on page 15 in the issued dated May 30th, first column. It shows what a small community can do. Will leave this open to see if anything fresh turns up by tomorrow's post. We get post any time after six by sending for it in the box. At Cradock we had to wait until about mid-day before it was delivered.

Love from Dad

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
Sunday June 8th, 1947

My dear All,

It is a beautiful Sunday morning, Reg and Dot have just gone by car to take their places in the Methodist Sunday School. Reg has occupied this responsible position for some years and is now thinking of giving it up so as to make room for a younger man (or woman) if such can be found. They have made a rule amongst themselves that no Church officers should hold office for more than two years in succession. It does not always work but in certain circumstances, it may be wise to enforce such a rule. There is a noble band of workers in this community as will be seen by a report in the South African Weekly of May 16th or 23rd, page 15, which shows how the work has advanced in recent years. They are hoping that by the end of 1947, they will have their own resident minister. They have nearly completed the building of the manse adjoining the church. At present they hold their Sunday School in the church itself but later they hope to build a church hall. As in Cradock, quite a number of Afrikaans children attend the Sunday School. Reg has been Superintendent for many years as well as taking services frequently here and also at Pietersburg, which is the head of the Circuit. He took the service here last Sunday evening and is due at Pietersburg next Sunday evening. Pietersburg is about 30 miles north from here. He was there last night to attend a Masonic Lodge meeting. Yesterday, nearly all day, Dot was helping prepare eats at the Town Hall for a dance in aid of some local fund. (It was Friday not Saturday). Dot employs three servants, two maids and a garden boy. They all sleep in outside rooms with bathroom etc attached. The nurse girl has been to Cradock with Dot more than once but just now has decided to leave and another is being substituted. It is a great assistance having them always on hand but it also has its responsibilities. Maggie, the nurse girl, has been very good with Baby and I am sure she (baby) will miss her a lot. There is no service here today, which I miss, but we can listen in this evening to some service.

On Friday and Saturday evenings, Mr and Mrs Watts have spent the evening with us. Last night we played halma, I came in a bad last. Dot was second best. I expect we shall often play. I am typing this on the north side stoep, in the sun and it is quite hot. It is too cold in the rondavel in the mornings. I often use the eastern stoep, between the rondavels as it is closed in with wire gauze and my papers cannot fly about.

I must tell you of an incident which happened a few mornings ago. I had gone to wash in the bathroom and placed Mom's ring near the overflow slit in the basin. Of course my glasses were off and whilst feeling for the soap, I felt the ring slip down the overflow pipe. Fortunately it had not gone into the main pipe so Reg was able to fish it out with a piece of thin wire. This error will not occur again.

So far did I get yesterday. It is now Monday morning. Yesterday afternoon we motored to the farm of Mr and Mrs Peppercorn, a peculiar name but very nice people., who live about 18 miles north of here. Mr and Mrs Watts had also gone there and others. The farm is near one of these famous caves where prehistoric remains are being found. Perhaps I shall be able to go and see the outside as the caves are locked, having been declared National Monuments by the Government. Mr Peppercorn is building a new house on the rondavel plan and when completed, it will be very convenient. They will have a very extended view from their front stoep commanding a broad valley and hills in the distance. Mrs Peppercorn has just returned from Johannesburg Hospital, having lost her first baby. On Saturday, 300 day old cheques arrived which will keep her fully occupied. We got back about six and as there was no service locally, we listened in to Rev J.B. Webb from the Central Hall, Johannesburg. I have never heard him before and was glad of the opportunity. He is a fine speaker and took for his text, "Lord teach us to pray". It was a very fine helpful address.

I am glad to say that my luggage arrived last Wednesday, nothing was missing or broken. It will take me some time to look through all the papers etc. that I have brought but I shall be glad to get it done.

So Evelyn, Arthur and Emily have gone to Queenstown to attend the wedding of Emily's sister. They look to be back home in a few days.

A letter from Grace this morning reports all well there. The plot is not sold yet but there are people “nibbling” at it. This is the coldest morning we have had but still no frost here but some farms have had it. I have two warm blankets on my bed and an eiderdown and hot water bottle but do not feel too warm. I am glad to be able to say that I am sleeping very well but still suffer from gapes. My nose still troubles first thing in the mornings and generally dries up about 11 and comes on again in the evenings. I notice that the chaps on my hands are better here than in Cradock. My nails too are less brittle. I miss the rainwater in the bath.

Joan still screams when her hair is being washed. Cannot understand why. She is still very sweet and has a number of playmates. Boswells Circus was here last week. We took Joan to see the animals. She was not frightened as she was in Pretoria some time ago.

Trevor and Charles have birthdays as well as Arthur and Rex. I shall not attempt another sheet as I have a number of business letters to write so goodbye for the present.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
Sunday June 15th, 1947

My dear All,

On Tuesday I shall have been here four weeks. The time has passed very quickly and I have very little to show for it. I am glad to say that I am feeling very well except that I get tired much sooner than I care for. I am sleeping very well – better than I did in Cradock for a long time. Dot says I am eating quite well – in spite of the fact that for years I have asserted “that it is precious little that I do eat”. The few people who do know me say I am also looking very well, so taking everything into consideration, there should be nothing to complain about. Indeed I am very thankful for everything. Everyone is very kind and considerate and help me wherever possible. I don’t think I have mentioned that the tooth which gave me a good deal of trouble before I left Cradock is still in my head but it is still more or less difficult to get the bottom plate in and out of my mouth, but I do manage it. Now I have discovered an old stump or a piece of bone protruding on the right side of my upper jaw which has caused me to go to the local dentist for examination. It has been so sore that I have to remove the plate after each meal. However I am to go to him next Wednesday to see what can be done about it. Personally I do not relish the idea of having it out. I have also visited the barber this week. He has taken off more than I intended but Dot says it is an improvement.

The Railways write that my hot water bottle cannot be traced so someone has to get a good article for nothing. I can get another here. My nose trouble, I am sorry to say, continues. As soon as I get out of bed, I begin sniffing and this generally continues until the weather gets decidedly warmer. I have had this trouble for several months.

On Thursday evening, Douglas phoned us up from the farm. All were well, Evelyn, Arthur and Emily were due back from the wedding at Queenstown shortly. They had had frosts but not serious ones. It took quite a long time before we could hear his voice. I wish Aunt Eliza had the phone laid on to Market Street, I would be tempted to phone to them there sometimes. It would also be a great help to Mary with all her philanthropic works and would not cost much. It certainly would be a great convenience, especially in times of sickness it is a necessity. Freda is still away and have not heard when she is returning. Wonder if Uncle Owen and Aunt Kate are back from Rhodesia. Douglas says that the furniture he bought at my sale has arrived but one of the legs of the washstand was cracked. Rex and Trevor have had birthdays this month and Arthur and Charles have still to have theirs. Raymond had one earlier too. Hope they all have good times. Rex had a tennis racquet stolen from the motorcar recently.

Joe writes that his whole family were invited to dinner at Dr Ruth’s. They helped with the eats and seem to have had a good time. Roy and Trevor are troubled with veldt sores, I am sorry to say. Perhaps Mary can recommend something. Joe only weighs 124 lbs. This is serious.

I have been spending most of my evenings cutting out and trimming some of the pictures that I brought up for my scrap books. There are still some hundreds still to do. There are many very interesting ones amongst them. Grace writes that it has been very cold there. She has been having a series of injections for colds and hopes to be free of that trouble for a long time. Ted has not been too well lately. The plot is still unsold but may be soon.

Norman and Alan will be home about 26th. Alan sprained an arm at Rugby a few weeks ago. It is out of the sling now but he cannot play again this season. Dot is talking of shifting me into the small room off the dining room before they arrive. She thinks it will be better for me. It gets a lot of sun, this one does not get any except for a few minutes at sunrise. The house and everything is very nice and comfortable. Some afternoons I go to sleep on the swing – under the canopy – on the front lawn. Water-leading was on the go this week. They are entitled to half an hour once a month but they have a good stream. They can use the garden hose as much as they like daily.

Renovations and redecorations have been going on at 29 ever since I left. It must make a lot of extra work for all concerned. I do not know how much longer it is going to take. You will be surprised to hear that Dorothy’s nursemaid she had in Cradock has left. The excuse is that her

mother is ill but from outside information, we think has been some mis-statements about it. Another girl is now employed.

Monday morning. Thus far did I get yesterday. Reg went to Pietersburg by car alone about six last evening to take the service there, the Minister being here. He got back about 10.30. After the evening service here they held their annual meeting of members and attenders. Reports of the work of different departments were read and discussed. Dot is Chairman of the W.A. Reg has been allowed to resign the Superintendency of the Sunday School. There was a good attendance and after the meeting was over, everyone was entertained to a cup of tea. This sort of meeting was quite new to me and it certainly creates a good deal of interest amongst the people. I see my paper has got all askew this week so I had better stop. Post has just come but brings only one postcard.

Hope all are well,

Love to all,

Dad

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
Sunday June 22nd, 1947

My dear All,

It is a nice afternoon and I am starting to write my weekly on the front stoep. It has been a perfect day, bright sunshine, very little wind but it will be cold as soon as the sun goes down. Yesterday was nominally the shortest day, the sun rose here at 7.7 a.m. and set at 5.15 p.m. We have not registered any frost but on some farms there has been slight recordings. Services are only held here on the first and third Sundays. I miss the regular morning and evening ones and wish arrangements were made whereby gatherings could be held where someone would read some address if an ordinary service could not be arranged. The minister from Pietersburg comes down for one or the other service and returns to his home town for the other. A local generally takes the other. Dot has been elected President of the Women's meeting for the coming year. Reg and Dot, with the assistance of other teachers, are responsible for the Sunday School which is held every Sunday morning.

Dot generally plays tennis every Monday afternoon and tennicourt on Thursdays. I have not seen Reg play yet. His hobby is the development of the farm he has recently purchased. At present he has men sinking a well and erecting fences. There is no stock on the place at present. The Nile river runs through it and is about 300 yards wide but it has no water. I understand that it only comes down once in very few years. The railway runs through the property. I should say the river is very flat and shallow. His time being more or less his own, he is able to go out quite frequently.

Dot took me to the dentist on Wednesday morning but he was not able to do anything as the offending tooth was too inflamed and appeared to have an abscess at its root. Dot suggested that a Dr had better see it and give me an overhauling as I had not been examined since I left Craddock. He sounded me etc and told me I should walk as little as possible, take no sort of sport, go slowly and much the same as I have been told before. He did not think the rupture should give any trouble. He enquired what illnesses I have had and seemed surprised at my age. The Hospital's X-ray plant is not in order otherwise I should have the tooth X-rayed. We went to the dentist again on Wednesday or Thursday and as the abscess appeared ready to burst, he lanced it and a good deal of puss was thus released to my relief. During the interval of the visits, a tooth on the opposite jaw has been giving similar trouble and for more than a week now I have not been able to use either top or bottom plates. In fact they are in the Dentist's hands. I am glad to say that both teeth are better today and I was able to eat a very nice dinner of guinea fowl, pork, green peas, mashed potatoes etc. We are going to the dentist tomorrow and I shall not be surprised if he says there is no bit of stump to be removed. I shall get him to ease the plates so that it will be easier to get the plates in and out without such a struggle as it has been for some time.

On Thursday, Reg is going down to fetch Norman and Alan from Pretoria for the holidays. They have about six weeks before they return. Joan is quite excited about them coming. Dot is shifting me into the small room off the dining room. This used to be their pantry and the dining room was their kitchen when I was here before. Now they have a new kitchen and pantry. The house is very comfortable. In the small room I found the old box I bought in London before I came to South Africa. It is made of some very hard wood and had a tray in it. It is still in good condition. The room is much smaller than the rondavel but Dot thinks it will be warmer for me and I need only use it for sleeping in. I have been busy for some time cutting out old pictures and trimming them in preparation to sticking them into scrap books. I still have a lot of old newspaper cuttings to look through but most of these I expect will be consigned to the flames.

On Thursday this week the Wesley Guild from Pietersburg are staging a film depicting Moffat and Livingstone's travels. This will be in the Town Hall and the Minister is taking the part of Livingstone. I think we shall all go to see it. We have been listening in to a service from the Baptist Church in Johannesburg this evening the atmospherics has spoilt the reception rather. On Saturday evening there is to be a dance in aid of hospital funds. I shall not be there I guess. Am sorry to hear that Mr West (Craddock) is not well and that Mrs West is giving up her job at the end of July. Gervase is all alone in Craddock as Rouena and Hope have gone to Johannesburg to visit

her daughters. Expect Freda is back home again by now. I am posting to Eric by this post. We have not been anywhere today but I have done a spot of reading and written this so far.

Monday morning. It is nice and bright, 7.15 but I think it may be windy later on. My nose still leaks early in the morning. My mouth feels easier and I hope to have my teeth in during the day. Dot has dosed me with salt water, bicarbonate of soda, plenty of soft well cooked food and every attention. Once she made a mistake and mixed tartaric acid instead of bicarbonate of soda but it did not have ill effect on me. I have quite a number of notes of matter I want to write about but do not know if I can find time for them today if we go to the dentist. Must phone to make an appointment.

I had a nice lot of letters last week but have not heard from Aunt Emmie for some while. The last report of Joe was that he is to have further treatment. His case does give us all anxiety. The Railway Administration is about as slow in coming to a decision as to his permanent appointment on promotion as anything could be.

The property next door but one to Aunt Eliza was sold recently for about £500 but I do not think it was worth it. I did think of buying it as an investment and am glad I did not. Clifford wrote that his mother was still with Eileen and that the new baby was flourishing.

When I was at Grass Ridge, Aunt Katie showed me a piece of cardboard on which was written the following testimonial:

To Dudley Templeton Collett, son of John and Mary Collett, born at Grass Ridge in the district of Cradock on the 9th day of July 1878.

This small token of affection is presented to him by his Father and Mother on his twelfth birthday with the hope and prayer that their dear son, Dudley Templeton Collett, may be spared to them and grow up to be a good and wise man striving in all the relationships of life to do to others as he would wish them to do to him.

The above was beautifully written in three colour inks, blue, black and red, illuminated with scrolls etc but not framed. I at once recognised the writing as being that of the late Mr Thomas Tilbrook who lived in Cradock and for some time in those long past years worked as a book-keeper in the office of Butler Brothers. I have in my possession some specimens of his writing in Mother's and my own writing albums. In a few days time Uncle Dudley will celebrate his sixty-ninth anniversary and I have no doubt he will be able to look back on the past years with the satisfaction of knowing that he has honestly tried to carry out the wishes of his devoted parents.

Since typing the above, news has come from Aunt Emmie that quite recently she had a nasty heart attack in her house. Fortunately both Gladys and Joyce were with her. It is some months since the last attack came on so we hope she is getting the better of them.

A nice letter from Pam who had a little time on her hands. She is happy in her work and play looks forward to her annual holiday about February or March next. Harold will be home for a short holiday and Jean is spending the school holidays at home. Charles had a birthday yesterday and is now the proud possessor of a pair of football boots. Lynne too writes that she has not been chosen to represent her club at Kimberley in the hockey tournament in July. Douglas has been in Kimberley on business for a few days. Evelyn and Arthur and Emily had a good time at Emily's sister's wedding in Queenstown. Miss Rowe has been spending a week at Grass Ridge. The wooden tray that Grace had that Mom made in her young days got damaged in going to Kroonstad but has now been repaired. I shall be sending the entre dish that the Sunday School at Vryburg gave to me to Joe to keep. Kingsley and Cecily will be home this week. Reg is spending the whole of today on his farm. He has taken out some bookwork to do but wants to be able to supervise the native boys who are sinking the well.

I was interested in watching the water-leading here at the beginning of the month. They have half an hour once a month for the garden furrow. There is a fairly good stream but certainly not enough for the size of the erven – 150 feet by 50 ft. Apparently they have free use from the garden hose as much as they like. White ants are a great source of trouble and they have plenty of them. I poked my walking stick down some of them and could not reach the bottom of the nest.

The Town Hall is more ornamental than useful. There are no dressing rooms or supper room and every time there is a dance or social function, tarpaulins are used for shelter. The hall

itself is in a large open space but very little accommodation. There is a café near which is far better equipped than any we have in Cradock. There are plenty of stores and they all seem to be doing a good business. The Tobacco factory employs a large staff. They have given free accommodation to the Public Library which is also free. I hope to make use of it when I get more time.

The dentist has not returned my plate. It is suggested that I have an X-ray taken to see if there really is a stump. The X-ray plant here is not in order yet and unless it is in a day or so, I expect I shall go to Pietersburg to have it done there. In any case, I am not suffering much pain at present so hope it will not be necessary to have anything done except to ease the bottom plate which has always been difficult to get in and out.

Last week there was a nasty accident to one of Joan's little friends. They were playing at Mrs Gilbert's where there is a Great Dane dog. The animal was asleep and one of the children fell on it. The animal turned and bit the child near its eye. A Dr had to sew up the eye and bandage it. Am glad to say no permanent damage has been caused to the little one.

I must really close now and get to post.

Much love to each and all,

Dad

July 4th, 1947

My dear All,

It is Friday morning and I am now dressed and sitting by the window in the spare room. I do not know how far I shall be able to get but I know Dot has been keeping you informed by letter and wire daily. The week between last Thursday and now will remain with me for a long time. Reg left by car about 6.30 a.m. for Pretoria to fetch the boys home for the holidays and got back just at six the same evening. Dot had been at the Town Hall more or less all day arranging matters for the evening's entertainment. Everyone from here went to the Show, which was quite good. The Hall is fairly large and has a gallery, its entrance being from the outside of the building and it has no door, consequently there is a big draught blowing through the hall as some of the side windows were open. I kept my greatcoat on and had a rug wrapped round my legs. I noticed that most of the men kept their overcoats on. I evidently must have caught a chill but did not notice it. On Saturday evening, all except me went to a dance in aid of the hospital funds. The same afternoon, we watched a rugby football match for the same funds. Dot and I did not stay long as she wanted to see to the final arrangements for the evening. Evidently there was a big crowd there. Dot did look splendid in her evening dress. Reg was of course just "it". I was in and out of my room during the evening getting things that I was working at and perhaps may have made my cold worse although I had not noticed that I had a cold at the time. They all came home about midnight. The boys had spent the evening at the bio and joined the others at the Town Hall afterwards. The maid of course stayed and looked after Joan.

Sunday morning I was up and prepared for my hot bath but found myself so wobbly that I could not stand. My whole body was shaking like anything. I do not ever remember having such an experience. Reg called in the doctor (only two doors away) and I have been in bed ever since. Since then he has been dosing me with two M & B tablets every four hours – day and night 24 each 24 hours. He did not give any penicillin but the effect of the M & B was rather drastic. It seemed to affect my head, all the furniture in the room seemed out of place. Not having got my teeth fixed up, I was unable to eat properly and only now am I able to use them occasionally. Dr has been to see me twice each day up to last evening and I am to call him if needed. He said he was just in time to prevent pleurisy attacking me. I suffered a good deal of pain but am very thankful to be as well as I am. Dot has been wonderful the way she has nursed me and attended to all my wants. She has slept in the lounge so as to be on hand.

Did I tell you that at my first visit he syringed my ears and removed a quantity of wax. The illness has no doubt pulled me down a good deal and as soon as I can get up town, shall get weighed.

I must thank you all for your letters. I cannot reply to them in detail but I can assure you they have been very welcome. Dot has read them to me and so I am kept in touch with what is going on.

Dot has not been able to keep all her engagements but has kept in touch with her friends, many of whom have been to see me and enquire how I am getting on. The boys enjoy going out to the farm whenever Reg goes, three or four times a week. Baby goes too sometimes. Neighbours have been very kind in sending in jellies etc. Douglas and Grace have both phoned a few times, all three have wired. Grace asks if she shall come and help but Dot thinks she can manage.

Am glad to hear from Blodwen this morning that Joe is persevering with his treatment which is to last for three months. Uncle Owen and Aunt Kate are expected back in Uitenhage shortly. All report strange weather. We have nearly had frost – 34 degrees. The boys have fixed up my instrument case and are interested. I must stop now and have a rest before dinner.

After dinner, which I have had with the family for the first time this week but as the post closes at 4.30, I have not time to add. I am pleased that I have been able to do as much as I have and will hope to do better next time. Hope you are all well and with love to all,

Dad

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
Monday evening July 7th, 1947

My dear All,

The sun has gone down for another day. How I used to dread this time of day in my first and subsequent illnesses. Another day gone and nothing to show for it, I used to say. This is now the 9th day I have been off colour and I am still far from what I should be. Everybody is exceedingly good and kind to me but I am sorry to cause so much extra work. Yesterday (Sunday) was a big day in Pietersburg, the head of this Circuit. Reg and the boys went up by car for the morning service but did not stay for the others. Quite a few friends dropped in to see me. Sunday afternoon, Reg took us all for a spin about town, the first time I had been out for over a week. Douglas phoned up later telling us that Kingsley was going to hospital tomorrow for an op for appendicitis. Otherwise they were all well. Cecily had a girlfriend staying with her for the holidays.

So far I got a few days ago and I have not been well enough to add to it since. It is now Wednesday noon and I am partly dressed sitting in my comfortable bedroom, the sun is shining brightly but Dot says it is not enough for me to be out of the room. The typewriter is on the edge of the dressing table and my knees pressing against the front of the table so the focus is far from convenient but for all that, I am glad to be able to do a little. I cannot do any speeding. I am most sorry to be giving such a lot of anxiety and not able to write and tell you all what is going on. My birthday and marriage greetings, which I have enjoyed sending to members of the family and others outside the family have had misses until I am more capable. Dr has not been coming twice daily as he did at first. We called him one evening as I was not up to the mark. I am sorry to say he has prescribed a little brandy occasionally. How anybody can like the horrible stuff I do not know but it has had the effect of bringing away a good deal of phlegm. You need not be afraid that I shall ever acquire the taste for the horrible stuff but as a medicine, it may have its use. Everyone has been so very good and kind to me.

Wednesday afternoon. Baby has not been at all well the last few days. She seems to be troubled with earache and has a cold which makes her restless and irritable. I am sure she is needing more of Dot's attention. Since Maggie left (the girl she has is OK) she has not taken to the new one as well. Dot sleeps in the lounge and every three or four hours is attending to me. Reg takes charge of baby during the night and he has a cold too. There is no private ward in the hospital nor a private nurse available so I really think I must make plans to move on. Dot does not think I could be moved for a fortnight so I have suggested that perhaps Grace could run up and give a hand as it is school holidays. Douglas has promised to come and fetch me at Pretoria when necessary but they have Kingsley down with appendicitis at present. Joe has suggested coming to fetch me to Uitenhage but I do not want to be a burden there or anywhere so far as that goes. Uncle Jack's brother, Jim and his wife, have written asking me to go to them. That would involve a night's journey by train from Pretoria, then over a 30 mile bus journey early in the morning which would not be comfortable besides which it would be impractical under present conditions. Norman and Alan are very good and help all they can in the house. Tomorrow, Reg, the boys and some of their friends are spending the day at the farm and look to climb the hill overlooking their property. A dry river about 300 yards wide lies at the foot of the hill and the railway line between the river and the main road. They are still working at digging a well and have got down just over 20 ft. The whole town was without electric light from early morning on Sunday till 8.30 pm, owing to failure at the power station. Three motor cars were involved in accidents and an Operation was necessary. Reg had to fly round the town for candles. I am writing this on the back stoep, the sun will soon be setting and I must get inside. I notice the days are getting longer at both ends. I am sorry not to be able to reply to all the kind letters and wires and messages received. My correspondence is accumulating. I shall hope to post this tomorrow.

I have not been able to get my teeth fixed up yet. The X-ray at the hospital is still out of order. I use the top plate but the bottom one is too difficult to get in and out. I am eating very little solids.

Thursday 11.30 a.m. Have just got up and am trying to finish this for the post. Last evening Dr called again and Reg got a Sister from the Hospital and gave me an enema which has greatly relieved me. I have had a good night. Reg and the boys and some friends have gone to the farm for the day. It is nice and bright now. We have only had one degree of frost since the boys fixed up my instruments.

