

The New Richmond Reader

Issue 13

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Our Literary News from the Heart of the
Karoo

July 12, 2018.

Greetings Karoosters,

The winds of winter have hit the bowels of the Karoo and shiver me timbers it has been cold in the dorp, all from the Cape of Storms. Snow on the highlands, and burst pipes in the village, the sun behind grey clouds it has been a harsh winter; but spring is in the soul if not the air, as we look forward to BookBedonnerd XI which is really not that far away.

We are passing through the valley of the shadow of death in South Africa these days. There just seems to be no end to the stink of corruption in every level of government, civil service and SOE's. We are however fortunate that we do have some functional and highly motivated civil society groups and organisations as well as one or two governmental sectors which are doing the job for all of us; trying to get this wonderful country back on tract. We must though do our part and not accept that it is normal to offer a traffic cop a two hundred spot to make a speeding fine "go away". We are then as bad as the cop.

Without getting into the finer detail I think that it high time that we have a new government, or at a minimum a coalition one in which the correct and proper running of the country and all that entails are done with a high calibre, honest, incorruptible and efficient government at all levels; from municipal to federal and including all State-Owned Enterprises which are at present huge leeches sucking the country dry. The government is a parasite on the population. The only thing which these outfits are good and efficient at is stealing the taxpayers' money. Sometimes you need change just for the sake of change; like in government you need opposition for the sake of opposition. A basic rule in all functional democracies.

We have a programme in the making and some wonderful books and speakers.....lined up.

On Wednesday October 24 we shall be honoured to host the Independent-Publishers presentations starting at 10am until 1 o'clock and an afternoon session capped off with the

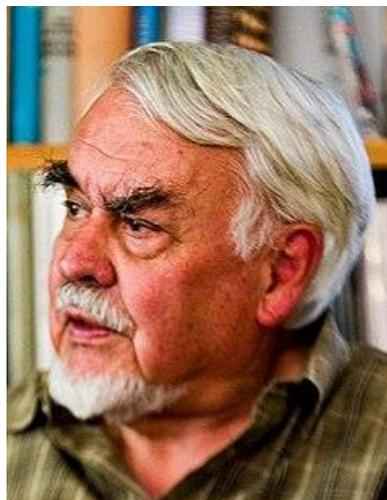
annual Independent-Publishers Awards Banquet. In the past it has been a superb evening, so we are looking forward to it.

Just in case you have not noticed there is a very recently published and beautiful book titled *Book Towns Forty-five Paradises of the Printed Word*. It is written by Alex Johnson and published by Frances Lincoln and sells for a couple hundred bucks and is available at Exclusive. I battled to locate a copy as it was sold out twice...so the written word is still in demand. It is a pretty little book and Booktown Richmond is right up there with the Hay-on Wye's and Wigtowns.

It is with great sadness that we heard of the death of Prof Kay DeVilliers who spoke at Richmond last year and did a Deelfontein walk about at the age of 90. What a great man of all ages. Following it Rose Willis' write up in her Karoo Round Up...

FAREWELL, DEAR FRIEND

Internationally known, highly respected Professor Kay (Jacques Charl) de Villiers died on Tuesday, June 5, after spending some time in hospital. He was 90. Kay was an esteemed author (*Healers, Helpers and Hospitals* as well as *Dwarstrekkers, Dweepers en Dokters*) and writer on medical and historic matters for the *S A Medical* and *British Journals* and other medical publications. He visited Richmond, last year, when *Yeomen of the Karoo* was awarded two prizes at the Independent Publishers Awards Competition. In essence, however, he was more than a co-author of this book on the Imperial Yeomanry Hospital, at Deelfontein. Both Arnold van Dyk and I found him to be a guiding light throughout the project – mostly we will miss his immense wisdom and infectious chuckle. Widely known in the world of history, medicine and military medicine, in particular, Kay was an expert on the Anglo-Boer War, the doctors, the outbreak and treatment of diseases, such as typhoid, and the way in which both armies treated their sick and wounded. He was an authority on Red Cross Societies, and international foreign aid during the Anglo-Boer War. His contribution to the world of neurosurgery was immense, as was his contribution to South African and international universities and institutes of learning. He served on many local and world medical and educational societies. He was honorary life vice-president of the World Federation of Neurosurgery Societies and life president of Pan African Neurosurgery Association. He was a key role player in the establishment of the Cape Medical Museum and for this he was awarded a gold medal by the Simon van der Stel Foundation, Cape Town honoured his contribution to cultural affairs by granting him Freedom of the City. Always willing to help and share information, Kay was a unique person. He will be greatly missed.



