

for the students of all faiths.

At Bedale Hall it did not matter to me if the student occupying the room next to me was a Roman Catholic a Muslim or Hindu.

I did not even bother to ask, nor was there anything to suggest that any of us at Bedale Hall would have had any objection to having his room in Wesley Hall or Iona.

Because we found ourselves at Bedale Hall, we liked and were proud of our residence and had no call to wish that we had been accommodated elsewhere.

This of course was true of each of the other residences and so one did not have to stay in Bedale Hall to have good and jolly company.

But it is a matter of interest to ask whether by 1939 there remained any good reason why denomination should have continued to be one of the criteria for determining residence for Fort Hare male students.

What-

ever the answer, being at Bedale Hall provided me personally with the facility I had enjoyed both at Holy Cross Mission and at St Peters Secondary School.

That was the Chapel.

It was helpful

having it attached as it was to my residence, because after my encounter with evangelists of what was later called the Full Gospel Church at my home in or around 1930, my religious practice took on a new and more personalised character.

I developed a liking for the early morning Holy Communion service which would normally be held in a chapel, which because it was early attracted few people.

Often I was the

only one attending.

But if there was no service, I went to chapel anyway for prayers, if not in the morning, then at any other time during the day.

anything else.

As he left me he went to others collecting pennies.

Who was Mr Bukas?

We got to know that he was the sole survivor of a tribe that lived one knows not how many decades ago in the Alice area.

The members of which were all wiped out by the Bubonic Plague, leaving Mr Bukas the sole survivor.

Since then, and I do not recall how old he was then, he lived in dreadful fear of the disease breaking out on him and wiping him out and therefore the last remnant of a tribe that was.

He believed fervently that his people were killed by this disease because they did not wash their bodies every day and he was determined to keep clean and therefore to have a daily wash.

He also wanted to make sure that where ever he was there in his totality, in his completeness, with everything that was; his body his soul his clothing, his money his soap.

The ritual of daily baths was also explained.

Every day in all his completeness, he went to the Tyumie River where he stripped naked.

This does not mean he necessarily peeled off his jackets one after another.

He could remove them in a heap but be that as it may, he stripped naked, moved up to the waters side with his soap, washed his hands and his arms and his legs and feet and then stooped down to reach the water with both hands.

Scooped the water and using both hands threw it over onto his back, but simultaneously quickly moved his body out of the way so that the water did not land on his

back.

It was presumably not warm enough for the comfort of his back.

He repeated this operation several times and then the process of bathing was over and he waited until he was dry before putting on his clothing.

This done he was satisfied that for that day he had insured himself against being attacked by this destructive disease.

from

St Peters

there was virtually no supper because what was called
supper was four remarkably thin slices of bread, taken with
a small cup of milk water, the water which would be hot.

We decided that there was no point in all of us travelling all
the way to Bedale Hall to drink a mouthful of water sweetened
with milk and then walk back, so we decided to form ourselves
into a group and we would in turns, at supper time

let

one of us go to collect his slices of bread as well of those of
the others and at a convenient time we would make tea for
ourselves, buy butter and jam and sit around and have supper
that could include some fish or whatever we could add.

This

went on for a few weeks and became an established routine.

We

then started to call ourselves The Syndicate.

That Syndicate became increasingly a serious grouping that saw
us through Fort Hare into the wider world and its members were
then bound by principles and considerations totally unrelated
to what you eat in the evening.

We were concerned with matters

of life, matters of the future, our role in society.

The Syndicate grew by the recruitment of two others that fitted
into this group very well.

So much for the time being of The
Syndicate.

Elukaniswene, another group of three, became identifiable.

It was not formed on the same basis and had no relations with
The Syndicate as such, but three of the women students

Considering the amount of time Mr Raman spent studying and accumulating knowledge, his performance in these debates was an anti-climax and disappointing.

This was because he

sought to apply his knowledge to the wrong problem.