So Willie Brown and Mrs Lucas, both great friends of Ruth's, have passed on. Ruth says her Uncle has left her £50. Eliza writes a newsy letter of local happenings. Sorry that Rev Ludlow had a bad cold. Douglas says Kingsley is getting on nicely. Will be a week late in getting back to school. Norman and Alan are due back about 27th. Joan is better this morning. I see the paper is nearly finished so will close again with lots of love to each and all and hoping to be able to write a brighter letter soon.

Love to all,
Dad

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
Monday evening July 16th, 1947

My dear All,

I see I have made a bad start. I am sitting on the side stoep with the sun on my back. There is a little breeze which bothers the typing paper in the holder. The weather has been awful all over the country so far as I can see by reading the Johannesburg Star which we get every morning (except Monday). This morning it mentioned Cape Town seeing the sun the first time for a fortnight! We are not as badly off as that. We have had some frosts and cold winds and plenty of dust. It is now Thursday morning, nearly ten and Dot has just finished helping dressing me and I am sitting by the window in the spare room.

The sun is shining in brightly and the boys tell me there was six degrees of frost last night. This is the coldest we have had since July 1st when they erected the instrument case. I could not get on with my letter yesterday, it does so happen some days that things do not work out just as they should. A puff of wind disturbs the paper and it gets torn etc but however it gives me a good deal of pleasure in trying to keep in touch with you all. I do want to say how grateful I am to all who write so frequently – under difficulties very often, I am sure. The family and friends who drop in from time to time all say that I am looking very well and that in time, my strength will return to me. I hope it does. Dr drops in for a chat now and then and says the pneumonia stage is passed and that my heart has stood up to the strain wonderfully well. Dot has been just wonderful. She has slept in the lounge every night since the boys came home – June 26th – and comes to me as often as necessary during the night. She warms up the hot water bottles, generally two of them and sometimes three which are a great comfort to me. I have breakfast in bed and generally retire about 8 or nine. Douglas is very good in phoning during the evenings. It is a great comfort to hear his cheerful voice. Am so glad to hear that Kingsley is getting on so well after his op.

10.45 a.m. 17th. Letter from Arthur just arrived says Kingsley expects to be out of hospital by the end of this week. That's good news. A card from Joe also by this post says he tried to phone through as he had not heard from us lately. Could not get through.

Uncle Owen was back, also Aunt Kate. Mary reports snow in Cradock and nasty weather. Uncle Norman been in hospital with hernia but was getting better and so I am kept posted with news. I am quite afraid I have not been able to do my part in keeping you all as well informed from this end. I have not been able to do much sorting out of my various jobs. Norman and Alan are enjoying their holidays, play tennis a good deal with their school chums. They often go out to the farm with Reg and there is talk of all of us going there this afternoon but I doubt if I will go.

A nice letter from Clifford Saunders this a.m. says his Mother and May are back home and better. My machine is not working properly so will stop and try another day. Lots of love to all and am very sorry to be giving anxiety to so many. I forgot to mention that Aunt Emmie wired yesterday to enquire how I was.

Goodbye. Love to all,
Posted without signing.

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
Monday evening July 22nd, 1947

My dear All,

If my brother James had been alive today, he would be celebrating his ninety-third anniversary but he passed away on 17th June 1923 at the age of 69. Aunt Letty will, I think, be 93 next month. It was two calendar months last Sunday (20th) that I arrived here and just three weeks since I was taken ill with pneumonia. I am very thankful to be able to report that I am decidedly better but still far from strong. Have not walked up town since I was taken ill. For the past three weeks, Dot has been sleeping in the lounge so as to be near me in case of need and the last few days she has had Baby in her cot with her as she has not been too well. Now they have both gone back to their rondavel as I do not need attention at nights. The last few days I have been up to breakfast (8.30) but generally go to rest before dinner as well as afterwards and retire about nine.

On Sunday morning Dot took me by car to church, a young minister (candidate) took the service. I have not been out in the evening since the church concert on June 26th. We have had very delightful weather for several days, no wind or dust. The boys are interested in registering the thermometers each day and so far the coldest recorded is six degrees of frost. All the avocado and pawpaws have been taken so there is no chance of those fruits for next season. Aunt Emmie writes that the weather at Cape Town has been awful, rain and cold. It seems to have been much the same all over. Joe writes that it has been very wet there too.

Mrs Watts eldest son came up from Johannesburg for the weekend. He knows David and Harold very well. He heard Harold take a service last Sunday and was getting back to be in time to attend service at 7.30 Sunday evening. I gave him a letter to give to David and I expect he is now in Kroonstad with the rest of the family. Yesterday I had nice letters from Pam saying they were expecting him. Lynne also sent a long letter. In fact everyone has been very kind in writing to me. I am sorry that I have not been able to do much in the writing way for some time, but I hope to do better as my strength improves.

I had closed my letter last week without signing it when Mr and Mrs Dr Fox of Johannesburg called to see us. Mrs Fox had just arrived back from England and they were on holiday by car to spend some time with Mrs Carthorne and then on to see Dr Farren. They hoped I would be able to attend General Meeting at Stellenbosch about Xmas. They have secured accommodation at one of the Universities for all Friends to be under one roof. I dare not look forward so far ahead but must live a day at a time. After their visit – about an hour – I was sort of flopped out for the rest of the day but I understand Dot added a few lines to my unfinished letter. I am alright again now.

I am sorry to hear of the death of Ruth's Uncle, Mr Willie Brown. I have known him for the past sixty years. Denis asks me to give his new address as follows: "Newthorn", 18 Henry Street, Grahamstown. This will be to February next. The owner has gone to Scotland on holiday and Denis hopes to get a place of their own as soon as possible after that. He has an appointment as a Master at Kingswood School from February. Douglas keeps in touch with us over the phone and we are glad to know Kingsley is out of hospital but will be about a week late in getting back to University.

As I get stronger, I am looking forward to getting on with some of the jobs I brought up with me to do and which I have hardly touched. I have paid another three months rent in advance – to the end of October – but I have no idea when, if ever, I shall occupy the room. Sometimes I wonder if there would be a chance of getting back into 53a when the Douglas's get possession of the whole building. The boys go back to Pretoria early next Tuesday morning by car. Reg is taking them down and will be back the same evening. They seem to have had a good time, plenty of tennis, parties etc. They enjoy going out to the farm with Reg and help fixing up the pump etc. Digging the well with three boys is slow work. There is nothing on the farm at present. Fencing has to be done and it will be some time before they build a house. I think the property is about ten miles from town and is not very extensive. Reg hopes to put most of it under irrigation.

I am not sure if I have told you that I have given up the idea of going to visit Jim Collett – Uncle Jack's brother – and family. It means a night's journey from Johannesburg then a Railway

bus journey of 36 miles early in the morning and they would meet me there by car. I should like to get as far as Louisvale if at all possible to see Jim and Hilda but that is another story. Dot does not think I could do better than stay here, the climate is certainly as good as it could be anywhere.

Just at dinner time, Douglas phoned to say that he would call us up at 7.30 this evening. I think he has been to Kimberley during the last few days. Hope all is well. Dot has to attend a sewing meeting this afternoon. I am sure she would rather stay at home as she seems very tired. Reg and Alan spent the morning on the farm lining out the well with bricks made with sand and cement here in the garden.

I must stop now and get this off to the post before 4.30 so hope you will get it about Thursday or Friday.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
Friday July 25th, 1947

My dear All,

It is just four months ago this afternoon that dear Mother passed away and I miss her more and more as the time passes away.

I am too late in starting to get it off today but if I manage it, you should get by first post on Monday if posted tomorrow. There is a possibility of us all going out to the farm for the day tomorrow as it will be the last chance for the boys as they are due to leave early on Tuesday morning for school. I am sorry to say that the last few days Dot has not been very well, having caught a cold which has compelled her resting for the time. Reg has sent out a lorry load (1000) sand and cement bricks a native boy has been making for him at the bottom of the garden during the past few weeks. Each brick weighs 7½ lbs. He is using these for lining out about nine feet of the well he is digging. He has got down about 20 feet and intends going to 30 ft when he hopes to have struck strong water. He has a pump in the well now. I have not been to the farm since the boys have been home.

On Wednesday evening, Mr Watts and family came in and showed us the film Joe took of the Royal visit to Uitenhage and on the same spool were snaps taken at 34 of Joan and Dorothy Murray's boy, John. Neither were very long and Joe had warned us that the Royal visit snaps were spoilt owing to the crush of people when the film in use is developed. Joan admiring the pomegranates etc was quite natural. Mr Watts also screened a number of his films, some of the Royal visit and something went wrong with the camera. His views of some of their travels were quite good. This is the first time Jean has seen films and it was interesting watching her excitement. Mr Watts was comical in singing with Joan ba, ba blacksheep, have you any wool? The young people enjoyed a singsong during the evening with Dot of course at the piano. I retired about my usual time, 9 to 9.30. I think I told you in my last that Dot has gone back to her bedroom instead of sleeping in the lounge and Baby is also much better. Dr dropped in one evening to see Reg on hospital business and of course had a look and chat with me. He is quite satisfied with my pulse and thinks I am getting on quite satisfactorily. He is very interested in Bushman paintings and anything prehistoric. He is evidently a very clever man but I do not fall in with his anti-religious views.

I have been up town once this week to watch Dot and Mrs Watts play tennis with their respective boys and to do a little shopping. I am glad Dot does play tennis. The boys are very keen. Dot has knitted a new jersey for Alan during the holidays using up all the odd pieces and colours of wool she can lay her hands on. The result is quite attractive.

Douglas phoned on Tuesday evening, conversation was difficult to hear but we understood Kingsley was home from hospital and was anxious to get back to University but Dr thought he should stay home longer. Rex and the Hudson boys had returned from the big game hunt in the Kalahari, having shot 18 big bucks and some smaller ones. They say there are thousands of bucks there. On 23rd, I weighed myself and find I am down to 141. I was 148 when I arrived here.

Joe, I am sorry to say is under 120 lbs. Talking of weights, I have this morning come across the following record taken at Vryburg Station when we went down to see Douglas and Milner Brown off by train to join the RAF in England. It is dated 14.2.1918. Douglas 140, Iris Brown 107, Ruth 111, Grace 100, Harold 136, Dick Brown 106, Myself 162, Willie Saunders Junior 146, Mr Geard 217, and Milner Brown 123. I wonder how present weights would compare with today's – nearly thirty years later. I am sending the original record to Douglas.

As you know I have not been able to keep up to date with my letters and as I am constantly tidying up, I come across notes that I have made of items I have wanted to refer to. Here are some of them. Ruth said the takings at her Red Cross Fete, they took £1027.5.3d. Jolly good. At the same Fete, baby Anthony, healthiest baby in his class, under eight months old. About 100 babies were on show. Congratulations to the proud parents, and grandmother. I hope you have noted Denis new address: Hawthorn, Henry Street, Grahamstown.

Joe has bought 50 day old chicks and expects them by the end of this month. I hope they will not be an additional 50 worries to him. The next door neighbour has just got a similar increase

in her responsibilities. Some of Blodwen's children have been troubled with veldt sores for some time. I hope Dr Ruth is able to do the necessary. By the way, should any of you need to phone Joe at any time, he says Dr Ruth will willingly take a message and send it to him. Her phone number is Uitenhage 100 (day or night service). Joe sent a bangle he found to Joan. He advertised it without anyone claiming it.

Ted is thinking of taking up bowls. Nothing is decided about going to see Mrs Garthorn. Olive has bought another house at Walmer I hear. Dot's fowls keep her pretty well supplied in eggs.

I get plenty to read – more than I can get through. The Johannesburg Star is delivered about 7 a.m and the Sunday Times on Sunday morning, Farmers Weekly, The Outspan, Picture Post, South African Weekly, the Midland News three times a week and the Stellander once. Of course the wireless is on more or less all day and evening. It is now a little past five and the sheet is full so goodnight.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
As Tuesday July 29th, 1947

My dear All,

The worst two days so far as climatic conditions are concerned since May 20th when I arrived, were Saturday and Sunday. The sun hardly shone all day and heavy banks of cloud hung over the country. A little rain fell during Friday night and more on Saturday but it cleared sufficiently to allow us to take a little spin in the car about town and inspect the airfield – from the inside of the car. We had a fire most of the day in the lounge but for all that, it was cold. My poor nose was most disagreeable and I even tried plugging it with cotton wool but without relief. I notice that when I am lying down it does not leak but as soon as I am up and about, there seems no stopping it. It is most uncomfortable. In addition, a small sore in one nostril has developed and increases the discomfort considerably. However, today there is a great improvement but not a stoppage of the trouble. I hope that will come soon.

Sunday afternoon, the boys wanted to see the farm once more before they leave for school so we all went out about five. I did not get out of the car. Reg has had 1000 sand and cement bricks, which he has had made in the garden here, ridden out to the farm. He has started lining part of the well he has had dug so as to prevent the sides falling in. He only has three boys (natives) working there and he does the bricklaying himself so it is a slow business. The boy who makes the bricks is at present in gaol for some trivial offence. Each brick, when made and dried, weighs just seven pounds.

I should have mentioned first of all that yesterday and today Dot has been much better, her voice is much stronger than it was. Of course she has been up to her eyes in work going over all the clothing etc for the boys who leave for school about six tomorrow morning. The new jersey for Allen is quite a work of art. Someone suggests that he will be called Joseph at school on account of the many colours which have been introduced into its construction.

During my wakeful hours, I heard three, four and five strike during the night. I had a brainwave – why not go to Pretoria with Reg and see a dentist who has an X-ray plant and have my teeth fixed up in the morning and return with Reg the same afternoon. Neither Reg nor Dot considered that I could stand the double journey of 130 miles each way in one day. So that is off at any rate for the present. It seems that the firm that has the Hospital X-ray outfit has not done anything in the matter of putting it in order. Reg says he knows the Pietersburg Hospital and that is only 36 miles away and suggests taking me there or to a local dentist who has his own outfit. So I expect one of these days I will be going there. I have not had my lower plate in my mouth for several weeks.

The post this morning brought an invitation to attend the wedding of Mr and Mrs Ambler's only daughter which is to take place in Pretoria on August 16th. I guess that Douglas and Evelyn will be sure to be coming over for the event. Of course you know that Gwen Ambler is Evelyn's sister. The Amblers were married from our home in Vryburg. I wonder if we shall see anything of them.

Amongst the papers I have been destroying lately have been testimonials and letters of appreciation from friends when we left Vryburg and Cape Town. They are interesting but do not constitute a passport to Heaven. Mr Haddow, when he read the testimonials, wrote to me that I had something to live up to. I fear I have come very far short of what I should have been.

The Methodist Church is just completing the finishing touches to a Manse they have just built in anticipation of the Conference sending them a resident minister. It has cost them about £1800 and most of the money has been raised. In view of the fact that a married man is not expected to be available for the next twelve months, they have let the house for a year at £12 per month. It is a house any minister may well be proud of. Every convenience has been thought of.

One important item of news I forgot to mention last week is that I was able to have a proper hot bath, the first I have been able to have for some weeks. Needless to say great care was taken to avoid catching a chill after it. I am sorry to hear that Rev Ludlow has been laid up and was not able to take either the Fish River or Town service last week. Fortunately Mr Roderick Douglas (who has bought Aunt Letty's old house, 53a Bree Street) stepped into the breach. Mr Ludlow and Uncle

Gervase are booked to stay with Uncle Owen at Uitenhage during the forthcoming Synod. I should like to have been able to go and attend.

It is now Tuesday morning after breakfast. Reg and the boys were up a little after five and were off before six. They had to pick up two other boys for school and I expect they are nearly there as they had to be in school by ten. They have enjoyed the holiday, had lots of tennis and meetings with their friends. The Watts have been in a few evenings and they have games and music. Dot has a large circle of friends and many callers so one is not lonely. They all went to see the animals etc at the circus yesterday afternoon. I stayed at home. They had great fun in drawing a railway track by looking in a mirror but it will take up too much space to describe it in this letter. Norman has put on weight, he is now 131, has had lots of cream and wants Dot to send him a bottle full every two weeks. Alan is 94. Norman is just the age I was when I left school, 16½. He has some years still to go and is calculating being at Rhodes University this time next year.

He expects his starting salary then will be £40 per month. What a difference to when I left school but then you must also take into consideration what a difference in the two boys! The first year of my apprenticeship, my wages was Nil and the second year I was started on 10/- a week.

There is no post this morning so I hope to be able to get on with some more sorting out of old letters etc. It is very quiet without the boys. Joan is more content to stay by me now they are gone. They are passionately fond of her and she of them. There is to be the weekly sewing meeting here this afternoon. What shall I do?

Dot showed me a plant for sifting meal. Perhaps the womenfolk who see my letter already know all about it. I was invited into the pantry and lo, she had a long stocking without any foot on it. After dipping an ordinary cup into a bag of meal, she emptied the contents of the said cup into one end of the stocking and closing the other end and lifting first the one and then the other, the contents of the stocking began to filter through the said stocking in the form of the finest flour you need wish to use. I have already seen the result in the form of delicious scones for morning tea. Dot is finding trouble with her stove as it does not bake her bread as nicely as she would like.

A cheerful letter from Joe says all their lights failed on Thursday evening last – not very cheerful that – but after 1½ hours, it came on again. We often have that experience. It was off for a whole day recently.

Mr Stock writes pretty often. He says it has been very cold in Cradock. He has three heaters in his house so managed to keep warm. He is glad to have his phone which has been cut off since he changed his residence to Hospital Street. It was switched on the night before the Minister of Posts gave a political speech in the Town Hall!

Evidently Kingsley has not gone back yet. Douglas says Dr was coming out to fix up his bandages on Thursday but phoned to say he was sick so could not come. He hoped he would come the next day.

Dot says when it gets a bit warmer, I may go back to the rondavel. It is a bit awkward having some things in this small room and others in a big room. I am very comfortable and keep warm. Generally have the dressing gown on most of the day. The dining room and this room have concrete floors.

I guess I have wearied you sufficiently with this long letter so will ring off as Douglas and Joe often say and save anything else for another edition. I am very grateful to all who write so often.

Lots of love to each and all,
Dad

My dear All,

It was my intention to have written another dear all last Friday or Saturday but the best laid plans of mice and men go oft astray, so a famous Scottish poet is reported to have said. The fact of the matter is that on Friday afternoon after a very hot morning, I took Joan for a little walk which would be about as far as from 34 Dundas Street to the corner and back. There is an island in the centre of the road and of course she preferred walking on the edge of the stones. By the time we got back – only a few minutes – I was pretty well exhausted and had to lie down. Reg and Dot think that the anxiety of balancing her walking on the stone must have been too much for me. I went to bed early and during the evening and night, suffered very severe pain round my heart. However, Sunday morning I was feeling much better and got up to dinner. I was sorry to miss going to service but it would not have been wise to have gone as I get spasms of coughing which might have been very inconvenient. Reg went to Sunday School and was presented with a couple of nice books on relinquishing the position of Superintendent for the past 12 years. They have been beautifully inscribed by the wife of a local preacher. Reg took the evening service. Today I am feeling much better. Reg has gone to the farm as he wants to get on with the building up of the lining to the well that is being sunk. He would dearly like to have had the assistance of his boys for the day but he took them back to school last Tuesday. They let here about 8 and he was home again by 3.30 p.m.

Douglas phoned early in the week saying they were coming over for the wedding of Ambler's daughter and would probably spend a couple of days with us here before the event. A note received from Evelyn this morning says she is sending some snaps by Douglas so presumably she is staying with her sister in Pretoria so as to help with the arrangements. No one seems to think it wise that I should return with Douglas and Evelyn after the wedding as it might be too cold for me there. I want to save them the trouble of another journey and I think I could stand the journey alright. However I submit to the wishes of others in the matter. No one from here will go to the wedding. Of course I should like to have gone, especially as the parents were married from our house in Vryburg. Rex I presume will come to drive the car and incidentally take lessons.

There is talk of making an appointment with the Dentist at Pietersburg for Thursday as he has an X-ray plant and could do what is necessary. Reg is talking of giving up the part-time job of Secretary to the Hospital. Under the new Ordinance, they want a full time man and he does not want to be bound. He has quite a number of different jobs in town and is his own master as far as time is concerned. He has to be out a good deal in the evenings attending various meetings. He is a member of the Town Council, Lodge etc. Of course his bioscope also takes up a good deal of his time. He has a wonderful calculating machine which adds, subtracts etc and saves any amount of time. The boys are very fond of helping and Dot also works it. Had I such a machine in my day, it would have saved me many hours of adding up columns of figures.

We are very sorry to hear that Mrs Collen of Vryburg, who stays at the same hotel as Lynne, has had a stroke and cannot speak. It must be very trying for all concerned. Lynne has not decided when to take her holiday. Rex is better and goes back to Stellenbosch this Thursday. Ruth and her husband are going to Durban to attend the Presbyterian Assembly in September. Ruth has never been there and is looking forward keenly to the change.

Reg is very proud of the clock Joe gave them for a wedding present. It keeps very good time and has never given any trouble. I listen to its striking many times during the night.

David spent nearly a week in Kroonstad. He conducted the morning service there which was appreciated. Harold and a girlfriend are spending this weekend there. Grace has been elected to go to Bloemfontein for the Methodist Synod from 14th to 16th. Grace says I am welcome to go to her at any time but I thought they were rather short of sleeping accommodation.

Am sorry to hear that Joe's weight dropped to 118 lbs recently but went up again. He thinks the nature cure man is doing him some good. I sincerely hope so. He says he is enjoying his food much better lately. He has had some head and feet for the first time since he was married and liked it. So do I but I understand it takes a lot of cooking. Little Dan seems slow in talking but no doubt he will make up for it when he does get a move on.

In an old letter from my brother Willie I have come across, dated 10.11.32, he refers to Joe's unsatisfactory state of health and his having to take three months leave. I had forgotten that and wonder where he went for the three months? I am still re-reading and destroying old letters and find it most interesting.

I have not used up all my notes of what I wanted to say but do not feel that I can tackle another sheet this morning. It is a perfect day for the Public Holiday. Reg will not be home for dinner, has taken food with him for the day.

Lots of love to all. Keep well,
Dad

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
Sunday August 10th, 1947

My dear all,

There is no service here today, only the first and third Sundays in the month. We are booked for an appointment with the Dentist tomorrow morning in Pietersburg at 11 so I think it best to do my letter now as I don't know what time we may be back. I hope that whatever has to be done will be done and finished with so as not to have to make two journeys of it. In any case, I hope to be able to post this after we return.

Dot has not been too well all the week, she cannot seem to shake the cold off and is not getting up today. Yesterday she was out with the other ladies at a farm selling tea etc. at a sale on behalf of church funds. (The sale was not on behalf of church funds.) They made about £2/13/- by the effort. They left about 9.30 and did not get back until after two, very tired. Reg was out at his farm all the morning and only got back about two. Joan and I stayed at home. She got very tired and wanted her Mommy.

On Monday afternoon last (holiday) Mr and Mrs Watts took us all out to Mr Arthur Amm's farm about eight miles from town. Mom and I went there when we were here last. It is beautiful for situation, like Mount Zion, on the side of a hill overlooking a large extent of their farm and surrounding country. They have hundreds, if not thousands of orange trees and Mrs Amm told me there were about 2000 pigs running on the farm. Of course they are not kraaled but in large camps, sorted out according to age etc. A very profitable business. Mr Amm is a very up-to-date farmer. One of their sons was killed in the war, and another, with two other ex pupils who were flying to Grahamstown to attend an old scholars union at Kingswood, crashed and were killed on the way down. Mrs Amm remembers motoring Mom and me to our lodgings in Johannesburg when we attended the Jubilee Exhibition there some years ago.

On Tuesday Dot had her W.A. meeting to attend. She is President this year. There were 16 present. Another afternoon we went round paying accounts. My Dr only charged me £5/10/- and the chemist a/c was about £1 so I think I have got off very lightly. Yesterday afternoon, Mr Watts went to a Masonic meeting in the country so Mrs Watts had supper with us and we played halma afterwards. Reg had to go to his bio I the evening. Occasionally we go to watch the tennis at the public courts and one afternoon we saw the police squadron drilling with a view to getting recruits. It was a very smart turn out. One of Reg's enlisted. The weather has been perfect all the week, in fact it is getting too hot to sit out under the canopy on the lawn in the mornings and I have to come inside and do my work. I weighed myself last week and find I am nearly back to my former standard of 148 lbs. Am only 3 lbs short.

