



26 January 1997

My dear Phyl

What a lovely surprise it was to receive a letter from you. I love your letters - you have such a wonderful way with words - and your sense of humour never fails! Thank you. Thank you too for the cuttings which arrived a day or two later. It was really good to read some ordinary South African news! It is very expensive sending cuttings and newspapers - but if there are ever any really special events or items - please keep these for me. For instance - is the New Constitution out yet?

Ted has e-mail on his computer and we have tried and tried and eventually cracked how to get into the Star - so I can look at headlines there and then decide if I want to read the article or not. Could you please find out if the Weekly Mail has an e-mail address - because it would be good to be able to do the same with them. That would certainly save on postage.

That IS a real shame about funding for the National Orchestra being stopped. I have the radio in my room here tuned into Classical FM - and it is really lovely to put it on and get all sorts of wonderful classical music. I love SA music too - jazz, pop, country - all sorts.....and there certainly is a place for classical.

Received dreadful news about our parish priest in Johannesburg - Bez Valley. Last Sunday evening he and a few students were held up in the church house and asked for money. They were given R4000 - the Sunday collection. They demanded more - there was no more. They threw petrol over Gerard and companions and threatened to set them alight if they did not give them more money. Fortunately some other students arrived at that point and the thieves ran away! But what a shock.

Here things are not much better. The unemployment is high - many, many YOUNG people being out of work and unskilled. The educational system seems dreadful and family values nil. Young kids have absolutely no respect for anyone at all. And senseless crime is rife eg the destroying of property for no reason eg Ted arrived back from a night away to discover that all the guttering of the church had been wrenched off and smashed up! Of course here there are great preparations for the elections. It seems as though it will be an absolute disaster if the CONSERVATIVES get in. But there is not all that much faith in LABOUR either.

Congratulations Grandma - my, but your daughter has worked very fast! Do they intend to have more? You must have been up to see them - as you say that babies are ugly!!! Are you going back to Johannesburg to continue what you were doing there - or will you work from Durban?

I understand that it has been hellishly hot in Natal lately - but then, you don't mind that, do you? Here - I have been blessed with relatively dry weather.....I would love to have seen some more snow - but there has been so much sun. Usually when it is sunny - it is frosty and crisp and VERY cold! But the houses are heated - and so one gets dressed for the outside - and then comes in to the warm. I enjoy it. I look forward to watching Spring come when I am in Wales. Next week I am going to my sister in Ireland for a week and then on the 14th February I go to Wales for 3 months.

Am still enjoying myself very much - think of SA every so often - but am not in a hurry to get back yet!!

*Take care and much love,  
belia*