

LIFE STORIES

Story 1 – Chronology of my life

This story was created on 23 January 2003.

I was born on 4 December 1960 in Fairview, Port Elizabeth (P.E.). I am the second of four siblings born to Edna Elizabeth Marks and Fred Jacob Groener. I have an older brother, Cedric (now aged 44) and two younger sisters Gail (40) and Wendy (34). Cedric, Gail and I were born in P.E. and Wendy was born in Cape Town.

Due to the Group Areas Act, my parents were forced to relocate when I was five years old. We then moved to an area called Korsten (in P.E.), where once again, the threat of being forced to move hung over my parents' heads.

I attended Gelvandale Primary, P.E. for my first year of schooling in 1967. At the end of 1967, my parents decided to relocate to Cape Town, partly for future educational reason – C.T. had the only university set aside for coloureds to attend. In 1968 I initially attended Portavue Primary School, Athlone, the closest school to our place of residence. For the latter part of 1968, I completed Sub.B at Thomas Wildschutt Preparatory School (TWPS), Retreat after having moved to Heathfield, a suburb adjacent to Retreat. In 1969 I did Std 1 at TWPS and thereafter moved to Thomas Wildschutt Primary School where I successfully completed my primary education.

In 1974, I commenced tertiary education at South Peninsula Secondary School, in Steurhof. Each year the threat of the school being closed down hung over our heads since it was located in a "white area". This area had previously been occupied by coloureds.

During my final year at school (in 1978), I realized that attending university was not an option for me, given my parents' financial situation and the fact that my brother was already attending university. Despite having attained a matric exemption, and being dissuaded by my teachers from entering the nursing profession, I silently suffered the pain of being denied access to university due to economic constraints.

I undertook my general nursing training from February 1979 to February 1982 at Nico Malan Nursing College, Athlone, a college for the training of coloured nurses. I hated every minute of my initial months at Groote Schuur Hospital. I despised being told by the sister-in-charge to offer urinals to all the males in this orthopaedic ward. How they ridiculed my innocence and

naïveté. I enviously thought about my classmates who were at university. I longed to be afforded the opportunity to study full-time at university and pursue the career of my dreams.

I did not, however, even allow myself to imagine what I might have studied, because it was probably too painful to explore the emotional impact that those thought processes might have had on my life. I later immersed myself in my work, pledging to care for my patients in the best way I possibly could. Having been an asthma sufferer for the greater part of my childhood and exposed to the health care system on a regular basis, I realized the difference a nurse could make in the life of a patient and therefore made a conscious decision to dedicate myself unreservedly to my profession.

I excelled both at school and in my career as a nurse. I did the integrated course in Midwifery (from March to September 1982) – an accelerated course for those with intellectual capabilities. Thereafter I worked in various intensive care units (ICU) for approximately one year. I then successfully applied to do a one-year course in intensive nursing science and completed this in March 1985. While working in ICU, I was approached by one of the respiratory professors to co-ordinate research trials.

From 1986 onwards, I worked as a research co-ordinator and an ICU sister. I lived abroad from 1989 through to the end of 1992. Upon returning, I continued working as a research co-ordinator and an ICU sister. From 1993 through to 1995, I co-ordinated a breast cancer research study full-time at UCT¹ Community Health Department.

From 1995 to 1997, I worked as a research co-ordinator for the Reproductive Health Research Unit, Baragwanath Hospital, Soweto. From 1997 to the end of 1999, I worked full-time, initially for Janssen and then for Pharmacia (pharmaceutical companies), as a clinical research associate.

I started studying psychology full-time at the beginning of 2000 and have continued working part-time for Pharmacia throughout my training.

Story 2 – Port Elizabeth (P.E.) - exit and revisit

This story was created on 17 January 2003.

Exit P.E.

It was a sweltering day in December 1967, a steam train chugged out of P.E. station. It felt as though with each chug my heartstrings were being pulled and severed. I was seven years old

¹ University of Cape Town

(my daughter's age right now) and I can recall weeping bitterly into a towel. Sad relatives stood by on the station, waving at us until they became mere dots in the distance. Once my tears had dried on that fateful day, I seemed to have locked away feelings related to life in P.E. in a distant room. Thereafter I learnt to choke away, swallow my tears, reabsorb the secretions from my tear ducts, but I learnt to control myself thereafter – sadly. It seemed as though after that day, the crying had moved to my lungs in the form of a chronic respiratory disease called asthma.

Asthma seemed to be my constant companion – it seemed to be the family barometer. Whenever tensions arose, asthma seemed to make itself heard. Sometimes I would try and quieten it, especially at night when the wheezes escaped like a stifled choir struggling to emerge from the deepest parts of my bronchioli. I'd have to eventually admit defeat, awaken my parents in the wee hours of the morning, be nebulised in hospital, injected, medicated and sent home to recover.

Sometimes it would appear as though there was a direct correlation between my asthma and my sadness and longing for the days when I'd joyfully played with all my cousins in P.E. I felt disconnected from the center of my being as the train headed for Cape Town (C.T.) – a foreign and potentially unfriendly city. P.E. has always been dubbed the “friendly city”. Whenever a relative died in P.E., I cried silent tears. I felt disconnected from the place of my birth. I used to silently question my parents' decision to move from P.E. to C.T.

Revisiting P.E.

In 1986, my aunt and uncle and 4 children made a journey down to South Africa from the heartlands of Texas. Uncle C and Aunt P (my mom's youngest sister) were seriously considering returning to S.A. after having lived abroad, initially in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) for 2 years and for the past 28 years in USA. My American cousins - two of whom had been born in Zimbabwe and two in USA were very keen to visit Africa and meet their cousins, reconnect with African soil and the birthplace of their parents.

The state of emergency at the time of their visit was firmly in place. Our American family was greeted with machine guns, caspirs and constant roadblocks and verbal interrogation from security police. My cousins commented that their parents were absolutely crazy to even contemplate wanting to return to S.A. amidst the conflict, violence and explosive atmosphere.

We accompanied them to Port Elizabeth, the birthplace of my aunt. We started off in South End, an idyllic coastal area overlooking the harbour. My aunt retraced the steps she had walked as child, just before they'd been forcibly removed. The silence was ominous and palpable.

We then journeyed to Fairview, where her mother had prematurely died as a result of the heartache precipitated by another threat of forced removals. We drove down winding roads, traversing the land I'd explored as a child before being brutally uprooted. We proceeded to the area where my maternal grandparents had resided and where my grandma had suddenly died at the age of 50. My aunt's comments were: "...and the foundations are still there – there weren't enough white people to inhabit this area – why did they have to remove us?" Words don't do justice to the emotions felt at this time. We rode back in silence, through the barren lands that once was vibrant with community life and spirit. We drove past the school where my dad had once taught. The land was derelict, undeveloped, unused, wasted.

Driving down the winding roads reminds me of the stories my mom used to tell me as young girl – how she would daily put me in the pram, my older brother would stand on the step and my mom would push us to our grandma's home. This had been the daily routine – until the day that my grandmother succumbed to the grief and pain of having to yet again relocate with her husband and nine children. This pain for her was too unbearable and she departed from the world before the government forced the rest of her family to depart from their cherished space.

Aunt Phyllis (my mom's aunt), who has been living in Switzerland for the past 40 years, came to visit S.A. a short while after the Jacks family. My mom and dad revisited Fairview with her.

While history lives on in our hearts, the bricks and mortar bear testimony to a community that once was. Serenity gave way to strife. Peace gave way to turbulence. Feasting gave way to feuding. Divided is the way many have gone to their graves.

These gravesites became the site where my mother's long-lost cousin, whom she had never before met in her life, tried to uncover the family history, find her roots and redevelop connections with family separated through the Group Areas Act and the reclassification system.

Shortly after the first democratic elections, T² (55 yrs old) and her close friend, traveled down to P.E. in search of T's roots. Eventually, through the help of the graveyard undertaker, T met a grandaunt of my mother's (still residing in P.E.) who gave T the address of my Aunt Phyllis in Switzerland. Aunt Phyllis in turn informed my mom. Two years ago, my mom met T, her second cousin, for the first time in her life. Last year Aunt Phyllis met T, her first cousin for the first time in her life.

Shortly after having met T in my home, I was shopping in a mall nearest to my home, when I bumped into T. I wondered how many previous times we'd passed each other unknowingly. T

² I prefer at this stage to maintain her anonymity.

lives in a suburb very close to mine – both the suburb she lives in and that we currently live in used to be whites only areas in the old S.A.

I wonder about the endless possibilities of having encountered white family posing as strangers or the enemy – I wonder how many whites killed their black families during township related unrests. I wonder.....

Story 3– Struggle for education

This story was created on 20 January 2003. There is some overlap between this story, story 10 and chapter four of this dissertation. I have however chosen to include this unpolished and unedited version of this story, even though a lot of the aspects will be repetitive and will have already been encountered during the reading of chapter four and will be encountered later in story 10. In so doing, I am also choosing to live with the inconsistencies that may arise within the three accounts.

Introduction

Yesterday our priest preached about the self we choose to reveal to others and to God. She used the analogy of rooms within ourselves where we never allow others access. We tend to allow people access to the neat/tidy part of our homes and ourselves.

I started thinking about the many rooms I don't even allow myself to traverse because it's just too painful to visit. Some of the rooms could be entitled:

- forced removals
- shattered dreams post matric
- disconnection from extended family
- gasping for breath (experience as an asthmatic in segregated hospital and mismanagement of chronic illness)
- fear of death (young friend died of asthma; misinformation re cause of death i.e. pump weakened his heart)
- searching for belonging in C.T. (outsiders from P.E.)
- loneliness (due to asthma – not allowed to play with friends or partake in sports activities at school)
- struggle for education

For now, I would like to choose to enter the room “struggle for education”. I have struggled long and hard to pursue a tertiary education that I am passionate about. Twenty-four years ago I pursued a nursing career because it was the only opportunity for me at the time to earn a salary and complement the income of my parents.

School

Last week I found school reports dating back to the 1960's. Two reports, specifically, made a huge impact on me. Firstly, my Standard 2 report for the second quarter reads as follows: "Very little improvement in Carol's work, she has been careless". The principal remarks: "1st: good!!!" I had attained 85% during the first and second quarters. The third quarter reads: "Carol has passed to Std 3" – I had attained 87%. In Std 3 (first quarter) the teacher writes: "I admire Carol's determination. Although her absence is due to her illness, she does not allow this to be an obstacle".

In Std 8 my report card reads: "an excellent result! Keep it up". I had achieved 91.5%. In my matric mid-year exam, around the time that I realized university would not be an option for me, my results declined dramatically to 71%. I can still feel the despair of realizing that full-time university studies was not going to be an option. I had lost my enthusiasm for studying. At that time I hadn't realized that correspondence university might have been an option. I managed to achieve a university exemption at the end of matric, despite my dwindling hope.

I vividly remember my favourite teacher calling me up to her table and asking me what I intended studying at university. She was gravely disappointed when I told her I was going to become a nurse. She said that my potential would be wasted. I never ever told my mom and dad how much I really wanted to study at university because they were already struggling to financially support my older brother who was studying dentistry. From an early age I learned to mask my pain and instead focused on the needs of my siblings and parents. I assumed the caretaker role. So it was not surprising that a career in nursing fed into this role. To my colleagues and friends I seemed 'cut out to be a nurse'. Inside I felt very differently.

Unisa studies commenced

During my training I encountered a nursing friend's sister studying via correspondence through Unisa. I then realized that herein lay the answer to my quest for an education. In retrospect it would appear as though my initial desire to study theology was a naïve attempt to try and understand God who created me with a skin colour that largely determined the course of my unfulfilled life (amongst others, feeling compelled to join a profession I despised and felt humiliated in). I wasn't good enough to clean the behinds of white people. However, when circumstances were such that there weren't enough white nurses to take care of white patients, then those of us who, in appearance, were 'less offensive' would be commissioned to work on the white side and would then be disposed of as the need declined.

My studying from 1986 onwards, on duty as an ICU sister and during my lunch and tea breaks (when possible and feasible) in a very stressful environment seemed to have been my way of coping with an untenable situation. I seemed to immerse myself in my studies and momentarily forget about the abuses suffered at the whims of white matrons, white doctors and sometimes my junior subordinate white colleagues who became visible when doctors wanted to communicate with regard to patients. I, on the other hand, became invisible due to my skin colour and was presumed to have an inferior rank.

While studying theology, we were allowed to take one 'non-theology' course. It was at this point when I allowed myself to actually dream about what I would like to become. I realized my deep-seated passion for psychology and enrolled to do Psychology 1. However, by this time I was already midway through my theology degree and it would have been unwise to switch degrees and lose a lot of credits. I therefore put on hold my strong urge to pursue psychology studies.

Studying abroad

From 1989 through to 1991, Ruben and I lived abroad as a result of his being awarded scholarships to do so. I subsequently studied via Unisa while living in America and Switzerland. The negotiation processes, stumbling blocks, bureaucratic bungle-ups and sheer frustration of dealing with faceless university lecturers did not detract me from my main goal – to get a tertiary education and empower myself to move out of a stifling profession (i.e. nursing).

I vividly remember my husband borrowing a car to enable us to travel from Michigan to Chicago – for three hours one way - to enable me to write Psychology 1 in 1990. Upon arrival I was told that no one was aware of my writing an exam on that particular day. It just so happened that there were two other students writing Psychology 1 on the same day. It also just so happened that a third multiple choice exam paper had (erroneously!) been included with the other students' exam papers. I could therefore sit for the exams through sheer luck – or was it divine providence. I had mixed feelings - on the one hand I felt fortunate and blessed – our tiresome journey had not been in vain. On the other hand I resisted the urge to give full vent to my feelings of anger towards Unisa for having shirked their responsibilities. I can't help wondering whether I might have chosen a different educational path altogether had things not been salvaged.

While my husband was pursuing theological training in the United States, I enquired about possibly enrolling for psychology courses. The professor who had facilitated my husband's scholarship promptly informed me, that my highest education (Diplomas in General Nursing, Midwifery and Intensive Nursing Science) at that stage was inadequate for entry to a preliminary psychology course. This moment of humiliation will always stand out like a

mountain in my mind. I hadn't expected to be humiliated in this way by someone who supposedly 'had a sensitivity towards the South African context'. I felt victimized – this time by a white American psychologist! This negative incident however, seemed to fuel my determination. I yet again put on hold my burning desire to pursue a psychology degree.

During my stay in Switzerland, I was studying at a theological seminary while concurrently studying through Unisa. A colicky baby, sleepless nights, an absent husband (due to his mom's sudden death in S.A.) and financial constraints did not deter me from remaining focused on my main aim – the struggle for education.

Navigating my way from Rüslikon to Berne via train with limited language proficiency proved to be no mean feat. I persevered, despite all the odds. I wrote my Unisa exams under trying circumstances.

Bachelor of Theology (B.Th.) Graduation; Psychology 1 & 2

Eventually I graduated (in absentia) with a B.Th. in 1996. I then started becoming impatient and wanted to enroll for Psychology 2 and 3 in the same year. I was curtly informed that it was against university policy. I therefore did Psychology 2 in 1996 and Psychology 3 in 1997.

By the beginning of 1998, I was determined to expedite this process. For various reasons, it had taken me nine long years to obtain an undergraduate degree. A further two years to do Psychology 2 and 3. I realized that the goal I had set for myself i.e. to be a registered psychologist by age 40, was slipping away. I couldn't bear the thought of being denied access to the psychology program because I might by then be too old!

Honours

Friends and university personnel had dissuaded me from enrolling for too many courses. Everyone suggested that I do Honours over three years. I decided I would do it over two years. At this time (1998), my second child was two years old, we were living in JHB with no support systems, I had changed jobs mid-year and traveled locally at least weekly and internationally every second month. My husband was traveling regularly as well. My life was in chaos – but I was determined to pursue a psychology profession.

On the day of my third Honours exam, just before walking out the front door, my aunt phoned, informing me that my 20-year-old cousin had just been hijacked and he had been taken captive by the perpetrators. Already I'd been running out of steam - I now felt as though my energy levels started to peter out.

I was a closet psychology student. I constantly feared that should I make a mistake at work or fail in my duties, this would be attributed to my studying. I therefore chose to take annual leave when it was exam time. I used to excuse myself from international social evenings citing tiredness related to a young child. In the privacy of my room I would then complete assignments. When traveling, I would ensure that I was always extra early for check-in so I'd be seated separate from my colleagues so they couldn't see me reading psychology books instead of work-related material.

1999 was probably my most challenging year with regard to my struggle to pursue tertiary education. I felt stretched beyond my limits. 1999 epitomizes my struggle to become a psychologist at all costs. I had expected Ruben to reciprocate the unequivocal support he had received from me during his 10 years as a full-time student. When Ruben and I married in 1985, besides the traditional wedding vows, we made additional pledges to one another – that we would allow one another the opportunity to study full-time – first he, then once he was employable, I would study full-time. Additionally Ruben had pledged to be the primary caregiver to our daughter, Tanya, so I could concentrate on work, travel (related to work) and studying Honours part-time. However, at the beginning of 1999, Ruben informed me that he had no choice but to relocate to Cape Town since all the regional TRC³ offices had been closed down and the TRC was going to continue operating from Cape Town. His moving to Cape Town represented for me a betrayal of the promises he had made to me. We were at loggerheads. I felt abandoned. I was left at home with two young children, a house that needed to be maintained, a demanding and stressful job and a hectic travel schedule. Added to this I was trying to do the second half of my Honours degree.

There were several moments during 1999 when I felt my body and mind were trying to convince me to call it quits – to admit failure – to terminate my studies. At these moments I recall being acutely in touch with my humanness and my capacity to fail.

One such moment was when I received feedback from a Unisa professor with regard to an assignment I'd submitted, informing me that if I didn't put more effort into my studies, I wouldn't pass at the end of the year. I then decided to push myself even harder. I remember some nights dosing off in my double bed while reading for an assignment, balancing my textbook on my knees while trying to scratch my eczema-ridden children who lay on either side of me.

The following month I was due to collect my last assignment from my mailbox. En route to the post office I made a pact with myself in light of the fact that I felt I was reaching the end of my tether. If I attained 60% or less, I would call it quits – if I attained above 60% that would be a sign that I needed to continue. With fear and trepidation I opened my mailbox,

³ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*

tore open the large brown envelope, flipped over the assignment cover and realized that I had scored 79% - the best ever for that year! I certainly couldn't give up now! No way! Especially since I'd already been provisionally accepted into the Master's Clinical Psychology Program. I had come too close to realising my life-long dream - I couldn't allow myself to give up now.

It was around this time when I so busy I used to feel 'disorientated' a lot of the time. I relied on post-its to ensure that I would order my day correctly. For example, I remember one morning having to wake up at 4am, drive via the Johannesburg Unisa regional office to post an assignment, then drive to the airport, catch a plane at 6am – do work-related and Unisa assignment related reading on the plane. I'd remind myself when alighting where I was – i.e. Bloemfontein, Kimberley, Cape Town, Durban or wherever, orientate myself as to the people I'd be meeting. Once I returned home, I'd do homework with my son, prepare supper, bath the kids, put them to bed and thereafter study. By the next day, when I'd return to work, my colleagues would ask me "how was your trip?" and I would respond "what trip?". They would say "weren't you in Durban yesterday?" and I'd say "oh yes, it was fine". I'd think to myself – so much has happened since that trip, I cannot even remember it!

It was in April 1999 that I started enquiring about applying to enter the master's program at various institutions. Around this time I was doing even more traveling than ever before. I realized that I would be out of the country when the application forms ought to be submitted. I applied for four programs at various universities in Gauteng. My organizational skills were being pushed to the limit. I couldn't ask my then current boss to act as a referee since I was still a closet psychology student. I also couldn't jeopardize my position by prematurely declaring my intent to possibly resign or even worse – be rejected at all the universities and then have to deal with victimization at work thereafter, for having contemplated leaving.

Because of my chequered work career, the best I could do was approach a previous employer in Cape Town to be one of my referees and try and orchestrate to get all the paper work to all the various institutions before the due date.

