

### **Grandchildren and great-grandchildren**

Vanessa, Dorothy's and my first grandchild, was born in 1971 in Kenya. Dorothy and I were delighted and John was jubilant, for Margaret had a hard time giving birth to her. Like most babies, Vanessa was much loved and fussed over (NOT of course by her grandfather!). I maintained I loved her when she was smiling but always ready to pass her back to her parents when she was troublesome. Vanessa however decided that I was a malleable fellow who could be wrapped around her little finger, and she adopted me as a friend. I was so popular that she would invite me to join her "dollies' tea party" which she held at frequent intervals on the stairs. I would settle myself uncomfortably on a stair with my legs curled up and (it seemed) my knees near my neck when the hostess would ask me to go and purchase some imaginary cake or other requisite for the feast. After several unravellings of my body and re-ravellings to fit back on the stair, it was a welcome relief when it was time for a real meal, or bed, or in fact any diversion that allowed me to reclaim my legs.

But Dorothy and I found her company even when she and her brother Max (born two years later, also in Nairobi) came to visit us and, one morning when snow had fallen in the night, went out into the garden as if it were their Nairobi garden without socks or shoes, to wallow in the snow.

Vanessa had a habit of pushing Max over whenever he sat up in his pram and I frequently reminded her that boys grew up bigger than girls, and it would be better to humour Max than risk his getting his own back later in life. She must have heeded my words for they grew up good friends and still are, thirty years later.

Four years after Vanessa, two years after Max, Peter's wife Moira had a little girl Holly whom I best recall as a tiny child dashing about the house – the fastest thing I had ever seen on two knees!

Laurence (known to all as Laurie) was born to Moira and Peter two years after Holly. I have memories of having to write a Christmas pantomime to fit Laurie's Christmas present – a Superman outfit. I obliged and thus was born that well-known story "Superman and the Magic Beans".

Our fifth grandchild came a long time later. She was Elspeth, known as Beth, and she was born in 1991 to Diana and her husband Rob. Diana was by then a Health Visitor and a Senior Nurse. She was very knowledgeable of course and told us authoritatively when she was about a month pregnant that she would be having a baby on 21<sup>st</sup> September. She did. In fact she dared not be wrong as a matter of professional pride! Dorothy and I went to Plymouth when Beth was only a few days old and I remember arriving at Diana and Rob's house to be greeted at the door by Diana with a bundle of baby in her arms and handing it over immediately to Dorothy. We loved Beth just as we had loved all her cousins. Even now Beth seems to have stayed my pet. When Moses was born I had to tell her that for a few years Moses would probably eat things like cheques and coins, so I would continue to give Beth any spare ones I had.

Dorothy and I got a great deal from the children in our lives – our three children, our five grandchildren and our two great-grandchildren. Moses was born just in time for Dorothy to see him before she died. When asked how I wished to be known to Moses I said I wanted to be GG (short for Great Grandad). Dorothy, ever the young lady despite her 87 years, said she wanted to be known as "Auntie Dorothy".

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Outside the family, Dorothy and I have influenced the lives of many children (for the good I feel sure). Many will always remember us – Dorothy as a schoolteacher and Brown Owl running a Brownie Pack for many years; and others will remember me as a Scouter. Many of these children are now parents and grandparents up to 70 years of age. If they remember us with affection I am happy. We certainly got a great deal out of knowing them and being accepted as part of their lives.