Since typing the above, I have been listening in to a service from the Central Hall, Johannesburg, the preacher was Rev C.K. Storey. I have never heard him before. It is Synod Sunday at Uitenhage today and I suppose Uncle Gervase is there. He is staying with Uncle Owen.

I had hoped to have finished looking through all the old letters etc. by the end of last week but have not managed it. It is slow work but very hard to destroy so many interesting documents. Of course some were of very little interest, such as old prescriptions which were all out of date. I only have two of my Mother's letters and so far I have not had the heart to destroy them. One was written to me when I had been at Croydon School for about three months in 1873 and the other was on my 34th birthday. I think I shall finish the job before Douglas and Co arrive. There are plenty of other things I still want to do as I want to reduce my luggage.

I wonder if you spotted the photo of Dorothea and Anthony in the Outspan of August 8th in the mother and baby competition? It is quite good. Now that it is getting light so much earlier – the sun is shining in the lounge exactly at seven – I want to get up at my old time of about six. I still retire about 9 and generally get five to six hours sleep every night. John Wesley used to say four hours were enough for him. The weather has been so mild that I have been able to discontinue having hot water bottle at night, also my cardigan except first thing in the mornings. I also had my hair cut last Wednesday. There was a very interesting letter in the Midland last week from Uncle Gervase's daughter, Pam (Mrs Avis) describing some of her experiences in housekeeping in

England. She does all her housework and likes it. There is no word of her returning to South Africa. We have not had a fire in the lounge since Thursday.

Yesterday 8th was the 26th anniversary of dear Harold's passing. I wrote to both Ruth and Denis. Ruth and John leave for Durban on September 14th and will be staying at the Federal Hotel, Durban. They are looking forward to the change. They do not say if they are going by sea, land or air! They look to be there a week. Mrs Legg has recently flown from Durban to East London.

Received letters from Aunt Eliza and Mary, both very interesting and will have attention in due course. It is now Sunday evening. Douglas phoned about seven and Evelyn too. They say there is no change in their plans and they hope to be here Thursday evening. I told them we were going to Pietersburg in the morning. Dr has just called in to see Reg, he examined my pulse and says it is "wonderfully strong". If there is time after we return tomorrow, I will do another sheet.

Love to all,

Dad

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
Saturday August 16th, 1947

My dear all,

It is Friday evening 15th and we have said goodbye to Douglas, Arthur, Emily and Lynne who left about 2.30 and are probably just arriving back in Pretoria. They arrived just at seven last evening, having left Vryburg at six that morning and leaving Evelyn at Pretoria with her sister, Mrs Ambler. It has been very nice having them here, Dot and Reg had not met Emily before. We fixed them up at the hotel at the corner of this street where Mom and I stayed the first time we came to Potgietersrus. Reg and Dot had no room. We sat and talked till past ten. Of course we have had discussions re future plans. On the 20th, I shall have been here just four months – the time has gone very quickly. Douglas is still willing to come over later on and take me to Vryburg but we all think that it would save unnecessary travelling if I went to Kroonstad first and it would not be any further for Douglas to fetch me from there. It largely depends on how Grace is situated with accommodation. Grace has been away attending Synod and only got home on Wednesday evening. They are all agreed that I must not travel alone. There is to be a school concert in Pretoria on September 4th at which Reg and Dot wish to attend as Norman is taking part in same. They are booking their seats for that evening and propose taking me as far as Pretoria. If it is convenient for Grace to have me then, they would see me off by train on Friday noon, arriving at Kroonstad 5.50 p.m. This is a fast train and there would not be any changing. They are both emphatic that I must give up all idea of ever living alone in Cradock. Dot is quite willing to have me and would like me to make this my headquarters.

Now 7.15 a.m. Saturday. I see I have made a mistake in stating that I have been here four months on 20th. It will be the completion of my third month. With regard to future plans, Douglas thinks I must make my future home with either Grace or Dot. He and Evelyn would be willing to have me at Vryburg but they are several miles from a doctor in case of need and lavatory accommodation is not so convenient as in town. If after spending some time at Kroonstad and Vryburg, it would be an easy journey from there to the coast.

Blodwen is contemplating going to Cape Town and it might be possible for me to go with her and pay my promised visit to Emmie and return with Blodwen. Kroonstad has the advantage of being far more central than either Potgietersrus or Vryburg or Uitenhage and being on the main line is a great advantage. Dot is needing an extra room here and is prepared to consider the building of such a room which I could occupy. People here have made me very welcome and are very nice and friendly and no doubt I should find the same in Kroonstad. At present there is not a spare room available and either the girls (Pam and Jean) or I would have to sleep out somewhere near which might be awkward. The room I have at Cradock is quite nice as an office but I cannot bring myself to live there entirely amongst strangers. Of course the coast, such as Uitenhage, would be the best so far as altitude is concerned but the uncertainty of Joe's position and lack of accommodation is a difficulty not easily got over. Of course I recognise that there is Aunt Eliza and Mary and other relations and many friends in Cradock but none of them have accommodation available even if they were willing to have me. I am a great believer in "way opening" and it does seem that light is beginning to dawn upon the future. Everywhere so far seems booked up. Various schemes are being considered, such as hiring a lorry and camping out at the coast somewhere. The boys are keen on getting away to the sea for December and January.

All the above seems very selfish news but I know you are all interested. I notice I have used Pam's name instead of Lynne by mistake. Another mistake I made last week was when I stated that the pigs on Mr Amm's farm were allowed to run loose on the farm. They are only allowed to run for a short time for exercise.

We had another surprise visit earlier in the week. Mr and Mrs Midgley, Friends, who have been stationed in various parts of the Union during recent years, have now been transferred back to Francistown, in the Protectorate. They had met Dr Fox recently who informed them that I was here so they made a point of coming to see me. They were travelling by car from Johannesburg and must needs pass through Potgietersrus. Their car, a new Nash, is up to date with all modern fittings. For instance, the back of the back seat lifts up and hooks so as to form a sleeping bunk. The back

seat pulls out to the rear of the front seat thus forming a double bed. Thus they camp out at night and are quite independent of hotels etc. Of course they have the wireless laid on so are kept quite up to date. They visited us some years ago in Cradock and slept at 34. Since then they have adopted a boy and girl, having no children of their own. They are motoring to General Meeting at Stellenbosch in January and hope to meet Mary, whom they have never met, there. I don't suppose I shall be there. They are very nice people.

It is just ten and the wedding at Pretoria must be in full swing. The weather is perfect here and no doubt it is the same there. Lynne and Emily borrowed some fancy shoes from Dot as they are most likely having a dance this evening. Arthur and Emily were very jolly and I am looking forward to seeing them in their own home shortly. Douglas is as full of fun as usual. He still suffers from the Butler family complaint of indigestion. He does not do much driving now. Both Arthur and Lynne drive the car. He is hoping to get a new car in the near future. Reg is also wanting a new car or a lorry. The latter would be more useful for the farm work but of course is not so comfortable for ordinary motoring. He is thinking of getting a trailer for holiday purposes. Lynne is due back at work at the end of the month but may take a week extra. She hopes to get home for Xmas.

I am very glad we took the trip to Pietersburg last Monday. We left here at 9.30 and it only took us about an hour to do the 36 miles. We took Baby and the nurse girl with us. The Dentist soon fixed up my plate and it is quite easy now to get in and out. He examined the offending teeth and we then went to the hospital to have them X-rayed. It did not take many minutes and only cost 2/6d per tooth. We saw Dentist again after lunch and he had examined the plates and said there was nothing to worry about. One tooth would have to be removed some time but as it was not giving any trouble at present, it was as well to let sleeping dogs lie. We motored round the town, saw the Town Hall and shops and got safely home by 4 p.m. I feel quite set up now that I can masticate my food properly. I am glad to say that my nose has ceased to give trouble since the warm weather has set in.

Later. Post has brought letters from Aunt Emmie and Grace. Nothing from Cradock. Grace had a very interesting time at the Synod in Bloemfontein. I shall be interested in hearing her views about my going there. When I go to Pretoria, I shall try to arrange for Mrs Halliday, Farren and others to come and see me at the hotel as it will not be possible for me to go and call on them. I don't suppose I shall have more than one night in Pretoria.

I am very thankful to be as well as I am and hope to continue so. Much love to all. Please excuse all mistakes.

Dad

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
Wednesday August 20th, 1947

My dear all,

Three months ago today I arrived in Potgietersrus, one month of that I was laid up but now I feel quite fit again except that my walking power is somewhat limited. I think my last letter was posted on Friday 15th which I hope you received on Monday. We have not heard from Grace yet if it will be convenient for me to go there on September 5th but there is plenty of time between this and then. A letter from Ted this morning says he has let the plots and still hopes to get a buyer at his price. Ruth also writes that she was down to play bowls at Uitenhage on Tuesday and was going to take them by surprise. I am sure they will be very pleased to see her. Ruth and John leave for Durban on Monday September 14th. Unfortunately their train does not pass Kroonstad, it branches off at Bloemfontein, otherwise it would have been a good opportunity to have seen them.

The surprise news for this letter is that on Monday I received a bundle of post from Cradock containing letters and book packets and newspapers – between 70 and 80 in all, dating from May to August. Why ever the Post Office kept them all that time I do not know. I have written for an explanation. I have often wondered where my letters had gone to. It has given me plenty to read. Some of the letters should have been delivered to me before I left Cradock. I wonder what explanation will be forthcoming. Dot's boys write that Arthur, Emily and Lynne paid them a surprise visit at their school after the wedding on Saturday. They had been out and on their way home, they spotted a nice new car standing outside a house and stopped to have a look at it. The owner came along and recognised their school blazers and very kindly gave them a lift back. I think he had been educated at the same school. Before dropping them at school, he took them – three boys – to a tuck shop and treated them to ice-creams etc. It was very nice of him.

Aunt Emmie writes that Dr Fox has urged her to go to General meeting at Stellenbosch in January and promises to arrange transport etc for her. She does not think it would be worth her while as she is so deaf and eyesight failing. In any case, I hope she will accept the offer. My plans have not matured at all since I last wrote. Reg and Dot are finding difficulty in getting accommodation anywhere for their holiday. They are trying to hire a lorry or in preference a caravan for a month. They have booked the hire of two tents at the Kowie and are hoping to leave here about December 15th. They would take about three days to reach the Kowie, passing through Cradock, Bedford and Grahamstown. After spending about a fortnight at Kowie, they would tour along the Garden Route as far as Mossel Bay and then strike inland and do Oudtshoorn – Reg was at school there I think – and see the Kango Caves and back home via Graaff Reinet, Middelburg etc. They would take a servant with them. If the weather is good, it should be a very enjoyable holiday.

We have not heard any news of the Amblers' wedding – there has not been time we suppose that Douglas and Co got back home on Sunday. He was due in Kimberley on Tuesday morning. Their visit here was very enjoyable but all too short. It was very good of them to come at all. Reg is down for service at Pietersburg for next Sunday morning, there will not be service here until 31st. Dot had to play the organ here both morning and evening last Sunday as the regular organist was away. I went in the morning. Have not been out in the evening since I caught cold in the Town Hall. Quite a number of condolence letters were amongst the "delayed" post that came on Monday. One was from Miss Ensor in Australia, Mom's cousin. Also a letter from Hubert de Beer who used to work for me at Vryburg. He lost his wife before the last war and both his sons were killed in the war. He is quite alone in the world. Surely we have much to be thankful for. I am still busy looking through old papers, letters and photos. It is slow work. Amongst these I found some verses I had copied when visiting Willie Saunders on their farm on October 10th 1890. As it is Mrs Saunders' birthday tomorrow, I have sent her the original copy I made. I expect she will be interested. I only have three typed copies left, if anyone would like a copy I can do some more. The title is "Abide with me" and the words are very beautiful. Baby is as entertaining as ever. Occasionally she gives me a kiss. She is a general favourite with the children in the neighbourhood. Dot has had a nasty cold for some weeks but it has been better the last few days. It is nearly dinner time and I want Reg to post this as he returns to office. I am not allowed to walk so far! Lots of love to everybody, Yours affectionately, Dad

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
Monday August 25th, 1947

My dear all,

It is five months today that dear Mom was called away. How I miss her, none but those who have gone through similar experience knows. There are so many things I wish I could consult her about and regrets that I did not do so before. The foreman I worked under at Stafford Allen & Sons in London often used to say we ought to have two lives, one to gain experience and the second to put that experience into practice. Of one thing I am certain is that had I my life over again, there are many things I would do and many I would avoid. The little book I have been reading since I arrived here, "God Calling", I have found much comfort and the futility of dwelling unduly on the past failures and mistakes. It quotes the experiences of Peter, Paul and the Disciples and many others whose sins were forgiven and lived useful lives.

I think I sent you each a postcard saying that Grace was ready to receive me any time I was ready. I have written booking my seat for Friday September 5th in spite of the fact I am travelling by the day train as Reg says they will not issue a ticket unless the seat is booked. I have been very comfortable here and do not expect any greater comforts than Reg and Dot have provided. I shall quite miss the friends I have met and every one has been most sympathetic and kind in every way. I have been to some of the homes and watched Reg and Dot play tennis and tenniquoits etc. On Saturday afternoon, Dot took the lady who took over her house when she came to help nurse Mom for two months, out to Amm's farm to see their piggeries. The lady had her two children with her and they were company for Joan as well as the little girl on the farm. It was a most interesting visit. There were over 2400 (two thousand four hundred) pigs large and small on the farm. Every boar and sow has its own sty. Each sty has its cement floor, trough and is covered in with an iron roof. There are rows and rows of these erections all substantially built in cement and each has its own water supply laid on. Of course there are hundreds of little pigs from day old to maturity. As they mature, they are graded and everything is kept wonderfully clean. Every week twenty-five are taken by Lotty to Pietersburg to the cold storage. They are regularly fed on grain and never have any milk. There are large mealie lands on the farm but they find it more economical to buy lucerne and other foods and sell their own mealies. Needless to say, all their animals are well bred. We were informed that it pays them better to grow potatoes at 30/- a bag than mealies. In addition to all this, they have hundreds of orange trees, each tree on an average yields 500 to 600 oranges. On Friday they sent away 180 boxes each containing from 120 to 160 oranges for the overseas market. Each orange has to be clipped – not pulled off the tree, a portion of the stem has to be left on the orange. Then they have to be graded by hand and each one wrapped and packed by hand. Native women do most of this work under European supervision. Only the best fruit are sent. The cases are subject to official inspection at the coast before shipped. Small oranges are in demand and the price paid is 2/- per 100. The cases are imported – knocked down – and put together on the farm. During the season, they have as many as 150 servants on the place. It was a most interesting afternoon and they want us to go again and see the sorting and packing. I have forgotten to say that each orange is wrapped in tissue paper.

Yesterday, Sunday, Reg took the service at Pietersburg, 36 miles north of here. I went with him for company. On the way there we passed three motor cars which had been involved in accidents miles apart from each other. Some of the occupants had to be removed to hospital. The road is very dusty and as cars pass each other, it is often impossible to see oncoming cars. After the service, we were invited to a cup of tea with Mr and Mrs Graham who Wednesday last celebrated their Golden Wedding. They are a very nice people. There were no less than six vases of beautiful flowers in the church. The church is rather small but the congregation was much smaller. It was built in 1898. The minister there is in charge of a number of country places, including here and is always travelling. Potgietersrus is expecting have its own resident minister this year. They have just built a very fine manse costing about £1800. As they expect the minister who is coming will be a single man, they have let the manse for £12 per month but reserve the study for the minister. Reg took us through part of the location to see the native minister who had trouble with the church

lights. Reg was able to help him out of his difficulties. There are two private aeroplanes here. The aerodrome is part of the commonage and quite close to the town.

Letters to hand this morning from Evelyn and Lynne report that the Ambler wedding went off according to plan. They got back to Vryburg on Sunday evening. Douglas was away to Kimberley the following morning and due back at the end of this week. I have not made any plans as to how long I shall stay in Kroonstad, that may depend on how long Grace & Co can put up with an old man like me. I promise to give them as little trouble as possible. This morning I was revising the table of altitudes with the following results: Cradock is 2855, Kroonstad 4491, Pretoria 4593, Johannesburg 5735, Potgietersrus 3865, Pietersburg 4269, Kimberley 4012, Vryburg 3893, Bloemfontein 4568.

I am sorry to hear that Aunt Charlotte has had the misfortune to break her bottom plate of teeth and they cannot be found. Aunt Eliza thinks I am getting restless in moving on. It is not that but it is considered best that I should do what visiting I want to do up country before the hottest time of the year sets in. Not that I think there is so very much difference as all parts of South Africa are hot in the summer.

Evelyn says they had some rain and the veldt is looking green already. But of course they want inches more before the season ends. Reg and Dot are keen on a caravan holiday about December 14th. I have written to Clifford Saunders to see if a caravan is available. One party in Johannesburg asks £10 for the hire of one for a month! If they cannot get a caravan, they will probably go by lorry. They have hired a stand and tents at the Kowie for a fortnight. Reg is wanting a lorry for his farm work or will want one later on.

I enquired when at the station recently as to the number of trains that pass through here every 24 hours. There are 28 and it seems to me that most of them go through at night. Sometimes I lay awake and don't they make a noise. The hospital is very near the railway line.

There is to be a big Masonic ball here on September 6th and Dot has been asked to be responsible for the flower decorations. This is rather awkward as they will only be back from seeing me off after the school concert by Friday evening. You should see the new dress bought for the ball. I won't attempt to describe it. All I will risk to say is that Dot looks very lovely in it.

Joe's latest weight is 128 lbs and he seems to be making some progress.

Aunt Emmie had a nasty turn recently. She has not been able to get a hearing aid that gives her benefit. I am sending her the one I bought for Mom at the beginning of the year and hope it may help.

In looking through old records, I came across X-ray photos taken on January 10th 1927 of my mouth. I showed them to the Pietersburg dentist and he at once spotted the one that has been giving trouble. It is still doing me service.

I am arranging to let Mrs Halliday, Mrs Farren and perhaps some other friends know that I shall be pleased to see them at Pretoria if they will come and see me at Pollyes Hotel, where I shall be staying for the afternoon and night on 5th and morning of 6th. I hope to see Reg's sister, Trixie, and her children as I pass through Johannesburg.

Joe says he ran into Ruth in Uitenhage when she was there for her tournament last week.

Nothing is decided about building a rondavel here for me. Reg says it would cost about £200. They do need an additional room but I do not want them to go to that expense. Life is too uncertain.

The Postmaster of Cradock writes that no trace can be found of my instructions regarding forwarding my post. I see by the Midland News that the young man who stole the £6500 bank notes from the Post Office says he paid his accounts, over £100 and burned most of the other bank notes.

Since the above was typed, Dot has been asked to be responsible for the flowers decoration for the Saturday evening ball so it may be possible that I shall leave by the Thursday train instead of Friday which will give Reg and Dot time to get back home by Friday morning instead of late in the afternoon or evening. Will let you know in good time.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

P.O. Box 16, Potgietersrus, Transvaal
Friday August 29th, 1947

My dear all,

Please take notice that from receipt of this letter, my postal address will be 47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad. I think I have notified all of you that we, Reg, Dot and Joan, plan to leave here about six a.m. on Thursday 5th by car and are due to arrive in Pretoria about ten and see the boys at the first break for refreshments and then go to the station and book my luggage. It was our intention to spend the afternoon and evening in Pretoria but no hotel had any accommodation so I suggested that I go by the 12.25 noon train. I tried to book a seat but the booking office say they can only book by the evening train. We take this to mean that it is not necessary to book by the day train. However I am going by it. Reg and Dot were going to spend the night in Pretoria but as they cannot get accommodation, they will return home after the entertainment, about 11 p.m. and get back about three or four in the morning.

Today Aunt Letty is 91. I have sent her a wire and written as well. On Monday last it was Mr Watts' birthday and today we are invited to Mrs Watts' anniversary.

Wednesday afternoon, Dot took the same lady and I to Mr Amm's farm to see the packing, sorting, and cleaning of thousands of oranges but I must not stop to describe the process as I want to get on with sorting out my things and packing. Dot thinks I should not write this week so I will be brief.

We have had nice letters from Vryburg. Arthur and Rex have been over to Pretoria again to take delivery of a motor lorry Douglas bought. Suppose they are back home by now.

Aunt Eliza writes that Aunt Charlotte's teeth have been found. Evidently she had put them on her dinner plate – or they had fallen there – and the maid had thrown away the scraps from the plates into the fowl coop and sure enough, there were the teeth.

We went out to the farm yesterday afternoon. This will probably be the last visit for some time. We called at another farm on the way back. Mr Hawkins, the owner, has over 1200 pigs and many head of cattle on the place. Reg was in partnership with Mr Hawkins in his business some years ago.

I weighed ourselves yesterday. Dot is 111, Joan 34, myself 147, just one pound less than I was when I arrived.

Blodwen reports that Joe too is putting on weight which is good news. He has not had any news about his new appointment. Blodwen is still hoping to go to Cape Town for Xmas. Merle unfortunately is laid up with mumps. I wonder if the whole family will get it now. Lynne is having an extra week at home which will do her good.

Blodwen says her finger is better. Her services are in great demand in one way and another – especially in the music line.

I will not add more but will keep you informed how I get on. Postcards are very useful.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
Saturday September 6th, 1947

My dear all,

Well here I am at last. I arrived on Thursday afternoon about six, Grace, Jean and Charles were at the station. But I must go back quite a distance before I record such recent happenings. I think my last letter was dated Monday. I am glad to say that on that evening Dot was able to make arrangements for sleeping in Pretoria instead of having to return after the entertainment at the Boys High School which, with Baby, would have been very tiring and awkward. This did not alter our plans except that it saved Reg and Dot a very late journey. We were up at five on Thursday morning, had early coffee, beds made, etc. and we were off punctually at six for the 136 miles to Pretoria. The road was better than we expected and there being very little wind, we were not troubled with dust. We saw the sunrise about six 30 and stopped half way for a cup of tea and then right through to Pretoria. I must record the fact that I had no difficulty in recognising the spot where Mom and I were held up by my Morris car failing us on the way back to Pretoria about ten years ago. There was no trouble this time. We arrived at the Boys School in time to see the boys at the first break for refreshments. Of course they were expecting us. We drove through part of the grounds and saw the playing fields etc. They have got an ideal spot for recreation. They arranged to have the boys out for the afternoon and we went on to the station to have some refreshments and seeing to booking in the luggage. Here we encountered difficulties which somewhat upset me. They refused to issue a ticket unless the seat had been reserved. We were previously told at Potgietersrus that it was not necessary to book by day train. I had previously written applying for a booking and was informed that no booking was taken by the train I wanted to go by. Then we went to the Reservation office and was told that passengers for Kroonstad were not conveyed by that train. We were then referred to the Head of that Department who told the same story. We told the man that I was not allowed out at night and must go by that train etc. He could not do anything without the System Manager's authority so that involved further delay whilst he consulted that official. After consultation, he enquired if I had a Doctor's certificate so I gave the Doctor I had consulted. Then he wanted my name. Then he recognised that I had previously written. At last permission was granted and he informed us that there was very few people travelling on the train and he remembered that I had asked for a coupe if possible. He then said I could have the whole of a compartment to myself and gave the necessary booking. All that red tape and worry did not do me any good. However, I have survived it.