It's been a roller coaster month of emotions. First we got news that Kay de Villiers, who spoke at Richmond last year at the tender age of 90 something, had passed away. He was a giant in the medical fraternity and an expert on medical history. His book, *Yeomen of the Karoo*, co-authored with Rose Willis and Arnold van Wyk, was one of 3 books to win the BookBedonnerd Prize for the best of the best of the self-published books in our SA INDEPENDENT-PUBLISHERS AWARDS. I will always remember how he cried on receiving the award. A man who had achieved so much. And his hallmark chuckle even though his facial muscles struggled to play along. May his soul rest in peace. Read the tribute by Rose Willis below.

And then soon after I got news that my good friend Louise Heckl had also passed away suddenly. Louise was the author of the book *Die Oervlakte* and more recently *The House that Jack Built*. Louise was a master printer with years of experience in the industry. *The House that Jack Built* was acquired by the Tate Gallery and I have no doubt it will become a collector's item. But Louise was so much more to me. Together we plotted a Dalene Matthee Festival in Uniondale only for the George Municipality to have a bout of amnesia at the 11th hour about the promised funding. May they rot in hell. Moreover, when I organised the first literary festival in history in Soweto, it was Louise, together with a few other friends, who lent me the money to pay for PJ Powers. But the abiding memory I have of Louise is one of a chain smoker who brought her beloved dog (forgot his name) to all our festivals. Luckily he passed on a few months before Louise. May her soul rest in peace.



But then the Soccer World Cup has been such a joyous occasion. Probably the greatest World Cup in modern memory. Russia almost pulled off the impossible. Belgium broke Japanese hearts to come from two goals down and beat Japan in the dying seconds. Croatia was magnificent. It was a World Cup of upsets. Games that captured the imagination of the world.

And then yesterday, Kevin Anderson pulled off one of the greatest comebacks in the history of Wimbledon to down the great Roger Federer.

Even if he wins Wimbledon, this match will define his career. To come back from match point and on the brink of being defeated in three straight sets...wow, that is the stuff of legend

But this was baby stuff compared to his knowing away at John Isner for over 6 hours to get the first South African into the final in over 9 decades. We live in great and interesting times there is no doubt.

On the literary front, I was thrilled to see Harry Kalmer, who was in Richmond a few years ago, won the Sunday Times Fiction Prize for his novel One Thousand Tales of Johannesburg. What an honour for one of the journeymen of SA Literature.

On the SA INDEPENDENT-PUBLISHERS AWARDS front, the entries are trickling in. Below is a list of authors who have entered their books in this year's competition. The Asterisks indicates that I have received a copy of the book.