The fact that we would some day leave Fort Hare wearing gowns, hoods and University caps did not mean we had the answers to any and all questions.

During our matriculation years in

Johannesburg, as must have been the case elsewhere in the country, Africans were justly proud of those of their people who had managed to obtain university degrees.

In fact this

achievement was every parents wish for his for his or her son or daughter and those few and there were relatively very few who graduated, were not only objects of admiration, but they themselves often displayed a consciousness of being special in African society, not least because they could claim intellectual superiority over many members of the so called superior master race.

And so it was not unusual to see special meetings of graduates, gatherings rather, whose main purpose was the display of their

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At all these institutions I made regular use of the chapel.

At Holy Cross Mission, St John's Kraal had its own chapel, but it was not used for Mass although I used it often enough.

For communion I would walk across the sports field to the

main church where the service would be conducted.

At St Peters, the church with two chapels in it, was a stones throw from my room.

The Bedale Chapel,, no less than the fact of my being an Anglican and staying in Bedale Halll, was to play a dominant role in the changing fortunes of my career and my future.

The student body assembled thrice a day for meals in the dining hall and once together with staff in the C.U. every morning for prayers before lectures started.

That is every morning except Saturday and Sunday.

Other points of convergence were the sports ground and also during lectures or general student meetings which would be held in the C.U.

There were at the time not more than 300 students at F ort Hare.

It did not take long therefore before every body knew everyone else and I did not have the problems of social adjustment and adaptation which had faced me when I first arrived in Johannesburg five years earlier.

Although it was natural for students coming from the same area to see themselves as roughly belonging together, vis a vis students from other areas,

At the back of the building that is on the eastern side were toilets and a disused tennis courts.

In the foreground

an open space covered with grass sufficiently short to enable one of the residents to use it as a little golf course.

I remember Aaron Libone a qudewx medical aid student from St Peters and an aspiring golf player.

He

would use that little space as his golf course and I often watched him doing all the maneouvres with legs body and arms and the golf stick before the final swing, which alas had to be controlled so as to avoid driving the golf ball beyond a limited 50 yards or so.

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Compared to the other residences Bedale Hall was relatively new.

Until it was built the Anglican students occupied the annexe on the other side of the Methodist residence of Wesley Hall.

The warden of the annexe was then Bishop Smythe.

He became the first warden of Bedale Hall, and seemed to have got on extraordinarily well with the students His successor as warden of Bedale Hall was Bishop Ferguson Davey, formerly Bishop of Singapore, who after his retirement was appointed to take charge of this Anglican residence.

He welcomed us to Bedale Hall, that is those of us who were new arrivals and we soon got to know him as a most pleasant old man, and his wife, Mrs Ferguson Davey. In my younger days at Bizana, I knew people around my home. I grew to know people and places further away, but within the district of Bizana.

Indeed

I regarded myself as pretty

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would tell his students, as he told us "What one fool can do.
another can".

It was a good slogan.

No one wants to appear
worse than a fool.

Although as a general rule residence for men was allocated
according to denomination, students who belonged to none of
the three denominations that provided residence were admitted
and they could conceivably form the majority at any residence.
It was particularly interesting to note that the residential
separation of the students on the basis of denominational
differences in no way reflected itself on the relations of the
student body in general.

There was inter residents competition
in sport, but it was free of any religious content.

The practice of having denominational residences had its
origins in the history of Fort Hare itself, which was established
as were virtually all African educational institutions by mission
aries,

At its formation by missionaries of the Presbyterian
Church, in 1917(?) and for decades after, Fort Hare was the
only African. Other churches, which ran schools for students
preparing for University, had an obligation to help in the
provision of accommodation for the students.

It
seems to have been
found convenient that each church assumed responsibility for
its own members mainly.

In the result we are fortunate that
there are not as many small residences as there are denomination
in South
Africa.