I had written to Mrs Halliday and Mrs Farren and Len and Mrs Ambler that I would be pleased to see them at the station if convenient. They all came. Mrs Halliday had not been out of her house for five months so did not get out of her car. Eric's wife drove Mrs Farren to the station. I was very pleased to see them although it was only for a few minutes. Len and wife were pleased to see us all. Mrs Farren is hoping to go to Stellenbosch for Friends General meeting so perhaps way will open for meeting her there. I rested all the way and enjoyed an orange and cookies which Dot had thoughtfully provided for the journey. The weather was cool all day and cloudy. I kept my overcoat on all day and slept a little in the train. I went to bed at eight and am glad to say slept well. I was very tired, largely due to the unnecessary fuss and bother at the station. I took a couple of heart tablets and they did me good. I got Grace to write postcards to each home telling of my safe arrival. Grace has given me breakfast in bed each morning but I hope to be up in time to have it with the rest of the family in future. They are all away from home before eight. Ted is working twelve hours each day this month as the Postmaster is away on holiday. He comes home to mid-day meal but not till eight and even later in the evening. Pam has to be at the office by eight and Jean and Charles at school a little before eight so breakfast has to be quite early. They have a maid who sleeps in which is a convenience. There is also a garden boy. The garden is still to be made, there is a vine and a few fruit trees but the previous owners evidently never took much interest in the garden. There is much room for improvement in that respect. Pam is full of beans and is as lively as ever. Jean is still troubled with a nasty cold but still attends school. I have not heard her at the piano yet. Charles is in Standard One and is bright. He is quite interested in some of my puzzles. He wants to learn to play chess. Grace does not look very well but keeps on keeping on.

Friday I did not feel equal to doing anything and went to bed at eight. Dot phoned before seven this morning, says they had a good trip home. I was still in bed, Grace and Ted spoke to her. Ted is due for leave next month and I hope he will get away for a change.

I would like to write about the oranges we saw at Mr Amm's farm but I do not think I can do so now.

Aunt Eliza writes that both Mr and Mrs Lidbetter are laid up. Mrs Lidbetter has been in Port Elizabeth Hospital for ten weeks at 17/6d per day. He is in the Cradock Hospital. Mr Stock was defeated at the Municipal election on Monday. I am sorry. I must not attempt another sheet today.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
Thursday September 11th, 1947

My dear All,

At six p.m. this evening it will be just a week since I arrived here. The time has passed far too quickly for my liking. Everyone is very kind to me and every care is taken that I do not do the wrong things and catch a cold or do anything indiscreet. I am sorry to say that my nose has been giving trouble again and we have had to send away for the prescription the Dr at Potgietersrus gave for my cough. I have been bringing up more phlegm than I have for a long time and my throat has been sore and irritated. Monday was an awful day here, strong winds and heaps of dust, you could taste it but not a drop of rain. We had 22 points at Potgietersrus one day and this all since May 19th when I left Cradock.

Here is an item of good news. Congratulations to Tom Webster on his elevation to the General Managership of Fletcher & Cartright business at Cape Town after 25 years service. May he live long to enjoy the extra responsibilities and rewards which no doubt go with the promotion.

Letters of condolence continue to come in. Miss Ruby Adendorf sent such a nice letter, having only recently having heard of Mom's passing. She is in Cradock this week attending a W.C.T.U. Congress. Grace says she remembers her quite well when at Vryburg. She was music teacher there.

In the rush of packing etc I am aware of the fact that many items of interest have been omitted from my letters. I have come across a number of notes made on scraps of paper that should have been mentioned. I apologise.

Congratulations to Roy on having gone up to 13 (thirteen) in his class at the recent examinations. Keep it up Roy. He would love to go with Reg and Dot and the boys to the Kowie. I do not know if it could be managed. Reg is trying to hire a caravan. Grace hopes that David may be able to visit Joe and Blodwen during the short holidays. He suggests biking from Grahamstown. Merle has been down with mumps, Trevor also. Joe is waiting for word of his promotion which he has been expecting for some years now. They do not know what to do for the Xmas holidays. Joe is putting on weight which is good news.

Ruth and John will be in Durban next week. I hope they have a good time. A Presbyterian minister from here is also attending. I did not mention that Ruth and her partner won the bowls championship tournament at Uitenhage and had the honour of carrying home the silver cup for the Grahamstown Club. Am glad she was able to spend an evening with Joe and Blodwen whilst there. One of the Fink boys who used to be in Vryburg stopped her in the street recently and asked her if she was not Miss Ruth Brown. He is now teaching in Grahamstown. Our great grandchild, Tony, is crawling all over the place Ruth says.

Uncle Owen and Ruth are not very well Joe says. Blodwen is kept busy writing words to music for various entertainments that are coming off between now and Xmas. She is very clever at that sort of thing. Joe is hoping he may get the chance of buying one of the Railway houses, the owner has been transferred. He has put in for it.

We hear that Uncle Gervase occupies our pew now, sort of keeping it warm for me. The young people here are full of plans. They are having a Young Peoples Rally soon and what with Guilds and other activities, they are kept very busy. I have not been to anything yet but hope to do so later on.

My plans for the future seem to be developing. Grace has suggested that Jean might accompany me to Cape Town and stay with some of her relations then it would be as easy, or perhaps easier than going via Uitenhage and return from Cape Town via Uitenhage. Reg and Dot have given me a very hearty invitation to make their home my headquarters. It is quite obvious that under present circumstances, there is not accommodation at either of the other homes. Alterations are going to be made at Potgietersrus and Dot does not want me to take all my furniture. Only my wardrobe, lower part of the cupboard, perhaps my desk unless I get one locally up there. Joe wants the bed I had in Cradock and perhaps he will have it soon. I am thinking of going to Cape Town after Vryburg and from Cape Town to Uitenhage. This is quite far enough to plan for at present as the Railways and other programmes say "is subject to alteration without notice".

Thursday afternoon. Grace has gone to her W.A. meeting. We sent to Potgietersrus for the prescription so as to get some more cough medicine made up. It came this a.m. We have borrowed an air cushion which is a comfort at night as I sleep half sitting up. I am gradually getting on with some of the jobs I brought with me but it is slower progress than I anticipated. The front room that I share with Ted is nice and sunny and has a large writing table at which I am typing now. I must close for post, thanking all for their letters. Douglas and Dot have both phoned to enquire how we are getting on.

Ernest Saunders and his wife have been along to see me and both the resident ministers have called. Mr Sowden was here last Friday and will come again tomorrow.

Love to all,
Dad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
Monday September 15th, 1947

My dear All,

Well the best news had better come first. Yesterday morning we phoned to Douglas asking him to phone birthday greetings to Gwen Hudson as it was her birthday and we had not her phone number. This was a little after nine. Grace did the actual phoning, I was still in bed. Douglas said it was raining and he had measured 15 points already and was watching the clouds for more. I hope he did get more. About three in the afternoon, it began raining here and Ted and Pam faced the elements and went to church – about 20 worshippers were present. However it rained more or less during the night and it has been showering since. I estimate over half an inch has fallen so far. I mentioned that I was still in bed when Grace phoned. The fact of the matter was that after the dreadful day we had last Tuesday – I think it was – I developed a nasty cough and my nose again gave trouble. I did not have chest pains this time so I judged it was trouble in the lungs but a good deal of phlegm was present. We called in the family doctor and he gave the usual examination of chest and blood pressure, 150, whatever that means. He said that was good for my age. I have spent a few days in bed and this morning I was up and dressed when he paid his second and I hope his last visit. He quite approved. His medicine has certainly done me good. He quite approved of me working. Replying to my query regarding the altitude here, he said he did not think it would worry me. What he thought might cause trouble was the dreadful dust which is experienced after long spells of dry weather. He says he has known days when it has been necessary to switch on the lights and then hardly be able to see for dust. (Kroonstad is not alone in that respect. Cradock can be as bad.) Here I am as well and feeling fit for plenty of work.

I have been picturing Ruth and John passing through Cradock this morning on their way to Durban. Hope they have a good time there. A card from Blodwen this morning says Joe has had another attack but not so bad as former ones. Dan, Merle and Roy were down with chickenpox. Trevor home for ten days to avoid infection. Roy is in the midst of exams so it seems a general upset. No word of any appointment for Joe yet nor any news about the Railway house he has made an offer to buy. If he gets it, it may alter my plans. Don't forget Joe has a birthday this week, 19th, and Aunt Eliza will be 88 on Thursday. I will try to enclose personal letters to each with this. I forgot to mention that Douglas has got his new car. Reg has sold his car and bought a Ford truck and looks to get a small car soon. They are busy making plans for their seaside holiday.

Grace has suggested to me that when Douglas comes for me that she also goes as she has never seen Grass Ridge. Of course I have no objection at all. Ted is due for some leave about the end of October. At present he is working every day this month 12 hours. It is too much but they are short handed at the office.

Rev Gould, formerly of Cradock, is coming to see me tomorrow afternoon. Old Mr Sowden is leaving for East London on Friday. He is a very nice old man. He lost his wife a year or so ago. He called to memory how we met him when he first came to Cape Town and lived at Observatory, and the time the preacher forgot his appointment and I took the service for him. I am trying to get an ear aid like I got for Mom and hope to be successful. I have sent Mom's to Aunt Emmie and am glad to say she finds it does help her somewhat.

Ernest Saunders and his wife have been to see us. Charles spent the weekend at their home and returned this morning. Pam took me and Mrs Saunders for a spin round the new part of Kroonstad late one afternoon. I want to see the old home at the Plot but have not got so far yet. I am very comfortable and everyone is very kind and patient with me. Jean is anxious to know the result of her examinations which finished last week. She is working very hard. Charles is in Standard One. He is interested in the games etc which I brought with me.

As I want to write some other letters, I must stop and catch today's post. Hoping you are all well and that rain has fallen in the areas where it has been so badly needed.

Yours affectionately,

Dad

Yesterday, Monday, Grace took me to see the morning market. It starts pretty early but we went about nine and there was plenty of stuff still to be sold. Boxes of apples went for 25/-. Grace thought 15/- was nearer the market value. Boxes of tomatoes from 3/6 down to 1/9. Two Market Masters are kept busy all the morning. I sat and read in the car most of the time whilst Grace was buying.

Charles is very keen on swimming. The Council Baths were opened for the season last week and he was keen on going the first day. The Council issues season tickets to children for 2/6. Unfortunately he caught cold the first day and has not been since. His cough is much better now.

Pam and Jean both wrote to Aunt Eliza for 88th anniversary and have had replies from her but I understand she has had an attack of flu during the week. We are anxious to know how she is progressing. No reference was made to her being sick in either of her letters. No post has come from anyone so far today and it is now 11 a.m.

There is nothing further to report re my plans for the future. We have looked at the road map to see which is the nearest route from here to Vryburg. The nearest is not always the best as we found to our cost when I took Uncle Joe, Mom, Grace and baby Jean many years ago. We left here on that occasion at sunrise and arrived after a scorching day just at sunset. Since those days, National roads have been constructed and it is consequently much easier to take a longer route and so take advantage of the better road. We must wait and see.

Later. After dinner. Pam has had a cold and cough for about a month now so Grace phoned to her doctor and made an appointment for noon. The Manager of the Land Bank allowed her to go to the Dr and Pam came home and told us that he examined her and says she must go to bed until the end of the week as she has pleurisy. She is very bright and of course we hope the rest will set her up again. She will sleep in Grace's room and Ted will sleep outside.

Post was very late today. I don't think there has been more than once that there has not been any post for me. However the post has come and brought only one letter and that is from Aunt Eliza. In it she says she never remembers having such a troublesome cough as she has had last week. The letter has the postmark of Cradock 22nd, that is yesterday. She tells me the sad news that Mrs M.J. van Rensburg, Councillor and Deputy Mayor and the President of the W.C.T.U. in Cradock and generally useful in all good works and prime mover in the recent W.C.T.U. Convention held in Cradock the week before last, died suddenly on Saturday evening. She had just used the phone and collapsed. Years ago she told me that she quite expected to drop down dead. She knew she was a Michau and most of the family suffered from heart trouble. One of her sons is a Dr in the Transvaal and the last time he was in Cradock, he hired our garage and told me he had urged his mother to give up some of her activities but she would not. She was re-elected on the Town Council on Monday September 1st and came second at the poll. I had a nice letter from her after Mother's death. The new servant seems to be giving satisfaction at Market Street, which is fortunate.

I had an interesting letter from Norman Butler in England. I was able to send him a present of some South African stamps of the Royal visit to the Protectorates to add to his collection. I bought them in Potgietersrus. He was very pleased with them. Norman Butler is one of the Executors in my Father's estate. He too has had heart trouble and had to lie up for some weeks. Phil Butler, the other Executor, also writes that a severe hailstorm passed over part of the country where he is living and did £50 000 worth of damage to the crops. I also hear there has been a severe storm in Cradock.

I think I have given you enough to read for today so will finish off and get post fixed up and posted.

Lots of love to each and all,
Dad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
As Tuesday September 30th, 1947

My dear All,

It is Monday afternoon and I want to get a letter off tomorrow afternoon. I have been addressing envelopes for my Xmas cards but of course the cards are not ready and will not be posted until December.

We have had samples of weather lately. Friday afternoon it turned suddenly cold and has been cold ever since. The wind was very strong and unpleasant. I went to an exhibition of motor caravans and other goods in the Town Hall on Friday afternoon – before it got so cold – and priced tricycles that Reg and Dot want to get as a birthday present for Joan. Local firms put up a good show. There are quite a number of factories here.

Last week Reg spent a couple of days on official business in Pretoria and Johannesburg for the Municipality so Dot slept at the Watts for a couple of nights. Reg and his half section could not find hotel accommodation at any of the hotels so Reg slept at a former neighbour's house. He got back in time to take his appointment in church.

We have not heard if Joe received any reward for finding the 12 railway axles that had been missing since May last. Roy was anxious to go to camp in the short holidays if his chickenpox was over. Joe has no word about the house he is hoping to get and no word about his promotion. The South African Railways is very slow except when anyone is owing anything for railway carriage etc. Then they are very sharp.

Potgietersrus experienced a terrible wind storm last Thursday, several roofs of houses were blown off and all the electric lights went out. Reg and Dot did not suffer harm to their property. Dot says she does not find it hard to drive the lorry but of course she misses the car.

Next Sunday morning Jean, and other young folk are being admitted as new members of the church. I hope to attend. I was there on Sunday morning but did not venture out in the evening. This weekend the young people of the church are holding a camp. Representatives from Bloemfontein, Colesberg and other towns are coming, about 60 in all are expected Ernest Saunders and his wife are to be host and hostess. They acted in the same capacity at Easter and made a great success. Pam hopes to be well enough to go. They camp out at the river. Pam was up for part of the day yesterday and today. She may go to work on Wednesday. Douglas and Evelyn phoned one day last week and Dot too to enquire how Pam was getting on. Douglas and Evelyn approve of the suggestion that Grace takes me to Kimberley instead of Douglas coming by car here for me. Grace says November will be the most convenient to her. Ted is due for leave about the middle of October but he says he does not want to go anywhere. He should have a change.

Some of Pam's Sunday School girls have been to see her and the Guild sent her such a nice bunch of flowers after their last meeting.

Mr Sowden has returned to East London. One of his grandsons has married one of Mrs Farren's daughters. He is a dear old man, about two years my junior.

I expect Dudley and Raymond are arriving at Pudimoe to stay a fortnight with Eric and Freda. I hope they have fine weather.

I forgot to mention that Jean has again come top of her class of 15. Her average of marks obtained was 75.1%, not including music. She practises a lot.

I was glad to hear that Aunt Eliza was better of her attack of flu and hope the improvement will continue.

Tuesday morning. A very agreeable change in the weather this morning. Back to bright sunshine again but unfortunately no rain. Grace and I have been down town and interviewed the Town authorities regarding a suggestion that I might add an additional room either in the front to correspond with the room I am at present occupying or convert the garage into an outside room. The latter is completely ruled out as being against Municipal regulations. The other is being considered by the Building Inspector and we shall know in due course. If this is refused, it is still possible to build a room at the back, which would have the advantage of being cheaper as the roof would not have to be altered. I feel that it would be more advantageous to make this my headquarters as it is so much more central and easily get-at-able. If that should materialise, I should

most likely get all my furniture up. I have written to Mrs van der Vyver giving notice that I shall give up the room at the end of the month. Mary doubts if there would be sufficient room at the place where she has her furniture stored so I would arrange with Hyams to pack and store what I want until such room was ready.

After seeing to this business, we went to call on Mr Rossler, brother to our Mr Rossler, Electrical Engineer in Cradock. This one is also Electrical Engineer to Kroonstad Municipality. He said he was pleased to see us. He knew Grace from the Plot days when she wanted electrical light there. He showed us all over the power station and it was most interesting. The station is about two or three times the size of Cradock's station. Strange to say he had received a phone message from his brother saying he was on his way to Kroonstad. I hope he will have time to come along to see me.

No letters from anyone have arrived during the last two days. Can anyone explain how or why my watch – my brother Joe's – keeps perfect time here whilst in Cradock and Potgietersrus it has always lost from two to three minutes every week? Nothing has been done to it since I left Cradock. Has the altitude or temperature anything to do with it?

As I have a small supply of what we call "off cuts" – paper which has been cut off larger sheets and is often thrown away as useless, I may as well use them up in this way.

In two days time Grace has a birthday. I have not heard of any party being arranged but I hope members of the family will not forget to remember the occasion in the most appropriate manner. I often wonder how Grace and Dot get through the amount of work which falls to their lot. The sewing machine is in this room and is more or less constantly on the go. Not that I mind in the least as it ensures my having her company whilst I am trying to get on with whatever I have in hand.

Douglas' anniversary will be on Saturday and I hope he too will not be forgotten. He is very good in phoning us from time to time to enquire how we are. I must write to him this afternoon. I wish Aunt Eliza was on the phone so that we could phone to find out how she is getting on.

Pam has gone back to her work this morning. I hope she will not suffer in consequence. She is Secretary to the Young People's Guild and of course has a lot of responsibility in making all the arrangements for the sixty visitors who are expected. The camp will last over the weekend and closes on Monday afternoon. Schools reopen on Tuesday morning.

Jean is knitting herself a new bathing costume in bright red wool. Grace has made her a nice white dress for Sunday when she is being admitted to membership in the church. Her white shoes cost a little over three pounds I understand. I do not know that goods are cheaper or dearer here than in Cradock. Kroonstad is the second largest town in the Free State. Houses are very scarce here as everywhere else. I have not been in many shops yet and have no need to.

Must close now as it is feeding time.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
October 3rd, 1947

My dear All,

Yesterday was a day of surprises in addition to its being Grace's 48th birthday. She had a number of callers and phone messages of greetings and flowers etc. The girls gave her an iced cake and she also had a dress length given her. In the morning, she went to market to get provisions and fruit for the forthcoming camp the young people of the church are holding at the river over the weekend. Representatives from various towns around here and as far as Kimberley and Colesberg are expected – about 60 in all. Amongst the Colesberg ones are three Maskells, two boys and one girl. I do not know whose family they belong to but of course shall find out when they arrive. I sat in the car whilst Grace did the buying – such a crowd of stuff. Mrs Cragg, the Minister's wife, was with Grace.

The day before, Grace took me to see Mr Rossler who is in charge of the electric power station and he told me that his brother from Cradock was expected that afternoon. When we got back from the Market, who should be waiting in the dining room but Clifford Saunders. He had travelled up with Mr Rossler as companion. Mr Rossler approached him the day before suggesting that as he had a brother here, perhaps he would like to pay him a visit. The offer took Clifford by surprise and after thinking the matter over, accepted it. They got here about 9 p.m. He is staying over the weekend. Eric and his wife, Pearl, are acting as father and mother at the camp so Grace has suggested that Clifford comes and sleeps here as Ernest's youngest boy is coming to stay with Charles.

This is not the end of surprises I had yesterday. The post brought a letter from Bernard Holmes whom we knew very well at Vryburg. He was in the employ of the Bechuanaland Government, which is under the Imperial Government, as Veterinary Surgeon. He often came and stayed with us. His headquarters was Mafeking. For a long while, he was stationed on the border of the Kalahari between the desert and German West. He writes from Cape Town saying that he is out here with his wife and three children on a visit. They are now on their way to Rhodesia to visit his wife's brother, then they are going to Port Elizabeth and hopes to see me in Cradock. He has come in contact with Mrs West (Friend) at Cape Town and she had told him of Mom's death. Their eldest daughter, who is with them, is starting at Grahamstown Teachers Training College in January and their two youngest children are at boarding school in England. Bernard Holmes has been very ill and had two operations and seven weeks in hospital so decided to come out for a change. I shall write to him and see what plans he makes as I should be sorry to miss seeing him.

Douglas and Evelyn phoned last evening to wish Grace many happy returns of the day. He says he may be in Bloemfontein about October 14th and suggests that Grace and I meet him there and he will motor us to Vryburg. He will let us know as soon as he knows the actual date. It is his birthday tomorrow. We have already written to him. If the weather stays as it has been the last two days, it will be nice for travelling.

I forget if I mentioned that Dee and her baby are in the running for the Outspan prize for the mother and baby competition. Look at the photograph in the Outspan of September 18th.

I made a mistake in a recent letter about Mr Sowden being my junior. He is my senior by two years. He is back in East London. Did I tell you that I went to a matinee with Grace and Charles a little while ago? I was not much impressed except that the building was much better than the Metro in Cradock. Aunt Emmie has trouble with her eyes as well as her hearing. I have sent her some information about hearing aids and hope some improvement will result.

Dudley and Raymond are at Eric's farm and if we go to Vryburg, it is possible we may be just in time to see them before they return to Cape Town.

Ruth is back from Durban and has enjoyed the trip and all the various meetings. Mr Rossler and his brother have spent quite a while here this morning as well as Clifford. They all remark how well I am looking and I am feeling quite fit except that I get out of breath quickly. Another surprise which happened yesterday and which I was forgetting was whilst sitting in the car at the Market, a Mr Boysen came and talked to me. He used to work in Cradock years ago in the days of Fryer & Hyam. He remembers Mr Lidbetter very well and was surprised to hear that he was still in the land

of the living. He knew David Fitchet and Byrnes very well. He is coming to see me again. Garnet Leonard, who lived next door to us in New Stockenstroom, is coming to see me. He is the only member of that large family left. His sister-in-law I met at church one morning.

I have stopped taking my usual drink of Milo just before going to bed and find I can do without it. I notice in Bloemfontein Friend that "Jimmy" Butler is to be the candidate for Parliament at the next election for Louisvale. I hope he gets in. We want many more men of his ability in the House. I see in the Midland News that reference is made to the back history of the Public Library in Cradock. I have brought with me notes that I made when I was Secretary and which I am going to send to Mr Furness to do what he likes with it.

I am going out with Grace this afternoon so will not start another sheet. Lots of love to all. Clifford will be returning with Mr Rossler on Tuesday.

Dad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
Wednesday October 8th, 1947

My dear All,

I am still using some off-cuts. There is still nothing definite to report re our movements. We phoned to Douglas on Saturday evening for his birthday and he had not heard when he would be coming over to Bloemfontein, but he rather expects it will be about Wednesday 14th, the 56th anniversary of our Wedding Day. There is no second post on Wednesday so unless we get a wire or phone call, we are not likely to know. However Grace is making up a dress of the material she had for her birthday present. In any case, continue posting to Kroonstad until I let you know.

We had a very interesting weekend with the young peoples' camp. The first arrivals came on Friday evening and the last on Sunday. In all there were 54 gathered in camp. The majority were local girls and boys. Amongst the visitors were four of Aunt Rosa's grandchildren. Rev Barnes, the minister stationed at Colesberg, brought them and some came in Maskell's car. They were very fine young people and they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. They had a discussion on various subjects and addresses all in the open air. The last day, those who liked to join in taking the Sacrament did so, all in the open air and kneeling on the ground. They reported on the various subjects discussed and did it well. There were five ministers in all present. Ernest Saunders and his wife were responsible and of course slept in the camp and supervised the cooking etc. Some bathed in the river, all took part in rounders etc. The spot, close to town, was ideal, close to the river and plenty of shade. Heaps of refreshments. All took their turns in doing the various duties. There were sufficient tents for all. Cooking for the most part was done in the open. Grace was a great help in conveying things from town. I went over one morning with her and the milk for the day. This was about 6 a.m.