I remember lying awake in my hotel bed somewhere overseas wondering whether the courier service and my referees had fulfilled their commitments.

Turmoil at home

Amidst all of this, on my return to my office, I received a voice mail message on my work phone asking me to phone an educational psychologist. The educational psychologist informed me that my son, Daniel, had been referred by his school teacher to her for an assessment. I was dumbstruck! My husband hesitantly agreed to accompany my son and myself to the educational psychologist. He sat there, as if to say, 'this is all unnecessary'. I

felt Ruben was in denial. I was far more open to allowing the process to take its course. Painful aspects of our lives unfolded during the consultation with the educational psychologist, aspects that the teacher had made the psychologist aware of. Amongst others, we were informed that Daniel was being reared by the domestic worker because his parents were constantly traveling and this situation was disadvantaging Daniel. I felt indescribably humiliated when the educational psychologist pointed out to me that I needed to choose whether my studies were more important than my son's. I felt so angry towards this privileged psychologist prescribing to me how I ought to conduct my life. I was trying my absolute best at the time, to be as good a mother as possible.

Just a few days ago, my son recounted how he used to cry into his pillow at night because he missed his absent, traveling parents so much. I realized that our situation was not ideal, but we do not live in an ideal world. I needn't to have been judged so harshly – of course, no judgment was meted out to my husband who'd had the privilege of studying for 10 years full-time. No judgment on the male whom society sanctioned in his role as an absent, busy father. The mother alone was chastised. How I managed to contain my anger, I do not know to this day. I guess my overdeveloped superego had a huge role to play in my response and my devotion to my son (and daughter who was 3 years old at the time) prohibited me from reacting. I chose to eat humble pie and sometimes still succumb to the guilt-ridden feelings of maybe not having been a good enough mother.

Community service

Now I won't even go into the emotional impact of living through the possibility last year (from February to November 2002) of being "moved away" from my children as a result of community service. It was when I considered the possible negative implications my moving might have on my children when I seriously considered giving up my psychology studies.

Ruben and I have moved 18 times during our 17 years of marriage. I was determined not to repeat history. By the time I had reached my daughter's current age (7 years), I had already moved 5 times. By the time Daniel had reached the age of 5 years he'd already moved eight times. I want to minimize unnecessary movement in Tanya's life and curb the movement in Daniel's life.

At the risk of sounding as though I'm attempting to relive my life through my children, it would give me the greatest pleasure to see my children attend one school from Grade 1 through to Grade 12, as is possible at the school they currently attend. It is my deepest desire to provide my children with stability which for me means settling into a community, attending as few schools as possible and ultimately not being forced to move.

The previous government permanently disrupted the lives of my parents and their children and forced them (my parents) to move when they were around my current age and I was my daughter's age. The current government now threatens to temporarily disrupt the life of my family and I strongly abhor this. We lived through injustice then, and I feel I'm encountering injustice yet again. The helplessness I feel is inexplicable, it's beyond words.

Selections

I had finally been invited to clinical psychology master's selection interviews at two Gauteng universities. I hadn't been informed that the selection process at X⁴ would last an entire week. I had applied for leave for only the first two days. I then had to run between work (Randburg) and X for the last three days of selection. I remember having a change of clothing in my car as I stepped from one world into another. On the final selection day, I started work at 07H00, was at X by 09H00. I went to Pretoria between 10H00 and 12H00 on work-related business and then was back at X in time to hear that I'd been successful. After champagne (which I declined) and a cup of coffee with two successful candidates, I rushed back to work, while changing shoes and a jacket in the car. My colleagues were none the wiser about what was transpiring in my world.

An invitation to the selection process at Unisa was the cherry on the cake. I had applied for leave for the initial dates received from Unisa. The dates were then changed at the last minute and these revised dates coincided with the expected time of our international strategic planning meeting. There was no way that leave would be approved during our international bosses' visit. I phoned Unisa and asked for clarity as to when I would be called in for interviews. No one could help me. I then explained my situation and was indignantly told to apply the following year if the current dates didn't suit me. I couldn't believe what I was hearing!

My thoughts seemed to revolve around psychology. My body was at work, but my mind was elsewhere. So focused was I on attaining my goal of becoming a psychologist that I seemed to lose touch with family and friends. It was only when tragedy struck the family that I was forced to re-evaluate my priorities.

My younger sister widowed

I vividly remember Thursday 2nd December 1999, after returning from my farewell party⁵ and collecting my son's birthday gift en route home, being phoned by my father from Cape Town and unexpectedly being informed that my youngest sister's husband had been killed in a car crash and my sister's five-year-old son was in hospital. This major crisis forced me to take stock of my life just two days before my 39th birthday.

⁴ *for the sake of anonymity, I will refer to the one university as X*

⁵ *I had resigned from my full-time job in order to commence full-time clinical psychology studies the following year at Unisa.*

It was on this day that I felt I was coming apart and that I was no longer coping. I wanted to give up. I recall thinking as I was about to board the plane –“how could Colin decide to die now - this is THE most inconvenient time”. I had planned to start (yes, only start) studying for my mid-January Honours exam on the 2nd of December. I worked as a clinical research associate right up until the 10th of January, one week before my exams. On Christmas eve I worked until 21H00 trying to sort out everything in light of my brother-in-law's unexpected death and subsequent time taken off work to be with my sister and attend the funeral.

I arrived at Red Cross Hospital at 22H00 where my nephew was being treated. I walked into the ward, saw my shocked sister – we held each and sobbed, only to be abruptly interrupted by a nurse instructing us to be quiet - how insensitive! I watched over my nephew the whole night while my mom comforted my sister in her home that night. Grant (my nephew) had a very restless night. He was confused - he thought his mother had been killed and was asking to see his dad. The tears streamed over my face for the greater part of the night. At about three o'clock in the morning, the nurse who'd quietened us asked who I was and then asked why we'd been crying. She then tried to compensate by offering me a tissue.

The next day I sat beside my sister as she unwrapped a package received from the police. The package contained the bloodstained clothes and shoes that Colin had been wearing on that fateful day.

Colin's body was brought home before the funeral service. Neighbours wanting to pay their last respects overcrowded my sister's home.

The vulnerability concerning my life and my future was never as stark as during this time. My husband paid tribute to Colin at his funeral service. I sat next to my sister while she appropriately giggled at some of Ruben's recollections of his conversations with Colin around courting and marriage. I had so many mixed emotions during the funeral service that I resorted to feelings to resignation.

Upon returning from Colin's funeral, Ruben was due to go away for two weeks and would then return for a short while and then go back overseas. He would be overseas while I was writing my final Honours exams. Here I was on the brink of my life-long dreamt after career and my husband was thousands of miles away. He couldn't have been more distant at a time I desperately needed him most.

After I'd written the third and last subject towards my Honours degree, my therapist confessed that she had feared that I might have collapsed especially around the time of my

last exam. I remember looking at myself in the mirror – trying to put on make-up to camouflage the dark rings and utter exhaustion that loudly and rudely emanated from my eyes. I spoke loudly to myself for the first time in my life and told myself – “this is the final step, Carol, you can do it – you have to do it”. I felt as though I were dragging my carcass to the exam room. I kept coaxing myself to try my best. During the first hour one student from my study group sighed a sigh of despair, got up and walked out of the exam, admitting defeat. I told myself I couldn’t follow suit. I needed to see this exam through, even if in the end I failed. I told myself, this was the final hurdle that stood between me and the upcoming clinical psychology master’s program. Halfway through the three hour exam, another student from our study group walked out in exasperation. I continually coached myself to try my best and that more than that I couldn’t possibly do. At this point I had given over to my spiritual guide and prayed vehemently for strength and perseverance for yet another hour. I coaxed myself to keep writing until I couldn’t anymore. I felt as long as I could attempt to write down what was still being contained in my head and heart, I might stand a chance of pulling through successfully, even if I just scraped.

Masters

I started the clinical psychology master’s program in February 2000 and for a few weeks I lived with the uncertainty that I might have to leave should I have failed any one of the three subjects I had written. I was particularly concerned about the third paper I had written. It seemed as though no one really understood the inner turmoil I was experiencing. Everyone glibly reassured me that I would pass. No one realized how much I had dipped into my reserves and how real the possibility of my failing felt.

I felt worn out, burnt out at the beginning of my master’s training program. I was too scared to admit these feelings for fear that I may be told to go and rest, reapply and return when I was rested. During my two years of training I worked part-time at a pharmaceutical company to supplement my husband’s salary.

Internship

When I started my internship, I again felt as though I was burnt out – I felt I had now reached rock bottom and that my spiritual guide was that rock who would sustain until the next blow.

To say that I was devastated on the 14 February 2002 to learn that I now have to do community service is an understatement. All my life I have worked extremely hard to attempt to rise above my disadvantage and then it is implied that I – who have financed my studies single-handedly – have to pay back to the community for the privileged of having been afforded the opportunity to study. I felt doubly disadvantaged! How dare the government apply blanket rules and make the assumption that I fall into the same category

as someone who had a privileged secondary education and went straight to university and now needed to 'pay back'. I couldn't allow myself to fully feel the anguish I was experiencing. The thought of being forced to move away from my family, break up my family in order to bring about healing in other families was absurd to me and nonsensical. When one of my colleagues innocently intimated at Helen Joseph Hospital how she supported the government's move to enforce community service and how advantaged we ought to feel to walk straight into a job, I was mortified!

Insensitivity from bureaucrats

Furthermore, the haphazard way in which the process was being handled by the Department of Health served only to deepen the wounds. I had struggled so long and hard to get this far. I had paced myself for a three-year marathon and now it was being prolonged by a further year.

I then mustered my last reserves to try and start on my dissertation to avoid the painful possibility of being uprooted at the whim and fancy of an insensitive bureaucrat. I then got caught up in additional bureaucracies after embarking upon an exciting and challenging neuropsychology dissertation. This seemed to epitomize my opportunity to engage in empirical science. Alas, the pain of having to set aside many hours of hard labour because of a bureaucratic bungle-up felt unbearable. I was subsequently compelled to cancel my initial quantitative research study.

The wound inside me feels as though it's bleeding from an artery too huge to try and stop. I have a pounding headache, a sore bleeding heart, but yet my determination again rises to the fore. I feel that this new dissertation is the penultimate step to my qualifying as psychologist. Each time I feel as though the goal posts are in sight, they are shifted. Sometimes I feel as though this marathon I embarked upon is never going to end. I hear rumors that I may have to do 2 years of community service. I had initially chosen to study at Unisa because I wanted to enjoy the experience of finally studying what I feel most passionate about. The program at Unisa is one year longer than at X. Little did I realize that internship, for which I'd tried to carefully pace myself, was not to be my final year. I now felt as though I'd entered to run a half-marathon and just as I was about to reach the finish line, it was decided that I was now going to be running a full marathon. Whew! What a blow! I felt as though an unreasonable sentence had been imposed on me.

I had been anticipating that, for the first time EVER in my life, I could take a break and neither work nor study. And now it was not to be. I felt completely victimised, terrorised, dehumanised, disadvantaged and humiliated in my dealings with the Department of Health.

For 9 long years I had ploughed away, working towards an undergraduate degree. At one point, I was working 7 nights on duty and during my week off I had two part-time research jobs in addition to my part-time Unisa studies. I had slogged and slaved, did without a lunch break during tense and stressful hours in a respiratory intensive care unit. I had struggled against all the odds to pursue my life-long dream of becoming a psychologist. Just when I was about to see the end in sight, it has been forcibly snatched away from me.

I know it's senseless crying over spilt milk, however I feel I owe it to myself to go through the motions of verbalizing my regrets – my regret that I didn't attend X instead – I would have qualified long ago! I ask myself the question WHY, knowing it will never be answered. I try very hard to see the humorous side of it – it's my wry sense of humour that has sustained me for most of my life. I feel that when this wanes, I'm heading for trouble. Last year I came close to no longer being able to laugh, giggle, let alone smile.

I need to mention that in principle, I wholeheartedly support the efforts of the government to provide services to disadvantaged communities. However, I do not appreciate this requirement being thrust upon me in my final year.

The previous government forced my parents to relocate permanently and they've never recovered from this huge blow. While my situation can in no way be compared to that of my parents and countless others, however, I cannot help feeling the impact of possibly being relocated away from my family. I have tried tremendously hard to balance life between my role as mother, wife, full-time worker, student, etc. I do not at this stage of my life need this kind of disruption and insensitivity. I feel repulsed by not only the collective response of the Department of Health but also the individual responses with regard to this matter.

I recall one particular conversation with a bureaucrat where he glibly informed me that I couldn't expect preferential treatment because I am married and have children. The injustice and ruthlessness of this entire experience has served to question my quest for education – I was forced to ask myself last year – 'is it worth it?'. I seriously considered giving up. I realize that this was an indication of the depth of despair I must have been feeling. How could I give up after seventeen long years? I have spent all my recreational moments in my study. I can't remember ever enjoying a public holiday or a weekend. I was always busy studying when everyone around was having fun. I finally move the stage in my life when I convince myself, in the presence of my husband that I need and deserve at least one year to recreate, to vegetate, to not have to work according to a strict timetable. And then the government ironically decides for me that I MAY NOT reward myself – not yet!!!

Glimmer of hope

I long to wake up feeling refreshed, invigorated and relaxed. My therapist once remarked that my determination far outweighs my energy levels. Here I am again – pushing myself. I

had given myself up until today to think through an alternative topic and then to persevere until the finished product (i.e. my dissertation) is on the shelf at Unisa.

Last week when I spoke with Patricia, my new supervisor, I acutely felt as though I'd lost the momentum I needed to get through this dissertation – what to me feels like Mount Everest. Patricia immediately tuned into my feelings.

When Patricia suggested autoethnography, I felt a glimmer of hope inside the deep recesses of my being. It felt as though I'd been given something to hold onto. Yes, I feel this seems right for me. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't embark on another empirical type study. The resources now have to come from within me.

How daunting it feels to finally attempt to give way to the emotions that have been bottling up in the various rooms for decades. I fear becoming so overwhelmed that I may become paralysed and not be able to proceed. For so long I have lived a compartmentalized life, I have to struggle to let go of that defence and succumb to the well within me.

Farewell to previous dissertation topic

Very recently – and not out of choice but rather through circumstances have I allowed myself grief time – to feel the pain of filing away 4 files of work related to my previous dissertation topic.

For one week my entire home and life was in absolute turmoil and chaos. I allowed myself to live in the chaos within and without. Cases from a few days away with family stood unpacked in the dining room area. My bed remained unmade for the greater part of the day with library books, children's toys and dirty clothes strewn all over. The kitchen sink was laden with dishes. My study, the room I most dreaded entering, amongst others, had three full black bags I had brought with me from my internship office at Helen Joseph Hospital.

As I slowly started to unpack the cases, rearrange first the bedroom, take down the long overdue Xmas decorations in the lounge and finally tackle the study, the stench of a tupperware filled with yoghurt that was now three weeks old nearly anaesthetised me.

Towards some concluding remarks

There's a saying – it's only when the tide is at its lowest that it can once again reach high tide.

Yesterday morning for the first time, I astounded my family and myself by walking down the aisle in a crowded church and requesting prayer. I felt so conspicuous and vulnerable and

insecure and yet deep down I believe that when one allows oneself to feel the depths of despair, one enables one's heart to become open to heights of joyous experiences.

I sometimes feel like wailing – how much longer dear Lord do I have to toil to attain my registration as a psychologist...

I think what has helped me cope through the endless years of studying and struggling, has been my ability to compartmentalize my life so that that defence mechanism became my 'overriding default drive'.

I have toiled against all odds. I have been declared insane by many acquaintances and friends. They feel I'm foregoing the pleasures of life simply to study. My cousin told me to have my head read when I resigned from my job that afforded me many privileges e.g. driving a BMW, international travel, generous stipends and various other perks. Yes, those who do not understand my quest would reduce it to insanity.

I went through secondary traumatising during my 2nd year at Unisa when a student in 1st year was forced to leave the program once he'd learnt that he'd failed an Honours subject. I was revisited by ghosts from the past, reminding me what a close shave I had had.

I have always felt utterly committed to my studies. I'd rather skip a meal, but I'd ensure that my varsity fees were paid up. I would sacrifice by walking long distances to ensure that my fees were covered. Sometimes we had no petrol for our car and I needed to cover distances up to 10km by foot. I have stark memories of once having only R5 left close to the end of the month. I had a third class monthly ticket so I could get to work. We bought a packet a mielies and beans and I'd given Ruben the instructions as to how to prepare the soup. He unfortunately burnt the soup, so we went to bed hungry.

Story 4 – Lack of support from local church

This writing was created on 17 February 2003.

At the beginning of 1985, Ruben commenced full-time theological studies at the Baptist College in Athlone, Cape Town, a college for prospective coloured ministers. The church organized a valedictory service to pray for Ruben as he embarked on his theological pilgrimage. Ruben's mother sang a beautiful and appropriate hymn entitled "So send I you". The church pledged to support Ruben.

A few months later, at our wedding, many congregants showered us with kitchen supplies in preparation for my becoming a pastor's wife – close to one hundred cups, several teapots,

teaspoons, cake plates and glasses. Ruben's mother was horrified when I returned certain duplicate gifts to the stores and exchanged them for more immediate needs like e.g. a rice colander, pot, grater, etc. I refused at an early stage already to be put into a mould and groomed for fulfilling the role of pastor's wife i.e. tea maker, cake baker and server for all the unexpected congregants visiting Ruben, as their church leader. I resented being boxed as the student pastor's wife. I wanted to assert my individuality but didn't quite know how.

Towards the end of 1985, we started battling to survive financially. Ruben's mom was also dependent on the meagre salary I was earning as a nurse. We ate humble pie and wrote a letter to the church requesting their support that we had understood they had pledged at the beginning of that year.

A few weeks later, the pastor phoned to inform us of the church's decision. Had I not heard the pastor with my own ears (Ruben and I shared the telephone receiver), I might never have believed what he'd said secondhand. The pastor said something to the effect that "the church has decided not to support you financially because we believe that the children of God need to learn to suffer. The suffering will make you better Christians and one day you will appreciate the wise decision of the church". I was incensed – I vowed I wouldn't EVER again belittle myself by asking for help – I'd rather starve and in fact, we did go hungry on a few occasions. Sometimes at work when I had no lunch I'd tell my colleagues that I'm fasting! My favourite joke when people remark how I've managed to look after my figure – I would tell them I could never afford bigger sized clothing and was forced to retain my original adult weight. It was in the context of this "suffering" that I enrolled to study at Unisa, amidst an extremely tight budget.

Ruben and I were determined to study our way towards freedom and financial independence. I was determined (unbeknown to Ruben) not to be forced into the oppressive role of pastor's wife that in those days meant wearing a hat, not wearing pants (slacks) and other external signs of an inner religious conversion. For the life of me, I couldn't fathom out how wearing a pants made one less of a Christian. A lot of the coloured churches in Cape Town still adhere to these "fundamental religious principles". I sometimes used to say to Ruben that I would continue working as nurse even once he was qualified and the church couldn't expect me to be the women's leader in the church as well as a full-time nurse. At that early stage of our marriage I was reluctant to raise my dissident voice too loudly – I thought I'd break it more gently by stating very clearly that I was not going to forfeit my career like so many other pastors' wives felt obliged to.

As I started studying theology, I slowly started challenging the interpretations that favoured the position of men and relegated women to second-class citizens. As I became more and more confident about my interpretations of scripture I was able to start challenging the

dominant discourses (albeit in a very elementary fashion) prevalent in our societal and religious sectors. I challenged those who dared to ask me “sister, where’s your hat?” I refused to be silenced by those who confronted me with the Pauline text that “women ought to remain silent”.

With tongue in cheek, I sometimes threatened the dominant male voices that one day I’d first become an ordained minister and then I’d become a therapist to all the male ministers who had distorted impressions of the Bible. Many a truth is said in jest – I didn’t believe that my utterances would one day

become reality, but maybe that was an important starting point – to put it out there – to dare to speak the unspeakable and the unthinkable and hopefully one day maybe it would become non-fictional.