SAIPA 2018

1. NICOLA HAYWARD – MASTER JACK *
2. KYLE ALLAN
3. LUTHANDO LUCAS
4. ED OSTROSKY need 2 more copies*
5. MARK DE WET
6. TOD COLLINS
7. HELENA DAVIS THE WIND IN THE WHEAT FIELDS*
8. VYGIE MENTOR
9. JOHN CLARKE
10. NICKI VON DE HEYDE
11. DAVID ROBBINS
12. LOUISE HECKL
13. LOUIS BOTHA
14. GILLIS VAN SCHALKWYK
15. JOHN COOMBE
16. CAL KENNEDY - I'M THE PATIENT NOT THE SHRINK- BIPOLAR
17. BRONWYN MULROONEY ZOONIVERSE
18. SABINE LEHMACHER – MOONLING
19. FIONA KHAN
20. LINZE BRANDON ???
21. TUMELO MOLELEKI – HER HEART*
22. SORAYA HENDRICKS???
23. LEBOHANG MASANGO
24. SANDHIR SEWMUNGAL
25. SAM NGOKATSE
26. SIMON O' CALLAGHAN
27. LORNA M. NTULI – GIVING BIRTH TO MY FATHERS*
28. HELENA DOLNY – BEFORE FOREVER AFTER PHILOSOPHY*
29. MEHLULI NXUMALO - THE FABULISTS BINDLE *
30. WENDY ROUX – PARENTING CHECKLIST*
31. CHRIS MARAIS & JULIENNE DU TOIT – MOVING TO THE PLATTELAND
32. JOSH CRICKMAY - JOSH'S BIG YEAR*
33. CECILIA DE CECCO/ WERNER ADENDORFF/ ANDREA GIAMPICCOLI – CUCINA IN SOUTH AFRICA*
34. TINA SCOTFORD- A FROG AND A WHALE IN A PRINCESS TALE*
35. B.E. MAGDALENA – INNOCENCE AT WAR*
36. DOMINIQUE MALHERBE- FROM COURTROOMS TO CUPCAKES*

As far as our line-up for BookBedonnerd goes here is a preliminary list of speakers. Many of the authors from SAIPA will join this list once judging begins and we get a better sense of the literary merit of these books.....

SPEAKERS BOOKBEDONNERD 2018

- ANTONY OSLER - INSPIRATIONAL
- TRACY GOING BRUTAL LEGACY
- CHRIS MARAIS & JULIENNE DU TOIT- MOVING TO THE PLATTELAND
- DAVID ROBBINS – WALKING TO AUSTRALIA
- LOUIS BOTHA – COFFEE TABLE BOOK ON THE KAROO
- LOUISE HECKL – THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT
- VERNON HEAD – BIRDING
- TOD COLLINS – THE ART OF BEING...AN AWFUL ANGLER
- JOHN CLARKE – WILD COAST MINING CONTROVERSY
- VYTJIE MENTOR – NO HOLY COWS
- MARK DE WET – A CAPE RUBAIYAT
- ERROL MOORCROFT- THE WOOL CLASSER, THE SHEARERS AND THE GOLDEN FLEECE
- RAJENDRA CHETTY – MOUNTAINEERING & A BIOGRAPHY OF PLAYWRIGHT RONNIE GOVENDER
- IZAK DU PLESSIS BOEREVERNEUKERS & RALPH HAYNES- GODFATHER VAN DIE WES- RAND
- JAMES-BRENT STYAN T.B.C
- ALMERO WELGEMOED T.B.C
- ANZIL KULSEN T.B.C.
- SIMON CALLAGHAN - COFFEE TABLE BOOK ON AFRIKABURN

Following is a wonderfully well written story of her, Jo Rushby, trip to Nepal and trek into the Himalayas. If this does not add one more item on your bucket list.....

Savour the simple pleasures of Nepal on trek to a lake made of snow

Path to hidden glacier takes hikers from old rhythms to ancient forests

20 June 2018 - 05:15 Jo Rushby (Ike's Book Shop Durban)



Working to survive: A Nepalese man uses a crude plough to till the soil for vegetables. People in remote villages live to a ripe old age due to clean air, a healthy diet, and energetic lifestyles.

Picture: JO RUSHBY

Dreams are made of this: flying into a landlocked country where a few years ago Maoist guerrillas roamed and a royal family played out Machiavellian intrigues that would culminate in blood and death.

Kathmandu. Backpack. Boots. A foot trek of six days. Sleeping rough, walking tough, with promises of glaciers, spectacular mountains, remote villages. Oh, and leeches. The excitement about Himalayan adventures, however, overwhelms worries about blood-suckers and soggy boots.

Kathmandu to Pokhara. A dressed-up bus chugs into view and we are on our way along narrow, winding roads flanked by hills of terraced, emerald rice paddies. No toll roads, no One-Stops. But many stops for samosas, masala chai and lassies sold by roadside vendors.

