

Hello Hugh and Kathy,  
How's it going over there? Well, I hope. I hope the snow and ice haven't been too bad. We've been having temperatures of 33, 34 and even 37 degrees Celsius over here, but it's cooler today. The 28<sup>th</sup> of Feb.

Hugh, thank you so much for sending Tracey some money to help pay for my new radiator. I really appreciate it. I had asked her not to worry you and Adam, but she'd already gone ahead and done it. They fitted a new radiator – the difference in price between a new and a reconditioned one was so slight, it didn't make sense to fit a rebuilt one. Initially, I'd thought it was silly to fit a new radiator in a car that was twenty years old. But then I realized I might just be inheriting someone else's problems with a reconditioned one. They also used some specialized machinery to flush out the entire cooling system, and get rid of the "scale" and gunk that had built up in the cooling system over the years. So I've got wheels again. You can't manage without a car here on the farm. The nearest Spar is seven k's away.

Tracey had a look yesterday evening, and there are a stack of emails from you and from my sister waiting for me. I have to go and read them down at her cottage. Otherwise she has to transfer them all to my laptop, which is extra work for her. But she mentioned that you're keen to have a family tree compiled, Hugh. So I'm going to give you all the info I have without waiting to read your emails. I'm giving you a lot of info which you won't need for the "tree", but I think you'll find it interesting to learn something about your "forebears"!

My father and mother were Llewellyn and Phyllis Eva Roderick. His father was Eli Roderick and I suddenly realized that I never knew what my grandmother's Christian name was! We never called her granny – we called her Gia, which is Welsh for granny. I **do** know that she was a Miss Morse before she married my grandfather. (No relation to the man who invented the Morse Code, otherwise the family would have bragged about it!)

My father was born in 1902 in a little Welsh mining town called Pentyridd Tonnipandi or Tonniraphel. (I get confused because he was born in one of them, and the singer Tom Jones was born in the other!) I'm not sure about the spellings either. I'm going to check in my

MARY MORSE

Pentyridd

Pentyridd

encyclopaedia before sending this off.) I've checked but can't find a good map of Wales. They're both very small towns, but I'm sure you'll find them on the internet.

My dad had older brothers called Thomas and Kenneth, a younger brother called Nevith, and sisters called Betty, Irene and Iris. I never met my grandfather Eli – he had been a miner all his life, and died of Miner's Phthisis up on the Witwatersrand before I was born. Eli had been a coal miner in Wales, and came out to South Africa in 1904 when gold was discovered. He worked as a gold miner in Pilgrim's Rest for a while, and when he was satisfied that his family would be alright in this country, he sent for them and they came out by ship. They landed in Delagoa Bay, later Lourenco Marques, and now Maputo. And all their furniture – including an upright piano! – was transferred by ox wagon across the Lowveld where the Kruger National Park is now. Then they must have come up Kowyn's Pass to where Graskop is now, and on to Pilgrim's Rest where they settled.

It was pretty primitive there in those days, and I think these people were incredibly brave, to leave Wales and come out to Darkest Africa. The Veld must have been teeming with wild life in the Lowveld in those days, when they crossed it in ox wagons. There were obviously no refrigerators or electricity in Pilgrim's Rest, and they couldn't keep cows to provide milk, because of Tsetse Flies and the Sleeping Sickness which affected the cattle. So every family kept a small flock of goats. A little African boy would take them out on the hillsides to graze during the day, and bring them in again at night. He would then milk them, so that the family had goat's milk for tea, coffee and porridge etc!

After several years in Pilgrim's Rest, they moved up to the Witwatersrand, and lived in places like Luipaards Vlei and Witpoortjie, near Krugersdorp.

My father's brother Tom died of flu in the huge worldwide outbreak of flu in 1918 after the First World War. He had been the youngest assayer in South Africa, testing gold on the gold mines or in the refineries for impurities. And his brother Ken died of encephalitis, after falling on a tennis court and fracturing his skull. (He died at home and when the district surgeon came to their cottage to conduct a



post mortem, the family could hear him sawing the top of Ken's skull off with a hand-saw, in order to examine his brain!)

Eli Roderick was a good musician. In addition to playing the piano, he could play all the instruments in the Brass Band. He taught his oldest daughter Betty to play the piano. And was then proud and humiliated when she obtained higher marks than he did in an Eisteddfod in Wales!

When my mother and father went over to Britain in the 1970's on holiday, they went on a coach tour of Wales. They visited the little mining town where my father had been born. Many of the little shops like haberdashers and butcheries had the name "Roderick" on them, and there were a lot of tombstones in the cemetery with the name "Roderick" on them. When they asked about my grandfather, some of the old people said: "Oh, Eli Roderick, the great musician! Yes, he went out to Africa in the early 1900's." He was still remembered after all those years. It could only happen in a small town. If you're interested, there's a wonderful little book about Pilgrims Rest called "Valley of Gold" by A. P. Cartwright. I once bought it for my dad, who loved it. It was full of old black and white photographs. I had it after he died, but lent it to someone I worked with. I never got it back otherwise I'd send it to you.

My mother's name was Phyllis Eva Palmer before she married, and she was born in Portsmouth, England in 1910. Her father's name was Owen Thomas Palmer, but once again, I don't know my grandmother's Christian name either! Or her maiden name. I think it may have been Richards or Richardson. Everyone in the family just called her "Ma." They came out to South Africa in 1918. And my mother told me that when the ship docked in Cape Town, all the passengers had to climb into large wicker baskets, like you get under hot-air balloons. These were then hoisted by crane and deposited safely on the docks, where the passengers scrambled out! The ships couldn't get right up to the wharfs in those days.