Between them Iona was Presbyterian, Wesley
House was Methodist, Bedale Hall, Anglican.

Each headed by a
distinguished church leader and scholar , plus the two non-

denominational houses all provided adequate accomodation

I was not affected by this sense of regionalism, limited though it was, because to the extent that there was any consciousness of the existence of various groupings of home boys as it were, I belonged with every group.

Those students, for example who came from what were known as the Northern Provinces, namely the Transvaal, Orange Free State, the then British Protectorates, were amicably referred to as Northerners, and would proudly refer to themselves as such.

I belonged with them.

Having taken my secondary school education in those areas.

But my home was in the Cape Province and in particular

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in the Transkei situated a few miles from the border between the Cape and Natal Provinces.

This made me acceptable to the non Northerners.

I soon found and made friends in all the residences, but this could not have been peculiar to me only, Fort Hare had a very friendly atmosphere with no hostile cliques of groupings, no divisions among the students on political or any other grounds.

Nor was life in any way characterised by tensions between the students and the college authorities, except with respect of the few instances which I will deal with later.

A group was formed at Bedale Hall known as the Syndicate, comprising Congress Mbata, whom I found at Fort Hare, but who came from St Peters, Lancelot Gama, who matriculated with me at St Peters and myself.

What brought about The Syndicate, was that meals in the Fort Hare dining hall were very meagre.

For those of us who came

There was another little tension I could not resolve.

Two of

my very close friends from St Peters, John Dinalane and Lancelot Gama, could not bear each other.

For some

reason

they disliked each other intensely.

Attempts to find

out what the problem was failed, as did many attempts to reconcile them, but at all times they each remained very close to me and I to them.

They must of course have got over that

problem, certainly after they left Fort Hare.

There were two people radically different from each other who, because each of them also stood out in his own way represented something we none of us had, was for that reason a point of reference in the minds of each of us, giving us reason to reflect on where we come from, who we are where we were getting to as individuals and as a society.

One of them was

an old man who regularly turned up at the campus from across the river where he lived near Lovedale.

I do not now recall

his name, let us call him Bukas.

Mr Bukas was a short man.

The first time I saw him approaching in the distance, he looked extraordinarily round about the body and there was something disproportionate in his appearance.

When I met him

I noticed he was wearing four jackets.

The top one did not

seem to have been washed in years.

These layers of clothing

represented his entire possessions.

He was clearly wearing

more than one pair of trousers.

I do not recall if he had

a shirt on, what he had on his feet could not bear being

called shoes oxxaxpennyxtn

CLARIFY THE FOLLOWING

or a penny one penny to enable him as he explained to buy soap,

he seemed to insist on a penny rather than 6 pennies or

The case of Bakus was about life outside and beyond the grandeur of University lecture rooms and libraries.

It

was about the people from whom we had come, to whom we would return after college.

It was about not one person who survived, but about the thousands, the hundreds of thousands, the millions who did not survive and the many more who would not.

How would we use our learned degrees to rid our country of the tragedies represented in the life of Bakus.

Did we care?

Then there was the other point of reference, Mr Raman, of Iona.

He was one of the older students both in terms of residence at Fort Hare and his age, being in his middle age.

No time to stand and stareâ\200\235 was his famous motto.

The foremost

students had crawled out of their beds in the morning

Mr Raman was out of the residence carrying his books and

walking briskly to disappear among the tuition buildings,

as the students were walking leisurely from their residences

towards the dining hall for breakfast, he would be seen

hurrying down the road from the direction of the tuition building

for his breakfast, soon to hurry back to his books and re-

emerge in time for the C.U. morning assembly.

He did not

seem to seek or to have much fellowship with the other

students, he spent little time exchanging pleasanteries with

people and appeared to consider it a nuisance to have to

say â\200\235Good Morningâ\200\235 or I'Good Afternoonâ\200\235 to anyone.