I guess it is this history of my outspokenness and wry sense of humour that Des indirectly referred to as “my need to always be on a mission and wanting to prove things to others”.

Maybe I should start hinting at more obscene goals and see what happens!

Coming back to the church community’s explicit non-support and understanding of their “God-given” role of our suffering. These very people had a mouthful to say when Ruben switched from the seminary to studying at UCT. They branded us for being ungodly and apparently no longer following God’s calling. They had had the audacity to pass judgment – to feel they had a right to offer their unasked for and unwanted opinions. Ooh, I can feel that rebellious spirit within me rising and wanting to shout out my disgust for people who professed to be Christian and godly – their shallowness was abhorrent. At one point we were branded as communists for attending the funeral of a slain Muslim freedom fighter and attending a political rally. We were considered polluted because we dared to hold hands with people of other faiths e.g. Jews, Hindus, Muslims and Catholics.

From the day that Ruben started studying at UCT and we moved into university residence, we were officially considered outcasts. We had apparently strayed from “the truth” and forsaken our calling. When we started studying at Rüsclikon, a ‘liberal’ theological seminary, we felt even more despised by our community.

It was hard, a lot of the time, and extremely lonely, for me and Ruben to pursue tertiary education. Somehow, we survived the threats from without and within. We seemed to have overcome the intrapersonal, interpersonal, marital and societal difficulties that confronted us along our journey. Many times it felt as though we were in a desert and then a tiny little oasis presented itself to us and we were able to nourish ourselves, even if it was only temporarily. Sometimes, in order to survive, we found ourselves clinging to verses of scripture that

reminded us of our fundamentalist past. Now we are able to incorporate our fundamentalist upbringing into our more integrated and liberal approach and recognize the value in both. After all, it is my parents' beliefs that enabled our family to survive during the tortuous years of apartheid. It is this which gave me hope and allowed me to dream of a better future while on earth and not just one day in heaven. Both Ruben and I strived together for a better life here on earth not only for ourselves, but also for our children and our children's children.

I wonder whether our previous fellow congregants/ acquaintances whom we've literally and figuratively left behind in Cape Town ever ponder or reflect on their lives as we do on ours. I wonder if they still feel we were insane to have done what we had done. I wonder whether they pity us or whether they silently think – "Oh, the Richards have finally caught up with us in terms of material comforts – they finally have two children, a house, two cars, three dogs, 11 fish and at least one of them has a stable and permanent job".

I, on the other hand, observe them and think – you are still living in the same neighbourhood, working for the same employer, attending the same church and probably haven't moved in your thinking. You are probably still just as conservative as you used to be 20 years ago and still believe that a woman's place is in the kitchen. Sometimes I think I'm becoming arrogant for feeling how much better off I am than they are, experientially. I have a wealth of experiences I might never have had, had Ruben and I not dared to follow the unconventional route and allowed ourselves to develop and grow in ways that had been denied us by virtue of our having been born into coloured families. We broke stereotypes and risked traversing unknown and treacherous lands to pursue our dreams and ideals. We defied societo-cultural, socio-political and economic norms. We have, to a large extent, outgrown and grown away from our peers and community. This has been quite painful and alienating. We have forged different identities for ourselves and developed bonds with people we weren't allowed to associate with in Apartheid S.A. We have learnt and continue to learn the art of living fully and in the moment.

We used to be so future-oriented, we didn't think about today. Theologically, we used to live for the day we died and went to heaven. Politically we used to live for the day we would be free. Academically, I used to live for the day when I'd be able study psychology full-time. 'Living in the moment' doesn't come easily – it is a conscious decision and effort on my part on a daily basis, to live each day to the fullest – to savour every breath I take, to absorb visual, auditory and tactile experiences – to relish the moments I spend teaching myself to write and relive my life in new and unique ways – to be able to explore the length and depth of feelings as they emerge during this writing process and to appreciate life in simple and profound ways. I treasure my relatedness to my Creator, to my family and friends and to myself – the facets that continue to unfold as I journey along this sometimes unknown path.

When I started my nursing career, I most dreaded being stuck in it forever. At that time I couldn't see a way out of it. I felt destined to work at Groote Schuur Hospital, live in Heathfield, Cape Town and boxed into the role of a pastor's wife. I didn't allow myself to dream the dreams I am now living for fear that they might never have materialized. I felt trapped and that my life had been predetermined. How wonderful to have woken up from that nightmare and to have created paths that previously didn't exist and that no one might have dared to tread. There were times when I'd read my prescribed Unisa theology books in the third class compartment of the Cape Flats train that took me to work and back. Sometimes the skollies⁶ would remark "jy hou jouself slim" "ek kan vir jou wys maak – nie boeke⁷". 17 years ago when I buried myself in my books during train journeys, during lunch breaks and teatimes, I really didn't stop to think about what the future held for me because it was too scary and too unthinkable and might have pushed me into a deep, dark depressive state.

I convinced colleagues, my friends and myself that I was simply doing it (i.e. studying part-time) for the fun of it, to keep myself out of mischief and to keep me awake on night duty. I couldn't dare to dream aloud for fear that I'd need to swallow those words and be mocked for having failed.

Maybe some acquaintances would consider our lives failures – we live in Gauteng and NOT in Cape Town, we've lost their friendship, we no longer have relationships with Ruben's sisters, the distance between ourselves and the Baptist community has been increasing, we have seemingly become materialistic and live in a big house far away from my extended family. That would be one perspective.

Another perspective is that life is different from what I'd envisioned it to be. I now live in an area that was previously white, my kids attend a school that was previously for whites only, we attend a church with a mixed congregation, we have befriended people from diverse backgrounds. We have accumulated some material wealth that I'd never thought possible. We enjoy comforts that sometimes feel too good to be true. I sometimes imagine what it would be like to be back where we were 17 years ago. Then I recall coming close to the feeling of losing everything and having to start from scratch again.

Ruben has been going through a tough time at work for the past six months. Sometimes the tension and agony feels unbearable. He feels he's being systematically undermined and victimized. He feels he is being pushed out of his job and being made redundant. I hurt with him and my heart bleeds for him. I find great comfort and solace though in knowing that when we got married 17 years ago, we owned nothing and we survived. I encourage Ruben by telling him that when I met him he had no money, no car, no house and no degree. Today he

⁶ gangster

⁷ "you are pretending to be clever – I can offer you wisdom – not books"

has money, a car and a house and four degrees. These degrees cannot be taken away by anything or anybody. We can start again from scratch if we have to. We have learnt to sacrifice and we can do it again.

Some define his struggle as spiritual warfare, others call it a refining process. Some put it down to professional jealousy and yet others identify it as a painful growing experience. The various realities continue to unfold. We sometimes live as if we do not have the sword of Damocles hanging over our heads. At other times the reality hits us as Ruben becomes snappy and impatient – he's never been like this before. The pain hits us at night sometimes when Ruben tosses and turns in bed and my thoughts wander off in a never-ending cycle. We try and envisage a future where he will not have to watch his back at every turn. A future where Ruben's integrity will not be continually undermined and his character no longer assassinated.

I find myself praying for perseverance, endurance, wisdom and peace for both of us. We wonder about the ultimate purpose of our current suffering.

Story 5 – Humorous moments

This writing was created on 5 February 2003.

I feel quite depressed and immobilized and have decided to give myself permission to recollect some lighter and more humorous moments in my life. I think sometimes I feel obligated to confine myself to the struggle aspects of my life. However, I feel I need to pay tribute to other aspects of myself and allow the reader to formulate a more balanced picture of myself as well as hopefully find that within himself or herself. I would like to convey to the reader that my life hasn't only been consumed with sadness and absorbed in self-pity. There is a side to me that lots of my friends enjoy and affirm and that I too enjoy. Some of them have encouraged me to stage a one-person show at the Market Theatre, so positive they feel about my capacity to engage, entertain, humour and yet give people food for thought.

A few years ago, after returning from our stay in USA and Europe, we were reminiscing with dear friends of ours and they mentioned that they appreciated my ability to laugh amidst the most trying circumstances. In America and Europe we received similar feedback. At one particular multicultural international event, at the height of Apartheid, Ruben and I staged our version of a "District Six⁸ type show" to a mainly white audience. They roared with laughter at our rendition depicting how everything is reserved for whites – beaches, restaurants, etc. – the song ends with the stanza highlighting that hell is also reserved for whites!

⁸ produced by Taliep Peterson and David Kramer in the late 1980s

While we'd been living in Michigan, we met up with a family who'd sponsored Ruben's dad's evangelistic and missionary work. This family, with a typical Afrikaans surname, but Americanised in its pronunciation, adopted us as their African kids. We flaunted our newly found status – having rich white parents! They'd offered us the use of their cars, home, holiday condo in Florida, rides in their private airplane, etc. One day Ruben and I were feeling adventurous. We decided to take Mama up on her longstanding offer and 'borrowed' her car while she was out. We decided to visit Canada for the day. When we arrived at the embassy we realized we wouldn't get there if we stood in those long queues. We decided – “what the heck – we'll just ride in without visas, plead ignorance and hopefully get away with it”. We figured if they let us in, they'd let us out. Who would want two poor South African liabilities? We were confident that if we could get in, we could definitely talk our way out!

Ruben decided to adopt a cool dude American accent that absolutely fitted with the huge American car we were driving! We were ushered in in a very welcoming way and then assumed we'd be waved out as easily (assuming the same official was on duty). We had a wonderful, rip-roaring day in Canada. This is the first time (well, maybe the second time...) Ruben and I had decided to defy official rules.

Exit time comes. As we near the border, Ruben practices his American accent and greets the official with a cool “Howdy” as we enter the exit zone. First the official struts around the car, inspecting it. Then he wants documents to prove that Mama had given us permission to use the car and that we hadn't stolen it! We hadn't thought about that! Next, he demands our visas. We brazenly hand over our American drivers' licences which we know doesn't constitute the near equivalent of visas. He looks at the licences in a hyper-irritated manner. Ruben then whips out a letter from the seminary he's studying at, as proof that we have permission to be in America – but we are now in another country!!! My heart starts pounding. I feel like I used to at the height of the unrest in Apartheid S.A. - I am dead scared! I fear being locked up in jail ad infinitum. I resigned myself to the worst fate and left Ruben to negotiate us out of Canada. I consoled myself with the fact that at least in Canada I'm sure they'd allow us to make one phone call each, unlike in S.A. At least here they didn't have detention without trial (I'd hoped). To this day, I still do not know how we managed to get out of that tight situation! Ruben wiped the sweat off his brow as our 'borrowed' car purred away from the border posts.

Once we'd plucked up the courage to relate to our fellow students this hair-raising incident, they then told us about an African couple who'd preceded us at the seminary and they'd spent a few months in jail! I pledged to be a law-abiding citizen while living abroad from then onwards. What a narrow escape!

This reminds me of our very first trip overseas. In 1988, a German friend, Regina, offered to take us to either Denmark or East Germany. Of course we chose the latter – it was more tempting to take the risk of entering forbidden territory than to go the conventional route. As we entered “no man’s land” between East and West Germany, I felt gripped with both fear and excitement. The excitement soon dwindled as the threatening border post official looked at us with x-ray eyes and scrutinized our faces – frontal view and side views. I’ve always prided myself for my capacity to outstare anybody – not this East German. He frightened me like no other white Afrikaner in S.A. ever could. I trembled with fear and wished I could find the faint childlike voice within me that had disappeared and beg Regina to please take us back. I even wished to be back home where I had a fear that was more familiar to me and a brazenness that I’d learnt to adopt on home ground. This was no longer fun! This was scary! By the time we had reached the next entrance border post, Regina no longer needed to translate for us when we needed to portray the “side view” of our faces. I’ve never felt so intimidated in all my life!

I was unprepared for the long queues that awaited us at the train station border post. And then, just as we neared this final blockade after two hours of queuing, “geschlossen⁹” went up before our very eyes. We then joined the back of another long winding queue. I felt we were deliberately being ostracised.

By the time we emerged from this final border post, we were ravenous. Another long queue!...for the driest burger I’ve ever tasted in my life. My first impression of the East Germans was: ‘siestog, these arme boere¹⁰ – they look so unhappy and so oppressed!’...but they’re not boere, they’re not arm and they’re supposedly not oppressed. I was very confused. ‘Rooi gevaar’ – ‘die kommunistiese aanslag¹¹’ – why did the apartheid government seem so threatened by this peculiar setup. The depth of sadness and despair, the gloomy faces and the seemingly downcast spirits forced my wry sense of humour to surface and I thought to myself “I’d rather continue living under apartheid and sing freedom songs with the joyous spirit and energy I’d come to know, amidst the harshness, but this form of communism was not what I was aspiring to”. I did not want THIS! Oh no, I’d be too scared to even whisper “Viva!” here – there seemed to be a lifelessness and a meaninglessness that seemed to emanate from the faces surrounding us. I had never before seen such sad looking white people. I really felt sorry for them and thought what an anti-climax – I wanted to catch a glimpse of the “people” – who were being more humanely treated by their government – or were they? I certainly didn’t envy these “comrades”. I couldn’t believe that I was longing for familiar and harsh S.A. - I wanted to be back home! All along during our visit thus far to London, Scotland and West Germany – I’d felt so free and uninhibited. Now, when we were

⁹ “closed”

¹⁰ “shame, these poor whites-”

¹¹ ‘red alert/ danger – ‘the communist onslaught’

supposed to be in the utopia we dreamt about in S.A., I felt more stifled, constricted, restricted, oppressed and immobilized than ever before.

I thought to myself – gosh, black people have more resilience in coping with hardship than white people. The shop shelves were bare – people scrambled for daily supplies of milk and bread. The prices were, of course, dirt cheap. We saw no shacks, only well built sturdy brick houses. The clothes, scarves and fishnet stockings they wore seemed like they were outdated and pre-dated the Salvation Army era (2nd hand) clothing in America. I was depressed – if this was what we were fighting for in S.A. – then maybe we should think again. I could now put into context people's surprise at our vibrant spirits during the youth conference we had attended in Scotland – our ability to wholeheartedly raise our voices and sing to our God who promised us freedom. We had an energy and a spirit that was hard to reckon with. A popular question asked was: “why do black people sing and dance (toy-toyi) when they're suffering so badly”?

The uniform matchbox sized cars on the road in East Germany reminded us of the *tjorries*¹² driven by our struggle friends in S.A. I guess I realized for the first time that I was a capitalist at heart. I also realised that the level of deprivation experienced by the majority of blacks in S.A. couldn't be compared with the situation in East Germany. I began to feel that I was one of the more privileged ones in S.A. That there was hope that I would one day – in the far distant future - rise above the circumstances I'd been forced into. I realized afresh that true freedom lay in unlocking the potential in one's mind and heart. While the Apartheid government, to a certain extent, succeeded in dehumanizing us and relegating us to second-class citizenship status, we COULD overcome. I returned from E. Germany more determined to play an active part in bringing about radical change within the S.A. context. I was now more committed than ever to not succumb to what I perceived as “a trapped mentality”.

The East Germans seemed to be surviving and not living. They seemed to be drifting non-purposefully. Their eyes seemed to lack vitality and warmth. In the midst of summer, they felt ice cold – like carcasses wandering around with no life in them.

I guess we've learnt to rise above our circumstances. Our ability to laugh at ourselves and our 'enemies' in the face of despair is what keeps us alive and hoping! Even at funerals, we rise above the sadness and join our voices in unison and look forward to the day when freedom would be ours and the deaths of our brothers and sisters would not have been in vain.

At one point I thought maybe I'm just not used to seeing struggling white people and felt that they just hadn't been equipped with “ubuntu” that was prevalent in S.A. I wondered whether black people weren't maybe just naïve to believe that they would be free one day. I felt,

¹² *cars in need of repairs*

strangely enough, at least we had something to live for. These E.Germans seemed to have resigned themselves to living lives of mediocrity. I really felt sorry for the E.Germans - I almost felt called to become a missionary to them – I really felt I could help free them from the chains of bondage they had constructed for themselves. I felt I wanted to teach them how to live life to fullest. How to rise above their circumstances, how to cook and be creative with minimal resources. How to savour life despite the unsavoury circumstances. I felt: ‘Carol, how dare you be so paternalistic and condescending – maybe they are content, they just have a different way of transmitting these messages’.

I questioned why we were the perceived savages who'd been deemed children of the serpent and the devil. Gosh, we had a defiance and a resilience that made me feel proud of our heritage.

I thought I was going to recall humorous moments and now I realize that the yin and yang of life are so inextricably woven, it would be almost impossible to try and present the one without the other. I must confess to feeling much better after having written this than before I'd started. I feel as though I am able to begin to integrate both sides of the coin. It feels freeing to give myself permission to weave the good and the not-so-good into the same piece – it doesn't have to be either or. In the midst of suffering, after all, there is joy, in the midst of death there is life and likewise in the midst of pain there is also humour. May I continue to learn to find balance in my writing and be okay with the serious and the satire.

Story 6 – Reflections on personal correspondence

This was created on 22 January 2003.

For the past 24 hrs, I've unearthed letters, journals, cards and photographs dating back to 1990, hoping to recapture my cognitive processes, my feelings but more particularly writings related to my struggle for education.

Instead, I'm deeply saddened by the Carol I encounter in these letters. I can hardly identify with the “stories” I wrote home to my parents. Allow me to briefly sketch the context of some of these letters. From 1989 through to 1992, Ruben and I initially lived in Michigan where he was doing a M.Th. at a theological seminary. In 1990 we moved to Switzerland where our first child was born. I used to write very regularly to my mother and father for the three years that I'd been out of the country. I had salvaged letters that I had written to my mom and dad when we returned from Switzerland and they were busy moving from the home they owned to a home owned by my brother.

I had never had the courage to read through these letters beforehand and thought that now that I've embarked upon an autoethnographic exploration, I was hoping that these letters would help me track and possibly compare the selves that I chose to portray then with the selves I'm more comfortable with now.

It is disappointing, to say the least, that I ALWAYS alluded to the fun side, the joyous side and mostly resorted to humour. I find it interesting, yet understandable, that every singly letter is chirpy, happy and gives the reader the impression of a blissful life. I am struck by the absolute SILENCE around any sort of struggling. Nowhere in my letters do I track my theological development. The tone of the letters is matter of fact, superficial, entertaining, lighthearted and extremely reassuring! It seems as though the discourse within our family centred around not giving anyone cause for concern. For various reasons, I did not want my parents to worry about me unnecessarily.

I have grown and developed so much since the time I wrote Psychology 1 in Chicago, I find it hard to take it in. I am now fully in tune with my vulnerability and fragility and I've probably gone to the other extreme compared to where I'd been 13 years ago. I had built impenetrable walls around myself to protect myself. I'd use humour (and a lot of the time sarcastic humour) to keep people at bay. I exuded an energy, a vibrance that a lot of the time was unmatched by my peers. I had a hunger, a thirst and an enthusiasm for education.

Then we decided to start a family. Having had the experience of simultaneously juggling three jobs, studying part-time and being a wife at the same time was a walk in the park in comparison to what motherhood entailed. I had an extremely difficult birth process and my life as well as Daniel's hung on a thread.

All along, I'd been pretty much in control of my life – suddenly I had to contend with a colicky baby who'd keep me awake for endless nights in a row. I was in a catch 22 situation – I wanted us to return back to S.A. as soon as possible with Ruben having to finish his dissertation in a very short space. He was behind with his work because his mother had died suddenly and six weeks out of seminary with language work to catch up on, meant him being absent most of the time. It was during these L-O-N-G sleepless, helpless, lonely nights that I realized that I could cope with a lot of stress, tension and pressure – however, I desperately needed sleep, which I was not getting. Only on the odd occasion do I mention tiredness in my letters to my parents. Most of the time I was portraying the loving and fun side of parenthood, not the hardship. So, it's understandable that there would be a deafening silence around my struggle for education amidst the silence around a basic human need i.e. sleep.

When I think back to the circumstances I endured in order to continue pursuing an education, I ought not to be surprised about my continuous state of burnout.