Ted has started his three weeks leave and does not want to go away. Grace suggests that he should go to Vryburg with me but he says no. There are lots of jobs about the house which he wants to see to. We are discussing what plans to make for another room. I do not like the idea of having turned out the girls from their room, but they enjoy sleeping out on the side stoep by Grace's window. Perhaps they will build another room in front to correspond with the one I am occupying. I should like it done whilst I am away – if I do go to Cape Town etc. Ted has four more years to serve before he is due for pension.

Ruth writes that she and John thoroughly enjoyed their trip to Durban. Natal is a beautiful province. They were taken for many trips and everyone was very kind. She will be leaving the Red Cross Society at the end of November, then she hopes to settle down in real earnest to her journalistic work. She made contact with some of the magazine managers who offered to consider any of her articles etc. Baby Tony, she says, is the most lovable baby she has ever seen. I can quite believe it.

I should have mentioned it earlier that Clifford entered heartily into the spirit of the camp and was most useful in helping in every way possible. He had meals with us and slept at his brother's house as they were sleeping in the camp. I have asked him to see to the removal of my furniture from No. 15. I am wanting to get the stuff here so that I can settle down more. Not that I am anything but comfortable and happy. Everyone is very kind and thoughtful. I have finished addressing my envelopes for Xmas cards.

Dot writes that she took Joan to church for the first time recently. Dot had to play the organ so Joan sat on the music stool with her mother. Of course she had a picture book to look at and was quite good. Dot on purpose left her dolly in the car. Dot wonders if Ruth has forgotten the times when she used to sit with her when she played the organ at church in Vryburg.

A long letter came from Aunt Eliza and also from Mary. Glad to say Eliza is apparently much better but not right yet. One of the old hands who worked on the Midland News in my time had been to see her. I must write to him. Una Shingler – Florence that was, had just phoned from the station saying they are coming to see us.

Lots of love,
Dad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
As Tuesday 14th October, 1947

My dear All,

Fifty six years ago this day, Mom and I were married at dear old Grass Ridge. How well I still remember the incidents associated with the event. No one gave any thought to the length of time we might be spared to each other and had we done so, I doubt if either of us would have dared to anticipate that our union would last so long. Truly I have much to be thankful for. We had our ups and downs, our pleasures and our disappointments but with them all, we came through together in double harness without any very serious disaster. No doubt had we our lives over again, many things would have been different but I cannot be thankful enough for all the mercies that have been my lot. No one except those who have passed through the experiences that I have had during the last six months knows. The loneliness has been greatly relieved by the kindnesses, the sympathy, the love of children and friends which could not have been exceeded. The loneliness at times has been great but I have been sustained by the prayers of many well wishers.

On Friday last week I had a call from Garnet Leonard who lived next door to us in New Stockenstroom Street, Cradock. He remembers Harold best of all and told us of many excursions and adventures they had together as youngsters, swimming the Fish River when in flood etc. He admits that he was a very naughty boy as Mom and I knew to our sorrow. Of course we did not know then what they were up to until years afterwards. He has turned out quite an average man, tall, well built, married and has a family of three. He is farming near town here and from what I could gather, is making a financial success. He has promised to come again. He must have spent about two hours with me. He is the only one out of at least six or seven brothers and sisters. His elder brother I knew better, he asked me to accompany the Cradock Town Guard on an excursion during the Boer War when the Boers were nearing town. I was then in the Ambulance service and some men had been wounded on previous excursions and had no one to help them. I went but on that occasion, nothing happened except that I gained a good deal of experience. Grace was only a few days old then.

Douglas phoned about our going to Vryburg. The meetings he had to attend were in Kimberley and not Bloemfontein. In order to save him the long motor journey to here, I suggested he should meet us at Kimberley and we would go as far as that by train. Grace did not feel too grand and was busy with dressmaking so instead of being there today, he suggested putting off the trip to next Monday (20th). There is a fast train which leaves here that morning, 7.32, and arrives Kimberley a little after 2 p.m. It will take about five hours by car to reach Grass Ridge. I think I shall be able to stand that alright, hope so at any rate. We shall just miss seeing Dudley and Raymond as they are due back in Cape Town this week. We shall also miss seeing Cicely as she returns to school today. I hope they get some rain before then. I am looking forward to the trip. Douglas says he is arranging a tea party in my honour to meet some of my old friends. It is very kind of him.

I was in the local printing office a few days ago and a lady, Mrs van Zyl, introduced herself. She is a cousin of Hy McLeod, Ina's husband who died about a year ago. I know her relations in Cradock.

Amongst the birthday presents Grace received was a collection box from Harold for the purchase of a vacuum cleaner and enclosing a note for the purpose. Good of him.

I called at the Station and ascertained that the cost of a tourist first class ticket from here to Kimberley, Cape Town, Uitenhage, Port Elizabeth, Cradock, Kroonstad and ending at Potgietersrus would be approximately £20. I have not yet decided to undertake this journey but will let you all know as soon as possible. The lady who has offered to look after me on the trip to Cape Town has not decided when she wants to go except that of some time about the middle of December. Reg and Dot and family will be passing here by lorry for Port Alfred.

Tuesday morning, October 14th. So far did I get yesterday afternoon. Fifty years ago this morning one of the greatest events in my life took place. There were no motor cars or wireless or telephone laid on but there was great activity at Grass Ridge. The largest building on the farm was gaily decorated for the double wedding. All, or most of the happenings of that day are still fresh in

my memory. I sometimes wonder if those on the "other side" have memories, if they think of anniversaries. There is no night there, a "thousand years are as one day". What we know not now, we shall know hereafter. It was a happy day in spite of the invasion of the swarm of voetgangers that swarmed over the farm. It was a happy day and the memory of it is sweet but the inevitable separation is hard to bear.

For some time we have been discussing plans for altering the house so as to provide an extra bedroom and we now think we have found a workable plan. This is in the hands of the architect and later will be submitted to the Town Council for approval and, if approved, estimate or tenders will be called for. Roughly the scheme is to turn the kitchen into a bedroom, build a new kitchen and breakfast room at the back. It will take some time before all this can be accomplished but it is something to look forward to.

Aunt Emmie writes that she is spending five days at Stellenbosch with Gladys and will be back in Cape Town Tuesday 21st. I hope the change will do her good. I understand she has not had a holiday since the time spent with us at Rockcliff, East London about ten years ago. I am very glad we had that trip when we did as it would have been too late if we had waited for the Diamond Anniversary.

Joe and Dot have both sent me cuttings from newspapers about the centenary of the birth of Dr Holub. It is very interesting to me as I remember meeting him when he visited us in London before I came to South Africa. My ambition was to come with him but he said he was only taking Experts. I may perhaps write to the contributor of the article and give him some personal recollections of him, but the job is to settle down to a job of that sort, especially as we look to leave on Monday morning for Vryburg. Joe says he has not even had a word of thanks from the Railways re the finding of the engine axles. Such is the South African Railways.

Ted has just taken me for a spin round part of the town. We went to see the Park Curator and I took my rainfall records with me so as to compare with their records. The lady in charge kindly has lent me theirs but they only have them since 1921. Apparently they have much more rain than Cradock.

By what I have seen this morning, Kroonstad is growing rapidly. New suburbs are growing in all directions. We looked over a house near here with four bedrooms which would have suited Grace and Ted much better than the present one but the owner only wants £4500 for it! Land has gone up a lot since Odendaalsrus goldfields have been discovered. These are expected to equal Johannesburg in a few years. If we return from Vryburg by car, I think we pass through this new place. Kroonstad is the nearest town to it. We had a look at the sports grounds, the Park, the river, Library etc. There is no doubt that Kroonstad is going ahead tremendously. It is a pretty town as well as a large business place. Just in front of this house, the garden in the centre of the road has roses growing there and no one seems to interfere with them. Most of the streets are tarred and well kept.

I do not know if I shall write again before we get to Vryburg so don't be alarmed if there is some break in the regularity of my correspondence. Grass Ridge is about 20-30 miles from town and posts are not as frequent as in town. Douglas generally goes to town on Friday mornings. This afternoon we are going to call on Mrs Howard, another friend of the family who lives a few miles out of town. Their daughter, who is a great friend of Jean's, comes here every morning for morning tea. She is in the same school as Jean. The only post so far is a card from Aunt Emmie.

It is a sad time for me being the first break in the chain of our wedding anniversaries.

Much love to each and all,

Dad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
Saturday October 18th, 1947

My dear All,

Grace and I are expecting to leave here by the 7.32 a.m. train on Monday for Kimberley. I say expecting because the Railways cannot say for certain that we shall be able to travel on that train as it is only supposed to take passengers for stations south of Kimberley but only if there is room, which can only be determined when the train arrives here. As I am supposed to be an invalid, I expect the use of a little "palm oil" will ease the way to getting what we want. We went to an entertainment in the Railway Institute last evening in aid of funds for the Young Peoples' Club and I fear I have caught a slight cold and Grace thinks I ought not to travel but as there has been a good deal of planning and re-planning for various reasons, I do not want to alter the arrangements now. We have already shifted the date by one week already.

Douglas phoned on Tuesday evening saying they had brought Cecily back to school on Monday and they had had an accident with the new car and Evelyn had hurt both her knees, one was cut and the other bruised. He did not say how the accident had happened but it was inconvenient for her to be attended to by the Dr at the hotel, so she was removed to the hospital where she stayed for a couple of days but was home again and working about as usual. He has to go to Pretoria on Monday but Rex will meet us at the station and on to the farm but if I am feeling too tired, he has arranged for us to sleep at the Grand Hotel. I do not anticipate that I shall be knocked up by the journey, so expect we shall arrive at Grass Ridge the same evening. We have not made any plans about returning or when. Probably we shall stay about a month. Douglas says he has arranged a sort of tea party in town for me to meet some of my old friends. Dot suggests that I stay in town for a few days. I don't suppose I shall be allowed to do much walking in any case. Douglas said there was some post already for me but he was not sending it on.

Norman and Alan have had a good time for their holidays. The boys who took the leading parts in the concert – Pirates of Penzance – were given records of their voices. They say it was a great success. The boys enjoy working on the farm during the holidays. The carved crocodile which has been discovered in a cave has been brought into Potgietersrus. I do not know if Reg or the boys have seen it. It is supposed to be some millions of years old. We do not yet know exactly what day Reg and family will be passing here by lorry on their way to Port Alfred in December but they must needs pass through Kroonstad.

David will be having three months holiday from University at the end of the year. He would like to earn some money during that time. Denis did so years ago by going fruit picking near Alicedale. Of course he may come home but there does not seem much chance of finding temporary employment here. Harold expects to come home for his fortnight or however long he has. No plans have been made here for going away at Xmas. I have got a written quotation for a tourist ticket to Cape Town, Uitenhage, Port Elizabeth), I would add Grahamstown as well), Cradock, Fish River and Collett Siding and Naauwpoort if I want to break at these places. Mr and Mrs Walker – Grace's neighbours, have not got leave yet. Mr Walker is employed on the Railway and both are entitled to travel 1st class. It may make more room here if I do go away. Plans for altering the house so as to provide another bedroom and breakfast room will be submitted to the Council shortly but I don't suppose anything will be done much before Xmas. The weather is looking very nice for rain. Hope it comes soon. Ernest Saunders and wife are coming to afternoon tea tomorrow, Sunday.

Please do not be anxious or disappointed if you do not hear from me for a few days. Post on a farm is often irregular and has to come or go by any opportunity. I will keep you informed of my plans as soon as possible. I hope to get a post on Monday evening.

Hope Aunt Emmie is having a good time at Stellenbosch. Five days is very little for a real change. Aunt Eliza, I hope, is making satisfactory progress to complete recovery after her attack of flu.

Love to all from
Dad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
Wednesday October 22nd, 1947

My dear All,

You will not be altogether surprised to see by the address that we are still in Kroonstad. Had things gone according to plan, we should have been in Vryburg last Monday evening 20th. Unfortunately, owing to having caught cold as the result of attending the concert on Friday evening 17th, my poor old nose gave me considerable trouble ever since. I have been in bed ever since until this morning and am glad to say that I am feeling better but not up to concert pitch. However, Douglas phoned last evening from Len Ambler's house in Pretoria that if I was better and could stand the journey, he would send Rex over with the car on Sunday and we could go back on Monday. We are to let him know by phone on Saturday if this will be alright. He reports that Evelyn is getting on alright after the accident. So far we hope to carry out this programme. He says a number of letters have already arrived for me and he has posted some back here. I hope they arrive before we leave for Vryburg. I guess there is a pretty good lot to answer as I have had very few letters for more than a week. I had written to Mrs Kongman at Bloemfontein to see us as we passed through and after the second failure to keep to our plan, I wired to her saying we could not travel then. We may see her on our return if we come back by train from Kimberley.

With regard to future plans, I feel somewhat in doubt. I still long to pay visits to the rest of the family but way so far has not opened. So far as the actual travelling is concerned, I do not see much difficulty. Mr and Mrs Walker are very willing to see me safely as far as Cape Town is concerned but all are of the opinion that there must be someone to look after me in getting about. Every place seems full of visitors and with motor traffic as it is, it is very dangerous for old people like myself to get about. At Cape Town, so far is not available and at this time of the year is generally very hot. My mind is therefore turning towards Easter as being a more suitable time to travel. Further, my furniture may be arriving sometime during November but cannot be put to use at present. Ted has had plans prepared for making more accommodation but the estimated costs seems prohibitive (£460). Wire just received from Aunt Eliza and Mary, 12.30, saying "Hyam is removing my furniture on Friday". It took three weeks for the goods I sent to reach Potgietersrus and I expect it will take as long to reach here. However, it can be stored in an outside room until needed.

Dot phoned on Sunday evening enquiring if we were ready packed to start the following morning – which of course we were not. However we look to leave next Monday by car if nothing unforeseen happens.

A letter from Uncle Bertie's Iris says they had snow on the mountains recently. We have had a cold spell and about 30 points of rain. On Tuesday the Swedish gymnasts gave a display on the sports ground here when all the family except Ted and I attended. I should have liked to have seen it but it was too risky owing to climatic conditions. It was quite hot during the afternoon.

The wireless has been brought into my room so I am able to listen to the news which I am sorry to say is far from satisfactory. The world is truly upside down. I hope Aunt Emmie has enjoyed her visit to Stellenbosch, it was a very short visit. I am enjoying drinking thick cream milk here, there seems plenty of it. It is now nearly four p.m. and there will not be any more post today so will close, with love to all. I hope it will not be necessary to alter our plans again. We hope to be at Grass Ridge, Vryburg some time on Monday.

Yours affectionately,
Dad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad, O.F.S.
Saturday October 25th, 1947

My dear All,

Unless anything unforeseen should happen between now (noon) and Monday morning 27th, this should be my last letter from Kroonstad until Grace and I return from Vryburg some time next month. My cold is much better though not quite gone but sufficiently to risk the journey by car to Grass Ridge, Vryburg. We are phoning to Douglas this evening, as arranged, saying we are ready. Rex will leave sometime in the morning and we hope he will be here by dinnertime. I expect he will want to make an early start on Monday as the journey is calculated to take about six hours. It is a new car and should be quite comfortable. I have a supply of stamped postcards ready addressed to post when we reach Vryburg as I don't know how the post from the farm runs – certainly not every day.

Aunt Eliza wired on Wednesday that the furniture was going to Hyams on 24th for final packing and dispatch. I suppose it will take about three weeks before it arrives here. Then there will be great excitement in unpacking some of the things and gradually getting straight. As stated in my last, I am giving up the idea of going to Cape Town etc for the present. Perhaps about Easter or the approach of winter it may be possible to arrange a tour.

About six yesterday afternoon we had a sharp thunderstorm and fortunately there was not much wind. Later 2.30 another thunderstorm has just fallen, the hail stones being a little larger than those of yesterday. I see by the Bloemfontein paper this morning that there have been big washaways below Cradock. Rain is also reported for many parts of the country. I wonder if rain will interfere with Rex's movements tomorrow. The Post Office advised us that Vryburg wanted us at 7.30 this evening. There was no post this morning for me. Whilst shopping this morning, Mrs Aspden stopped me. She was in Cradock and came from Potgietersrus. She is living at Koppies not far from here.

The printers here have printed more Xmas cards than I ordered. They are not charging for the extras so if any of you will give me the names and addresses of anyone you would like me to send a copy, I shall be pleased to do so. I shall not post them until about the middle of December.

Aunt Emmie wired on Friday to know how I was. Very kind of her. She enjoyed her five days holiday at Stellenbosch but that was altogether too short.

Dudley and Raymond are back from their visit to Eric and Freda. They both had a good time. We are hoping to see the Fears too, also Maude and Mike Meyers and of course the Hudsons. Dot says they will not be passing through Kroonstad on their way to or from the coast as they intend going through Natal and via Kimberley and Vryburg on the return trip.

I have not done much to my packing yet so must stop this and get on with it now. I will write as often as possible from the farm, so don't worry if you do not get letters as often as you might like. Had a nice letter from Kate Dudley which I have not answered yet.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

No news from Joe or Blodwen for quite a while.

A month ago today dear Mom passed away.

Grass Ridge, P.O. Box 8, Vryburg, Cape Province
Wednesday October 29th, 1947

My dear All,

At last I am here, sitting in the spare bedroom in which is our Burma teak bedroom suite that we had in Cradock as well as my old Davenport that was one of my 21st birthday presents and which I gave to Douglas many years ago. I am allotted to this room and Grace has the room adjoining which has a door from this room and also opens on the side stoep, which Mom and I had when we were last here about 11 years go. It is now past 5 p.m. and I do not know how far I shall be able to get on. I am not too grand. There is much that I want to tell you but the spirit is willing but the flesh is in a mess re weak. However I shall do the best I can. I must retrace my steps somewhat so as to make a more or less complete story.

Last Friday afternoon and evening we had a nice rain accompanied by some hail but fortunately unaccompanied by strong wind. Saturday we had more rain, in fact it kept on more or less all day. We began to wonder how we should fare if it continued too long as the roads might be too wet. Sunday was fine, no rain. Douglas had phoned that after all he considered it would be best for Grace and I not to go by train as far as Kimberley but rather he would send his new car over by one of his men in the Co-op business on Sunday and would motor us back to Vryburg. Rex was not able to come as they had also had some rain and were naturally anxious to plough as much as possible. Later on Sunday, Douglas phoned that his man had left about 11 a.m. and the journey should only take him about six hours. We were anxiously awaiting his arrival. I think Charles was the first to spot him evidently looking for the house. Grace had booked a room and garage for him. At six 30 he arrived and soon was settled in and had supper with us. We were relieved when he told us that the roads were in fine order and could make an early start. We were all up and about by 5 a.m. and had a quick impromptu feed and by six we were off. It was nice and cool – fresh – I had my light overcoat and cardigan on and my Jaeger rug around my legs. We sat three in front and so kept warm. We stopped at Wolmaransstad about 8 for breakfast and on again to Schweitzer Reneke for morning tea and duly arrived at the Vryburg Post Office exactly at 12 noon. There was no dust as the little rain that had fallen had settled that nicely. As it got warmer, Grace transferred to the back seat and we discarded as much of our clothing as we convenient could as it got very hot. The car, a new Hudson, was fitted with wireless so at 7 a.m. we got the new as we were speeding along at about 35-40 miles an hour. It came over very clearly and it seemed wonderful that the same voices we listen to at home was so clear, the speed we were travelling made no difference. We also got the 8 o'clock news and as much music as we wanted. The country we travelled in is not very interesting being so flat. Trees do grow where they have been protected. On one farm we saw seven spans of oxen ploughing which was encouraging. What crops we saw were very short. It was one gradual fall in altitude all the way from Kroonstad, the difference being approximately 600 feet. Vryburg and Potgietersrus are approximately the same altitude. We did not travel on the National (tarred) road except for the first few miles out of Kroonstad. Grace and I were reminded of a former journey we took over the same distance when Jean was a baby and Mom and Uncle Joe from England was with us. I drove my little Morris car. Then we left Kroonstad at sunrise and arrived in Vryburg exactly as the sun set – 12 hours. The heat was terrible and dear Mom was terribly sick. No plans have been made regarding the return to Kroonstad.

Thursday morning 30th. Thus far did I get up to about five p.m. when I was too tired to carry on. To continue my story, within a few minutes of our arrival in Vryburg, we met Douglas at the Office of his Company. We delivered the telegram which I asked Ted to send announcing our departure from Kroonstad, he remarked at the time that we should probably get there before the wire, which was what practically happened. We crossed the road for light refreshment at Mrs Hayes café when Douglas took charge of the car and drove us home to Grass Ridge, just 25 miles from town, arriving here at 1.15 p.m. Whilst we were having lunch, two of his gents who had to go with him to Bloemfontein to some meetings arrived and before 2.30 the three of them were off by car, hoping to be back on Wednesday evening. Whilst we were at breakfast a few minutes ago, Douglas phoned from Bloemfontein saying they were not leaving there until about 2.30 this afternoon and would go straight into Vryburg so we do not know exactly when he will be back but

most likely some time tonight. He is a very busy man. Before leaving town, Douglas sent off some wires announcing our safe arrival. I should have mentioned that Dot phoned on Sunday p.m. to enquire if we were really going the next morning and sending love to everybody. Aunt Emmie had also sent a reply paid wire to know how I was. It is very kind of you all to be so interested in my wellbeing. I do not deserve it all.

So far I have not referred to Evelyn and Rex. I am glad to say Evelyn was as bright as usual. She is about and as busy as ever. The cause of the accident is briefly as follows: Douglas was driving Evelyn and Cecily in Kimberley when evidently, owing to his defective sight, he collided with an electric light standard with the effect that Evelyn was jerked forward bruising one knee and cutting the other. Cecily was not hurt. The front buffer was considerably dented and has had to be sent to Johannesburg for repair. Evelyn spent two days in hospital before returning home. It is a mercy the accident was not more serious. She is very bright and as busy as ever. I was very tired and went to bed early, was not unmindful of the happenings of seven months previously when dear Mom was laid to rest in Cradock cemetery that morning.

Tuesday and Wednesday were spent mostly in bed. Unfortunately the tooth which gave so much trouble in Cradock and Potgietersrus again is giving more trouble. The jaw was swollen and the pain extended to my left ear. However it has yielded to treatment of hot salt water and is much easier this morning. Rex is going to Kimberley one of these days and perhaps I will go with him and have the offending tooth removed. I do not know when this will happen. Rex came home on Tuesday evening but was off to town early on Wednesday to get some parts for the tractor which had got broken. I think he is coming home tonight. Grace has got in touch with Gwen Hudson and she wants us to spend a few days there. Arthur and Emily have also been in touch but I do not know when we shall see them. Rex has finished ploughing there for the time being. Eric and Freda of course we want to see. Freda went to Kimberley with Douglas on Monday afternoon. I do not know if she is returning with him tonight. Ms van der Spuy – Miss Puttick before her marriage – and was Grace's teacher here – called on Wednesday morning and had morning tea with us. They have bought the next farm where Mr and Mrs Metcalfe were living. It was very nice seeing her. Of course she remembered Mom very well. No doubt we shall see a good deal more of her. The farm is within walking distance from her but not so far for me. She acted as Principal here for a while. The Congregational minister has promised to come and see me. I knew him in Cape Town. He is very popular here.

I am quite at a loss how to describe the garden here. It is simply wonderful. There was practically nothing the last time I was here, now it is perfect oasis, flowers and lawns galore. One bed of St Joseph's lilies are simply grand. Grace is in her element here. It is wonderful what a change has come over the place in eleven years. There are six windmills within a few yards and there is no lack of water and plenty of garden hose to lead it anywhere. The rustic seats and tables, crazy foot walks, shady trees, etc. and everything in such perfect order reflects the highest praise on Evelyn, who no doubt has been responsible for most of the work. It shows what can be done on the bare veldt. No doubt there have been many drawbacks and disappointments during the years it has taken to bring it to its present state of perfection. The house, too, is still in perfect order, no settlements in the foundations or rotting of timber. The 16-ft veranda round two sides of the house is a perfect godsend, providing as it does plenty of shade throughout the day. I am rightly proud of my son's design and construction of the building. There is every prospect of an abundant fruit harvest. The apricot trees are bending already with the weight of fruit and vines too are flourishing but a single hailstorm may ruin the lot if accompanied by high wind.