In a way

With Murdoch and Davidson then, it was necessary to put in much work in the lecture room in order to come to terms with the subject of the lecture.

What exasperated me about

maths in particular was the home work was the home work

Mr Murdoch would give us after each lecture.

Do numbers 1 to 42 he would say and numbers 1 to 42 were all similar questions.

If you could do number 1 you could do

the rest;

It was like being asked to write your name 500

times and Mr Murdoch, short tempered and bad tempered would

be furious if you submitted less than the 42 answers called for.

The result was that maths took up an inordinate share of my

study time without making me a better mathematician.

Maths

was easy, but it became a drudgery. During my second year

I felt I should drop it as a major and replace it with

chemistry for the final year.

It was most frustrating not to

be able to reach wide beyond my limited science degree courses.

I was deeply interested in Law, Philosophy, Sociology,

Psychology, Anthropology.

I had come across books on Economics,

and various subjects of which I knew nothing.

And which

were there for the asking if only I could make the time and I

couldn't because of the pressure of my science degree work.

I consulted Mr Darling of St Peters of my intention to

switch

to chemistry, but he advised against this and so I kept on with

mathematics as one of the two majors.

Mr C

P Dent lectured in chemistry.

He was a teacher, a tutor

who had the ability to place his subject within easy reach of

his students.

If no one ever passed physics and maths,

no one ever failed chemistry.

This was not because chemistry

was easy, but the subject was in the hands of a master and

Mr

Dent had a theory which applied to all subjects..

He

well travelled within that district.

Certainly more than the

average boy of my age in my locality.

Then I went on to

Holy Cross, where I widened my little world, for I was

then living in another district â\200\224 Flagstaff.

My fellow

students came from all the four districts of Eastern Pondoland,

they were Bizana, Lusiksiki, Flagstaff and Tabankulu.

There was even one from Umzimkulu, some distance north east

of Bizana.

Next came St Peters secondary school where I had been in the

company of African students who among them spoke several

languages, Sotho, Tswana, Zulu, Afrikaans as well as of course

English.

A few came from the Cape, some from Natal as well as

the Orange Free State, but the majority came from the

Witwatersrand and the rest of the Transvaal and so my world was

wider still.

What was more, until I reached St Peters,

the staff at the primary schools I had attended were all

Africans.

At St Peters the majority of the teachers were

European,

35 we would say in the language of those days,

There was also a difference in the range of subjects taught as

between the grammar school and St Peters secondary school.

Whereas at Holy Cross I had studied Xhosa, English History,

Geography, Arithmetic and Scripture, all compulsory, at St Peters

the languages taught were Tswana, Sotho, Xhosa, Zulu, English

Afrikaans and Latin.

Of these English and one of the vernacular

languages as well as Latin were compulsory, then History,

Geography, Domestic Science for girls, Physical Science

Scripture and possibly even Hygiene.

In a way he was something of a closed book himself although he kept so many books open for so long.

Nor was Mr Raman

in any hurry to leave Fort Hare.

He was reported to have

accumulated many subjects to his credit in the Humanities over the years.

Evidently he had the means to finance his

protracted studies and could well have ultimately left

Fort Hare with several degrees in his bag.

Mr Raman missed

no C.U. student general meeting.

On these occasions,

there would be some issue being debated and that is where

Mr Raman appeared in a new personality.

He enjoyed

debate and no one left the meeting at the end with any

doubt but that Mr Raman was there.

He seemed to regard

these occasions as providing him with the opportunity of

delivering to the public what his highly absorbative brain

had been busy taking in while others wasted their time

standing and staring.

At such meetings Mr Raman invariably

stood for longer than most staring at the chairman as he

poured out his wisdom.

Often in disregard of the chairmans

concern for time.

He would treat his audience to a philosophâ\200\224

philosophical discourse that floated high above the clouds

ranging over many topics, but saying precious little about the

subjects under debate.

The point however, was that Mr Raman

felt he had something to give and as far as he was concerned

he gave it.