I remember one day before Daniel's birth, I was running up the steep chapel steps – two at a time and one of my lecturers remarked: "Carol, you must take it easy". I had scheduled a Hebrew exam for the next day in preparation for Daniel's birth supposedly the following week. I had a Greek exam on that following Monday. I went into the labour ward with my Greek and Hebrew books, determined to study and then return to seminary and write the exams with rest of the students. Alas! - my body and mind had not been prepared for the upcoming shock and total readjustment of my life post-delivery. It was even more scary because I am a qualified ICU sister and midwife – when ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise. I think the major trauma for me following Daniel's birth was how extra hard I now had to work to maintain my correspondence studies through Unisa as well as do enough courses at the seminary to warrant my residing there.

In all the letters I have preciously safeguarded all these years, I can count the amount of sentences referring to my studies on one hand. Unbelievable! Well, maybe not so unbelievable, considering that in 2001 for the first time, at the age of 70 years, did my mother for the first time put pen to paper about the impact of forced removals on her life and family. My mother's parents had been forcibly moved twice. My mom's first experience of forced removals was at the tender age of 14. For more than 50 years my mom has been silent around the painful and brutal apartheid atrocities (see story 11a below). It is therefore not surprising that a culture of silence pervaded our lives. We kept the "blink kant bo"¹³ at all times.

Another interesting finding was to read in a journal that I'd asked my parents to complete as a record for my children about their grandparents' lives. My dad's response to a question, "what do you most regret not doing at this stage in your life (when you left school)?" reads as follows: "that I couldn't go to university". When I read through a photocopy of my application forms to Unisa for the Master's Clinical Psychology Program, I had written: " I regret not having had the opportunity to study full-time university after matriculating". I'd no idea up until yesterday that my dad and I had penned the same regrets.

Story 7 – Switzerland

This was created on 13 & 14 March 2003.

In September 1990, Ruben and I arrived in Switzerland as prospective new students to the International Baptist Theological Seminary. We arrived with a total amount of R50 in our

¹³ presented the positive side

pockets. We were greeted at the airport by a friendly Southern Baptist American missionary (L) who informed us that should we need money we could get an advance from the seminary.

I felt “typical American, assuming that we poor Africans cannot take care of ourselves”. The next day we were driven to the nearby village store by L to do our weekly shopping. Off we marched to the store with our R50 in hand. To our dismay, we couldn’t even purchase products for one meal with the R50. We were astounded first all of by the exchange rate – our South African money was worth nothing. Empty-handed we returned to the vehicle and informed L that we would take him up on his offer. He smiled wryly as if to say “I thought so!”.

I felt quite downhearted, to say the least. Here we were in a foreign country where we could barely make ourselves understood to the Swiss and struggling to survive financially. I longed to return home, but we didn’t have money for airfare. No choice. I had to stay – we had to stay – more precisely, Ruben wanted to stay – I was two-minded.

Eventually when another student arrived from India with his entire tribe’s monetary collections towards his five-year stay and this amounted to R50, we no longer felt alone. Later, we realized that most of the students were in the same boat. We had all arrived from either third world or Eastern block countries, with currencies that were insignificant in relation to the Swiss franc.

We immediately set out to work on campus to earn Swiss francs. Ruben became an assistant to one of the professors. I felt I’d rather do hard labour – cleaning, scrubbing – it was safer – no room for misinterpretation. I felt too threatened by the overpowering German and Swiss dialects to want to work in the library or alongside a professor. I also opted to do extra domestic work in a nearby village as an extra source of income. Fortunately I cleaned houses for people who were immigrants and we could understand one another.

It was quite lucrative having an off-campus job. Some of the greatest gifts I received from my madam were a second hand pair of genuine running shoes, that her daughter no longer wanted, and a package of salmon. I will never forget how Ruben and I savoured every bite of our delicious salmon meal. At that time, we could barely afford red meat in Switzerland, let alone fish! Salmon at that time was around R100,00 per kilo – and that was 14 years ago.

Cleaning a triple-storey house in three hours on a Friday afternoon doubled up as a gym class and a cleaning expedition. My greatest fear was breaking one of the fine ornaments decorating the top of the piano. I would enviously watch my madam plan her dinner parties as if she had nothing else to do. Sometimes she’d ask me for my opinion and I’d feel very flattered. I seemed to assume less than the one-down position and would marvel at this white woman asking her maid for advice. I thought this was revolutionary considering how madams

treated their maids in S.A. Nevertheless, I gloated with pride as I'd converse with her. I'd learnt to affirm whatever she was doing and/or planning. That way I'd keep her happy and she'd keep me happy. A win-win situation. I couldn't understand why she'd pay me for R60 for three hours of cleaning – a very generous package considering that we had arrived in the country with only R50. Afterwards I learnt that to afford a triple-storey house in Switzerland, you'd have to be extremely rich and then it made sense. I'd look forward to receiving whatever she handed to me. Even if she gave me something and I didn't have the faintest clue as to what it was, some student at the seminary would have been able to help or would have found use for it.

We used to exchange stories as maids. My Italian counterparts would play piano and fool around when their madams went out. They inevitably got fired. I was very compliant. The extra R60 per week came in very handy and I wasn't going to jeopardize my job. I took my work very seriously. I used to think about my dad a lot of the time while I was cleaning. My dad used to tell me that his grandpa used to say him – “even if you are a street sweeper, be the best street sweeper you could ever be”. I strove to be the best maid and my madam was certainly very happy with the quality of my work, judging from the constant gifts I received.

Our staple diet during our 2,5 year stay in Switzerland was pasta, tuna, rice and on the odd occasion, a miniscule meat loaf or a literally blue tough chicken, imported from Italy (I think). We used to walk past the fruit stall and salivate as we noticed prime S.A. fruit advertised at exorbitant prices. One day we mistakenly purchased an oil-coloured vinegar instead of oil – we couldn't distinguish between the two because of the language. We nearly cried when we discovered our mistake because it was just too difficult for us to return and exchange it – we had to forfeit whatever it had cost – and every penny in those days counted.

We could only afford to phone home once every three months and speak for a few minutes because it was just too expensive. We therefore invested in letter writing. Didn't have email in those days! – let alone a computer.

The one bonus of being in Switzerland was that we could afford to eat the finest Lindt chocolates even though we could barely afford a decent meal. During the summer holidays, students could work at the Lindt chocolate factory and buy Lindt chocolates at discount prices. We always had bowls of Lindt balls overflowing in our matchbox lounge. Our odd visitor from S.A. was always delighted to be offered fine Lindt chocolates. Dessert was always a treat in our home – the main meal barely palatable.

On the odd occasion a professor would invite us to his/her home for a meal. This was something every single student looked forward to – great food and wine in abundance.

When I became pregnant with Daniel, I couldn't afford to buy maternity clothes. One of my professors saw my need and handed all her maternity wear to me. She was much shorter than I was so for my entire pregnancy I wore "minis" but I was comfortable! She even gave me her bras and outsize panties. I'd never worn secondhand panties before! Sometimes I wished that I were home where I could get 'hand me downs' from my highly fashionable sister. However, I did eventually treat myself to one special outfit – I still have the pants to this day!

One of my more refreshing moments in Switzerland comes to mind. I was sitting chatting with an American volunteer one day. She remarked how she'd always be stopped in the street and asked for directions. I shared my astonishment with her that I'd never once been asked for directions! Later on, in conversation with Ruben, I realized the reason why I'd never been assumed to be Swiss – I was brown skinned! For a few moments - or maybe even longer - I had forgotten that I was a 'coloured'! I vividly remember feeling quite overwhelmed that I'd actually forgotten my 'categorization'. Then I started thinking how dangerous it was to have forgotten. I would be returning to South Africa the following year and I couldn't dare forget that I was person of colour and what that meant. However, I must admit that I also felt encouraged that our new environment had facilitated my forgetting that I was coloured. I was simply a South African in the context of Rüschiikon with equal rights like every other student. I had mixed feelings – proud that I'd forgotten and in so doing – shed the burden of constant awareness around skin colour. I felt affirmed for being treated like an equal human being. I enjoyed the freedom that accompanied my status as a human being without a racial classification. I felt affirmed. I became saddened at the prospect of returning to S.A. and having to remind myself that I was coloured or else I'd suffer the harsh consequences for my "oversight" in the country of my birth. I laughed at myself – how refreshing – to have forgotten that I was coloured! I couldn't believe that for a few fleeting moments – or longer - I don't know for how long – I'd actually interacted at a level where I was not consciously aware of my brown skin. This moment was one of the highlights of my life in Switzerland. It will always be cherished.

The palatial seminary building and lavish grounds was a magnificent environment to start rearing our first child. I have fond memories of sitting in the beautiful garden with Daniel, admiring the view, the water features, Lake Zürich and the exquisite Alps. It was breathtakingly beautiful. There were times when I'd wish that moments like these could last forever. There were times when I wished we didn't have to return to the harshness of S.A. I would fantasize about bringing Daniel up in an idyllic environment, where we could move around freely and just enjoy life. I dreaded returning to S.A. and re-experiencing Apartheid. I so much wanted our son to be protected from the cruel realities awaiting us in S.A. Yet I longed to be with my family and friends. How I wished I could inhabit two places at the same time.

Ruben and I constantly reflected on how much living in Switzerland felt like we were in heaven. When I returned to S.A. I told friends that I'd experienced heaven on earth. Needless to say, on the odd occasion, we experienced racism in Switzerland as well, but nowhere near the experiences we'd become conditioned to in S.A. At times we found ourselves being more tolerant of the prejudice meted out to us in a foreign country. However, we struggled to come to terms with prejudice towards us in the land of our birth.

Interestingly, it was only once I'd lived abroad that I started owning the fact that I was Cape Townian for all intents and purposes. Despite my having grown up in C.T. and having spent more than 20 years there, I'd always referred to myself as a Port Elizabethan. I prided myself in announcing that I was NOT from C.T. but from P.E. When I lived abroad, most people who had traveled to S.A. knew about the beauty of the Cape. I then started taking pride in the city where I'd grown up in. This was quite a remarkable shift for me because I'd never felt a sense of belonging in C.T. For the first time in my life I could own being a "Cape Townian". The distinctions between being from P.E. to C.T. only seemed relevant when I shared details of my history with interested persons.

It was in Switzerland where I got to know myself in a different way. I realized how adaptable I could be and also sometimes was able to live in the moment. The good laughs we shared in this cross-cultural environment became very meaningful, particularly during the difficult, dark days that followed after our return to S.A. I recall my Hungarian friend packing up with laughter when I used the expression 'next to nothing' – she'd never heard of something so ludicrous before and couldn't stop laughing.

Switzerland, in my estimation, is probably one of the few countries that is prettier in real life than on a postcard. We were fortunate to have had the opportunity to travel quite extensively through Switzerland and the surrounding countries. One of our professors had sold us a car that had nine months left before it was due to be scrapped. We thoroughly enjoyed exploring the beauty of the Swiss countryside in our bargain vehicle. It was a sad day when Ruben drove the car to the scrap yard and paid them fifty Swiss francs to receive the car. We were shocked at the strict controls related to roadworthy vehicles in Switzerland. How we wished we could've brought the car back with us to S.A. In our opinion, there was nothing wrong with the car. The Swiss felt that the car was an environmental hazard because it had a few rust spots on the undersurface. Whenever I see all the unroadworthy cars polluting the S.A. environment, I reminisce about life in Switzerland and how we used to turn off the car engine at traffic lights to minimize pollution.

Our experiences in Switzerland partly ruined us and made it difficult for us to readjust back into life in S.A. when we returned at the end of 1992. We had tasted freedom. We had

experienced a fairly good quality of life with both of us studying. We had had excellent medical care on a shoestring budget. Ruben had been offered a scholarship to study at the University of Zürich. That would've meant living in Switzerland for 6 more years. I desperately wanted Daniel to grow up with his cousins and our extended family. Ruben's family situation also necessitated that we return at that time.

Whenever I became disheartened once back in S.A. – which was quite often - I'd think back to life in Switzerland. Coming back to S.A. meant that I once again became the sole breadwinner and had one full-time and two part-time jobs at the same time. I wondered on many an occasion whether we had made the right decision to return. Life had become unbearable on many levels. Tensions in Ruben's family home had nearly driven me to the edge. I used cry myself to sleep at night, regretting having returned. I longed for the utopia we had left behind. I missed the comforts we had enjoyed in Switzerland. I missed the stuff we had been forced to leave behind because it was just too expensive to ship to S.A. It felt as though I had left part of myself back in Switzerland. Sometimes when it seems as though life in Switzerland was simply a figment of my imagination, I look at Daniel's birth certificate and remind myself that it was real. There are times when I long for the energetic feelings I used to experience in Switzerland, the carefreeness and the joy of just being.

It was in Switzerland where I rekindled my desire to learn to play piano and was taught by a very kind fellow-student. I had always wanted to learn to play the piano. My parents could not afford to buy a piano. During my primary school days, a very kind neighbour gave me piano lessons and allowed me to practice on his piano. A few months later he died suddenly and my piano lessons died with him. Hence, my utter joy of re-learning to play the piano in Switzerland.

It was in this idyllic country where I had had the golden opportunity to study to my heart's content. Initially I had been reluctant because I was being forced to study as the spouse of a student. Once I had taken my first few classes, I became so engrossed, you would've sworn that I was the primary student and not Ruben. I was passionate about studying, reading and increasing my knowledge. Above all, the atmosphere created by our esteemed professors, was very conducive to learning. I enjoyed studying Hebrew and Greek. It was encouraging to be lauded as one of the top language students in the class. It was during my "death and dying" course that I affirmed my determination to one day become a psychologist.

The seminary was situated diagonally opposite the Jungian institute, across the lake. One day I asked Ruben to visit the Institute with me. I can still feel the excitement I felt that day as we walked through the picturesque garden, the library and pondered at the pictures and framed writings on the wall. I took a deep breath and promised myself that one day I'd return and walk through the Institute as a qualified psychologist. At the time it was unaffordable for me to

enroll for any courses at the Institute. Just recently my husband and I started talking about the possibility of visiting Switzerland with our children, so that we can introduce Daniel to the place of his birth. We are trying to save money towards this venture. My trip back to the Jungian Institute is within reach. Graduation, too, is within reach!

Story 8 - Ma Joan's death

This writing was created on the day of Ruben's mother's funeral. Since I was 6 months pregnant at the time, my gynaecologist advised me against traveling to South Africa for the funeral and I therefore remained in Switzerland while Ruben returned to S.A. to bury his mom. I read this letter to Ruben for the first time ever on 28 January 2003 and transcribed it the following day.

28 August 1991

The bells are tolling eleven o'clock. They tell me that when the bells continue to toll past the hour, it means that either there's a wedding or funeral occurring. Today, the prolonged ringing signifies for me the death of my dear Mommy Joan, not only her death but also her resurrection. Yes, as I read the hymns that are going to be sung at Mom's funeral service today, I can picture her smile and feel her communicating with my spirit – telling me in the words of the hymn writer that “her labours and trials are o'er, that she's safe on that beautiful shore near the Lord she adores”. Yes, Mommy Joan always saw the silver lining in every cloud! A strong woman indeed – been through a lot, but now she's walking with the saints gathered at the river.

What'll I tell her little grandchild one day when it's old enough to understand about his/her grandmummy who was so excited about his/ her conception? Death does not necessarily mean an end, but the beginning of something new and different. Yes, I'll tell our little baby that its grandmummy wasted no time whatsoever in getting to clicking those needles. I remember so clearly how she asked: “what colour must I knit?” – and her humorous son answered: “purple!”. Come to think of it, isn't it paradoxical that purple is normally the colour associated with death and not with life.

I think the best way for us to communicate to our baby about its paternal grandmother is to keep the evidence we have of Ma Joan's anticipation of its birth and indeed the entire growth process in utero. Yes, we'll treasure all the letters and knitted items that bear testimony to Grandma Joan's excitement. Yes, my little unborn baby, right now as I feel you fluttering around in my belly, I have the assurance that in the midst of Grandma Joan's dying moments, she was thinking of you – a new life in which she had participated through bringing her only

son into the world – and in so doing, enabling your daddy and I, through the grace of our Lord, to do the miraculous – to conceive you. Yes, there wasn't a prouder mummy walking this earth than Mummy Joan. She waited for 10 years for her beloved son with the big curl on his forehead and his big mop of hair (as Joanie put it). So proud she was of him that she named him Ruben (meaning "Behold a son"). To think my dear little baby, that you're going to be born around Christmas time, a time that signifies the birth of our Saviour. I, your mommy, normally associate the words "behold a son" with the birth of baby Jesus. This Christmas will bring forth an even deeper meaning of that expression.

Yes, baby, your daddy will probably think that I'm going a bit "overboard" but you know, just last night I realized that the most recent picture of your Grandma was taken at Easter – a time that signifies both death and resurrection.

You know, Mummy Joan always used to tell us how she used to communicate with Grandpa Robbie¹⁴ at night when she'd lay down to rest. Now, admittedly, I found it hard to empathise with Mummy Joan on this one. But you know, last night I had a strange and wonderful experience, I woke up in the middle of the night and realized that Ma Joan had come to say thank you to me for the last letter I had written her. I just felt a sense of peace and assurance that I had communicated with Mom. Now you know, strangely enough, that afternoon when I was busy writing that letter, your daddy came home unexpectedly early from work. I somehow felt cheated 'cos I figured that I'd finish the letter by 4.30pm, prepare supper for us and the next morning get your dad to post the letter since he had to do the mail run next morning. Well, when he came in early, he almost flew into the bedroom, where I was writing the letter, he said hello to the two of us – in his 'silly' old way (he'd do the usual tap on my belly and wave hello to you as if you could see him) – then he let me finish off my letter to Grandma Joan, informing her that I'd been interrupted by her son. He then proceeded to take the pen and write: "yes, Mummy, your son has LANDED!!!"

Yes, baby, so despite the fact that I may not have succeeded in communicating my final written words to your grandma, I have something better that I will forever cherish – a telephone conversation with your grandma three days before she died. I had pestered your dad to make this memorable phone call. I clearly remembered how she said to me: "you take care of that baby, Carol, and she jokingly added – "don't let Ruben feed you too much".

Oh yes, coming back to the last letter Mummy Joan wrote to us for which we were able to thank her the Monday before she closed her eyes for the last time. I remember how that when your daddy read his mommy's letter, he said to me: "a nice letter, hey", and I agreed.

¹⁴ *Ma Joan's husband and Ruben's dad*

The bells are now tolling mid-day. In half an hour's time Grandma Joan's body will be wheeled into "Jehovah-Jireh" to say its final goodbye. It (the coffin) will probably stand next to her now empty chair where she sat knitting her last item – probably for you, darling little unborn one. You know, come to think of it, one of the things I admired about Mummy Joan is that she never wasted an ounce of wool – she always created something out of the last strand. She'd, for instance, knitted a multi-coloured pullover for me from wool she had left over. Yes, I love this bright pullover – so meaningful – I call it my jersey of many colours. Yes, sometimes Mummy Joan would even pull out an old jersey that no longer fitted anybody and she'd create a new item out of something old – the so-called death of an old item giving birth to something new and being knitted for a newborn.

Yes, Mummy Joan, the Lord has called you home and one day "in the sweet by and by we will meet on that beautiful shore"...

Around the time of the funeral on the same day (i.e. 28 August 1991), I penned the following words.

The bells have chimed 3.15pm, marking the end of a new beginning. The beginning of a different phase in the lives of all Mummy Joan's children, family and friends. No longer will Mummy Joan's physical presence be with us but the sweet memories we have of her will live forever.

Baby and I have for the past one and a half hours, shared with you in spirit the funeral service held in honour of Mummy Joan's life here on earth. In our own way, baby and I created an atmosphere that would enable us to feel the significance of this afternoon's happenings many thousands of miles away.

