

### **31. A VISIT TO KENYA, NAIROBI, 1991**

Our Robert went out to Kenya in 1990 under a Canadian foreign aid program that would help the Kenyan economy, and he stayed for four years. Kenya was then enjoying a period of relative peace and civil order, but nonetheless there were such events as this: his colleague was driving out a lonely road, and he came to a barrier. At the barrier a policeman stepped out, and said "Give me your money" and then to underline the importance of the request he added "I have a gun" and he showed his service revolver. There was no argument.

The reputation of Kenya for wild game is entirely deserved. On our one visit there Beatrice and I went to a park near Nairobi, with Robert as our guide and driver, all part of the entertainment he had laid on. It was a wooded hilly area, of several square miles. As we came to a pride of lions on the left-hand side of the road we stopped to look at them while they looked lazily at us. They seemed so lethargic that we might have descended from the car to see them at closer range, perhaps to pat one of them on the head, except that there were signs all over warning, "Don't open your car door. If you have a breakdown, just stay in your car and wait for help." And the park management does have a regular patrol.

And we saw exotic animals like giraffes, zebras and elephants of which we had seen pictures, plus at least one of which we had never even heard the name--Elands. There was a lookout where one could go out on a second story balcony, and I remember Beatrice offering food to a giraffe that didn't even have to stretch to reach her. It took the food daintily out of her hand.

And Robert took us to a fancy open air restaurant in which those animals were cooked and served. There was no lion meat on the menu that night--and when there was such the price was over \$20 per pound-- cost that reflects the fact that lions, nourished entirely on animal meat, necessarily cost the total of the meat they eat.

#### **Rob and Nazrat, Kenya, 1990-93**

The marriage was to Nazrat Mirza, a young doctor teaching in Nairobi but whose home was in the port city of Mombasa, an admirable young lady, beautiful, with a charming smile, behind which is a will of iron. To show the courageous and decisive person Nazrat is, late one night a man was brought into the bush hospital where she was on night duty. He had a ruptured appendix, and unless he was operated on immediately he would die. Nairobi was 200 miles away, and the connection was on tracks through the jungle. She was a pediatrician with no experience in surgery, though she had a certain amount of instruction at the Kenyan medical school where she got her degree. Still the only solution was for Nazrat to do the operation and immediately, in the primitive operating room available. She patched the man up; he recovered

sufficiently to be sent to Nairobi, and there was brought back to complete health. He owed his life to Nazrat's courage and decisiveness.

I have never discussed Nazrat's ancestry with her, but assume it to be Middle Eastern. She is certainly not African. As I understand it, the Sultan of Oman had trading rights on a 10 mile strip down the east coast of Africa (or at least Kenya and Tanganyika), the main items of trade being ivory and slaves. To carry out this work on the large scale demanded by the market, the Sultan needed soldiers, bureaucrats, and other functionaries. These employees of the Sultan were the Swahili speaking people, who now number about 75,000. They never intermarried with the Africans. It is understandable, considering why their ancestors came in the first place, that they are not popular locally, and most would like to get out. Needless to say the spirit of the slave trader is not inherited, and we know few people who are as humane and public spirited as Nazrat.

Nazrat always had a vision beyond curing sick children, important as that is. She wanted to do research, to contribute new knowledge. She was interested in health problems affecting communities, and at one point she got an M.A. in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University.

They loved each other, both wanted to get married, but Nazrat laid down a condition: Robert had to convert to Islam, the religion of which she was a pious practitioner. Robert held out for most of the four years he lived in Kenya, then he caved in. At one point he phoned me and asked my opinion. I said "If you are as good a Muslim as you have been a Jew, then your conversion will make no difference at all." In short yes, he should go ahead and convert if he and Nazrat really loved one another. They were married shortly before coming back to Canada.

That did not solve their economic problem. True, Robert had a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics, but now no job; Nazrat's medical degree from Kenya did not permit her to practice in Canada. I will not dwell on the details, but as they ended up about five years ago, Robert has a responsible job at the World Bank and Nazrat is a senior pediatrician in one of America's best hospitals. Their combined income must be fabulous. They have now engaged an architect to draw plans for a modification to their Washington home that will cost what to me would be a fortune