But whether in the result his contribution took
the debate any further was another matter.

were obviously very close friends.

I can only remember
some of their names.

One was Nomoto Pikitcha, later
to become Dr Pikitcha, another was Phyllis, who got
married and was Mrs Mziedume, she is unhappily now
deceased and a third one was Lorna I forget her surname.

The thing about this group is that I became very close to it
and this would not have been worth mentioning but for the fact
that at some stage the three assumed a collective attitude of
hostility towards me.

I did not know what had gone wrong.

They would not greet, they just froze up if they saw me
approaching and this went on for a week, then suddenly
brightness returned from nowhere.

In the meantime, unable
to explain this strange conduct, I had decided I would behave
as if nothing had happened, whatever was worrying them was not
worrying me, and I was not in the slightest affected by this
attitude which I regarded as ridiculous.

Therefore, if I met
them or any one of them, I greeted them as warmly and as cheerful
cheerfully as I had always done, making clear however that I
was expecting no response, and
there was no response.

I believe this wore them down and they decided to call off
the demonstration, whatever its purpose and motivation had been.
All three were very fine people.

While Lorna was a little
inflammable and therefore to that extent unpredictable,
the other two were very highly respected women in the campus.

Then came Fort Hare.

Here my world was wider still.

Apart from African students, there were also 'coloured' and Indian students.

The students came not only from

what was at the time known as the Union of South Africa, but also from the then British Protectorates, known at the time as Bechuanaland, Basotholand, now Botswana and Lesotho respectively and Swaziland as well as from as far north as Uganda.

As at St Peters the majority of the teaching staff

were European, but the range of subjects taught was much wider.

Anthropology, Sociology, Native Administration, English Language and English Literature, Psychology, Philosophy, Bantu languages, Zoology, Botany Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Applied Mathematics, History and so on.

For the first two or three days after our arrival at Fort Hare

we were engaged in the business of sorting out our degree courses and deciding on the curriculum.

For my Science

Degree I would take for the first year, English Applied Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics.

For the second year,

Chemistry, Maths and Physics and for the third and final year Maths and Physics.

Our first Maths lecture was attended by about 12 students, but at the next lecture the number fell to half.

Those who

remained were the die hards.

The first encounter with the

Maths lecturer, Mr Bill Murdoch, explained why we had been

warned that no one ever passed maths and the group that

decided to abandon the subject said they had sat through some 45

minutes of the lecture and had not understood a word of what

Mr Murdoch was trying to say.

Bill Murdoch, tall and broad

Shouldered, slightly stooping forward, with an aggressive

boomino voices snnkew

booming voice spoke English with a particularly strong accent that made it difficult to follow what he was saying.

Nor did

he wait until you did understand.

He scawled our words and figur

figures on the blackboard, rubbing them out before you had copied them down on to your notebook and racing down the blackboard again with his chalk.

At the end of that first lesson

half of us had learnt nothing and had decided that they could never learn anything and so they dropped maths from their curriculum..

The rest of us including Joe Mokwena, Lancelot

Gama, Sostenise Mohgokong, all from St Peters, Rosettenville, Uhklid Khomo, all of us stayed on and soon enough adapted to Bill Murdochs' manner and style.

For all the aggressiveness

of his voice, he was full of jokes, he was also full of outbursts of temper which cleared completely only a few minutes after.

So we got to like hime as a person.

If his style did

not endear mathematics with some of us.

The Physics lecturer was James Davidson.

He also had his

peculiarities which made physics a difficult subject for most.

Somehow he seemed to expect students to follow his lecture as easily as if they already had his qualifications in it.

He had an Msc degree in physics.

He used the great

deal, saying very little by way of explanation.

By nature

he was not given to talking much.

He was noted for being shy,

a good rugby player and a frighteningly fast driver.

For all

that he was very likeable and popular among the students who
fondly called him Davi for Davidson.