Some symbols used to enhance the atmosphere were as follows:

- a family portrait
- the most recent photo sent to us by Mommy Joan of herself
- one of the plants I had replanted in fresh soil
- a music box with a singular flower placed on top
- an audio-cassette with Mom Joan singing "Jesus is always there"

We started and ended our service with Mom and Granny Joan singing "Jesus is always there". We (baby & I) then prayed for each individual family member as well as the extended family and friends gathered at Pastor Roman's church to pay their last respects. We, of course, especially remembered our dear husband and daddy who so courageously, and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, did what Mummy Joan and Pa Robbie would have wanted – presented a well-thought through and well-prepared sermon. We are proud of you, Ruben, and thank God for blessing us with one such as you.

Be aware also that this morning, a little prayer chain was set up as students and faculty were asked to remember you, Ruben, and your beloved family as you prepared to finalise the laying down to rest of your one and only mother, grandmother and indeed sister, friend and loving neighbour to many.

Baby and I felt a surge of strength as we together sang with you those beautiful melodies from the Baptist hymnal – “in the sweet by and by”, “shall we gather at the river” and that glorious hymn “oh that will be...”.

Prior to our service, baby and I took a picture of the seemingly tranquil Lake Zürich. This picture will always serve as a special memory of our late Mom and Grandmom.

Amazing isn't it, how extra-sensitive our baby already is Rubs. It's almost as if it was fully aware of what was going on. It didn't give its usual violent post lunch kick. Instead, it was more of an assuring kind of movement within me - that tried to communicate with me and simply let me know that it's there – an inner sense of peace just overcomes me – I marvel at our Creator's work – the one who decided to make humankind in God's image, who saw that what was made was good and indeed rested thereafter. On this note, baby and I will now go and take an afternoon nap as the community of friends and family gather at no.3 Chatham Road, Heathfield, around a cup of tea after having laid Mummy Joan to rest.

Story 9 – Colin's death

I created this writing on 6 February 2003. Colin, my sister Gail's husband was tragically killed in a car accident on 2 December 1999. This writing was the second one created on 6 February 2003 – the first one is of an extremely personal nature and has therefore been excluded. This second writing is a reflection on the initial story written on this day.

I wrote about Colin's death today because in many ways I started thinking differently about life and relationships from that moment onwards. The meanings that I now construct in life and about life are radically different to the time before Colin died.

Colin's death enabled me to become more self-reflexive than I'd ever been before. His death brought about a desire within me to explore the various meanings of life. In fact, at first I was searching for the *meaning* of life. I started off by reading Viktor Frankl's “Man's search for Meaning” and this had a huge impact on me.

I started paying close attention to the role I was playing in fueling the growing conflict between Ruben and myself. I started taking responsibility for my actions even when I felt I was being severely provoked. I realized how much I'd shut Ruben out of my world by building increasingly higher, impenetrable walls around myself. It dawned on me that the anger I was feeling towards Ruben had accumulated over many years – an anger that I feared would destroy me before destroying our relationship.

While Ruben and I had promised to enable one another to accomplish our academic dreams, not once did I ever dare to share my dreams with him. I marveled at him for pursuing his dreams -- in a way, envying him his unsolicited, unapologetic and unharnessed fervour to study on three different continents. At the time and up until 3 years ago, before Colin's death, I had always played a very supportive role, financially and emotionally supporting Ruben throughout his educational pilgrimage.

After Colin's death I started thinking seriously about what it is I want out of life. How much did studying psychology really mean to me. What if my life were prematurely snatched away before completing my studies? Would I go to the grave satisfied that I'd lived my life to the fullest?

I started becoming more assertive about my needs, about being more responsible for voicing my dreams. I started sharing with Ruben my regrets about not speaking out earlier. I went as far as to say that to a certain degree, I regretted having supported him so fully. I felt I had done myself short – I should have been bolder in making my needs known. Prior to that I'd blamed Ruben entirely for not ever asking me what it was I wanted to do with my life.

I accused him of pursuing his dreams at my expense. I think a lot of time I doubted that I might have had the capacity to pursue my academic dream/s. It seems as though I pushed myself into the closet when I started studying psychology "undercover". Maybe I was scared to tell people for fear that I might never have succeeded and then not be able to endure society's judgment on me. Maybe I was scared to realize that I might not have succeeded at university post-matric, even if I had had the opportunity to study full-time. I therefore allowed Ruben to be the pioneer – the more he succeeded, the more I doubted myself.

After Colin's death I started to try and think about myself in a more positive light. I started affirming myself and taking pride in my accomplishments. I think I became so acutely aware of my aloneness after Colin's death, I started realizing that if I didn't take care of myself, no one else would.

This period of transition in our marital relationship, where I more outspokenly voiced my position in our relationship, how we had co-created an imbalance where I felt disadvantaged,

was a difficult period. Ruben and I found it sometimes difficult to hear one another. He came from a family situation where each person took care of him or herself first before taking care of the other. In our family, the reverse was the predominant reality where self was almost sacrificed for the other. Ruben therefore seemed to be the main beneficiary as a result of our backgrounds and dispositions.

Colin's death made me realize how vital my studies were to me. It also enabled me to risk opening up to Ruben to allow him to get to know me in ways that I might have preferred him not to. I had preferred up until then to only be portrayed as the good, supportive, devoted wife. Suddenly I felt I was being demonized because I dared to bring to the fore, what he perceived to be my hidden, negative feelings as well as my reservations. I felt that life is too short to not live it fully. I was prepared to show a side of me to Ruben that a lot of the time he couldn't cope with. I had to live with the consequences of being hopelessly misunderstood at times.

Colin's death enabled me to encourage me and Ruben to try and open up channels of communication between ourselves and Ruben's three sisters. Our relationship with them had become strained and later severed following events surrounding Ruben's mom's death. Sadly, we have thus far not been able to bridge the insurmountable gaps that exist in our relationships with them and we are not as yet reconciled with them. When my children ask about Ruben's sisters, it saddens me that they don't know them at all. It saddens me that there's this gulf between us.

Colin's death made me realize that life is far too short to live at loggerheads with one another. His untimely death has made me aware of my vulnerability and fragility. Last night my Dad phoned me and during our conversation he mentioned to me that he no longer fears death as he used to. He shared with me that he feels he's lived a full and satisfying life and feels ready to depart from this earth. He hastened to add that he will in no way become careless about his life, but that death was something he was ready to face.

Story 10 - Master's training

This story was created on 14 February 2003. There is some overlap between story 3, chapter four above and this story, namely story 10. I have however chosen to include this unpolished and unedited version of this story, even though a lot of the aspects will be repetitive and will have already been encountered during the reading of chapter four and story 3 above. In so doing, I am also choosing to live with the inconsistencies that may arise within the three accounts.

Yesterday Patricia¹⁵ was keen that I elaborate on my training and internship experiences. I realized that I had glossed over these aspects of my life almost as if I were implying that the beginning of my training marked the destination and not the continuation of a journey. I guess my silence was about how emotionally close and how affected I still feel by the impact of my training. It's as if I'm still trying to digest chunks of it and continually suffer from indigestion when I do try to reflect on it. I resist the temptation to unpack my training for fear that the undigested parts may release their fermented bitterness into my very being and may overwhelm me.

In November last year a 2nd year master's student interviewed me for the purpose of her dissertation. She was exploring narrative accounts of students' training experiences. This was the first time that I'd formally reflected on my training process and I came to the realization that I harboured a lot of untoward feelings related to my training.

Yesterday I felt very strongly that if Patricia was particularly interested in that aspect of my life, I could share it with her informally. However, today I feel inspired to start writing about my experiences within my training environments and maybe in so doing uncover and hopefully begin dealing with my growing negativity towards the profession as a whole.

When I started my training in February 2000, amidst the burnt out feelings I had, I also had a level of excitement that probably equaled, maybe even surpassed, my daughter's tangible excitement when she started school for the first time three weeks ago. Here was the moment I'd long awaited – to be able to study full-time – to allow myself the time and space to wander around in the library, smell the antiquated books and new books lining the shelves. All my life, while working full-time and studying part-time, I'd fantasized about the engaging debates I'd have with fellow-students while lying sprawled out on luscious lawns and sipping a refreshing drink. I'd anticipated getting to know my lecturers and 4 fellow-students like I'd never gotten to know anyone else in my life besides my immediate family (parents and siblings), husband and children. I dreamt about possibilities of active, lively engaging talks where differences and arguments could be contained, entertained and thrashed out. I had expected openness, transparency, equality and the capacity to handle diversity and ambivalence.

I had been accepted at another institution (called X hereafter) and at Unisa. I desperately wanted a change in tertiary institutions and would have preferred to opt for the other institution. However, given my burnt out status, my responsibility as a parent and the time allocation of the two institutions, I chose Unisa. Another contributing factor was that at X I would have been the only person of colour and the only one with children. I therefore opted for the smaller class where I felt I had something in common with at least two others. Post selection at X, Prof. Y reassured me that I had not been chosen because of my colour but

¹⁵ *my second supervisor*

because of my ability. I felt uncomfortable. Why am I the only one out of a class of ten who needs to be reassured vis-à-vis the reasons for my being included. I did feel that I had fulfilled the criteria up until the point that this Professor decided to reassure me, and then doubts started creeping in. The eleventh student had been excluded because none of the hospitals/institutions on the final day of selections would offer her an internship placement. I had felt earlier on in the process that this candidate was being included simply because she was black and not necessarily because of her capabilities. I had had quite a few conversations with her that had led me to this conclusion. The final day of selection served as confirmation for me. I'd felt pretty sure that I was not an affirmative action candidate and/ or a necessary face of colour to fulfil a quota. I felt I had earned my selection and that the process had been fair. Prof. Y. however cast doubt on this feeling of mine.

It wasn't easy to opt for traveling to Pretoria for 2 years as opposed to 10 km away from home for 1 year. However, another facet was that I wanted to be in the program extending over two years instead of one because I had always wanted to study full-time and now the opportunity availed itself.

I wanted to savour every moment of the two years that lay ahead of me. I wanted to enjoy the 50km ride there, anticipating the classes of that day and on my return journey unpack the day with my fellow traveler.

The first six weeks or so were consumed with concern as to whether I'd passed my Honours exam or not and whether I'd be included or excluded. Once I'd received my long-awaited results and had given myself permission to settle in and enjoy life as a student, I soon became aware that I started feeling down. I initially thought that maybe the journey towards this point in my life had been so tiresome that I just didn't have the energy to enjoy it. On the other hand, I constantly had the feeling of "gosh, this is an anti-climax, how disappointing".

When D. interviewed me in November, I was unpleasantly surprised at how I still negatively appraised my training. I thought that the distance created – both geographically and temporally (time-wise)– would have caused me to view my training in a more positive light. Alas, this was not the case. I must hasten to add, lest I be criticised for being an overly negative person, my internship, to a large extent served as a corrective to my training experiences. To a certain extent, it is my sincere hope that in creating this story of my training, that at the end of the process, or maybe even during the process of writing it, some sort of balance between the positive and negative will emerge.

My first experience during practical training, following supervision, was one of being literally reduced to tears, feeling torn apart, helpless and totally incompetent. I'd always prided myself in my ability to be efficient and competent, while at the same being acutely aware of my

limitations. However, when one's supervisors make one feel as though you have nothing to offer and make one feel more vulnerable than the client you are busy seeing before and after supervision, this seemed to reinforce the discourse of the Apartheid regime – that I was a second grade citizen with nothing substantial to offer.

My initial meeting one year prior to training with one of the trainers had made me feel so enthusiastic and eager to start training. I felt that for the first time in my life a white person would potentially treat me differently. Alas, very soon after training had commenced, the experiences I'd had with the old boys' club at an academic institution, where I'd been employed as a research co-ordinator, started to re-emerge but now under the guise of openness, acceptance and a supposed equality.

The trainers seemed to have the ability to make me feel like a little school girl and that I needed to prove myself to them. All my life I had felt that I'd been forced to prove myself – in my nursing career, my research career and in the corporate world. I did not expect to experience the same dynamics within a psychology training environment. I felt constantly undermined and my years of experience as a nurse, researcher and corporate worker counted for nothing. It was as if the undergirding philosophies during training included: "struggle and crisis is absolutely essential to the development of a therapist"; "a trainee therapist needs to be rendered incompetent and totally unsure of herself before training could begin to happen". I felt I had struggled against all odds to get into a clinical psychology training program. At the very least I felt I needed to be treated with respect and dignity and not constantly reduced to feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness and utter helplessness.

My experiences are best illustrated by way of stories. The first one that comes to mind is entitled "picking up garbage" My second story is about an encounter with a Unisa trainer entitled "Carol, I need to speak to you". My third story addresses the fickleness of one trainer in particular and my fourth story raises my ambivalence during my second year of training.

Picking up garbage

My initial impressions of training started off as a feeling of disgruntlement and this later deteriorated to feelings of disempowerment. A pivotal point came for me when we facilitated a workshop at a school in Pretoria in July 2000. Ruben was living in Cape Town due to work commitments, one of my children took ill on the day of the workshop and I had also struggled to find a babysitter. I felt that I would be victimized if I absented myself from the workshop, so I reluctantly decided to go.

In preparation for the workshop, we had divided ourselves into different groups, each group focusing on a particular aspect e.g. music, drama, etc. The group that I was part of failed to attract participants. A fellow -student and I then decided to take a walk and be on the lookout

for students who hadn't as yet found a place and invite them to join our group. While walking we met up with trainer C who enquired where we were going. We gave her our very logical explanation. Shortly thereafter, trainer C returned with trainer B at her side and we were now being interrogated as to our movements. We were then instructed by trainer B to pick up garbage lying around in the school grounds.

I took strong exception to this. I felt that these trainers hadn't a clue with regard to the context I'd emerged from. Here I was, a 40 year old mother of two, a product of racist S.A. with a low self esteem that I was still struggling with – in a school previously exclusively reserved for white children and I was being told to pick up garbage. I felt that the trainers had no respect or appreciation for the obstacles I'd had to overcome to make it to the workshop. Added to this, they had a total disregard for the context from which I emerged. On that day I felt bruised beyond repair. Thereafter I went into survival mode. I would henceforth do what was expected of me as a student, play the game I felt I was forced to play and endure the insults, insinuations and humiliations of the new regime, namely my trainers, who so closely resembled the Apartheid regime. I think I now am able to verbalise the reason why I had glossed over my training – it is very painful and infuriating revisiting the experiences that have tainted my ideas of what a trainer – and by implication, a therapist - ought to be. When we returned from the workshop on that Saturday evening, as I spoke with a fellow student, tears started rolling down my cheeks. By the time we arrived at this student's home, I was so emotional that she and her partner counseled me. I sobbed as I related what had transpired.

On the Monday following this particular Saturday, during our regular group meeting, I risked raising with two other trainers and 3 fellow students (one student was absent) what had occurred on that day. I vividly remember talking about the fact that I'd seriously considered leaving the program. I didn't feel I had the capacity to endure the brutal insensitivity of the trainers. As the class and two trainers unpacked what had happened, I felt as though I was being set up to confront trainers and would probably be placed as the sacrificial lamb on the alter of training on behalf of others who wouldn't dare to confront these trainers. At the end of the class, I felt uncontained, even more vulnerable and went into preservation mode. Thereafter I shut up and withdrew and as a result became less of who I was. It was difficult to try and trust the trainers after this experience.

At the end of the year, in an attempt to bring about some form of closure, I made a collage – a visual representation of the garbage encountered at our practical training site – as an expression of some of the figurative garbage I'd encountered.

“Carol, I need to speak to you”

As mid-year of our first year of training approached, we were informed, much to my relief that we would not be having mid-year exams. When I bumped into one of the trainers shortly after

the June holidays, he mentioned to me in the corridor, "Oh, Carol, I need to speak to you". I lightheartedly replied, "and I need to speak to you as well". A grimace came over the trainer's face and it was as if he was declaring war on me. He then demanded that I enter his office immediately and I was totally taken aback. I'd thought that we were not being evaluated. However, it would appear as though the trainer had had a change of mind during the holidays and this experience felt similar to a typical police interrogation session during the Apartheid years. From that day onwards I realized that discourses like "we are in conversation with one another", "training is a mutual learning experience", "we are all equal" and "power differentials are not operational at Unisa" was lip service – in reality, I as the student was definitely in a one-down position and could not take the trainers seriously when they tried to give us the impression that Unisa's training was unique. I started experiencing training as more abusive and destructive than blatant and overt racism and power games. I interpreted it as a dangerous form of subjugation, masked by what would appear to be appropriate discourses. I realized that I needed to assume the one-down position in order to survive training.

Amongst others, during this "conversation" it emerged that the trainer felt that I was avoiding supervision. When I pointed out to him various instances when I had tried to get supervision and was competing with 17 other students and people from the community for the trainers' attention, I realized that I wasn't being heard. I was being hauled over the coals for not being "a good student who knew her place" and apparently seemed insensitive to the power dynamics operating at the practical training site. I felt the full wrath of a trainer on that day. I had learnt "my place" in the old S.A. in relation to white doctors, white managers, etc. I reverted to assuming that all-familiar role in relation to my trainers in the new S.A. in order to survive.

I struggled with my need to fight the pervasive injustice that reared its ugly head on a regular basis. However, I told myself that for the greater part of my life I'd learnt to be submissive – to say "ja baas, nee baas, drie sake vol baas"¹⁶. To continue doing so for another two years wouldn't kill me. I had been through worse before. I believed that in time to come, I would allow my silenced voice to emerge and maybe that time is now even though the fear still grips me and threatens to render me paralytic.

I think I had run into disfavour when I asked for permission in one of our end-of-day meetings at our training site to have a two week break from all matters related to Unisa and Agape. I'd previously heard from other students that one could only be excused from Agape if you were going to another province to visit your home. I refused to buy into the prescribed notion that I ought to create a trip to Cape Town to warrant my absence. I decided to risk stating that I was feeling tired and needed time out to take care of my family and myself. The silence of the trainers was palpable to me. A minority of students gave me their 'blessing' and I decided to

¹⁶ "yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir"

not discuss the matter any further. I am almost convinced that because I dared to open mouth vis-à-vis my own needs and put them supposedly above the needs of the community, I ran into disrepute.

Eventually it felt like group sessions on Monday mornings became a post-Agape debriefing session. Around September we were informed that we were no longer required to go to Agape the following year – we would be doing therapy behind the one-way mirror. I rejoiced on that day for various reasons. The end of my journeying to Mamelodi was coming to an end. I no longer had to contend with double messages from trainers at Agape. I no longer had to make additional arrangements for my children to be taken care of on a Wednesday evening because I never knew what time I'd be returning. I would at last be able to attend one of my son's cricket matches.

In principle, I support the notion of Agape. I feel it has a lot of potential. However, my experiences with trainers, with the uncontainedness and total unstructuredness of the day, started affecting me adversely. Despite the adverse effects, I was able to form lasting connections with several community members. I tried to separate my therapy and my relationships with clients and community members from the trainer-trainee politics and dynamics. I'd been used to compartmentalizing aspects of my life and being at Agape seemed to be an extension of previously lived through experiences. I became quite versatile and adept at handling tenuous situations. Anyone who might have seen and observed me at Agape would probably have been oblivious to the inner battles raging within me.

Fickleness

It was a blistering hot day at Agape. The toilets were not functioning and there was no running water. On this particular day, there weren't any chairs either.

A male fellow student (student A hereafter) came over to me informing me that trainer A had allocated a particular young woman to be counseled by the two of us. Student A provided me with some background and through this I learnt that the client had been raped and was now feeling suicidal. We together approached the client. The client indicated to me that she wanted to speak to me alone. I asked student A to excuse us for a while. She told me she'd been raped and therefore didn't want to be counseled by student A as well. I then informed student A of the client's request. He in turn went back to trainer A who apparently insisted that the client be seen by both of us. As I tried to negotiate with student A and explain to him that I wanted to be sensitive to how the client was feeling and would therefore appreciate him excusing himself, I added that maybe in the future the client would feel ready to incorporate him into the sessions. I could sense that student A felt very strongly that he needed to be my co-therapist. Under duress, and based on what student A had reported from trainer A – I seemed to have no option and then tried to negotiate with the client to include student A.