My grandfather had worked as a shipwright in England, building and repairing ships, and later became a deep-sea diver. He wore one of those big helmets and a rubber diving suit, with heavy boots weighted with lead, to help keep him upright. He once told me that you had to be careful ... if you bent over to pick something up while

under water, the air in your diving suit could get into the legs of the suit and make you turn upside down! Once, when my grandmother went to meet him down at the docks after work, he'd turned turtle. And when he was brought up to the boat by his crew, his boots came out of the water first!

He worked in Cape Town, East London and Durban over the years. While in Durban, he was one of the divers who laid the foundations for the giant grain elevator in the harbour. Huge blocks of concrete would be lowered by crane into the water, and the divers would have to guide them into place to form the foundations. They were laid loose, without any mortar between them. (One had to be careful that one's air-hose didn't lie on the blocks. It would have been trapped and crushed between the blocks.)

There were no compression chambers in those days. Sometimes, if my grandfather was brought to the surface too rapidly, he would get the "Bends" when nitrogen bubbles formed in his bloodstream. Very painful. He would then have to call his crew and they would all go back down to the harbour again that night. He would be lowered to the depth where he'd been working earlier, and then gradually brought to the surface in stages.) Very primitive.

He also worked in the Belgian Congo for some years, although the family didn't accompany him. His job was to salvage and repair boats that hit logs or "floating islands" — large chunks of the bank that broke away and floated down the Congo River. The reeds in the soil made them light enough to float. He also built and repaired landing stages, jetties and piers in the river. The Belgian Congo had huge plantations of palm trees, from which they extracted palm oil. (Hence the name Palmolive soap!) They also had a huge "groundnut" scheme, growing peanuts. His strangest- ever assignment was to recover a man's false teeth from a sunken vessel! The boat bringing him up the Congo River when he arrived from overseas, hit a sandbank or log and sank during the night, and his false teeth were left in a cabinet in his cabin. There was no way he could get another set of false teeth in the Belgian Congo in those days. So he paid my grandfather to go down in the muddy water, find his way to the man's cabin in the sunken boat, and recover the teeth from a cabinet over the washbasin.



Once, one of the Union Castle liners lost its anchor after leaving Durban harbor and crossing the "bar". The shipping line offered a few hundred Pounds to any diver who would recover the anchor. All the divers said it was too dangerous, but my grandfather – who loved money – said he'd do it. I suppose a few hundred Pounds was quite a lot of money in those days. The swells and currents were very strong when he was lowered into the sea outside the "bar". He located the anchor, attached a line to it, and it was successfully recovered. But he'd taken such a pounding in the rough seas, that when he was brought to the surface, he was bleeding from his nose, his eyes and his ears. As I say, he loved money. Once when we were teasing him, we asked him why he didn't spend some of his wealth and enjoy life. We told him "Hey, Pops, you can't take it with you." His answer was: "Well, if I can't take it with me, I'm not going!")

My mother had two older sisters, Edna and May, and a younger brother called Owen Domingo Palmer. (My grandfather loved foreigners, hence the unusual second name!) My grandfather, who was a big strong man, faked his age and went right through World War Two, serving as an engineer in the Sappers. He was in North Africa and Italy.

My mother and father married in 1930 and I was born on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January in 1937. My sister Patricia Audrey was born on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 1941. And of course, you know all the details of my grandchildren. My sister had a baby called Sean, who died very young. It was a "cot death". She later had a daughter called Siobhan. Siobhan is married to a Tim Wilson. They live in London and have two children, Monica and Lucas.

My father's brother Nevith (we called him uncle Nev) married a woman called Alice Large. They had two children – Kenneth and Barbara Anne. My dad's sister Iris married a man called Reginald Swan. They lived in Durban and had one child, Maureen. She married late in life to a man called Norman Collinge, but they never had any children. Ken Roderick was married to a woman called Eunice and they had several children. His son is called Stewart and I can't remember the name of his daughter. Eunice died some years ago and he is now married to someone called Dawn. Her maiden name was

Large. And I think they were distantly related, as Ken's mother Alice had been a Large. Ken and Dawn live in Dundee, in Natal.

My mother's older sister, Edna, married a man called Thomas Cornhill and they had one son, Owen. They lived in East London. Her other sister, May, married a man called William Laaks, and they had two sons, Keith and Garth. They also lived in East London. Keith was killed when riding his motorbike while quite young and never married. Garth was married to a woman called Ria, who died some years ago. I don't know the names of their children. He is now married to a lady called Elise and lives in Port Elizabeth.

My uncle Owen Palmer married a girl called Kitty whom he met in Edinburgh during World War Two. I don't know what her maiden name was. They moved to Durban and had two children – Norval and Margaret. I've lost touch with that family completely and don't know whether Norval and Margaret have married or not. They must have by now.

I hope this is all the info you need. Otherwise, the lady compiling your family tree would probably be able to get more details from old records of births, deaths and marriages in Britain and South Africa.

One other interesting little piece of information ... my father's sister, Irene, married a man called George McClintock and they had two sons, Paddy and Ken. They lived in Salisbury, in Rhodesia. Aunty Irene was the first woman to become a postmaster in Rhodesia. She was the postmaster of a small post office in one of the suburbs of Salisbury, either Marlborough or Mabelreign.

Well, I'll get Tracey to send this off to you. And I'll write another email after I've read all your emails awaiting me! Cheers for now and lots of love to all the family. Love Dad.