

**ARUSHA SCHOOL**  
**A Young Colonial Boy Goes To School in East Africa**  
**By Alan McFarland**  
(Writing Your Life Stories Group)

In 1935 Arusha School became my unhappy home on and off for the next eight years. At the age of five, I was sent to Arusha School, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1935, as a boarder. The school had fewer than 100 children. Boys and girls were approximately even in numbers.

Arusha is only 52 miles from home in Moshi (Kilimanjaro). The road journey, at that time, took all day because of the terrible road conditions. Dad's Morris Cowley bounced and rattled from pothole to pothole, straddled deep ruts, and pounded over corrugations at 10 to 15 dusty miles per hour. Lunch consisted of mother's cucumber and chicken sandwiches washed down by tea from Dad's old battered Thermos flask. We sat on the car's running board at the side of the road, and listened to the silence of the dense, surrounding forest, interrupted by cicadas that sounded like continuous ringing in my ears. I was silent. The thought of going to a strange boarding school was nauseating, and tying my stomach into knots. To me, 52 miles was a trip to the moon.

I arrived at the Arusha School in the afternoon, with my tin trunk packed with clothes and many goodies that Lapasi, the cook, had slipped under them. Dad had stenciled large white letter "MCFARLAND" on both sides of that trunk. The Reverend William Wynn-Jones (Big Sir) welcomed me into his large study, and sent his office boy to summon Miss Vance, the Housekeeper, to take me into her care. The sight of my Dad driving off in a thick cloud of red African dust sent me crying down the road after him. I was persuaded to return by the Headmaster's son, Timmy, to play with his toy train set. I also finished off the goodies.

I found it difficult, at first, to settle down to boarding school life at Arusha. I awoke to my first awful morning in the boys' dormitory on an iron double bunk bed surrounded by a mosquito net. As I stared up at my cloth-covered net, I noticed a growing yellow stain. The top of the net began to sag towards my face. When I realized that the kid above me had just peed his bed, I leaped out onto the floor. Hendrik Van Emminis, a tall, skinny, bespectacled Afrikaner, was a chronic bed-wetter. Hendrik's father had shot himself, so we all felt sorry for him. I got

the bed under him because I was a new boy. I discovered that Hendrik also cried at night and talked in his sleep. One night, during one of his sleeping monologues, I engaged him in conversation, as I had done with my brother David – and it worked. “Jump Hendrik,” I said, and he jumped off his bunk, crashed onto the floor and broke his wrist. Hendrik was hauled off to the school hospital and we were free of him for a month.

He returned to a single bed and whenever he talked in his sleep, we gently carried him outside encased in his net-shrouded bed. This practice had to stop in a hurry when one night, the Assistant Headmaster, Mr. Feuerhead (Little Sir), lost his Fox Terrier, Scylla. We were asleep in our beds when an unearthly screaming awoke us. We listened in terror to the sound of a leopard tearing Scylla apart outside the dormitory wall. Suddenly, we realized that Hendrik was out there. Someone yelled “Get Hendrik!” No one moved. Luckily, Hendrik heard the commotion and plunged into the safety of the dormitory entangled in his mosquito net. He never talked in his sleep again, but continued to wet his bed.