While trying to negotiate, the client gave chase and ran down the road. I followed the client and student A in turn followed me. We needed to run quite fast in order to catch up with her. Eventually, after catching my breath, I asked her for a contact telephone number. She reluctantly gave me the number of a neighbour. Upon returning to Agape, trainer A interrogated us as to what happened. I was reprimanded for not sitting down with the client – there were chairs – I tried to explain to trainer A that I had offered the client a stone, but she did not want to sit on a stone. I thought to myself: “what was I supposed to do!”. I managed to contain my anger towards trainer A. To cut a long story short, we spoke about strategies towards the end of our meeting. Trainer A had given what I’d felt was a very good strategy should the client return the following week.

The following week, during the small group meeting, I noticed the client walking through the gate and taking a seat. She then started fidgeting and I took the initiative to walk over to her, acknowledge her presence and ask her to wait until the end of the morning meeting. Towards the end of the meeting, the client jumped up and headed for the gate. To this day I don’t know why I conceded to student A’s nudging and indicating to me to follow the client. I prodded him to do so. Eventually I got up and followed the client and employed the strategy that the trainer had suggested. The client decided to leave anyway because she said she had lot of things to attend to. I then went over to trainer A and expressed my thanks for the useful suggestion that seemed to have worked. I was unprepared for what transpired next. Trainer A accused me of being totally insensitive to the client’s needs and reprimanded me severely for having, according to his assumptions, haphazardly utilized a technique that he’d suggested the previous week. I told him that I had taken into account the context and I had felt that it had been appropriate, given the situation. I was perplexed, confused, and angry and spoke with student A after my encounter with trainer A. He told me to forget about it and move on. I couldn’t. I was sobbing. The trainer’s fickleness on this particular day had gotten to me. I felt like a naughty child who’d misread a parent and couldn’t understand the double messages I was receiving. Student A cautioned me not to try and make sense of the situation. He convinced me that since he’d been around for a longer time than I had, he was au fait with what to do when faced with double-bind messages. I felt it was ludicrous. Eventually I felt strong enough to confront trainer A and student A literally restrained me. He held me to my chair and warned me to leave matters. In retrospect I realized that student A was probably right to discourage me from confronting trainer A. I suspect that I might have been more severely reprimanded and victimized thereafter.

Ambivalence in 2nd year

Mid-year of my second year, I verbalized my feelings of ambivalence with regard to becoming a psychotherapist. I was curtly persuaded to terminate my training. The uncontainedness continued. I had thought that an academic institution, and more specifically, a trainer, would have been able to contain the ambivalence of a student struggling to find herself, her voice

and find meaning in what she's doing. Alas, you either had to conform or concede to leaving. I stubbornly refused to leave. No trainer, let alone a white person, was going to deny me training after I had worked so hard to get where I was. What annoyed me was that I was made to feel as though I had denied someone else access to a program that I no longer found useful. It was implied that I was fickle and that Unisa had no place for fickle-minded students. The audacity of this trainer to this day makes me sick to the stomach. I resent being boxed and to have legitimate feelings minimized.

The trainer was unable to hear me say that I'd had enough of the game playing that reduced me to a submissive actress having to play a particular role. I felt training made me less of who I was and internship made me more of who I am.

Towards some concluding remarks with regard to training

When we requested training with regard to the DSM-IV in preparation for internship, we were told to do it ourselves.

Before I move on to internship, I need to put it on record that my experience with Professor Kate Grieve was a very positive one. My initial undertaking of a neuropsychology dissertation confirms the impact that Kate had on me. I will forever be grateful to her for having salvaged the course for me and having made it worth the while.

When D. interviewed me about my training, I mentioned that training happened despite the trainers. A lot of the time I felt as though I was learning from trainers how NOT to do therapy and how not to be in relation to other people.

D. had asked me how the course had empowered me. I had to say that I felt disempowered the majority of the time. I also said that I experienced my training as abusive, ad hoc, fragmented and hugely negative.

She'd asked how the training had impacted upon my family life. I commented that I hadn't allowed it to have a negative impact on my life. I had had experience in compartmentalizing my life. This was an extension of that fragmentation.

Throughout our training we were given the impression that feedback was a two-way process. My experience was that it was one-way - from trainer to trainee - and never vice versa. At the end of our two years we offered to give feedback for the sake of future students. Our offer was rejected.

A lot of the time I felt that the amount of time I spent traveling to and from Unisa and the amount of money I spent on petrol hadn't been worth the training I had received.

Internship

Training had ill-prepared us for internship. Professor Kate Grieve had made her contribution by taking us to visit the various placement sites in order to better prepare ourselves.

While I am aware that no training program will ever be exhaustive, however I became acutely aware of my training shortcomings within the first week of my internship. I needed to debrief a family who'd been violently and brutally treated by a gang of thieves. I needed to counsel a teenager who had attempted suicide. I attended the sexual and physical abuse clinic and was confronted with gross human violations. During our training we hadn't covered anything related to suicide, trauma or human rights violations. We had mainly delved into the self and while this is of vital importance, there should have been a more balanced approach, with exposure to a wider variety of topics.

Our Wednesday morning training sessions during internship proved to be far more valuable than our two years of training at Unisa. Only once did my Unisa lecturer pitch for an evaluation – I was evaluated every 4 months during my internship year. No apologies had been forthcoming. On the one occasion when he had arrived, he seemed to be in another place while I was being evaluated. His body was present but his mind was elsewhere.

I felt very contained throughout my internship. Space had been created for me (and indeed for the rest of the interns) to develop, interact and grow. Looking back, it was a very taxing year with high expectations. The professional way in which we were treated at all times, the respect meted out to us and the appreciation of each person's unique contribution to the team was refreshing and enhancing.

Circumstances were sometimes difficult, bureaucratic processes sometimes unnecessarily impacted upon, interfered with and/ or retarded therapy, however, I experienced a team cohesiveness that superceded all these obstacles.

Most weekends as interns we were busy with assessment reports, preparation for ward rounds and slide presentations, journal club readings and/or preparations, writing extensive process notes, preparing for HIV/ AIDS training workshops, etc. However, our efforts were affirmed and appreciated and not undermined or minimized or negatively critiqued. My internship was a hugely positive experience. There were up and downs and struggles, but overall the context was conducive to development, growth, openness and empathy.

Story 11a – Mom Edna's story

In August 2001, in preparation for an end of year workshop during my first year of training at Unisa, I telephoned my mother who lives in Cape Town and asked her to write me a story related to her upbringing. My request was quite open-ended since I did not want to influence my mom as to what she should write about. I asked her only once since I did not want her to feel pressurised. Towards the end of September, as my workshop date drew nearer, I thought that my mom had either forgotten to write the letter or had decided against doing so. On the morning of 6 October 2001, my mom telephoned me to say she had written the letter I had requested and wanted to know what she should do with it. I asked her to fax it to me from my youngest sister's home and also send the original in the post. I responded in writing to my mom's letter on the same day I received her letter. I also had a very emotional conversation with my mom, dad and sister on the phone on the same day.

Typed version of story written by mom, Mrs Edna Groener

26 September 2001

I Edna Elizabeth Groener was born in No 6 Anderson Street, South End, Port Elizabeth. We were two families that lived next door to each other my late dad's brother and our family of 9 children including our late parents. At the age of 14 years we were forced to move from South End, my dad's brother and his family that lived next door to us and another brother that lived just around the corner from us moved right out of S.A. to Australia.

My dad had a shoe repair business in South End, he had three workers helping, he had a thriving business. My dad could not afford to move out of S.A. because of his big family, with the result he decided to move to an area called Fairview. My dad could at least purchase property, the plot of ground which he bought with a wood and iron house was a morgan in size, it could be divided into 9 building plots. His intention was to give each child a plot. The majority of people that owned property in Fairview were "coloured", there were very few "whites".

Then came the devastating news that Fairview was also claimed under the Group Areas Act. At this stage my dad had almost paid for his property. One can imagine what a struggle my parents had to keep the wolf away from the door. I had to go out to work to help them. My mom became ill, because of all the worry not knowing what would happen to us as a family. Then at the young age of 50 my mom passed away after a severe heart attack. I blame the system of this country for her death.

My dad could not even buy property now because of the amount which he received from the government for his property. I was married now so my husband could buy property in Korsten,

my dad and the rest of my family could stay with us, we had a double storey house and my one married sister lived at the bottom level of the house, then we heard a rumour that the group area were going to claim Korsten as well. We decided to move out of P.E., and we moved to C.T.

Today I can say that the forced removals really affected us as a family. We left our other families behind. Also, many of the older folk just had sudden deaths, some could not take being separated from their children. I would never like any one to experience what we had gone through due to the system in our country. The group area system is also the result of all the hatred in our country. At times I also feel hatred, but I just try to forget and carry on although the scars will always be there.

Story 11b – Carol’s response to Mom Edna’s story

I responded to my mom’s letter (11a above) shortly after having received the faxed version of her letter.

6 October 2001

My Dearest Mommy, Daddy and Wendy,

Mummy, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your letter dated 26.9.2001. Words don’t come easy – I’m sitting here in front of my computer with tears flowing down my cheeks and an immense sadness in my heart that overwhelms me. Yet there is a huge part of me that is motivated to say things to you that I’ve never been able to say before.

Mummy, where do I begin? You who have given me life, also gives meaning to my life right now. Mummy, all my life I have known you, but have never fully understood where you’ve come from, what your early childhood experiences were and what has contributed to your being the woman you are.

I felt scared to ask you to write this letter to me because I wasn’t sure whether I’d be contributing to your experiencing more pain. On the one hand I feel happy that you wrote me this letter. On the other hand, I wonder how you must be feeling – how did you feel while you were writing it and how do you feel now that Wendy and I have read it.

Thank you for sharing this part of you life with us, Mummy. My admiration for you grows. In all the years that I’ve known you, I have never known about the hatred you feel at times. I can only imagine how deep the hurt reaches into your very soul. The mother whom I’ve grown to love has never come across as one who bears any form of malice or hatred in her heart. Yet the hurt and scars have been there all these years. I can only imagine the extent of your

suffering that gave rise to these feelings. I don't think any speculation on my part could EVER capture the extent of your deep pain. Mummy, I have seen you endure suffering and bear it so gracefully. There were times when I wanted to defend you when people hurt you and you would just shrug it aside as if it were nothing. I think I can now "more or less" understand these incidents as "minor" in the light of the untold suffering you had already borne.

If anybody who didn't know you, as intimately as we your children know you, were to read this letter they may wrongly think that this letter depicts a bitter woman. You have every right to be bitter, Mummy, but yet what radiates from you is an inner strength and beauty – a warmth - that surpasses human understanding. Wendy said to me this morning that you are an angel and I can concur with that sentiment. For the first time ever – in all my experiences of you – am I aware of the hatred you feel at times and the scars that you carry. I can only imagine the depth of your pain, suffering and trauma that would elicit these kinds of feelings from a woman as gracious as you. Wendy and I, today, have a mere glimpse of the intensity of what you must have felt as a teenager, as a child, as a wife and as a mother. Most of the time we are only in touch with the sensitive, caring, nurturing, giving mummy and Grandma – and we are not in touch with the mother who bears the scars of her past.

We've never accessed the struggles that you experienced as a teenager being removed from your community, being torn apart as a family. We don't know about you as a scholar who had to leave school to go and work in a factory so that your brothers and sisters had food to eat. We don't know about the 14-year-old who had had to say goodbye to her school friends and become an adult prematurely. We don't about the young, innocent, playful, jolly Edna who had to give up the dream of becoming a nurse. Yes, sometimes that naughty, playful Edna emerges like at Daddy's 70th birthday and at numerous other times, but a lot of the time she (the playful Edna) remains hidden.

We know more about the mummy who worked extremely and earned pittance so that we could go to school and realise our dreams. And today I am still busy realising another dream – thanks to all the effort of a very special woman – you, my dear mother. A woman who rose above her pain and suffering and enabled her children to experience what she could only dream of. Mummy, you gave up your childhood so that your siblings could have a better life. You slaved so that we, your children and your grandchildren, could have a better life.

Your life was torn apart when we were little – when we were young and innocent and couldn't understand the immense struggles that you and Daddy were facing. All we felt was the love of two wonderful parents. We hardly ever got in touch with the turmoil you must've felt in your hearts and in your souls. The biblical text comes to mind – her children rise up and call her blessed – can't remember where it's found – YOUR ARE BLESSED, MUMMY.

As a mother of two children right now, I cannot begin to imagine, Mummy, the anguish you must have felt as a 14-year-old when your mommy and daddy, your brothers and sisters lost your precious home to a greedy and savage system called Apartheid. How helpless Oupa must have felt when he not only lost his home and job but later on also his beloved wife – oh, the untold grief that must've caused. I was 4 years old at the time and didn't have a clue about the enormity of the loss being mourned. The picture that comes to mind is of you and your sisters standing around Ouma's grave. In my mind's eye I see 5 forlorn sisters who lost their mother when they needed her most. You and your siblings lost out on the further impact your mother could've had on your lives. We, as Ouma's grandchildren, lost out on getting to know a great woman.

I cannot imagine the pain and anguish that Oupa must've felt when he laid Ouma to rest. The senseless loss and tragedy you were all forced to endure at the hands of a merciless government. This evil government stole and plundered the land that my grandparents had worked so hard for!

And as if that weren't enough – this cycle was to be repeated over and over again in my dear mother and father's life. How did you cope, Mummy and Daddy? The losses you experienced in silence over all these years must have been too painful to face. Yet I see two people who make the most of everyday that God blesses you with.

We see a caring grandmother and grandfather still sacrificing and helping their grandchildren, Keenan and Grant, who lost their daddy. Mummy and Daddy, you have wells that just never run dry. Your love is an unconditional love that I feel privileged to have experienced and continue to experience.

Mummy, the pillows that you so regularly and patiently stitch up for Tanya, my beloved daughter, bears testimony to your greatness, your warmth, and your unselfish love. Every week my children have the joy of speaking with Ma on the phone. Ma attends to the little details of all our lives and conveys her love towards us in a very tangible way. This Ma is as patient and loving and giving as Ouma probably was. But yet we never hear about those stories. We've never sat down with you, Mummy and asked you to tell us about your true-life stories. I am glad that we have started talking about the history you carry in your heart, Mummy. Thank you for taking the time to reach into the deep recesses of your heart and share some of the feelings you have carried inside for almost 60 years. Thank you for letting us benefit all these years from your generous nature, from your gentle spirit and from your remarkable presence. Your letter has touched me more deeply than you could ever imagine. And yet, you are humble enough to say to me that I must change your words and your grammar if it's not right. Oh Mummy, even if your words and grammar were to need editing (which they don't) I wouldn't dare to be so insensitive as to 'diminish' what you have so

generously written. I am so moved by what you have written, by what you have suffered, by what you have endured for many decades, I just marvel at your tenacity and your countless inner qualities that speak to me from these pages.

I am honoured to have been born of a woman like you. I wish I had the courage to rise up like you and raise four children and 7 grandchildren amidst your suffering and pain and loss. There are brief moments when I've come somewhat in 'touch' with your enormous losses. One that comes to mind is about four weeks ago when the World Trade Centre collapsed and I phoned you for Auntie Ollie's number. You said to me: "tell Auntie Ollie I cannot phone because it's too difficult for me – I cannot bear to hear more bad news". I know I'm possibly misquoting you, Mummy, but I think this captures the gist of what you were trying to convey – that you've endured more than enough loss!

It is at moments like these when I think I come a little close to catching a glimpse of what you've been carrying in your heart for many, many years. I also recall your heart-wrenching sobs at Colin's funeral. I had never seen you so grief-stricken before and I think on that day I experienced a mother who was grieving for her daughter's loss in a way that we could not comprehend. I had never before heard you wail as you did on that day, almost 22 months ago. Another huge loss for a woman who has known pain and loss all her life.

You know, Mummy, for the past few weeks I've been struggling to write a paper for one of my professors. I've read quite widely – including the book called "South End – as we knew it" that you so kindly loan to me. It's been very difficult for me to write this 'academic' paper because it entails writing about my family's history – a painful history. I ask myself – how can I write it in a way that pays due respect to the pain that my family has endured. How do I write it so that it's not just another cold academic clinical paper. How do I write without just rewording what others have written before. How do I avoid the pitfall of simply adding more and more words to libraries already full of words that have gone before. I then realise that somehow words just cannot fully capture what our hearts and minds feel, yet they are necessary. They do add meaning and deepen our understanding of events that have gone before. They in some way verbalise and put words to that which has gone before albeit in an insufficient way.

In the words of my professor, Mom, what my family has endured, needs to be written down. Thank you for starting this enormous process by writing me this letter. What you have written down, Mummy, enables me to start writing. It transforms words into meaning and adds a depth to our trying to understand what you have endured and what your family (ancestors) has endured.

Recently I felt quite hurt in class when one of the students in my class implied that the loss we as a family experienced happened 30 years ago and that we should've dealt with it by now. I

then, very emotionally, replied that we as a family have hardly ever spoken about the losses we experienced many years ago. I also said to her that my youngest sister doesn't even know much about it.

Yes, Mummy, we have been silent for a very long time about the havoc that was wreaked in our lives and in the lives of our grandparents. We've never spoken about your growing up, about your teenage years about your impressionable years as a child suffering as a result of Apartheid. We have never spoken about how our family has been scattered around the world because of Apartheid. We have never spoken about the families we don't even know who have been living in different parts of the world. Some we don't know about because they'd been classified as white and we've lived apart for many, many years. Just last year, you facilitated my meeting with one such family member, Auntie T, who lives around the corner from me, in a historically white neighbourhood. I found it amazing that she had to go via Port Elizabeth and Switzerland to find her family who lived round the corner from her. These are the untold stories and experiences that continue to unfold today. It hurts me oh so deeply when someone tries to minimise our families' experiences by implying that an event that happened 30 years ago and is gone, should be forgotten. How can I continue to contribute to the pain you have experienced – that has torn you apart – by maintaining the silence – by making it appear as invisible - history. How can I continue with my life and my career, confronting other people's pain and not even ask my dear mother to share with me her pain. I feel only when we can confront our own pain can we dare to confront another person in his/ her pain. How dare I try and facilitate someone else's bearing of his/ her pain when I continue to perpetuate the silence and invisibility of the pain that my family (ancestors) have been forced to bear.

Mummy, you have been instrumental in starting to open up many years of pain that has been silenced. When I do settle down and put pen to paper and rewrite my paper in a more personal way and in a less clinical way, it is you I have to thank. As I begin to start writing our history, I pray that your spirit and the spirit of God that has enfolded you all these years will enable me to write in a way that somehow bears witness to your life – to Daddy's life - your extended family's life and the pain and suffering you have endured. I must hasten to add that that pain and sorrow you have must have felt and continue to feel we have been sheltered from. You have been a living example of a fine mother – you have protected us from the full wrath and potential of your anger and hatred that you have locked away for many years. You have hidden it from us in such a way that had I never asked I might never have known about it. Mummy, you have had the courage to go into your heart and unlock that part which you have never, in all your graciousness, dared to show us. You have been a living angel all your life. You have been alone in the grief you locked away, maybe for fear of what it might have done to you or us or to humankind or to your devout faith in God. Instead you have censored

your feelings, your emotions. When you have encountered other losses, to which we have been witnesses to, you have solemnly borne it very graciously.