We have had nice post since we arrived. Some had been sent on from here to Kroonstad and returned again here. Have not had time to answer them yet. Glad to hear from Joe and Blodwen. Blodwen hopes to go to Cape Town on December 19th. Joe must take one week's leave before the end of this year otherwise he will lose it altogether. I am suggesting to him that he comes to Kroonstad when my furniture arrives and helps me unpack and arrange my room. He says it will not cost him anything as he gets a free ticket. Grace says this would have to be in November as David will be coming home early in December. Of course I do not know when the stuff will come until we get the rail note that it has left Cradock. The suggestion is worth considering.

Page two I typed on the side stoep but it soon became too hot so I had a nap before dinner and again after and it is now past three. I do not think there will be an opportunity of posting this before tomorrow (Friday) when someone will be sure to go to town. One of native servants has to be taken to hospital with a poisoned finger which most likely will be amputated. Douglas is not expected home before about midnight so we do not know what plans will be made. Rex is expected home some time this evening. There have not been any callers so far today. Frank and Irene were here on Tuesday and brought us a nice lot of post from town. Both their children are away from home at school. They live about 1½ miles from here.

I am glad to say that I was able to get my bottom plate in at dinnertime without much difficulty or pain. To make matters worse on Monday, a nasty gum boil developed on the roof of my mouth, this too has yielded to treatment.

Evelyn has been able to tell us a good deal about old friends many of whom we hope to see.

Grace came away without a hat but Ted is sending one on. We have not had any post from any of the family there yet. I am sure they all will miss their mother.

What do you think we had for dinner today? Real strawberries, real cream and custard! So far no one is any the worse. They were delicious.

Irene has just come over and had afternoon tea with us. Dot has sent me a picture of the newly discovered wooden crocodile in a cave near Potgietersrus. It is supposed to be millions of years old.

A letter from Ruth says she spent the happiest birthday she has ever had. At the end of November she retires from the Red Cross secretaryship then she hopes to settle down to writing articles etc. She often sees David and says both he and Denis are working very hard at their studies.

Joe says he still feels drawn to country life and I wish he could make the change. He says the house he was after has been allotted to another applicant. No word about his promotion. They are thinking of sending Roy to the farm where they all went to for their holiday near Kendrew. Trevor was away from school with a cold and sore throat. Merle is very keen on the Girl Guide movement which she has joined. I am glad to hear it. Joyce Tilley is going to a nursing home at Walmer in December. She is living in Marendellis (Rhodesia I think). Uncle Owen and family are all well. I am hoping to see Maude and Freda before we return to Kroonstad. Blodwen is very busy knitting etc. She has written some songs and poems, some of which have been published. These will be sung at the Railway Orphanage concert in December. The charge for guests at the Kendrew farm is x three £ per head per week. Joe has finished with the health specialist who says he will feel the benefit after this. He is to keep on a strict diet. I hope he is right.

Alan was playing in a cricket match in Pretoria and scored one run and kicked his wicket. His team of under 14 lost the game. Norman played in the tennis team and was also beaten. Jolly good practise to play against stronger teams.

I have received nice letters from Aunt Eliza and also from Aunt Emmie. I expect they will be disappointed that I am not visiting them just at present but I still hope to do so later on. I hope I have not made you tired in reading this long letter. I hope you are all well and that you will not worry about me. Grace is a good nurse and looks after me very well.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

P.O. Box 8, Vryburg, Cape Province
Monday November 3rd, 1947

My dear All,

It is a few minutes past seven and this time last week we were well on our way from Kroonstad to Vryburg. We have experienced a very hot week but very enjoyable one. We have not been off the premises except one afternoon we went to see Frank and Irene who are only one and a half miles distant. They have a very pretty homestead with a grass lawn in front. Both their children are away at school so it is very lonely for them. We have had a number of visitors, especially yesterday, Sunday. Mr and Mrs van der Spuy asked us to go to them for morning tea but Douglas and Evelyn thought it was too hot so invited them to come here. They, too, are just a mile and a half away but in the opposite direction to Frank and Irene. They brought some of their nice cookies with them. Rex, who had spent Saturday afternoon and evening in town, also arrived home and Arthur and Emily phoned that they were coming to dinner so we had a nice family party. Later in the afternoon, Leslie, Gwen and their little boy and Mrs Neville came to supper and stayed the evening. Mrs Neville was a teacher at Tiger Kloof Native Institution and her husband was farm manager there. Their only son was killed in the war and their only daughter married to the only son of Mr Sutherland, a local business man whom we knew here. Mr Neville died on Leslie's farm some years ago and Mrs Neville has made her home with her married daughter now living in Durban and is here on a visit to Leslie and Gwen. She is a very nice lady. Frank and Irene also joined the party at supper which we all enjoyed on the beautiful wide stoep (16 ft). Supper here is generally about 8 o'clock but having the electric light on the stoep, it makes it quite a fairy scene. About nine p.m. they all left for their respective homes after enjoying each others company. I should have mentioned that Maude and Mike Meyer came on Saturday and stayed to dinner. They are both looking very well and was glad to hear that Uncle Owen and family were also well. Eric and Freda were not able to come as their car was not in sufficiently good order. We are hoping to be able to go down and see all that we can in that area. The distance is not more than about 10 or 12 miles but the roads are in such a bad state that it takes about an hour's or more to negotiate the roads and opening of gates.

Mike is very interested in a book which Grace has had for a long time. The back and front binding is missing as also some pages at the front and back are missing and consequently the title of the book is unknown or the publishers. It is a book of several hundred pages and evidently is a book devoted to all forms of games and sport. The immediate interest in the book is in the fact that it contains diagrams and problems regarding soloters, the game which Aunt Eliza has been so interested in for years past. She has had made several solyer borads – some made out of zinc, others in wood. Mike has one of these and has puzzled out various ways of playing the game. Grace has lent him the book and he is thrilled with it. When it is returned, which he promises to do, I will try to type some of the problems for Aunt Eliza and myself. The book also contains illustrations of every conceivable game.

It is now nine a.m. and we have finished breakfast. I am typing this on the stoep and there is a nice cool breeze. It is decidedly cooler than yesterday, it is cloudy and it feels as though it might rain. Rex says he would like to see a fall of anything up to six inches of rainfall now. I have come out in an open neck shirt this morning for the first time for some years. It is delightfully cool. I want to get weighed as soon as there is an opportunity, I think I am putting it on. We have been enjoying strawberries and cream, thick milk, lettuces etc. You should have seen the supper last evening. Vienna sausages on sticks, etc. I did not venture on sausages.

Grace has heard from home that everything is going alright. Ted is still on 12 hours shift. Her hat has arrived safely. I do not know when we shall be going into town but probably Wednesday as Douglas has some meetings to attend. We have been talking a good deal about old friends who I would like to see. There is the usual Road Motor Service post on Mondays and Thursdays. This passes about three miles from here and they send a boy on horseback with letters but they will not leave Vryburg before Tuesday noon so you should get this about Wednesday or Thursday. No one went into town last Friday. I am glad to say that since my last letter – three pages – I have been almost free of toothache but my nose continues to give a certain amount of

trouble. I am sleeping well and enjoying everything. How Mom would revel in the garden! I will not attempt another sheet this post. Hope you are all well, I expect my furniture is on its way from Cradock by now.

Grace sends her love to everybody. 9.30 still nice and cool. Hope it keeps so all day.

Dad

Grass Ridge, P.O. Box 8, Vryburg
Thursday November 6th, 1947

My dear All,

My last dear All was dated Monday 3rd. A lot has happened since then. Tuesday morning we woke about five to hear a very gentle rain falling on the roof. It did not amount to very much it is true, but it was something to be thankful for. It cooled the air and seemed to give a promise of more to follow. Douglas considered it good enough to risk a trip to see Arthur and Emily in their own home at Theronsrust so after arranging matters over the phone, we, that is Douglas, Evelyn, Grace and I left for the farm. It is only about 14 miles distant but the road, or rather track, winds about a good deal. The road is only a farm track and the responsibility for keeping it in order devolves upon the owners of the property through which it passes. The Divisional Councils are only responsible for what are called Divisional, or main roads. Road making is an expensive business for farmers and generally what is anybody's business does not get done. However we got there without incident, passing through dear old Compton Ranch where Douglas and Evelyn spent the first few years of married life. That property is now owned by a Jew who is not from all accounts much of a social asset. We did not stop, much as one would have liked to see the old rooms where we had spent so many happy holidays, especially at Xmas and New Year. Perhaps it is best to let the memory dwell upon the incidents as we enjoyed them at the time.

I had never been to Theronsrust before, the building is on solid stone, small windows and is rather exposed to the wind, of which there is plenty as a rule in Bechuanaland. Of course the house has been done up, modern steel casement windows inserted, ceilings put up, rooms all colour washed, floors cemented and covered with lino and a small flower garden in front and veranda erected so that it has made a very cosy home. At present there was a wind charger to supply sufficient electricity to charge the batteries for one light and the wireless set. They are connected by telephone direct to Vryburg and are on the same party line as Eric and Meyers and Pudimoe. As a rule, several conversations between the various homes takes place. This is a great convenience. Arthur was busy using the planter sowing mealies on the land measuring about eighty morgen. In previous seasons, they have reaped as many as nine hundred bags of mealies from this one land. The little rain we had about a fortnight ago enabled Arthur to plant a portion of this land and it was interesting to see that a crop was already showing up. If more rain falls shortly, they should be assured of a bumper crop. Grace went to the lands with Douglas and had her first experience of riding on the tractor, by no means an easy machine to ride over a ploughed field. I obeyed orders and had a rest and a little nap whilst dinner was being prepared. Emily is a good provider and we all enjoyed the good things set before us. After another rest, we moved on to see Maude and Mike Meyers who live a few miles distant. Emily accompanied us as well. We stopped en route to see Arthur working the planter, all very interesting. Lansdowne, named after Uncle Owen's old farm near Grass Ridge, I visited some years ago when Douglas took Mom and I there and on to Tilley's farm before Eric and Freda bought Hollodene.

Mike has made wonderful improvements around the homestead. He is evidently a good landscape gardener as well as an all round farmer. He has laid out the garden in front of his house most artistically. A large wire thorn tree, a rare variety, has been protected in such a way that it forms an outstanding landmark. He has a large fishpond, a fountain, ornamental arches – all his own handiwork, granolithic dais, rock garden etc. We chaffed him as it seemed as though he made elaborate preparations for the reception of the Royal family. The house, an old stone building, with small windows is completely covered with Virginian creeper and is a wonderful sight. It has covered two sides of the house but the side facing south suffered considerably from the recent hailstorm. In the autumn, with the beautiful tints, it must have provided a wonderful sight. Their cooler, a building built of stones of volcanic origin, very light and of a porous nature is built on lines similar to what I saw years ago on Col. Roger's farm at Dry Harts.

After refreshments, we moved on to see Eric and Freda Fear who are a few miles away and on the way back to Theronsrust. It was past five when we got there and both were ready waiting for us. I recognised the front garden from the film Joe took some years ago. Both were very jolly and looking well, I thought, but Grace did not think Eric was as well as I thought he was. Eric is hoping

that they will have a good season so that it can set them on their feet. The prospects do seem more favourable than for some time past. It was getting late so we did not stop long but shall look forward to seeing them again. Unfortunately, Eric does not like to use his car off the main road to Pudimoe Station as if he gets any car trouble on the farm roads, he is properly stranded whilst he can always depend on getting some help if anything goes wrong along the main road. They are the nearest neighbours to Arthur and Emily which in case of an emergency might be very convenient.

We dropped Emily at her home and shortly afterwards the sun set on our way back to Grass Ridge. We had a most enjoyable outing and the day was delightful.

So far did I get before dinner. Now I want to tell you of our doings yesterday. The morning was not as cool as Tuesday was but Douglas thought it would be alright to go to town after dinner. He had a business meeting to attend at 7 p.m. so we four started off about three, arriving there at four. We soon contacted the Mayor, Mr Galvin, the Editor of my old paper, Mr Woodcock, and one or two others. Needless to say we had much to talk about, water supply for the town, one and another who had passed on and others who are still in the flesh. Evelyn and Grace buzzed off somewhere and left me with Major Woodcock who showed me over the old Northern News office. We had all had tea together first. The shop and office all seemed so much smaller than when I was there but of course it is just the same size. One of the assistants who worked for me is still there. She has had a troubled married life, a large family and had to divorce her husband but was still able to work. A native boy working in the office recognised me when I was in charge of all the Location during the 1918 plague epidemic. I hope to see the boy again. Another old hand I was glad to see was a young man named Archer, who still has a wry neck. He has been with Mr Woodcock ever since and was pleased to see me. A new typesetting machine, costing over £1500, has been installed and the two typographs I had have been scrapped. They rendered me very good service all the time I had them and for years since. Mr Woodcock is very well pleased with the business he is doing. His paper is much better supported by advertisers than I was. He is talking of building larger premises at the rear of the building.

Then Joe took us for a drive round part of the town to see how the place has grown during the 21 years since I left Vryburg. It is surprising, so many new and nicer houses and shops and offices. We did not go into any but one could judge by the outside appearance the great improvements that have been made. I was very pleased to meet Mrs Jones, the young lady who wrote to the YMCA about a relative who lived in Bechuanaland. I was able to give all the information needed. To cut a long story short, she eventually came out to South Africa and married Mr Jones who I knew very well. She has just returned by air from a visit to Ireland. She has two children living here. We called to see the young lady Rex is interested in and I expect she will be coming out for a weekend whilst we are still here. Her father is a retired bank manager and is working as book-keeper in one of the large stores.

Douglas had got in touch with the minister of the Congregational Church who knew me in Cape Town who kindly invited the lot of us to supper at the manse. Being Guy Fawkes night, the three children were very excited about their crackers and bonfire. Rev Blake has only been in Vryburg for just a year and is very much liked, especially by the young people. Since I left Vryburg, the old church and schoolroom has been sold and a new church and manse erected. All this was of interest to me as I was secretary and the treasurer in my day. The old manse was in bad repair in my day and was eventually pulled down to make room for the new one. Unfortunately there is no room on which to build a new schoolroom. The new church is badly cracked as all buildings in Vryburg are affected. Ruth's mother was very interested – as well as others – in collecting funds to build the old Sunday School hall as a memorial to the late Mrs Willie Brown. Now there is no money or room on which to build a new hall to her memory. I had a rest whilst Mr Blake played with the children and about 10.15, Douglas came from his meeting and we left for Grass Ridge in the dark and arrived safely home about 1.15 after a most enjoyable and interesting afternoon and evening. We collected our post and I was reading the letters until midnight. Mrs Short was here to afternoon tea and has taken Grace in her lorry to see Mrs van der Spuy. We brought out their post and left it in their post box at their gate as we passed.

You will be glad to hear that Aunt Eliza has fixed up with Mrs Mayhew to be with her for three months whilst Mary goes on holiday. Mary is going to Jeffrey's wedding in Grahamstown on 29th. My furniture has left Cradock – about 20 packages, but I do not expect they will arrive at Kroonstad. In any case Ted has prepared an outside room in which to store them.

A telegram arrived from Lynne yesterday announcing her engagement to McDougall of Queenstown. Bobby Collen is getting married on Saturday 8th in Queenstown.

There may be an opportunity of getting post tomorrow as the van der Spuys are going into town. No one from here is going although they generally do go on Fridays. Evelyn is helping serve at some function on Saturday so perhaps we shall go in then. I want to reply to the letters we got last night so will close this with love to all and thanks for letters received and hopes for more.

Dad

Grass Ridge, P.O. Box 8, Vryburg
Monday November 10th, 1947

My dear All,

I do not know exactly what time the sun rises here but it is before six. My room does not get the first rays of sunshine as it faces nearly west, Grace gets the sun earlier. It is a nice bright morning and I have just had the seven o'clock news, which by the way does not sound too good. Fresh outbreaks of plague somewhere, Arabs in a very threatening mood over Palestine. The world is still upside down and will remain so until the nations look to tackle matters from the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. May that be soon.

Tomorrow, 11th, would be my Mother's birthday and Wednesday is Mary's. You will be glad to hear that Aunt Eliza has fixed up with Mrs Mayhew for three months so as to let Mary have three months holiday, which she well deserves. She will be going to Jeffrey's wedding on 29th and on to Graaff Reinet from Grahamstown. Of course she is also going to General Meeting at Stellenbosch in January. We have completed two weeks stay here today and a very happy time it has been. We have had some hot and some cool days. On Friday no one from here went to town, an unusual occurrence as Friday is THE day for meeting friends and shopping. We were in on Wednesday and as Evelyn had promised to help at some function on Saturday morning, she and Rex went in by lorry and did not get back until the small hours of Sunday morning. They went to the Pictures in the evening. Douglas, Grace and I were invited to supper at Frank's. I took my halma board, a game which they had never seen before and quite enjoyed it. Their home is only about 1½ miles distant and is quite a pretty place with grass lawn in front and many flowers as well. We were home before ten. How we all watched the clouds for signs of rain. We hear one town in the Free State had six inches in half an hour. We have only had one shower, about 18 points, but for all that the veldt is looking remarkably green. Douglas has taken us about to parts of the farm to see some of his cattle and they look remarkably well and in good condition.

Yesterday was Remembrance Day. Douglas had phoned Mr Bull Metcalf and arranged to meet us before service. This we did over a cup of tea etc. Mr and Mrs and Miss Wookey (former matron of Kimberley Hospital and where Cousin Katie Crew was employed) and Miss Brown from Kuruman and Metcalf's youngest daughter were present. There was not much time for talk but we hope to meet them again next Friday when we go to town again. My old friend, I.P. Frylinck, an old Cradock boy, was pleased to see us after the service and we enjoyed each others company. There were other old friends who gave me a welcome, and whom I hope to see again. Grace had not been to Vryburg since she was married. We got back about one in time for a nice cold lunch. To my surprise, I slept after lunch till nearly five. Next Sunday service is to be held here when I expect the Hudsons and others will attend.

Dot writes that their new minister, a candidate, has arrived and made a very favourable impression. They have been working for years to get their own man. Dot fears that her nurse girl has left without notice at the end of the month. Joan has had a sore throat like she had in Cradock. Water restrictions are in force there as elsewhere. The heat has been up to 99 in shade. Mr Stock writes that his pet dog has been very ill. He is so fond of dogs and trains them very well. We are hoping to hear from Joe if he is coming here for a few days as he has to take another weeks holiday before the end of December or forfeit the week. Perhaps he might return with us to Kroonstad. No word of the arrival of my furniture yet. We have been enjoying some of this season's apricots. There is a good crop here. As showing the friendship existing between the churches, I should have mentioned that the local Jewish community supplied and paid for a new pulpit in the Congregational Church, it is built of brick and cement. Douglas has thought of most things for my comfort and convenience. He erected handrail from the stoep so as to help me up and down the few steps. He also got a reflector lamp attached to my bed for reading. Grace did the same at Kroonstad. I am running the risk of being spoiled. I wonder how Reg and Dot will get on if the Government imposes petrol restrictions just as they are planning to go to Port Alfred via Maritzburg etc. I hope they will try to see Muriel if it comes off. Dot won a prize at their recent flower show for best decorated flower basket. They took over £200 at their bazaar for furniture fund for the Manse. They are real goers for work.

Post goes in by Bus service this morning and it means sending a boy with it about three miles to catch the bus so I must be brief. Am glad to say I am keeping very well. My nose has not been troubling me for some time. I have not had reason to take medicine for quite a while. I want to weigh myself as soon as I get the chance. Grace too is putting on weight. Evelyn's knees are quite better. You should see how she works in the garden. Rex too is always busy. I did not see the armoured truck working at Theronsrust last week but Arthur uses it for hauling the plough etc. It is of course dismantled of all its guns etc. It is a very heavy piece of machinery. Must stop now and write to Lynne on her engagement.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

Grass Ridge, P.O. Box 8, Vryburg, Cape Province

As Friday November 14th, 1947

My dear All,

I am starting another letter as things seem to be happening rather faster than I can keep up with them. It is Thursday morning and we have just finished breakfast. My last was dated Monday 10th and a good deal happened since then. Tuesday we stayed at home but in the evening, the van der Spuys and Irene came to supper and we enjoyed sitting on the wide stoep talking about farming matters, rainfalls, etc. Of course there is electric light on the stoep and this attracts the insect life in abundance. It had been a very hot day and we watched the clouds for indications of rain which did not come. It is very nice sitting on the stoep "so long" but I often felt that I should be doing something else. As a matter of fact, I have read two books which have interested me greatly. One, The Skeleton Coast by John H. Marsh and the other The Atlantic Meeting by the famous writer, H.V. Morton. Both are true stories of what happened. I have no time for fiction. Truth is far more interesting than fiction. The first, The Skeleton Coast describes the sufferings and endurance of a shipwrecked crew off the South West coast of Africa and how 60 odd people were rescued after some weeks of anxiety. The Atlantic Meeting of course describes the meeting of Churchill and Roosevelt. I advise anyone to read either or both if you have the chance.

I did eat my first ripe apricot that morning and I asked Grace to take care of the pip and plant it in her garden when she gets home and I hope it will grow. I would like it to be as a memorial to our visit to Grass Ridge. Since then, we have had more and some stewed, all perfectly sound and of excellent flavour.

The big news is now to follow. Whilst at breakfast on Wednesday, a wire came from Joe saying he was leaving on Saturday afternoon and would arrive here on Monday morning about five. He could stay a fortnight or longer. There was great rejoicings. Douglas has phoned to Arthur to meet the train at Pudimoe about three a.m. and we will motor over to Theronrust later in the day and bring him here. No doubt he will see Maude and Mike and Eric and Freda on the way. Arthur is nearer to Pudimoe than we are to Vryburg. So we are all looking forward to seeing him soon. No definite arrangements have been made about his going back with us to Kroonstad but there is that possibility. If it should happen, it would be nearly a family gathering with only Dot being absent. However we shall wait and see.

Douglas had a meeting to attend in town in the afternoon so at 2 p.m. he motored Grace and I with him. I had some shopping to do and people to see. It was a very hot afternoon but there were lots of clouds about and we hoped we might have rain before we got to town but by the time we arrived, all the clouds had vanished. Douglas invited the ex M.P. to have afternoon tea with us at the Café and we enjoyed a good talk about ancient days. It was nice to hear him say that I was right in many of my articles on local and political affairs although at the time he was opposed to them. He is not taking any part in public affairs now.

I took the opportunity of getting my hair cut and beard trimmed, I am told that I look quite smart! I visited Brown, Rayner & Co store and met some old friends there. Some were in the Sons of England in my day, others in Sunday School etc. They all remarked how well I was looking. I met the Provincial Council member who was one of the leading farmers in my day. I hope to see more of him. Whilst Douglas was attending his meeting, Grace and I spent the time with Mrs Rowe, mother of the young lady Rex is interested in. She was busy watering her garden and complains of the shortage of water for that purpose. Water has always been a scarce commodity in Vryburg as they are dependent upon boreholes for their supply. In spite of the shortage, the town has grown and is still growing rapidly. New shops and dwellings are springing up all over the place. Vacant spots are being built upon. The premises I had first when I went to Vryburg were destroyed by fire a little while ago, new shops are nearly completed now. The hotel opposite the Northern News has been rebuilt as a double storey and looks very nice. We enjoyed a nice cool orange drink at Mrs Rowe's. Mr Rowe was not home from work. He is a retired bank manager and is now in the employ of a local Jewish Factory who manufacture the famous double crown yeast etc. Miss Rowe was attending the same meeting as Douglas so we did not see much of her. However they are all coming out here on Sunday as it is the monthly preaching day. We left their

house at five minutes past seven, the sun had set and there was not a cloud in the sky. We were home in 45 minutes and it was nice and cool. Venus was very brilliant in the western sky and was setting very shortly after the sun had gone down. It was worth looking at.

Frank and Irene were at Grass Ridge. Frank is very keen on halma and is going to make his own board he says. I tried to get the game in town but without success. I was in bed by nine, none the worse for the outing.

