

A glance at the “the other side”.

WHEN YOU ARE TOLD every day “get out of the office, go!” in order to witness and record some exciting or significant event or some horrifying or hilarious incident, then life cannot be boring. By good fortune that was my compelling, sometimes discomfiting, job for all my “working days” over most of the 20th century, except for a mere 20 years of sitting at a desk telling others what to do and trying to make sense of what was happening locally, nationally and on the world scene. Even that was never boring.

So I thought I might share a few of these experiences with you to remind your family of their own memories of fun and fury ... knowing that inevitably your view of events must be quite different. This is a reminder too that everybody’s history always has at least two sides and that, to be closer to reality, we need to be aware of the directly differing views of others, especially of those of ethnic cultures different from our own .

However, there is no consensus on how to replace the one-sided national history imposed on a nation by an apartheid government for half a century – or how to replace the equally one-sided colonial history of the highly disputed 100 years before South Africa was created. We should all be aware that, for a national history to be valid, it needs to be accepted by all sections of society. To reach that goal is a painful exercise, made easier if we step back and contemplate the widest of all pictures of our past.

If we are to make sense of all our versions of modern history, we also need to be aware that our shared “yesterdays” were fashioned by the tumultuous times of the “day-before-yesterday”, that is, the 1800s which still haunt all of us, especially the people of many cultures still seeking equality and true democracy in South Africa. That is why my own story – and yours, wherever you are – should begin more than a century before we or our parents were born. For the context of our personal short-term histories, we need to begin by looking at that markedly disruptive 19th century.

Thus PART ONE of my life-story begins in 1820, when a young lad named Wood (the source of my middle name, I discovered late in life) decided to escape to a place he did not know, called Africa. His and his family’s life-story is a lesson to all of us, of all races I suggest, for it begins, not with belief or culture, but with *starvation and death versus survival and growth*.

The rest of this five-part book is a personalised account of the “ups” and the laughter, as well as the “downs” and the drama, concerning the events of the 20th century and ongoing struggles to publish freely “the truth”, then and right now.

Harvey Wood Tyson – September 2017