Mummy, you and Daddy are saints. You could have unleashed your anger and hatred and become very bitter over the years. It seems as though over the years you had accumulated wisdom and a wealth of experience in how to deal with loss and how to live life in a meaningful way. In all your experiences over the years that life has dealt to you, not once have I heard you cursing God or cursing another human being. You have courageously and with fortitude turned (and indeed continue to turn) your stumbling blocks into stepping stones. You have taught your children far more about life than any educator or teacher could ever have hoped to teach us. You have taught us that it is not what happens to you in life that counts but **how you deal with what happens to you**. Mummy and Daddy, the book you have written is inscribed within our hearts – the teachings you have instilled within us are teachings that no university or educator could ever hope to teach us. This metaphorical book you have written within our hearts through your living examples contains the values that we try to live by. This book also contains the untold legacies of your unspoken past. You have taught us amongst others, Mummy and Daddy, through your lives, through your silence and through what you have endured – to love our enemies – to respect other human beings despite the evil they mete out to others. You have taught us not to take revenge on those who persecute us because we have been born with brown skins and curly hair. You have taught us to respect all of God's creation. You have taught us that life can still have meaning even when our oppressors try and squeeze the life out of us. You have taught us how to bear suffering with courage and dignity. You have taught us to look beyond our immediate gratification and to focus on developing inner strengths that no other human being could ever take away. You have taught us about divine justice. You have taught us how to remain united as a family amidst the tearing apart that was happening in society and amidst the tearing apart that you experienced for the greater part of your life.

Even though today I cannot make sense of how you made sense of your life, Mummy, I can only marvel at how you and Daddy managed to create a home where we felt safe, amidst all the struggles and turmoil. How do I find a way to express my untold gratitude to you and pay tribute to you as parents who have risen above your struggles and obstacles. You teach us how to be human, how to go through life with dignity and respect, how to continue to believe in God despite how the Apartheid government presented their version of God to us in the form of punitive inhumane, destructive policies.

When I look back at my life, through my 'psychological lenses' I see how that my developing asthma became a symptom of the greater suffering that my family was enduring. I see how that my asthma represented a breathing difficulty in response to how the Apartheid government was withdrawing the living breathe out of communities. I reinterpret my asthma

as a physical struggle to find oxygen amidst the stifling and suffocating cruelty of Apartheid. As Apartheid drew the living breathe out of my grandmother's life, so her children and grandchildren struggled to maintain their breathe some literally, like myself, others more figuratively. Some, like my mom and dad, provided shelter and breathing space for other family members while they struggled to recover from the harshness of the Apartheid system. Some were driven to lives of poverty, alcoholism and other social ravages that were wreaked upon their lives through deliberate deprivation of the Apartheid policies. Others tried to find a living overseas - in foreign lands – where they more welcome than in the land of their birth.

I have been privileged to meet some of these family members as they've travelled through the land of their birth in recent years. I vividly remember making such pilgrimages to our birthplace when relatives from overseas were escorted by Daddy through the overgrown streets and redeveloped lands of where they'd been forced to move from.

It is heartbreaking to breath in the air and walk through the streets where we as children had been torn apart. It is equally heart-wrenching to see the foundations of some of the homes of my ancestors. Yes, white people had forcibly moved us from the places of our birth. They denied us our God-given human rights – they literally destroyed our shelters – our homes – communities... and because there were too few of them (i.e. too few whites) to fill up the barren spaces they'd created in destroying our homes, these barren and desolate, destitute lands bear testimony to the pain that tore through our communities as bulldozers reduced to dust what communities had taken years, sweat and sacrifice to build up.

Yes, Mummy, when you emphatically stated a few years ago that you didn't ever want to go back and live in P.E., I couldn't really appreciate what exactly you were saying or implying then. If I may now paraphrase what I think you were saying then, you were probably implying that you don't ever want to go back and be visibly reminded of your painful past. You were probably saying that you want to maintain the geographical distance between your past and your present.

Daddy, when I brought you the map from the Deeds Office a few years ago so that you could point out to me and Ruben where exactly our Fairview home had been situated, your face fell. I will never be able to describe the untold pain in your eyes that day. You may wonder, Daddy, why I only requested that Mummy try and write a letter to me expressing the losses she'd experienced many years ago, it's because I didn't want to inflict more pain. I have seen that kind of pain in your eyes on a few occasions in my life – most of them when I was suffering from asthma and you and mummy would rush me to hospital. That kind of pain which I as a child used to see in your eyes as I lay suffering and you would tenderly hold my hand was the kind of pain I saw in your eyes on that fateful day when I handed you the map. I

didn't want to be instrumental in re-inflicting that same kind of pain. I hope you understand my reservations.

I guess my gender bias plays a strong role here in asking Mummy to write her story. It's almost as if I feel more free to access Mummy's pain being a mother myself. I guess I must admit that as illogical as it may sound, it is more unbearable for me to ask you to access your painful past than it is for me to ask Mummy. It's almost as though I feel because Mummy is the "talker", the "feeler", the telephone caller, that I'd be able to "follow-up" the conversation with Mom on the phone or in writing. I think, Daddy, you are the more "silent" one, the one who protects himself through a quiet confidence – the more philosophical one, but also maybe the more vulnerable one. Wendy asked me why didn't I ask you to write as well. Deep in my heart I wanted to, but I thought I'd rather talk to you about it when you visit me in December. I know this probably doesn't make sense to you, why I haven't asked you to write to me as well. I guess, like a female friend of mine said to me recently, one can tap into the pain of a woman and be able to 'stand' it and identify with it, but the pain of a broken man is almost unbearable. My over-protective instincts towards you surface. It was unbearable for me to witness your pain when I suffered from asthma as a child. It felt as though I was causing you pain and yet there was nothing I could do about it. I felt that I was adding to your financial burden when I used to take ill and you had to fork out money for my treatment. There were times when I wished I had died to save you the financial costs. How naïve my thinking was as a child. As a parent now I can appreciate the anguish and helplessness you and Mummy must have felt. I think one such memory that comes to mind was when we were living in Heathfield in the Carr's separate entrance. Mummy had gone to Wynberg to do the grocery shopping. You were at home with me and I was struggling to breathe. I remember your holding my hand that day and you were crying. Another example that comes to mind was when you took me late one night to Victoria Hospital. We could hear the white doctors laughing loudly while they were having tea. We had to patiently sit in the waiting room. You held me in your arms - I could see the anguish in your eyes as you held back and contained yourself. You wanted to confront those doctors and ask them to help your suffering child. But you knew that you couldn't appeal to these white doctors – you feared that they might victimise me and not give me the treatment that I so desperately needed. I imagine that you must have prayed very hard that night, Daddy – for God to undertake. It is seeing the pain in your eyes on these occasions and when I handed you the Deeds Office map that makes me reluctant to ask you to revisit your pain. At the risk of sounding like I'm overpsychologising your experiences, Daddy, you know loss from the tender age of 11 months when your mommy died. This is another reason why I feel you are even more vulnerable than Mummy.

Yes, Mummy and Daddy, you have both suffered extreme losses and both of you to a large extent have suffered in silence. Yet you both have had and continue to have remarkable impacts not only on the lives of your children but also on the lives of countless other people.

I only have to witness the difference you make as Aunt Edna and Uncle Fred to some you have adopted as your own “children” in Grassy Park Baptist Church to begin to realise the full and major impact you have on others. These others don’t have a clue as to why you are who you are. These people don’t have a clue as to the events that formulated the calibre of persons you are. They don’t know about the pain and suffering you endured. But what they do experience is the warmth, the joy and godliness of the parents who have given me more than life – you have given and continue to give me MEANING in life.

Daddy, as recently as 8 weeks ago, you shared with me a letter you had written almost 36 years ago. I am astounded at your integrity. I marvel at how you’ve never sought to defend yourself with hard evidence. Instead you’ve borne the brunt of the extended family’s misunderstandings for a lifetime and you’ve done it with such dignity. You truly are a gentleman of the finest calibre. You never sought to disclose all the reasons why you’d sold your home in Korsten. You only shared those intimacies with Mummy and later with Oupa. I can only imagine – no, I cannot imagine - the pain of bearing this for such a long time.

Daddy, you and Mummy, courageously moved from P.E. to Cape Town, amidst pain on many levels and tried to start “afresh”. Amongst others, you had howling me weeping a towel full of tears. You held onto each other on that long journey into the unknown in search of a better life for yourselves and your then three children. Daddy, I can only imagine how particularly difficult it must’ve been for you, as the breadwinner, to initiate moving to another city with a wife and three children. How alone you must’ve felt – what an awesome responsibility.

Once in Cape Town, amidst the unsettledness and struggling, Wendy was born – our thoroughbred Cape Townian sister who signified a new beginning in many ways. She represented an innocence and naiveté that the family probably desperately needed. She just enjoyed life. She didn’t have the baggage we brought with us from Port Elizabeth. She was unaware of the pain we carried with us. A lot of the time I think she became a symbol of our pain. She was the one we dared to unleash our anger on as siblings. In retrospect, we as her older siblings inflicted unbearable pain on her because of the pain we couldn’t express - that had been silenced within the family. We never told her about the cousins we were missing and longing to play with. We didn’t tell her about the P.E. school friends we were missing. We didn’t share with her the memories of our birthplace and hometown. Instead we fought with her and screamed at her and caused her pain.

I now understand that because we as children were hurting, we had no other outlet except to hurt our dear baby sister. I now also realise how an “event” that happened 30 years ago could continue to wreak havoc and pain in generations of people. Forced removals was not a once-off event that happened on a specific day and the next day people just went on with their

lives. No, it continues to have an impact on people's lives today. I can now see that the negative impact of Apartheid could be perpetuated within families, albeit on a subconscious level – if it's not addressed.

As Wendy is now pregnant with her baby, maybe this letter will help her to gain a better understanding of the pain she endured as a child as she prepares for the birth of her child. Maybe one day she can share with her child how she grew up experiencing senseless pain and terror at the hands of her older siblings. Maybe now, Wendy will be able to begin to understand that it was not about her or about us but about a system that was bigger than all of us. It was about an unspokenness surrounding our lives that threatened to engulf us, swallow us and maybe paralyse us if we allowed it to. It was about institutionalised pain that in turn made us vent our pain on each other.

We have come full circle, Wendy. You have become a symbol of a transformative power that dwells amongst us, both in our family and in our society. In your ceremony tonight, I hope that the insights shared within this letter help you to understand why you are “fighting a fight” that started before you were even conceived. You are being lauded tonight for making a difference in society, a more ‘ideal’ society that your grandparents and parents strove for and some lost their lives for. You are giving legitimacy and credibility to what your parents and grandparents have suffered for. Your work today affirms that what the Apartheid government sought to achieve has been broken. That the society they wanted to achieve – based on evil - based on division - couldn't last forever. You make me believe that the sufferings of previous generations have not been in vain. You are making a difference as a tribute to your ancestors. You, who have been born in another part of the country – a different geographical location to your extended family - lends credibility to a cause that your grandmother died for – a cause that sees us united today and not divided. While we continue to struggle through certain aspects of a changing society today, we are filled with more hope than when our parents were our age.

I don't think it is any coincidence that tonight you will be hailed as the black manager of the year (in Cape Town). The passion that you have for your job and in making a difference to society is a passion that precedes your birth – it is part of your heritage. Our grandmother died in her struggle for togetherness and fighting against an apartness that an evil government sought to institute and legalise. She did not want “apartness” (translation of Apartheid) on the basis of colour. Ouma died because she could no longer bear the pain that was being inflicted upon her by an evil system. She did not want separation on the basis of biological heritage – on the basis of physical features and race. She strove for togetherness in her family life and in society. Ouma, Oupa, Mummy and Daddy have contributed to who you are today – a woman of courage, a woman who is passionate about justice – a woman of remarkable strength and righteousness.

I don't think it is any coincidence, but rather divine providence, that you should be the link between our starting to share our history, Wen. Thank you for who you are and for all that you strive to be in your workplace. Your efforts don't go unnoticed.

Now that I have wet about 40 tissues and have recycled some of them, let me fax this off to you.

With lots and lots and lots of love

From your daughter and sister, Carol

Story 12 – Mass at kids' school

This writing was created on 23 January 2003.

Yesterday morning I was one of a handful of parents who attended mass at my kids' school. This mass marked the beginning of a new year. The service was very significant for me various reasons:

- it was my 7 yr old daughter's first mass at school – (hopefully the first mass at the school she'll attend up until Grade 12);
- my son beamed with delight when I entered the hall - this was the first time I'd been able to attend a mass of this nature – previously I couldn't because of work and study commitments;
- I reminisced about my educational pilgrimage.

Mass started off with the singing of “We are the world, we are the children” – what a beautiful and touching rendition it was as our collective voices echoed through the vast hall.

It saddened me when communion was served that this was exclusively for Catholics. I can only imagine that my children must feel confused. They might have been wondering: “why are we served communion at the Anglican church we occasionally attend, but yet we're excluded from joining in at school where we've been for the past few years” (Daniel in pre-school and primary school for the past 7 years and Tanya in preschool for the past 4 years). They haven't addressed this issue as yet and may never, and I guess this may be more my projection onto them of how excluded I felt.

It took me back to my childhood that was dominated by the theme of exclusion – excluded from attending white schools, excluded from beaches, restaurants, neighbourhoods, and above all churches.

As someone who was ordained as the first black female minister in December 1997, I became acutely aware of the theme of who's in and who's out. I believe I serve a God who is inclusivist and doesn't exclude on the basis of colour, race, gender, denomination or creed.

I attended one of the top coloured high schools in Cape Town, yet this 'top' school had minimal facilities - a miniscule library, no science laboratory facilities, limited school grounds. Several broken windows and gaping holes in walls were some of the distractions/inconveniences we became immune to.

In primary school, due to a shortage of teachers, for Standards 4 & 5 we shared the same classroom. While the one standard was receiving an oral lesson, the other standard was given written work to do. One had to learn to 'shut out' the distractions that were happening in a confined space.

When I regularly walk my children to school, I cannot help but compare my schooling with theirs. Now and again I try to tell them about my experiences – however, I don't think they'll ever grasp the gravity and intensity of what I faced as a scholar.

I marvel at the first class, balanced education they are receiving. I marvel at the architecture, the beautiful gardens, water features, play areas, majestic main entrance, reception areas, vast sports grounds, well furnished and luxurious staff room, sports hall and adjacent Olympic sized pool. I'm amazed at the variety of subjects offered as well as extramural activities – the choices they have.

I used to be huddled in a prefab building with human-made air vents – holes in walls and broken windows. However the lack of resources did not deter attendees from achieving academic success. Our school has created leaders and produced many top engineers, doctors, dentists, lawyers and academics, despite the limited facilities.

Story 13 - Daily diary

28.1.2003

Today marked my second meeting with Patricia, my supervisor. During our conversation, she remarked that I have "soul". I experience Patricia as very holding, affirming and I look forward to our journey together over the next few months. Patricia is able to create a space for me where I feel safe enough to be vulnerable and to explore terrain that I've previously avoided. Mountaineering is one of my favourite hobbies and it's interesting that I should constantly think in terms of journey and landscape metaphors as I tread previously unexplored, overgrown and closed-off paths that lead to painful experiences, challenges and rocky places.

I spoke with Patricia about my overdeveloped critical inner voice that sometimes prohibits me from allowing me to fully engage in momentary experiences. Self-doubt is another constant companion that refuses to leave me alone - it wants to overpower me and drown out the other voices that could enable me to fully integrate aspects of myself and ultimately bring about healing.

It may be because I feel so tired, consumed with exhaustion and resignation that I don't have the capacity to erect walls around myself and shut people out and myself in. I am at that point where I want to be vulnerable (enabling voice) – well, maybe not too vulnerable yet (cautious inner critical voice). I want to risk opening myself up to the well of emotions that is so preserved and sheltered from others.

29.1.2003

Last night Ruben and I reminisced up until the wee hours of this morning. I had found a diary that I'd kept while I was pregnant with Daniel and had searched high and low for this. Finally last night at 23H00 I found it tucked away in an unused drawer. To my astonishment I found writings that I had made on the day of Ruben's mother's funeral – while I was alone and six months pregnant. I found myself holding back the tears that welled up within me. Ruben was very moved – he'd been unaware of these writings for the past 12 years.

I'm normally very reserved when it comes to sharing heartfelt writings with Ruben, even though these writings are in relation to his beloved mother. Ruben was extremely moved and touched as I read aloud my feelings and thoughts that I had penned twelve years ago. He commented that I am meant to undertake an autoethnographic exploration. It's very important for me to have this kind of intimate interaction with Ruben pertaining to my studies and my life. My studies have sometimes been used to exclude Ruben from processes because we hadn't worked through various issues and particularly I hadn't worked through what I felt was his non-support during the year when he resided in C.T.

This dissertation seems to serve a multifold purpose. It serves as a bridge to help us (Ruben and myself) find one another as well as relive good and bad moments and possibly redefine these moments and enable us to move forward in a more meaningful. Ruben suggested last night that we together compile our memoirs in the form of a book as a legacy for our children. Today we are going to try and find the letters we'd received from his mother and my parents during our stay in USA and Switzerland. We will also include our children in the process and share with them letters written between us, before, during and after their conception and birth. This dissertation is opening up conversations between family, our friends and ourselves and allowing us to reconnect in ways undreamt of before.

We are expecting a visit from a very special friend today – a dear brother who was instrumental in facilitating my being ordained. Meeting with Desmond reminds me of the connections Ruben, Daniel and myself have made internationally. He and his family are studying and living in the USA. I am reminded of the many painful goodbyes – planned and unplanned I've had to make throughout my life. It seems as though each time I really connect with someone, either I move elsewhere or they move elsewhere or death forces me to say goodbye in a physical sense even though the persons' memories live on in my heart and soul.

I feel as though the theme running through my life is one of connection and disconnection – out of choice and through force of circumstance.

02.02.2003

We've last seen Des 2 years ago – he and his family have been living in the USA for the past 3,5 years. Amongst others Des mentioned he's noticed how much I've grown. He mentioned that I seemed to have mellowed, appear to not be stressed out and no longer seem to be on a mission to prove myself. It's good to receive such candid feedback. I realize that I have indeed grown a lot and much of my previously felt seething anger seems to have dissipated. I seem to be able to live in the moment – to appreciate life to the fullest – to be fully me (a lot of the time, at least). Of course I still have ongoing battles with my critical voices....

03.02.2003

I discovered today that a student with whom I did my internship last year has been busy studying about as long as I have been. She's been keeping it under wraps, probably a bit embarrassed, like me. I've only just begun engaging in conversations re my many years of studies.

B and I spoke about the pros and cons of our protracted educational pilgrimages – the mutual feelings of having “missed out on life” for the past 15 years or so – no holidays, no free weekends, no sleep-ins, etc. Every morsel of extramural time has been dedicated to our studies.

For the first time today, I am able to sit in the shade of a tree, surrounded by hundreds of students milling around. I'm aware of how 24 years ago, I had wanted to be a 'carefree' student, hanging around in cafeterias, leisurely drinking soda and later meandering through campus.

One consolation is that I haven't been alone in my struggle to pursue a tertiary education I feel passionate about. B had been socialized into marrying well and no emphasis had been placed on her education. We could identify with common tensions experienced over the years

– trying to balance another career with part-time studies and family responsibilities. It's good not to feel alone.

04.02.2003

This past Saturday I was invited to speak to a group of 22 church women about HIV/AIDS. After the event I remarked to my husband that speaking engagements like these enable me to combine my nursing, theology, research and psychology experiences in a very enriching way.

Not too long ago, one of the speakers at our peer support group meeting spoke about the use of the Red Riding Hood (RRH) story as a tool in helping children attempt to overcome abusive situations. The next day I asked my children to relate the RRH story to me. Both of them gave me detailed, balanced accounts of the story. Tanya particularly focused a lot on the flowers in the woods. I had completely forgotten most of the aspects of the story. I mainly remembered the big bad wolf. I wondered that day, how much my socio-political reality of growing up as a kid in Apartheid S.A. accounted for my very fragmented version of the story. I had completely forgotten about the flowers. I wondered how much my selective memory processes had impacted on my recall abilities and how much the trauma of having grown up in a dysfunctional society had influenced my recall. I guess one could speculate ad infinitum.

When Kate approached me in 2001 re my previous dissertation topic, I felt really affirmed. I so much wanted to engage in an empirical study and attain good results. I wanted to feel the recognition and glow in the glory of having mastered a challenging study. Maybe this was a way of steering away from heart (emotional) matters and concentrating rather on head (cognitive) matters. I had the primitive urge to prove myself, to prove that I could have done a “truly scientific study” and proudly flaunted this achievement.