Pokhara at sunset is like arriving in a wonderland. The light shimmers and speeds across a lake that hugs the town and disappears into the surrounding mountains. A path around the water is

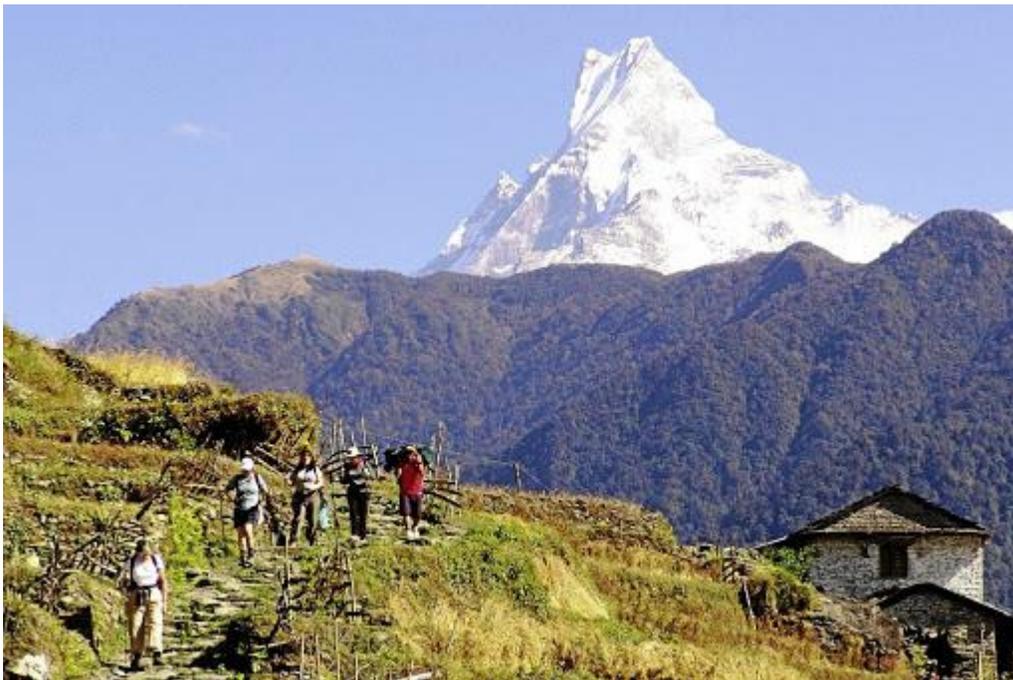
lined with cafes and bars, people boating, fishing, feasting. Chaos organised. Not Geneva, just nirvana.

Much Better Adventures is a well-oiled team, a mix of hardened Everest veterans and apprentices learning the trade. Our mission is Nepal's hidden glacier, an offshoot of the snow-capped Annapurna mountain range. Like children knowing there is a lollipop around the next hill, we leave the town just before light breaks, the Madi River keeping us company.

Jagan Timilsina is our guide, Tika and Chiiring our porters. Timilsina's reception in the valley's teahouses and villages tells of his 20 years of trekking in this neck of the woods. The last drips of our lunch have barely settled when he smilingly announces "5,000 steps to the next stop". Suddenly the dhal and rice feels a bit heavy around the midriff.

Memories of my training raise a laugh. The Durban promenade reinforced with running up and down stairs. I am as prepared as white South Africans were for the end of apartheid.

The humidity hangs low, seeping under clothes, working up dribbles of sweat. Halfway up, a man nonchalantly ploughs his thin strip of terrace with yoked oxen.



Top of the world: Visiting a hidden glacier in the snow-clad Annapurna massif is worth a walk on the wild side. Picture: YOUTUBE

A woman is waiting on her veranda, Tibetan beads hanging as heavy as a buffalo's harness. She waits for something to happen. Or nothing. The mother of the mule-driver, her hand clings resolutely to the wooden veranda as she shyly announces her age, "88: too old now".

A combination of steep paths, crisp air and healthy diet mean people here live well into their 80s and early 90s. Their energy is infectious; we try to keep up with a man and his cows returning home from a day's grazing to the village of Sikles.

