

listened to the radio every night at 6 pm to get the latest news. I didn't understand the war. I knew it was bad because people were being killed. But it was good when bad people died. War was very confusing. So I wanted to know everything about it. At home I would always try and get my head close to the radio loudspeaker by lying on the floor.

During the years of WWII, radio was our communication with the rest of the world. It shared news of the war with Germany and Japan every day. The war in Europe was more interesting to us kids because our fathers and relatives were in the fight. We didn't care about Japan. Letters to mothers and sons and daughters were very exciting events. We would sit around and listen to someone read the letter. The newspaper articles were never really read by kids, but we followed the arrows on the maps in the paper. They showed the Allied Forces driving the Germans back to their country. My mom was now, and throughout the war period, very busy working during the day, and volunteering in the evening with the Women's Auxiliary. This organization did everything they could to help the soldiers preparing food packages, arranging the knitting of sweaters, pullovers, scarves and socks for the troops. In addition, they helped soldiers, sailors, and airmen who were on leave. They also entertained a large number of British Servicemen who were being sent to South Africa for rest and recuperation. Many of them had been in the war for years and the British Isles was short of food and not necessarily a good place to rest. South Africa was not rationed severely with food and had no ongoing local conflicts.

World War II was continuing as the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth countries were fully committed to battle. The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and America entered the conflict. The governments in South Africa were glad about America's entry because the British and their allies were having a tough time. We learned of these events by listening to adults and to the radio. The war was also affecting life style in South Africa and taking its toll on the family.

My dad joined the Army even though he was not that young. My uncle Dennis joined the South African Air Force and went to England to fly with the Royal Air Force squadron. My mom joined the Women's Auxiliary, an organization to support the war effort. Families in Andrew Street had sons 'going off to war'. Many families made clothes, knitted sweaters and scarves and supported Women's Auxiliary groups. All the women in our family knitted. They did it while doing charity, while

broker betook himself to a hashish-seller, of whom he bought two ounces of concentrated Roubi opium and equal parts of Chinese cubebs, cinnamon, cloves, cardamoms, ginger, white pepper and mountain skink<sup>1</sup>; and, pounding them all together, boiled them in sweet olive-oil; after which he added three ounces of male frankincense in fragments and a cupful of coriander-seed; and, macerating the whole, made it into an electuary with Roubi bee-honey. Then he put the confection in the bowl and carried it to the merchant, to whom he delivered it, saying, "Here is the seed-thickener, and the manner of using it is this. Take of my electuary with a spoon after supping, and wash it down with a sherbet made of rose conserve; but first sup off mutton and house-pigeon plentifully seasoned and hotly spiced." So the merchant bought all this and sent the meat and pigeons to his wife, saying, "Dress them deftly and lay up the seed-thickener until I want it and call for it." She did his bidding and, when she served up the meats, he ate the evening meal, after which he called for the bowl and ate of the electuary. It pleased him well, so he ate the rest and knew his wife. That very night she conceived by him and, after three months, her courses ceased, no blood came from her and she knew that she was with child. When the days of her pregnancy were accomplished, the pangs of labour took her and they raised loud lulliloosings and cries of joy. The midwife delivered her with difficulty, by pronouncing over the boy at his birth the names of Mohammed and Ali, and said, "Allah is Most Great!"; and she called in his ear the call to prayer. Then she

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<sup>1</sup> Arab. "Sikankur" (Gr. Σκίρκος, Lat. Scincus) a lizard (*S. officinalis*) which, held in the hand, still acts as an aphrodisiac in the East, and which in the Middle Ages was considered a universal medicine. In the "Adja'ib al-Hind" (Les Merveilles de l'Inde) we find a notice of a bald-headed old man who was compelled to know his wife twice a day and twice a night in consequence of having eaten a certain fish. (Chapt. lxxviii. of the translation by M. L. Marcel Devic, from a manuscript of the tenth century; Paris, Lemaire, 1878). Europeans deride these prescriptions, but Easterns know better: they affect the fancy, that is, the brain; and often succeed in temporarily relieving impotence. The recipes for this evil, which is incurable only when it comes from heart-affections, are innumerable in the East; and about half of every medical work is devoted to them. Many a quack has made his fortune with a few bottles of tincture of cantharides, and a man who could discover a specific would become a millionaire in India only. The curious reader will consult for specimens the *Atanga-Ranga Shashtra* by Koka Pandit; or the "Rujá 'al-Shaykh ila 'l-Sabáh fi Kuwwati 'l-Báh" (the Return of the Old Man to Youth in power of Procreation) by Ahmed bin Sulaymán known as Ibn Kamál Báhá in 129 chapters lithographed at Cairo. Of these aphrodisiacs I shall have more to say.

listening to the radio, and even on buses. My sister could knit a sweater in two days. The house was full of balls of wool. They were fun to kick around barefoot in the house.

Now the Movietone Newsreels at the movies started to become important. We understood more, as it had started to affect families and the kids in the Southern Suburbs of Johannesburg. We hated the Germans and the Japanese. We didn't know why the Italians joined the Germans, we knew some Italians who lived on Main Street, opposite Andrew Street, and they didn't seem like fighters. It was just a big game adults were playing and we had started to see the right and wrong of it. But, as much as we talked, we didn't understand the horror.



Our area of Johannesburg was a mixture of people, especially during the day. Many non-whites were working in different jobs involving labor and services. We had milk delivered by black men, fruit and vegetable carts were driven by Indians, refuse from houses was picked up by black men, and ice cream carts could be driven by Indian or black men. White journeymen and black helpers did construction and building work, plumbing and electrical repair work. Our street was very busy and doors were essentially open during the day and locked at night. We were aware of stealing and burglaries. We had been burgled ourselves one time. Our parents taught us to be careful even though we walked to school and caught buses by ourselves. We knew from stories in the paper that there were many crimes being committed. We were aware of some cruel happenings.

Although our lives were centered on Andrew Street, all the kids in Andrew Street were reminded every day that we were growing up in a complex society and in a country where the people were predominantly black. The blacks outnumbered the whites by a factor of almost 4. There were more than eight black languages and as many tribes in Johannesburg. None of us understood anything spoken in a native tongue. The different tribes didn't necessarily get on with each other. Fighting between them was frequent and resulted in wounded and dead. Sundays had the highest toll and usually involved excessive drinking. In Johannesburg, the black and white people were split into very definite areas for living purposes. We were living amid a kind of segregation with changing rules. Included in our city were first, second and third generation English, Scottish, Irish,