Digging into the inner recesses of my heart and accessing locked up emotions and issues, is a daunting task at times for me. At other times, I feel within me that this autoethnographic exploration feels right. However, a lot of the time I feel this is an opportune time for me to face issues that I've been avoiding for a long time. I feel this is a more useful and meaningful way to bring closure to this part of my journey. This seems to be the ideal time to reminisce, remember, recall, re-write and re-integrate the different selves within me, the ones I encounter in letters and journals written more than a decade ago, the memories I have of the different selves and the way in which I allow the much younger me to now merge with the older me – as I merge the participant and the observer within me through personal narratives, through vignettes, poems, excerpts, school reports and memories.

05.02.2003

Yesterday I found a way of moving from my immobilized state to writing about recollections of time spent abroad. Today I feel energiless – my body's telling me to go and have a nap, my

mind's telling me that I need to sit in front of this computer and work, regardless of feeling drained. I'm not sure whether this drainedness is connected to the stuff I'm busy trying to deal with or whether it's related to a cumulative effect of feeling burnt out over many years. I so much desire to get this dissertation behind and yet the harder I try to get it going, the harder it seems to get going. I feel dried out and unable to create anything worth writing down. I wonder whether I should try drawing something representative of my life – maybe this will open up channels that may give rise to something of substance.

A fellow student said to me three days ago, his anxiety is slowing him down. Maybe once I start learning to swim, this may release endorphins and re-energise me. I think I should try and capture an ecological map of my life on paper.

06.02.2003

I've read the first three pages of Ellis' article and put it aside. Ellis' article relating her brother's sudden death in a crash brings back for me vivid memories of my brother-in-law's sudden death. I find I am able to recall the sequence of events as if they happened yesterday. They are etched in my memory like a slow motion movie – the physical effects and emotional feelings are re-ignited as if they are happening right now.

07.02.2003

(Session with Vanessa¹⁷)

Reflected on my feeling more empowered than during the previous session. Spoke about letters I'd discovered, reminding me of the possibility that I could engage in evocative writing. We discussed the importance of recalling and revisiting these writings when I feel stuck and need a source of inspiration.

11.02.2003

Last night I cried tears of sadness because Regina will be returning to Germany next month. I am encouraged by my willingness to be in the sadness and not attempt to suppress it or distort it. Regina tried to reassure me last night by saying we will spend as much time together as possible before she leaves, but this won't take away the vacuum within me when she's gone. I met Regina for the first time in 1987 when she visited S.A. John Daries, a mutual friend introduced us to one another. John overcame many tribulations and tortuous experiences under the Apartheid regime. He was once met at Johannesburg international airport, en route to Cape Town. He was ushered off the plane, blindfolded and driven by car to a prison, which he assumes was Victor Verster in Pretoria. He was undressed and tortured for about 24 hours, stark naked and deprived of sleep, while his family waited in vain at Cape Town international airport. This is but one of the incidents that John survived. Then in 1992, at the age of 40 something John suffered a fatal heart attack. We were unable to attend John's

¹⁷ *my therapist*

funeral because we were out of the country. When we returned, it was Regina who took us to John's burial place. We missed John terribly on the day we cast our first vote towards a democratic S.A.

Today I will be going for my first swimming lesson. The other day I excitedly told my mom about my decision to learn to swim. In my conversation with her I was reminded about the main reason why she and I and the rest of our family had never learnt to swim. We had been denied access to the best and most beautiful beaches, swimming pools and bathing facilities, and holiday resorts for the greater part of our lives. Needless, to say our coloured schools didn't have pools like the white schools. As I watched my daughter last week enjoy her first swimming lesson at school, I was reminded how blessed they are and how deprived Ruben and I had been. I do now thoroughly enjoy being a member of a gym and having unlimited access to all facilities. Lately Ruben and I have been reminiscing a lot and reminding ourselves of how different life had been just a mere 9 years ago. We sometimes cannot believe how we've managed to break out of the vicious downward spiral that our lives had been destined for. I have a deep sense of satisfaction at times that our sacrifices haven't been in vain and that our children are enjoying more balanced lives, free from institutionalized racism and discrimination.

I am both scared and excited about my swimming lesson! I wonder what's more challenging – trying to do a dissertation or learn to swim!

11.02.2003

Today I experienced feelings of fear and exhilaration at the same time. I marveled at my determination to want to swim despite the hydrophobia. My swimming instructor was very reassuring, was beside me most of the time, gently coaxing me and encouraging me. It's one thing to know in your head not to panic, quite another thing to put it into practice. As I tried to swim my first length alone, half way through I needed to come up for air – I panicked as I sunk to the bottom of the pool and then reached out for my L's hand – how wonderful to have a lifeline so close by. How strange to feel that childlike fear than I'm going to be engulfed and swallowed up and drown! Water makes me feel so out of control. I enjoy a deep hot bath where the amount of water is limited. However, when I feel the power of the water beneath me and allow it to hold me and float, it feels oh so good!...then the fear begins to grip me as I realize I need to breathe. At least learning to swim makes me feel somewhat more adept at writing. At least I don't have someone watching my every move and observing my sinking – maybe Patricia will observe another kind of metaphorical sinking!

I am already starting to feel nervous about the next lesson. My daughter fearlessly throws herself into the water, effortlessly floats up when she realizes she's losing control and just continues to try. I, on the other hand, seemed to have a lot more baggage attached that

allows me to sink to the bottom like a sack of potatoes. I know that when I tense up, my body becomes heavier and then sinks. No matter how I talk myself through the steps and tell myself to try and enjoy the experience, I still falter endlessly. I have swallowed enough water today to create a huge fish tank inside my belly. I am tempted to give up and convince myself that I actually do not enjoy swimming, however I am determined to see it through. The swim school owner was probably confused when I told her I wanted to pay in advance – the more she told me I could pay on arrival each time before the lesson, the more I insisted I wanted to pay up front for quite a few lessons. Of course, I wanted to ensure that I wouldn't chicken out. After my first half hour lesson, I remained in the pool, seated on the middle step, to allow myself to feel the water encircle my neck as if it's going to choke me.

When I said to L someone mentioned to me swimming is like driving – she hesitated and then admitted that she cannot drive. I volunteered to teach her to drive! Bingo, I thought, I can do something she cannot do! My sense of joy was short lived – until my next near-drowning experience. Why am I doing this to myself? I don't know. I try and convince myself it's a good idea in case my children need rescuing one day. Chances are far greater that they will be rescuing me! I want to be able to master this phobia! I think it' appropriate while I learn to navigate my way through my dissertation.

13.02.2003

Today Vanessa and I spoke about my hydrophobia and it was very useful to talk through it. I felt reassured, affirmed and comforted and drew strength from the session. Vanessa seemed to really understand my predicament. She empathized with me and made me feel as though there was nothing shameful about my fear.

We also explored the underlying reason for my fear – a traumatic childhood experience where I was thrown into the sea and was unable to swim. The near-drowning experience had disabled me and while it hasn't preoccupied me, it has strongly affected the impact that water has on me – either in the sea or swimming pool.

I think the session freed me up to be able to confront my reservations with regard to my instructor and to communicate with her the intensity and gravity of my fear. Somehow without my confronting L she seemed to be far more supportive on Thursday. She allowed me to negotiate with her and was very sensitive to my needs and fear. This resulted in my relaxing and I was thus able to enjoy the experience. It felt good to allow the water to hold me, to sway me and for me to be able to more aware of my bodily parts within the water – come up for air by standing in the water without sinking to the bottom and utilize L when the need arose. I now feel excited about conquering swimming and overcoming my intense fear of drowning.

14.02.2003

My children participated in the school's swimming gala on Friday. Every single child participated whether they could swim or not. Those who couldn't swim were accompanied by older children who walked alongside of them while they struggled to remain afloat with the help of boards. I was amazed at my daughter – she has had one individual swimming lesson and three group lessons and she was able to successfully jump into the water, navigate her way from one end of the pool to the next while holding on to a board. She finished in third place. I felt this was remarkable considering her limited amount of swimming lessons. I learn a lot about the long-term effects of traumatic events that happened in my life more than 30 years ago, added to the fact that as an adult one is far less trusting than a child. Adults also learn to fear and mistrust due to various life experiences. My daughter radiates a joy and an enthusiasm that is enviable when she gets into a swimming pool where she cannot touch the bottom of the pool. She happily experiments in the water, assuming different positions, allowing the water to support her and hold and caress her. I am fascinated by the confidence she exudes.

On Friday morning I started writing about my training experiences. After two hours of writing I was completely and utterly exhausted and slept for about 3-4 hours. On Saturday, my tiredness continued. Only today I feel I have recovered enough to be able to reflect on it. I think the cognitive and emotional processes related to my training are so intense and so loaded that I needed to take time out.

I think that during the two years of being at Unisa, to continue using the water analogy, I allowed myself to put my toes into water, sometimes I walked in ankle deep and on a very few occasions, I got in knee-deep. These knee-deep experiences seemed to have had detrimental effects on me and I'd simply walk out and return to shore. It seems as though I'd constantly resisted the urge to throw myself in at the deep end. Maybe I should re-examine my process notes for this year and try and establish a connection with the Carol that immersed herself in therapy behind the one-way mirror. These therapy sessions seem to have represented the times when I would be fully me – where I jumped in hook, line and sinker and allowed myself to be with my patients in ways that I was reluctant to in class.

I still have that overwhelming feeling that training was an anti-climax for me. I wonder whether I was too scared to trust my fellow classmates and lecturers or whether, on the few occasions that I risked trusting I was so horribly disappointed that I withdrew instead. I do feel as though I withheld a lot and was very selective about what I showed to whom.

My lecturers in Switzerland had taught me that what you get of your training strongly correlates with what you put into it. Maybe I didn't have the resources to put into my training

what I would've liked to. Maybe I was just too burnt out to even care. Maybe I had hoped that someone would tap into my feelings and empower me to open up in ways that I would've liked to, but felt too afraid to do so. Maybe part of my hesitancy had to do with the fact that as students we were aware of the politics going on in the department and I was sensitive to the reality that even if I were to open up, the lecturers were so preoccupied with their own stuff that they wouldn't have the capacity to contain my issues as well as theirs. A lot of the time I experienced the lecturers as being physically present but emotionally and cognitively distant. It was as if they were simply just going through the motions. Sometimes I felt they too were possibly burnt out, thinly stretched and had maybe reached breaking point. I guess there is no one answer but a variety of answers as to why I feel I did not maximize my training opportunities – as to why I feel shortchanged in retrospect – as to why I feel training didn't quite take off. It's almost as if people constantly threatened to engage in training but stopped short of doing so.

At the risk of sounding as though I do not want to take full responsibility for my training, the reality is that trainees do have expectations of training and trainers. Maybe it might have helped to have more dialogues with our trainers re training expectations.

It saddens me that all my life I had waited in anticipation for this training opportunity and then when it finally came along I was just too burnt out to get out of it what I should have. Maybe the entire cause of the anti-climactic feelings lies within me and I am the only one who can unlock this. Maybe some of my fellow students feel the same way as I do – maybe I should contact some of them and find out their impressions – maybe I'll discover that it was all about me – deep down I am hoping that this is not the case.

17.02.2003

I derive a lot of hope when I encounter my life and track my development from fundamentalism to radical feminism to an integrated approach that attempts to affirm humanity both in myself and in the other that I encounter on a daily basis. I am acutely of humankind's capacity to evolve, develop to full potential, grow steadily and enhance life. I do feel that I still have so much to learn and experience, but yet I cannot deny the deep sense of satisfaction that emerges as I continue to unravel my life along its winding paths and sometimes tortuous planes and unknown destinations.

Sometimes I find it hard to believe that I used to practice as a nurse, that I have been ordained as one of the first female black Baptist minister within the Baptist Convention, that I used to manage research trials and am now emerging as a therapist. I sometimes question my usefulness within society when I realize how introspective, self-centred, self-indulgent and self-reflexive I've become particularly over the past few weeks. Then I remind myself that this is the utopia I'd always dreamt about and remind myself to enjoy every single moment without

feeling guilty. Last week at a secondhand bookstore I unashamedly bought a book called “The Smart Woman’s Guide to staying at home – how to maintain your independence”. I am slowly allowing myself to live each day to the fullest – to live in the moment – to experience the joy of not having to go work – to enjoy the luxury of “ivory tower existence” for once in my life without any guilt attached to it.

26.02.2003

Yesterday, in the wee hours of the morning, we returned from Cape Town, having spent a few days with the family. Our visit was enjoyable and memorable for various reasons. It was the first time that we as a family rented an apartment to live in and use as a base. Previously, we’ve always divided ourselves up and lived with family. It was my idea to create this space for us to connect and be united as an immediate family, while at the same time, enjoying opportunities to spend with our extended family. Ruben confessed while in Cape Town that this had been a splendid idea.

Our 3½ days in Cape Town were very full and also very meaningful. We visited with relatives and friends and enjoyed being in the presence of our family while converging and diverging in various groups and around a variety of topics. At times we simply just enjoyed being in one another’s’ midst, without feeling the urge to fill the silences with words.

I thoroughly enjoyed swimming several lengths in my brother and sister-in-law’s pool and being cheered by my entire family for my achievement. I am the only sibling out of four who is able to swim. When I informed my mom recently about my swimming lessons, she commented that when she was growing up, none of the public bathing facilities allowed access to people of colour. When Grandpa did manage to take his family to the beach, it was a biennial occasion. The beaches that had been reserved for people of colour were the rocky and unsafe beaches, hence mom’s inability to learn to swim. The cycle repeated itself during our childhood years. Mom and Dad were so busy surviving, there was hardly time for leisure activities. Dad introduced us to the public library very early on in life and this became the main leisure activity for our family.

Ruben and I drove past a high school, midway between the suburbs we had grown up in as children. He recalled observing sports events from outside of the fence with his dad – the school had been reserved for whites. I have vivid memories of walking past the school, envying the facilities, the huge pool, the well architected building with the fancy driveway. I used to silently question “why was I born with a brown skin?” “why am I denied access to this beautiful school which is so conveniently placed and yet out of my reach?” I used to wish that one day I’d wake up with a white skin and I’d be able to attend this great school. I longed to be taught to swim. I longed to participate in sporting activities while others enviably peered through the fence to watch.

Ruben and I realized this past weekend that we both had similar feelings and memories attached to the same school and neither of us had spoken about it before. I found myself wanting to engage in talks related to our experiences of growing up. Ruben and I became very aware of the changes that have occurred over the past 9 years. We commented on the children and teachers of colour, visible in the school grounds, where once we'd been forbidden to tread. We were thankful that our children's experiences would be different to ours. We couldn't believe in what a dysfunctional society we had been born into, reared and developed. We once again became aware of how much effort it had taken and the huge sacrifices we had made to break out of the cycle we'd been destined for.

I asked my mom whether she felt like visiting an old family friend and she was very keen to do so. Ma F holds a special place in my heart and mind. She used to be the close friend of my maternal grandmother. She will be 93 years old next month. Ma F holds the key to a lot of memories I would have loved to access. Ma F has become silent over the past few months and her daughter reports that sometimes she is confused. The Ma F I encountered on Friday is not the Ma F I used to know. She used to talk incessantly – she was a wellspring of knowledge and history. Now, her shriveled body silently sits in the corner and she just smiles when she notices anyone looking in her direction.

A few years ago, when I started my master's training, I'd mentioned to Ruben that I'd love to converse with Ma F about her experiences with my grandma, her experience of life in the old S.A. compared with the new S.A. Ma F's sister, Aunt N, was at home on Friday when we visited Ma F. Aunt N only became known to us in the new S.A. Aunt N had married a white man and had lived in Zimbabwe for the greater part of her life. She is now 88 years old, vibrant, energetic and with a wry sense of humour. She is as talkative as Ma F is silent. It seems as though life in Zimbabwe for Aunt N had been different and possibly easier. She talks freely and unencumbered.

Meeting with Aunt K, Ma F and Aunt N – three widows – I became aware of how the men in their lives had departed from them. Both Ma F's sons have died suddenly and unexpectedly. Aunt K mentioned to my mom that recently Ma F has been talking about her sons as though they are still alive.

As Ruben and I talked about our visit en route back to Johannesburg, I became aware of the struggles that people encounter on a daily basis. For a few brief moments, I breathed a sigh of relief that I am 1 400km away from the daily struggles of our previous community where we grew up.

Sometimes I feel guilty about the opportunities that I have in comparison to some of my family and friends in Cape Town. I feel relieved that I do not have to encounter their struggles on a

daily basis, that I am not visibly reminded of their crises. It's as if we have escaped, albeit temporarily, from the pain and misery that grips our community. People seem to be constantly struggling to survive, to put their children through school, to survive while on maternity leave and receiving minimal benefits. It seems as though the geographical distance provides us with the illusion that everyone's okay until our next visit – when we are reminded of the unemployment, ongoing exploitation, and people struggling to make ends meet. Life seems to be an ongoing struggle. I was reminded of how privileged I am to be able to strive towards realizing my full potential and pursuing my dreams. I feel saddened that so many people may never allow themselves to dream or envisage a better future for themselves because it may make day to day living too unbearable and intolerable.

At Ruben's cousin's home we watched a video of their family reunion that took place last year for the first time. We pointed out to the children, Ruben's two sisters and brother-in-law. Ruben's cousin's wife remarked in a very surprised manner: "don't your children know their aunts?" Ruben failed to elaborate and simply replied "no".

03.03.2003

I feel so good this morning. I joined in a walk group at the gym – a 1 hour brisk walk through the treed suburb of Houghton. How refreshing and invigorating. I was very aware that I was the only person of colour amongst a group of about 20 people. Today I felt privileged to be able to have the luxury of exercising at this particular hour of the day. It feels oh so good to be able to do something like this.

I think Ruben seems to think I'm joking when I say to him that I do not ever want to work full-time again, after my upcoming year of community service. On Friday when a friend mentioned that she intends taking a year off because she's in dire need of doing so, I could really strongly identify with her. I long to be able to do things in a leisurely way – go to gym, relax, read books, go for walks and allow myself the time and space to recreate and recharge my batteries. I feel that at the moment I'm getting a taste of what that might feel like. I cannot fully imagine it right now because I have my dissertation hanging over my head. I dream about not having to force myself to do ANYTHING. I dream about endless possibilities – what it would feel like to wake up in the morning and not have to go to work or have to study... I wonder what it would be like to be truly a "lady of leisure". I wonder what it would be like to concentrate on only home-related matters and just have endless time with my children and husband without anything niggling me. I wonder how long I'd be able to feel satisfied without having lists of things to do and occupy my time. I can only imagine that I'd have to work very hard to not feel guilty about having so much "me-time". I'd have to make a concerted effort to try not to think about all the other women I know who may never have the opportunity I am creating for myself. I also think about those who are just too driven career-wise to even envisage a gift like this to themselves. I do have a few friends who could probably financially

afford to do what I intend doing, but may feel emotionally not ready to do so – or maybe trapped by their feminist yearnings and not allow themselves an opportunity of this nature.

02.05.2003

Reflections on rereading the texts today: Each time I revisit the texts I have mixed emotions. Today as I read my mom's letter and my response to her letter, I cried again! I keep thinking that one day I will be able to read it without feeling overwhelmed with emotion. How naïve of me. My ears and throat hurt from trying to control my feelings as I write this right now. I want to get on with this dissertation – I want to finish it – but there's no short cut around emotional pain that's been buried and now excavated after decades. I feel as though there's emotional shrapnel in every part of my being. On the day I had initially written my response to my mom, I cried for about 6 hours non-stop. There's a sense in which I'm tired of crying about it.

As a nurse, I am very aware that if one fractures a limb, it takes a lot of time to heal. Sometimes all sorts of complications set in during the supposed healing process – the plaster is removed once healing is assumed to have taken place. Once the plaster's off it is then noticed that the bone hasn't heal properly and it needs to be broken again in order to heal properly. I feel like this today. I feel as though my heart's been broken, shattered – that there's been several attempts to heal and each time it breaks even more and feels as though it's going to take even longer this time to heal.