Paths zigzag past stone houses, wooden balconies and intricate carvings. Prayer flags. Fountains. Gardens and fields of mealies and potatoes. The village clings to its gods. It is cut off from the



outside world during monsoon as the road slides into a mud-fest. So everyone mucks in; there is no retirement, there is too much to do. After the elderly can no longer bend in the fields, they are kept active on their verandas, spinning wool, weaving cloth or making myriad items from bamboo.

The year is 2075 according to the Nepalese calendar, but time seems to be standing still.

This most idyllic of settings, a place that time has refused to warp, produced the fearsome Gurkhas, soldiers of the empire. And all the while, modern ways are creeping in: Wi-Fi, one-minute noodles and plastic.

It's time to rest the feet. We are booked in at Namaste Guesthouse, run by the irrepressible Maila. Its flower-bedecked terrace hangs on the edge of the valley, looking over a vegetable garden bursting with goodness. The

menu is as simple as it is delectable, dhal and rice.

Outside children's voices play, smoke rises, cows are put to bed. If Pokhara was loose strands running off in different directions, Sikles is a tightly fitting garment, with its seasons and discipline of weeding, ploughing, planting and harvesting. We feast on vegetable curry and pickled radish. It's a heady combination that loosens the tongue and the bowels.

An excuse to go trekking and camping in the mountains proves too much for Maila. Bag packed, knife at the ready, he bounds into the forest, thrashing nettles that quickly regroup behind him. He fashions bamboo walking sticks as we twist and turn upwards through a forest of ancient trees, dripping with orchids, moss; creepers looping, tendrils falling.

Porter pace ensues as the midday steam drains our energy: slow and steady. Hugging precipitous slopes, the path rises and falls like a heartbeat, each rise a welcome chance to gulp breezy air, and descending again into the wooded calm, the tantalising roar of water in the distance slashing the silence. Suddenly the river opens up before us, monsoon rains swelling its banks. It is a chance to take off boots, cool feet, dispense with leeches. We cross wooden bridges, leap across Ice Age boulders upstream. And all the time just above the treeline are glimpses of the shining white peaks. Ever closer. We are now deep in a world of nature.

Hugu village is our resting place for the next few nights. We are in an assortment of sheds equipped with the basics. No one lives here, only the momentary footprints of hunters and travellers, the youngsters having abandoned old ways for new.

One couple remain in the village, eking out a seasonal existence by honey hunting. The husband reveals bear claw scars down his back. Somewhere in the forest, their furry presence suddenly looms. The bear attacked him in the forest and he survived only because his daughter carried him to safety.



High up in the Himalayas, reality is less about a cellphone signal and more about sleeping with one eye open while bears and leopards roam outside.

We camp out, light a fire, pluck potatoes from the earth and roast them. The food tastes pure, and we laugh nervously over hot rum toddies as darkness sweeps in and leopards think about supper.

A bamboo cow shed is a bedroom. It has no door.

Morning mists cloak the mountains and then clear. I hear the glacier before seeing it. Crashing rocks, cracking ice from some of the highest peaks in the world, Annapurna.

Kahphuche, "lake made of snow" appears, floating icebergs in the middle. We are 2,450m above sea level. I dip my fingers in, quickly pull them out. Two men walk out of the forest carrying packs and ropes. Hunting honey in the cliffs, they talk of bears swimming in the lake. So we quickly head back to camp, spotting birds, Chiiring Sherpa teaching me Nepali words.

Silence descends on the group trekking back to Sikles. After six days, the village feels huge. Pokhara is a metropolis.

This trek, this Nepal, stretches beyond words. It's no Monaco or Disneyland. Here the adventures are raw. The people real. The radishes pick(I)ed from the back garden.

Buses more gaudy than a Bihari bride. Guides who every day share a forest with leopards and fight off bears.

Go — before this place is over-run by giddy tourists who will want tea-houses to become Starbucks, climb mountains in cable cars, turn waterfalls into slides and resting places into miniature Hiltons.

As I return home via Dubai, leeches appear again, this time their suckers reaching out to fill bloated money machines.

And I think, please take me back to the future – to 2075 and the Himalayas!