We are going in again on Friday and on Monday we shall go over to Theronrust to fetch Joe. I managed to get some more paper as I had not brought enough from Kroonstad. This, with what I still have in Kroonstad, should last me for a couple of years. Douglas has arranged for me to see his Dr on Friday as I am getting very deaf.

I still have a little more of the off cut sheets and a little more news to tell so I may as well do it now. Denis has sent me a beautiful photo of Anthony taken at 11 months old. He weighs 24 lbs and has seven teeth and Denis says he is as mischievous as a bag full of monkeys. He is certainly a very fine child and I hope to see him one of these days. I will be sending the photo round for inspection as soon as the others have seen it. Thanks Denis.

Another piece of news is that on Tuesday I received a certificate from the Headquarters of the South African Boy Scout Association, a certificate signed by the Governor General as Chief Scout for Africa "as evidence that he has been awarded the Medal of Merit of the Boy Scouts in recognition of his good services to the Movement". There is also a covering letter from the Council of the Boy Scout Association of the Union of South Africa as follows:

"By direction of the Chief Scout's Commissioner, Sir Herbert Stanley, GCMG, I have to inform you that the South African Headquarters has awarded you the Medal of Merit, in recognition of your long and good services to the Boy Scout Movement, I am also required to convey to you an expression of great gratitude for all that you have done for Scouting in Cradock, and to offer you South African Headquarters' warmest congratulations on this well merited award. Signed Kenneth Fleisher, General Secretary."

There are also letters of congratulations from the Deputy Divisional Commissioner and General Secretary of the Cape Midlands Division expressing the hope of being able to present the Medal personally when I visit Cradock or Uitenhage.

This all sounds very nice but I am sure I do not deserve the honour as all I did was to keep the movement going as Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer when no one else would take office during the war years.

And now for another surprise. Just before dinner, we received another telegram from Joe saying he had at last received his looked for promotion as from Saturday 15th and under the circumstances he did not think it wise to leave and further that Roy was showing signs of pneumonia. Of course we are disappointed but under the circumstances, we could not do otherwise than wire our congratulations and hope for the best. I don't suppose he will come before Xmas in any case.

Dot writes that they went to Pretoria for the weekend, their longest trip so far in the lorry. There was a special "do" for the school war memorial when over £200 was raised. Joan slept on the floor of the cab on the return trip. They took her to the zoo and there they met Mr and Mrs Halliday. Mrs Halliday senior was not well. They also met Mr and Mrs Ted Browne, formerly of Vryburg. It is just about a month now before they start on their holiday trip through Natal, Port St Johns to Port Alfred etc. They will be regular globe trotters by the time they have done. It is quite overcast today and we hope it will rain.

Arthur reports four large oxen have died during the last four days from something he does not know what. Hard luck. I will reserve space for any "late news" that may come along before posting tomorrow.

Friday 14th, 6.30 a.m. Douglas, Evelyn, Grace and I leave for town about 9 so must finish this off. No further news from Joe so hope Roy is alright. I am to see Dr and perhaps Dentist. Am getting deaf, I am sorry to say. There is a Church meeting this afternoon and Douglas is chairman. He has asked me to attend same. There is also a women's meeting which Grace will attend. It will be a long day but I feel quite equal to it. Rex goes to town tomorrow for tennis etc. Kingsley is due

home next week. Arthur lost four head of cattle in four days recently and Rex lost three pigs lately. Cause of death in both cases unknown.

The lawns and garden hedges have been trimmed up the last few days. It is service here on Sunday afternoon. Hope Hudsons, Fears, Arthur and Emily and others will be here. I must really stop and get the seven o'clock news, then breakfast and off.

Much love to each and all,

Dad

Grass Ridge, P.O. Box 8, Vryburg, Cape Province
Monday November 17th, 1947

My dear All,

I have had to get some fresh paper as my stock which I brought from Kroonstad is practically exhausted. I fear that the carbon copies will not come out too clearly although I am using my best carbon for copies. However will hope for the best.

We had a full day in town on Friday, arrived there about 9.45 and left at sunset. Douglas hired a room at the hotel opposite Northern News and we had dinner there as well. There was a function of bring and buy at the club and there I met a number of old friends, including the local Member of Parliament with whom I had a good talk on the liquor question. It was very hot but we kept in the shade as much as we could. Leslie and Gwen Hudson were there and Mrs Hart was in town as well. We thought she was looking remarkably well. She has to use a walking stick. She was at the Dr when I went to there in the afternoon about my hearing. He said there was a quantity of wax in my right ear but not so much in the left. We are to apply oil for three days before next Friday when I am to go again in the morning and in the afternoon as well. He also looked at my troublesome tooth and as soon as I get back to Kroonstad, I will have it out. My nose has not been giving me trouble since I have been here. In the afternoon, the ladies had a church meeting, Evelyn and Grace went to it and at about six, the Monthly meeting of the Church Committee was held. I was invited to attend and was pleased to do so. I was able to give them some information regarding the Sunday School Hall which was built with money collected by Ruth's mother and Mrs Rickett in memory of the first Mrs Willie Brown. The Church and Sunday School Hall have since been sold and a new church built but not the Sunday School Hall. There is no funds available at present.

I had a nap at the hotel after lunch so was not too tired for the rest of the day. Saturday was spent at home but Sunday was a full day. In the morning, Arthur, Emily and Eric and Freda arrived and Frank and Irene had the Minister and family to dinner at their home, about 1½ miles from here. Leslie and Gwen and their little boy arrived and Mr and Mrs Rowe motored out and stayed to dinner. Their daughter came out with Rex the evening before. There were 14 of us to dinner and such a dinner it was. Evelyn arranged everything so nicely. The large table in the Hall, with additional table added to it, was crowded with good things. Everything served cold. A fat sheep had been previously prepared, cold salads etc. A very handsome dinner service with small decorated mats for the dinner plates and smaller plates and even mats for each tumbler. The flower decorations – roses especially – were very pretty. Sweets in the way of jellies, custards, blancmange etc and cold drinks were well patronised. It was indeed a splendid spread. After this, a rest for some of us whilst others played tennis. Service was at 3 when about 25 to 30 attended. Rev and Mrs Blake and their three children were there. It being Temperance Sunday and also the centenary of the death of Rev Luyte, the author of "Abide with Me" was referred to and the hymn sung. It was a nice service. More tennis followed for those who like it whilst others sat on the stoep and others in the shade near the court. I rested.

Visitors left about seven and we four, Douglas, Evelyn, Grace and me had supper in the cool of the evening on the stoep. Arthur, Emily and Rex left with Eric and Freda, the twins returning to town with Mr and Mrs Rowe. Kingsley is expected home in a day or two and we may go to visit the Hudsons on Wednesday and to town on Friday.

Ted phoned a few days ago that they had been down with tummy trouble and the servant was not there so Grace is naturally anxious to get home. However Ted phoned at six this morning that the girl had turned up and they could carry on to the end of the week. So Douglas is going to motor us to Kroonstad next Sunday morning. We got the post bag this morning but found the key of same had been left in the car, which would be in Kimberley by this time. However Douglas got two letters out, one from David and the other from Joe. He did not cut open the bag. Joe writes that he is on three months trial before his appointment is confirmed but as he has been acting for the past ten months, there cannot be any doubt but he will get the appointment. Roy was improving. They have had lots of rain there also in Grahamstown. Anthony's photo has been greatly admired by all the visitors. No word of my furniture arriving in Kroonstad yet. Everyone seems busy with school exams now. I hope they all do well. Jean has been selected as the Head Girl in her school. We

wired congratulations to her. Ruth has sent a snap of herself and partner who won the bowling championship cup in Port Elizabeth recently. I am afraid this is a very scrappy letter but it has been under pressure and shortness of time.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

Grass Ridge, P.O. Box 8, Vryburg, Cape Province
Saturday November 22nd, 1947

My dear All,

This will be my last letter from Vryburg for some time I suppose as we leave after breakfast tomorrow morning. We arrived here on October 27th and depart November 23rd, practically a month. We have had fine weather for the most part – some very windy days, others very hot ones, plenty of dusty ones. Yesterday in Vryburg was about the worst and reminded me forcibly of similar days when living here before. Thursday, after listening to the account of the Royal Wedding, we watched at the lightning and hoped for a good downpour which did not come. However, about 4.40 this morning, a nice shower fell and as I write – noon – 30 points have been registered and there is every appearance of more to follow. It will make it nice for travelling tomorrow if it does come. Ted phoned a little while ago to know when to expect us. No rain had fallen there.

Rex and Kingsley passed us going to tennis as we were coming home yesterday afternoon. They have just phoned that there has been a big rain in town and tennis is consequently off. We are expecting Arthur and Emily any minute as Arthur was also going to play this afternoon. Arthur, Emily and Rex went to Kimberly by car on Tuesday and met Kingsley there and all returned on Wednesday. Kingsley is just about six feet high, looks very well and is coming with us tomorrow to Kroonstad, just for the pleasure of the ride and seeing the rest of Grace's family. Kingsley has finished his exam and thinks he has passed. Now he has three months holiday.

On Wednesday afternoon, Douglas motored us to Leslie Hudson's home and we spent a very happy afternoon and evening, leaving there about nine. The homeward journey took about an hour. There were quite a number of gates to open – Evelyn and Grace do all this sort of work. I am willing but am not allowed to do it. However Douglas manages to drive on these roads at night is a marvel but he does. Yesterday it was so hot in town that I shed my waistcoat, today I have a warm suit on and my cardigan as well. I had two appointments with the Dr yesterday. At ten he put some dioxygen into my ears to soften the wax and in the afternoon cleaned both ears and I hope to be able to hear better. The three previous evenings, Grace has been putting oil in – according to order.

Evelyn took in a quantity of apricots "for sale" or giving away ...[unreadable] in future Order of Merit)! She tells a good story against Joan. When at Pretoria, she and Reg were in conversation with the Principal of School. Joan and the boys were a little distance away. Joan came running to her and immediately clung her arms around the Principal's legs. She says she remembers doing something similar when a child and I was getting out of the bus – no motors in those far off days – and embracing the legs of the first person who alighted. Girls should be more careful who they embrace.

After dinner and a rest, it is still raining. Arthur and Emily arrived in time for dinner. I think they will sleep here tonight. I forgot to mention that Dr had a good look at my old tooth and said the sooner it was out the better it would be. So I hope on Monday that the Kroonstad dentist will have it out. Dr would not make any charge for his service. We drove up to the hospital but did not go inside. We have not been able to go to the cemetery to see Pat's grave. Douglas took me as far as the station to see how the town has grown in that direction.

Joe and Blodwen both write that Roy is better. Blodwen fears she will have to give up the idea of going to Cape Town as no arrangements have been made for Roy's holiday. I hope way will open in the desired direction. Reg and Dot are still looking to start on their jaunt in a few weeks time.

A nice letter from Lynne on receipt of our congratulations. A party of four of them are trying to get a motor and come up for Xmas. I shall get off my Xmas cards early in December, they are already addressed and waiting in Kroonstad. As Joe cannot take the extra weeks holiday at this juncture, I am thinking of asking Clifford if he would not like a holiday(?) and come for a week and help unpack when the furniture arrives. So far there is no word of it. He would know where the different things were packed. I have not mentioned the matter to him yet. I do not think there will be any advantage in posting this as we go through Vryburg on Sunday so I may as well leave a few lines to report our arrival and post on Sunday.

I see I have typed twice over a line about half way up. I cannot remember exactly what was under but the top should read "Dot has asked me if in future she add O.M. after my name in addressing my envelopes". Today is Tony's first anniversary. We have sent him a joint telegram of congratulations.

Kroonstad, Monday 24th.

We left Grass Ridge at 9.10 Sunday morning and arrived here safe and sound – but tired – at 3.00 p.m. Beautiful rains fell on Saturday afternoon and night which cooled the air and made parts of the roads sloppy. Douglas drove all the way. Evelyn and Kingsley were in the front seat and Grace and I in the back. We changed over for part of the way. The car was very comfortable. Douglas, Evelyn and Kingsley will be returning Tuesday via Odendaalsrus.

Love to all,
Dad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
as Thursday November 27th, 1947

My dear All,

Here I am back in Kroonstad and back with a supply of the old original thin paper. My first words must be of deep gratitude to Douglas and Evelyn for their great kindness to Grace and me during the four weeks we were under their hospitable roof. Everything that could add to our comfort and convenience was done for us and we both enjoyed the change and rest. We were taken to see most, if not all, our relations in those parts and saw many old friends of former days and made fresh associations. I did not see all that I wanted to see but must leave something for another time. All who knew me in former days remarked how well I was looking. Some even said I did not appear to have got any older.

Grass Ridge home is indeed a lovely home, there are so many comforts and conveniences – wireless, telephone, two cars, hot and cold water night and day, plenty of cream, butter, homemade bread, jams, fruits etc. Early coffee was brought to the rooms between five and six and one could sleep as long as one wanted too. Of the garden I have previously written, it needs to be seen to really be enjoyed. Arthur and Rex are a great help to their father. Of course Arthur and Emily are on their own now but can communicate by phone as often as they like. Evelyn's brother and his wife are about 1½ miles distant and often either walk or motor over. Both their children are away at school so no doubt they feel lonely at times. Irene is a great knotter and is always busy. The Metcalfe family have recently left Bechuanaland and moved into the Transvaal but a Mr and Mrs van der Spuy have purchased their farm and are very good neighbours. I think I may have mentioned before that Mrs van der Spuy was a teacher and taught Grace when she took her matric. They have two children, one is at home and the other away. They help each other in getting post from town etc. Douglas is a very busy man and is constantly being called upon by one and another for advice on matters of farming etc. He is Chairman of a Meat Co-operative concern which takes up a lot of his time. He is also interested in a consumers co-operative concern so as to bring producer and consumer closer together and so reduce the cost of living. He has a lot of machinery on the farm, motor tractors, mechanical planters, reapers, ploughs, windmills, and plenty of water from boreholes. There are no less than six windmills, all supplying an abundance of water, in close proximity to his dwelling house. He has his own engine for his electric light. A great attraction is the 16 foot veranda round two sides of his beautiful house. You can always find a cool spot where you can sit and enjoy the breeze. Unfortunately the insect life in the evening is attracted to the light. On calm evenings, the evening meal is often held on the stoep. The fruit, apricots, figs, strawberries, mulberries and grapes later on are in abundance. The first ripe apricot I asked Grace to plant the pip in her garden and hope it will grow and be a memorial of our happy visit. On the day before we left, one of the servants found a six foot snake swimming in one of the reservoirs near the house. Douglas soon put an end to its life history. We did not see much game on the farm but the cattle we saw are in excellent condition. They are milking about sixty cows every day. The quantity of cattle on the various farms must run into four figures.

I managed to get so far on Wednesday afternoon and must finish this so as to get it off today and I hope you will all receive it on Saturday. The journey across was quite comfortable, the rain that had fallen on Saturday settled the dust but made some of the road muddy. We stopped for morning and afternoon tea and completed the journey from door to door in exactly six hours, the distance being 208 miles. They were expecting us and we received a warm welcome. Neither Douglas or Evelyn and Kingsley had ever been to this home before and but for the shortage of another bedroom, think it quite a suitable place. After further discussions, it is hoped that an additional room may be built before the end of the year. David is due either on Saturday or Sunday. He may be attending Jeffrey's wedding on Saturday. Harold will be home for Xmas and in the meantime, Ted is fixing up the garage as a temporary bedroom for them. Ted and the girls went to evening service, we were too tired. Ernest Saunders and wife came down in the afternoon and Pam and Jean slept at the Saunders the two nights Douglas and Co were here.

On Monday afternoon my furniture arrived. I had a sort of presentiment that it would come as soon as I was back. One package, however, has not turned up, the spring mattress belonging to

my bed. Ted and I went to the station about it and it appears that the label had torn off. They have not yet delivered it but expect it today. So far my wardrobe only is in my room. Two of the glass doors in the bookcase got broken and one leg of a chair has also broken. Have not unpacked any of the smaller things yet. It will take me quite a time to get settled in. I was thinking of asking Clifford if he would like to come and help me but it will not be necessary now. Douglas and Co motored a good deal about the town, saw the old plot and the new extensions to the town and I think they are all favourably impressed. They left on their return trip home via Odendaalsrus on Tuesday morning and expected to be back in Vryburg by about dinnertime. We have not heard of their arrival yet but no doubt they got through safely.

All this holiday has been provided by Douglas at no expense to us. I naturally wanted to contribute my share to the cost of petrol etc but he would not hear of it. I feel deeply indebted to him for his kindness. It has been a long desired pleasure on my part to pay a visit to my scattered family and now it has been accomplished, I am deeply gratified and shall look forward to seeing them all again some day. I thank all for their great kindness to me.

I am glad to say we found all the family well on our return. They had all suffered from tummy trouble and the servant was also away for a few days but they managed to keep going. Pam stayed home from work for a couple of days whilst Ted was laid up but they are all OK now. Jean has been sitting for her 1st year matric exam and all hope she has done well.

On Tuesday afternoon, Grace and I called on the mother of the young man who has recently got married to Alice Bigg's daughter – have forgotten her name- and Grace is out attending the market. She happened to be out but came across in the evening. She lives in the same street. She brought us some snaps which were interesting. She leaves this evening for Graaff Reinet. By yesterday's post, we received a snap from Alice showing the four generations.

If plans have worked out according to plan, I suppose Mary is in Grahamstown to attend Jeffrey's wedding on Saturday. I shall hope to hear from Aunt Eliza how she is getting on. I hope her letters will continue to arrive as usual. At the moment I have an accumulation of correspondence to deal with, most of it to be sent on to one and another.

The holiday position seems somewhat confused so far as Uitenhage is concerned. Blodwen writes that she fears her trip to Cape Town may have to be abandoned as no invitation has been received for Joe and Roy to visit any of the farms but Joe, in his last letter, says seats have been provisionally booked for Blodwen, Merle, Trevor and Dan for Cape Town. Joe does not think he should take the extra week's leave now that he has been promoted but says he may take a run up to Cradock at Aunt Eliza's invitation. Of course he knows that he is always welcome at Vryburg or here and Roy too. Potgietersrus is out of the question this year as Reg and Dot will be away. However, I hope way will open for all to have a jolly good time. David is hoping to get a job locally for the three months that he has before returning to College. David will be home for a fortnight about December 16th. Mrs Walker was here last evening with Mr Walker and they may be going on a visit to Bothaville – near here – and would like someone to occupy her house whilst they are away, this may help the sleeping accommodation here as the house is in the same street and not far away. My 500 or more Xmas cards are all ready addressed and in their envelopes and will probably be posted next week so as to get them out of the way.

Trixie and family have been on a visit to Dot. Dot says her lorry is being got ready for their trip. I hope all goes well. Am afraid we shall be out of touch so far as the postal service is concerned. Joan is being taken to the bio for the first time this week, I wonder how she will like it.

Roy was allowed to do his exam papers at the home of his teacher as he was not able to go to school at the time. He is now OK so far as his health is concerned. Hope he continues to improve.

Rev Ludlow has written suggesting I supply a new table for the communion rail in memory of Mother. I am considering it and should like to hear the views of the family.

A letter from Gladys Norman says Kenneth Maskell is selling his farm Dwaal. Harvey Brown's daughter, Una, is to be married in February. Gladys gives me a pressing invitation to come to them for the next Fish River Fete, Ascension Day, May 6th. I should like to be there but am not making any promises at this stage.

I have an appointment with the Dentist for four p.m. Friday when I hope to part company with my tooth which has given a good deal of trouble in recent years. I might have had to go to a Dr an hour or so ago as I fell whilst going through the opening in the iron fence and scratched both legs and one elbow but Grace has fixed me up.

I hope to hear that all are well at the different homes. Lots of love to all and again many thanks to Douglas and Evelyn and family for all that they did for us during our stay with them,

Dad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
as Wednesday December 3rd, 1947

My dear all,

The last month of the year has arrived, a lot has happened since the beginning of 1947 and no one can foretell what may yet happen before the end of this month. We must wait and see.

I had hoped to do a dear all yesterday but could not manage it. Grace took me to her Dr – the same one who treated me before. He examined the offending tooth. I asked him if he thought my heart would stand the shock. He examined the heart and said he would not give a full anaesthetic as that would give me more trouble than the pain caused by the extraction. He proceeded with the job. The crown with the gold stopping at once broke off, that was painful enough but when he tackled the remaining stump, it was more than I could stand. It took him some minutes before he succeeded. The pain was dreadful. Grace was in the adjoining room but came in after the tooth was out. The nurse also was in attendance and gave me water – and something in it, I don't know what it was – to revive me. Grace did the fanning and I suppose I was resting on the couch for nearly an hour before he said I could go home. That was Friday afternoon and I have not been able to eat anything since. Even to swallow anything is very painful. So yesterday afternoon, Grace took me again to see him. My face was swollen considerably and my throat is so swollen and very sore. However, he has given me some tablets and I have to rinse my mouth with permanganate crystals frequently. I hope it is not going to continue long like this. However it is out and won't happen again. The tooth should have been out years ago.

On Saturday we were half expecting David to arrive home but had no definite word as to how he was coming. Ted went to the station to meet the regular train about midnight and whilst waiting there, who should turn up but David. He had arrived by car shortly before and so went to the station to fetch his Dad.

It appears that a Motor dealer in Johannesburg had been round the country purchasing second-hand cars and engaged four Rhodes students to bring the cars up, he paying all expenses. They had to pick one up at Hofmeyr, one at Steynsbury. The other three students went to one of the hotels. David had by far the best car to drive. After breakfast, David motored us to the river and about town and by ten they were all off to Johannesburg. Pam joined David for the trip and they both returned by train the same night. David has three months holiday but of course has to put in a lot of study work. He may get a job in one of the stores here. There is also talk of Harold being transferred here from Johannesburg. Ted is fixing up the garage as an extra bedroom for the boys whilst here. He has submitted a plan to the Town Council for a new room to be erected at the back of the house. It will be nice for the family to be all together again. Jean thinks she has done fairly well at her exams. She sticks to her work very well and I hope she passes.

Douglas phoned reporting their safe arrival home. Evelyn too has sent a card. The roads they travelled over were worse than we had. It is Lynne's birthday on 4th. Hope she has a happy day. Joe writes that Roy was allowed to sit for his exams in the house of his teacher as he was not well enough to attend school. He rather crows over the others in his class as he was given tea and cake. They have bought a fridge which they have wanted for years. Joe does not mention holidays but I hope nothing will prevent Blodwen and some of the children going to Cape Town. If Joe cannot see his way to go to Vryburg or here, he will, I hope, accept Aunt Eliza's invitation.

I have got my wardrobe and revolving chair in my room but other things will have to wait. The leg of one chair got broken and two of the glass doors in the long bookcase were broken. The smaller things I have not attempted to unpack.

Tuesday afternoon.

My dear All,

Dad has deputed me to finish off his letter but I think I had better try one on my own. Dad is not at all bright this afternoon. The tooth was removed on Friday afternoon, and it was a nasty performance. It was done by our Doctor in his surgery and I brought Dad home after he had rested a good while. He got up as usual on Saturday and Sunday, even went to Church in the morning. In the afternoon he started complaining of the pain in his ear again and on Monday morning, he had a slight swelling under the jaw, so we went down to the surgery again and saw the Doctor, who gave him some tablets to take. Since then it has become more and more difficult to swallow, so after dinner the doctor came again and is sending some tablets to deaden the pain, so that he can take more liquids and then the original tablets will be able to operate more effectively. He says the glands under the tongue and near the ear are swollen. This afternoon the swelling is centred under the chin and is hard and sore to the touch, as if an abscess were forming but this is not what the doctor says. It is with the greatest difficulty that Dad can swallow a mouthful of liquid. Still the Dr thinks he will overcome the trouble, and will call again soon, and if necessary give him some Penicillin injections.

That is all I can tell you in the meantime. Douglas should be in Bloemfontein today, if I remember rightly and I hope he will phone this evening, as he usually does when he can. I don't think there is any cause for alarm, only the patient is having a rough time, and is unhappy about not being able to get on with his work etc. and I am worried about him not being able to take nourishment as he should.

Lots of love to you all,
Yours, Grace

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
Thursday December 11th, 1947

My dear All,

I think my last letter was dated December 1st. I have not been well enough to write since. After having that troublesome tooth out on Friday afternoon, Grace took me to the Dr on the following Monday as I was suffering a great deal of pain. This continued and my face became very swollen and painful. Dr came almost daily for a week and gave me medicine to take etc. It quite knocked the stuffing out of me but I am thankful to say that I am now practically back to normal. I was up for breakfast by 7.30 this morning and feel equal to do a good days work. The telegram from Joe on Saturday 6th saying he and Trevor were arriving next day was an excellent tonic. This was followed the next day by a phone call from Douglas from Pretoria saying he and Evelyn and Kingsley were there on a visit to the Amblers as they are being transferred to Windhoek A.W.A. When they heard that Joe was here, that decided them to go back to Vryburg via here. This has given us all additional pleasure. Ernest Saunders and Doris offered accommodation for sleeping and as Ted has fixed up the garage as a sleeping place for David and Harold – who by the way is not now coming home for Xmas, there was sufficient room for Joe to share my room and Charles and Trevor shared the garage with David. David and Evelyn and Kingsley returned on Wednesday morning. Douglas has suggested that if Joe takes his next year's holiday about April or May, he might come here again and might come over from Vryburg and fetch us. It is worth bearing in mind.

Grace has sent a number of postcards during the time I was not able to write so I need not go into details further, except to say how much I am indebted to Grace and Ted and the family for their kindness in looking after me. The last two evenings we have been looking out for the new comet. It was dimly visible for a few minutes last evening but I could not see it. I hope to see it tonight.

Yesterday we all forgot that it was Grace and Ted's 23rd anniversary of their Wedding Day until Grace told me. I had the date down on my list to remember but I forgot. However we all offered our congratulations. They went to the bio for the evening.

There will be a number of farewells before the end of the month as both Ministers are leaving for pastures new. Rev Cragg, the President of the Conference is going to Fort Hare and Rev Brenen to either Burghersdorp or Bloemfontein. Mr Cragg went to see Aunt Eliza when in Cradock recently.

Reg and Dot leave on Monday for their holiday. They expect to arrive in Grahamstown by Friday 19th. I hope they have fine weather for travelling and that all goes well. We hope they will call here on their way back from Vryburg. They have been to a lot of trouble in fixing up the lorry and we shall be glad to hear how it has stood up to the journey.

On Monday I posted 516 envelopes with Xmas cards. The printers printed more than I ordered but did not charge for the extra ones, so I have been able to send some to more friends than usual.

My typewriter has not been working properly, several times it has torn my first copy so I will not continue much more. I have quite a large amount of correspondence to catch up before Xmas, which will be here two weeks today.

I very sincerely hope all will have a very happy time. Needless to say, I shall be one of those who will feel sad, this being the first Xmas since being separated from Mother.

Joe has had word from the Railway that there is no vacancy on any train to Uitenhage until after Xmas. However he is going to get on the train tomorrow night if at all possible.

I have read Ruth's article in the Xmas Outspan and will try to carry out the policy therein contained.

Lots of love and best wishes to all,

Yours affectionately,
Dad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
December 17th, 1947

My dear All,

Only a week to Xmas. There is a lot I want to do before then but do not expect to accomplish everything I want to do. However there is no harm in trying. First of all let me say that we have had a number of good showers and things are growing nicely in the garden. David will be leaving just after Xmas for Johannesburg where he has secured a job for two months at the Native Affairs Department where he was before. He will probably call here on his way back to college. He has a possible chance of a lift back by car but if that does not materialise, he has offered to take charge of me as far as Grahamstown if I want to go. This would not be until about the end of February. We must wait and see.

I have now got all the big pieces of furniture in my one room but of course I am not nearly straight. There are some packages not opened yet and much sorting out of things will still have to be done. I promise not to overdo myself as there is no immediate hurry.

Last Sunday I went to service in the morning but not in the evening. There was a farewell social to both ministers after the evening service when presentations and addresses were made. The new minister is not expected until about the third Sunday in January. There will be a social welcome in due course.

Joe tried to book his seat for Friday last and was told there was none available until after Xmas. However we all went up to the station in time to catch the train and found that the first class seats were full but there was plenty of room in the second, so he and Trevor got away comfortably. We have not heard of their arrival yet. Blodwen and some of the children are leaving for Cape Town on Saturday. Joe expects to have his Xmas dinner at Uncle Owens.

Yesterday, Dingaans Day, we spent at the river from about 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mr and Mrs Walker and Ernest Saunders and family and the Walkers' two children and others made up a company of nearly twenty. The men folk put up the cost of a rowing boat for the day (17/6d) and most of the young folk took turns at rowing. The young people spent the day in their bathing costumes and got fairly well browned. Charles lost his pair of sand shoes. We all enjoyed a cold lunch as well as morning and afternoon teas. There was plenty to eat and drink. The river is a beautiful spot for such an outing and we are looking forward to a repetition of a similar outing on Boxing Day. They very kindly took a folding chair for me and after lunch, I had a nap on the back seat of Ernest's car. Although my gums are healing up, I have not yet been able to make much use of my bottom plate as some adjustment must be made and possibly a new tooth added to replace the old offender. I have been able to eat a little meat after a fortnight's abstinence. We have had green mealies twice recently but I find I cannot masticate them properly. We have not heard from Reg and Dot since they left on Monday morning. They expect to get as far as Grahamstown by Friday. Mary is due at Graaff Reinet about now and looks to leave for Stellenbosch on 29th. Dot's address will be to January 2nd, P.O. Box 11, Port Alfred. They expect to reach Vryburg about January 7th and may perhaps call here on their way home about January 10th. We hope they do.

We hear that the Amblers are being transferred to Windhoek from January 1st. Their daughter recently got married and is living at Brits, Transvaal. Amblers were married from our house in Cradock and celebrated their Silver Wedding recently.

I have not experienced any excessive heat recently. Joe remarked that he had not felt it at all hot, in fact he was wearing his sweater all the time he was here. Last night I found two blankets were not too much. I have not heard a mosquito since I have been here and there are very few flies.

Grace weighed recently 132 lbs and I scaled at 148 so I am keeping about the same weight. The piano Ted bought from Aunt Eliza has been tuned since I arrived. David is taking lessons and Pam makes good use of the instrument. I am wrong, it is Jean that plays. Jean has passed her first year exam and expects to pass the final matric next year. Charles has also passed into the second standard and did very well in his class.

I forgot to mention that the day before we left Grass Ridge, one of the farm boys saw a snake swimming in one of the reservoirs near the house. Douglas killed it, it was over six feet long. I think Evelyn said it was only the second snake they had seen near the house.

The photo of Tony, the first great grandchild, which I sent round for all to see has come back and all have greatly admired the fine little chap. Denis had bought a house in Grahamstown near to Kingswood where he will be teaching next year. Ruth has given up her duties at the Red Cross Society from the end of last month. Alison writes that they have moved into their new house and I notice they are advertising the Poplars for sale. Guess they will not have much trouble in disposing of the old place. Originally it was a double storey house and at one time was the parsonage.

An advertisement in the Midland News announces the arrival of a wee daughter to Neville and Nancy Collett.

I am disappointed that I have not been able to get a glimpse of the new comet and now that the moon is getting brighter each evening, I fear I shall not see it. I have cut out a very fair photo of it from one of the newspapers. I shall never forget seeing Halley's Comet in 1910 at Vryburg.

Aunt Emmie has not been too well and was under Dr when she last wrote. She has had some motor trips with Keith in his new car which he drove from East London recently. Quite a number of Xmas cards have come to hand and a number of letters.

Love to all,
Dad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
as Monday December 22nd, 1947

My dear All

It is Sunday afternoon and I want to get one more dear all off before Xmas. We received our first news of Reg and Dot on Friday 19th on a postcard posted at Howick Falls on Tuesday. They left Potgietersrus on Monday morning and slept the first night at Bethel Hotel and Tuesday night at Howick Hotel. They had not had occasion to sleep in the veldt so far. They had encountered lots of rain but fortunately the canvas covering over the back part of the lorry was watertight so they did not suffer any inconvenience on that score. They describe the scenery as beautiful. "All the world was wet" Dot says. Joan was quite happy at the back of the lorry and the boys had taken turns at driving. From what Ted says of the country they still had to travel over before they get to Port Alfred, it is very difficult as there are so many "hairpin bends" and that part of the country is subject to heavy rain. They expected to reach Grahamstown and pick up their provisions at Ruth's as she had offered to purchase what they wanted. If they travel to their own schedule, they look to spend a day or so with Reg's mother and arrive home on Saturday January 10th. It would be a great additional pleasure to me if they could spend the 11th (eleventh) here. Perhaps Douglas and some of the family might come as well as they know the road so well. By the way, we were expecting a phone call from Douglas on Saturday as we understood he was due to be in Bloemfontein that day.

Mrs Farren's daughter, who married Mr Pierce's son here, called last week with her three children to see us. The baby was only about four pounds in weight when born and looks like a large doll but a very sweet child and so good. Her mother lives with her in Johannesburg. I remember this young lady when I was in Cape Town. The first Sunday evening Aunt Emmie took me to see the Farrens on the High Level Road, where they were then living and the young children entertained us with recitations etc. Both daughters are married and the only son is a doctor and also married.

Christmas cards have been coming in in great numbers. One day I received 40. It is now Monday morning, the longest day of the year and incidentally Reg's birthday. I hope he will have a happy day at the seaside. It is a few minutes past six, the maid, who sleeps on the premises, brings in the early coffee before six and I generally get up about that time. Today I want to be busy. All the big pieces of furniture are in my room. They have put down a nice square of lino from the dining room and a new piece to take its place in the dining room. A few bedside rugs, my Morris chair and my revolving chair is at my table. One of each of the two cupboards that I bought from Mr Thomas just fit each side on my desk. One has my wireless set and the brass reading lamp on top, the other has the teak table that I used as a bed table for my meals when I was ill, on top of it and the letter scale belonging to Mary is alongside of it. The same bedside lamp I had in Cradock is screwed on just as before. My electric clock is just in front of me on my table with the revolving date rack on top of it. My stationery cabinet which was given me by J.E. Bellis on my 21st birthday is alongside of me and is well stocked with paper, envelopes etc. In March last year I had 500 postcards printed. That stock is almost exhausted now. You see I use a lot of them. There is an electric light hanging from the centre of the room, which I seldom use, but I have an electric fan attached which I can switch on in the afternoon if necessary as I get the afternoon sun. In the winter, I can attach my electric heater if necessary. My wardrobe is against the wall at the foot of my bed and the long bookcase just fits into the corner between the door opening into the bathroom, which when the alterations have been made, will also be the lavatory. I have not unpacked many of my books yet so the shelves are very bare at present but it will be very convenient when I am straight. Aunt Eliza has always disapproved of a bed being in the corner of a room, it so happens that my bed is situated just the same as hers, the door opens against the side of the bed. The square table I used on the back stoep is at present in the bay window but most likely I shall shift it to the front stoep here. I wish you all could all come and see how comfortable everything is arranged. Even the wool foot-mat that Mom and Joe made years ago, is at my feet under the desk. I wonder if Mom from the spirit world can see it? Xmas Day it will be just nine months since she was called away. I do miss her terribly.

Ernest Saunders called for me and took me to evening service last night. The young minister preached his farewell sermon. Mr Cragg preaches his farewell next Sunday.

7.30 stop for breakfast. The news this morning is not too bright. More lives lost in Palestine and the world is still upside down. Peace and Goodwill towards all men seems further away than ever. We have had an increase in the family circle. A stray kitten has taken up its abode here and Charles is making it quite at home. It reminds me of the stray one at Cradock.

It is now nearly 11 a.m. It is a great convenience Ted being on the Post Office staff. He often goes early on his bike to the office – only about two minutes away and brings back whatever post is already sorted. The same when he is on early shift, he comes home for breakfast and brings the post with him. On Sundays too someone has to be on duty and he calls at the offices on his way back from service and by that means I get post a day earlier than otherwise I should. Ten more cards came this morning, one from Neville, Nancy and Alison, a week old!

One afternoon, Grace and I went to see the pictures of the Royal Wedding. They were very pretty. Quite amusing to see how the two little Royal page boys were fidgeting whilst the photo was being taken. The huge crowd was inspiring.

Yesterday afternoon Grace went with Doris (Ernest's wife) to the Hospital distributing Xmas gifts to the aged sick. It was a nice gesture from the Women's Auxiliary of the Church. One evening Ted and I went for the longest walk I have had since I have been here. It was only about as far as from 34 Dundas Street to the Church and it encourages me to venture further afield in the cool of the evening.

After the holidays are over, I must try to make an appointment with the dentist to see if he cannot add another tooth to my plate. I have tried to use the plate a few times but the gums are still sore and the plate chaffs my tongue. Fortunately the swelling has gone down.

A postcard from Dot dated Friday reports their safe arrival so far after covering 1100 miles. They slept in Grahamstown and saw Denis and family and the Bishop.

A nice long letter from Kate Dudley. They had invited Uncle Norman and family to Grass Ridge for dinner on Xmas Day but as Nancy's baby was so small, and the road so rough, Kate and Dudley are going to Katkop instead.

There is nothing from Joe this morning so we do not know if Blodwen was well enough to get away to Cape Town. Most likely we will hear tomorrow. He was expecting to go to Uncle Owen's for Xmas dinner.

We are a very scattered family this Xmas but wherever you are, I hope all of you will be thinking of each other as I am sure I shall be thinking of all of you and I trust you will each all have a happy time and no regrets or accidents to mar the occasion. There may be absentees in Douglas' home. There will be one here as Harold is not coming home, Joe may be alone but Dot will have her family complete. I shall of course miss Mom but I would not wish her back to a world of suffering. Mr and Mrs Stock always made a point of calling on us after their morning service and we used to pay calls on some of the old folk. In our younger days, we generally spent Xmas at Grass Ridge with the children. Make the most of the blessings you have.

May you all be spared to see many more Christmases and may each bring with it increased happiness. I have always endeavoured to keep the family united in love and happiness.

Yours affectionately,

Lots of love to all,

Dad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
Christmas Day, December 25th, 1947

My dear All

It is just past 8 p.m., all the family are out at the river where an open air concert is being given by the local Musical Society. The stage is a float on the river and the audience seated or standing on the bank. The grounds are beautifully lit up by hundreds of electric coloured bulbs and the whole scene is quite fairy like. We had a lot of rain last night and today has been cloudy and this evening it is positively cold. Grace and all thought it would be too risky for me to go under such circumstances so I am alone in the house and I do not think I can spend the time more profitably than writing my usual letter. Perhaps you will wonder how I am able to give a description of what is going on at the river. It is simple. On Monday evening Ernest Saunders and wife brought their car and took some of us, including me, to see the illuminations in town and specially at the river. The Municipality are certainly to be congratulated on their enterprise in making the place attractive. The river is not like the Great Fish River, it is a river with running water in it and the banks are laid out in grass and willow and other trees and cars can drive quite close and get plenty of shade. There is also a pavilion – and refreshments – and boats for hire besides a couple of motor boats. Electric lights are suspended near the waters edge and in the trees and some suspended right across the river. Quite a tall tree near the pavilion was decorated as a huge Xmas tree, there must have been several hundred lights on it. The National road bridge as well as the suspension bridge were also decorated. The effect caused by the reflection of the lights in the water gave a fairylike appearance. We sat for quite a while enjoying the scenery and incidentally ice-creams. Weather permitting, we are repeating the picnic of last week tomorrow at the same spot as last week. I must mention that Jean is taking part in the concert tonight. Ted has taken a couple of folding chairs and cushions as well as a sail so as to keep their feet dry so I hope no one will catch cold.

We started this day quite early. Coffee was ready by 7 and we all went to morning service at 7.30. Mr and Mrs Cragg, who were here the afternoon before to say goodbye, kindly offered to fetch me and bring me home after service. Mrs Cragg kindly called and took Grace and me. The collection was in aid of the funds of the Marsh Memorial Homes at Rondebosch. Breakfast was a little delayed owing to the distribution of Father Christmas presents. They have a system here every year for each member of the family to make a list of what they would like to have. I said I did not want anything, I was rather lessening my belongings. However I was not overlooked. The requests were varied. They included a camera, a mechanical train, books etc. Ted got a working model telegraph set capable of sending messages from one room to another. The batteries are readily renewed. This will give Charles Junior a lot of pleasure. Pam had a camera, David a fountain pen (cost about £4/10s) a Parker pen.

So far did I get and the family returned home about ten. It is now 6.30 a.m. Boxing Day, Friday 26th December. I have had a good night, did not wake once until 5.15. The sun is shining and the prospect for a fine day seems assured. I must retrace my steps so far as my letter is concerned. One of the Xmas presents was a miniature cine camera which produces films about the size of finger nails, a very neat little thing. About half a dozen films are supplied with the outfit. My presents consisted of a book from Grace and Ted, a purse-wallet combined from Pam, a box of very nice writing paper and envelopes with a scripture text printed as a heading from Harold, a hankie from Jean and a notebook from Charles. Charles withdrew a savings bank Union loan – about 16/-, with which he bought seven presents. He did the shopping all off his own bat and came back with a penny change. Quite a good business deal. The dining room and passage was decorated with streamers and balloons and a very happy atmosphere prevailed.

The first visitor was my doctor who came just as we returned from morning service. I had sent him one of my cards and he said he had never seen such a nice selection of words in all his life. He is an elderly man, a Hollander. We all thought it a very kind gesture on his part. He was much interested in some of the other cards which I showed him. Christmas dinner was served hot, consisted of fowl, pork, stuffing, vegetables etc. Grace had made the Xmas pudding and Charles was fortunate to secure some of the tikkies which had been hidden in it. My last two Xmas dinners

were at the Premier Hotel, Cradock. Two years ago we had Joe and family with us but last year there was only Mom and me. No one need ever wish for a better meal than we had yesterday. In the afternoon we listened to the King's message to the Empire. As usual, His Majesty struck a very high note. Doris and some of her children came down and they brought a nice iced cake which with Grace's, was enjoyed for afternoon tea. I phoned to Douglas about five and spoke to Lynne who had arrived with her young man about 3 a.m. All well and happy.

It is quite cool this morning. I can do with my cardigan. I slept with two blankets on last night. The rain we have had the last few days no doubt accounts for this.

We have had three postcards from Dot so far. They arrived in Grahamstown after having covered 1100 miles. They had slept at hotels three nights and once in the open. They had experienced rain and some bad roads but the beautiful scenery was a great compensation. They do not mention having gone to the St John's river mouth. I hope Dot will write a descriptive account of their journey for future reference. We are hoping to hear good news from Grahamstown in the near future. Dot says they did not call to see Muriel at Maritzburg, they were pressed for time evidently. Muriel has written to say she was looking out for them.

We have not heard from Joe if Blodwen was well enough to go to Cape Town. Holidays always disorganise postal arrangements. He was going to have Xmas dinner at Uncle Owen's. Aunt Emmie is looking to go to Friends gathering at Stellenbosch but fears she will not be able to hear much of what goes on owing to her deafness. However I hope she will go. Mrs Halliday and Mrs Farren are looking to be there. Mary looks to be there from December 31st to January 13th, Box 25 will find her.

David leaves for Johannesburg this evening and will have a few days with Harold before he starts work on January 2nd. We shall see Harold when he passes through to Bloemfontein. It would be nice if he could spend a few days here on his way.

Jean is interested in a young Kestral Hawk which has fallen in the garden with a broken wing. She feeds it with raw meat and it drinks water nicely. It seems quite friendly. A stray kitten has made its home here and Charles claims it as his. It is very playful.

Ernest and Doris are coming later for Grace and will take us to the picnic place. It is nearly 9.30 and there may be time to enclose this with the first sheet but if not, will post what I have written.

I have got more of my things into my room. The medicine chest is fixed up and the next to be unpacked will be the box ottoman. I see the lid is broken off but no doubt it can be mended. It will take me a long time before I shall be as straight and tidy as I want the room to be.

I will stop now and will write again early next week I guess.



Lots of love
to all and a happy
New Year to
everyone.

Dad

Grandpa Charles
Butler's room at
48 Reitz Street,
Kroonstad

47 Reitz Street, Kroonstad
December 29th, 1947

My dear All,

Time is on the wing, I hope you all will receive this, my last letter for 1947. It has been a very eventful year, the passing of Mother, the breaking up of the old home, the settling into new surroundings, the parting from old friends and the making of new ones have created new experiences for me and others. It was only at the beginning of January that I realised Mother's serious condition and the events which followed all so suddenly. Everything that was possible to do to save her life was done and I am thankful that she was spared a long period of suffering. We must all look forward to the future. I often wonder how we will recognise each other when we meet on the other side but these things are hidden from us, we must "trust and not be afraid".

I am settling down quite nicely, not rushing it but each day sorting out things here and there and in time I shall know where things are. The room Grace has given me is very nice and comfortable. As a rule I sleep well and am meeting very nice people.

The Christmas holidays are over and I think everyone has enjoyed themselves. My last letter was dated Xmas Day. Boxing Day was quite cool after the rain we had a few days previously. In fact I had my cardigan on all day and my light overcoat on until late in the afternoon. We all picnicked at the river as before. We had a rowing boat for the day and most of the young people were in their bathing costumes most of the day. The party was not confined to the family and everybody was very sociable. As the weather was threatening, it was decided to get home before the rain did come. Ted took some of the visitors from the upper part of the town home in Saunder's car. He ran out of petrol before getting to his destination but was able to borrow a gallon from a near neighbour and with the assistance of another motorist, who had also run out of petrol, who gave a helping push, we got started again. I suppose we were held up for quite half an hour when rain began to fall. Pam arrived on her bike to find out what had happened as we should have been home by then. In the evening, Charles and I stayed home whilst all the others went to see "Great Expectations" at the bio. Ted also stayed home after seeing to the booking of David's luggage. David got into a slip carriage and joined the train during the night for Johannesburg. He starts work again on January 2nd. Harold will be passing here in a few days on transfer to Bloemfontein and we may only see him at the station.

Yesterday (Sunday) Grace and I did not go to service as we expected Mr and Mrs Logie Ruth's sister and brother-in-law, to call. We had a very interesting hour with them. They are spending part of their holiday at Aliwal North, then they go on to Grahamstown and Port Alfred. Mr Logie has three months leave from his school where he is the Principal. He goes on pension in about four years time. He looks very washed out. Both their children are recently married. We had much to talk about old days in Vryburg and we were interested in seeing some of their snaps as they were to see ours. We all went to service in the evening when Rev Cragg preached his last sermon. They leave tomorrow for their new appointment at Fort Hare. The new man is not expected until the third Sunday in January.

Aunt Eliza writes that Mrs Mayhew has sent her furniture to Port Elizabeth and will be going to live there after her three months is up at 29 Market Street.

New Year's Day we expect to spend at the river again. The decorations are still up and there is plenty of room.

Reg and Dot will be leaving Port Alfred on Saturday, if they keep to their schedule. We have only had postcards from them so far but I hope they will write a more detailed account of the trip when they get home. There is no word from Joe yet but hope to hear soon. Dot, in her last postcard dated 21st, says they have a delightful spot for their camp. Have had lots of wind. The first car they saw there was a car belonging to a Hollander working for the Cradock power station. They had had their first swim and enjoyed it. They are very comfortable and like the place. They saw Ruth and Co, spent an evening with Denis. Anthony is a fine child Reg says.

I weighed myself this morning at a chemist and found I was down to 146, the last time I weighed was on the Station scale and was 150 lbs. Douglas thought I had put on weight by ten pounds whilst at Grass Ridge but evidently I didn't. Only one card this morning and one I

addressed to Brother Willie's son, Harry, in England was returned "gone away". This is only the second card returned out of nearly six hundred posted.

I see I must start the New Year with fresh carbon paper.

I do not think of anything more to add except to wish one and all a very happy New Year. We must be thankful that we do not know what awaits us in the future but as we say in the Scout movement "be prepared". God knows what is best for us all.

Much love to you all
A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL
Dad