



*Hermanus house with leaning tree.*

# 1, Opening journey

*The first words, like the first steps, are the hardest, but also the sweetest.*

The Hermanus wind is howling. The leaning tree is gone. In its place a clearer view. A vision of my life – where it's going to and where it has come from.

*Meerlus*, our family house in Hermanus on the Southern Cape coast, moves me to begin writing. The house is full of the shells of my mother Moyra and my Aunt Lucy. It's a symbol of growing up, family closeness and holidays together.

A sketch of my Mom in 1958, the year of my birth, hung for many years in Hermanus. Her picture is in Kommetjie now, an hour outside Cape Town on the coast near Cape Point, proudly adorning the bedroom wall in the place of my new beginning. A space shared with my soul mate and life partner, Andile. Tears etched our 12 December 2004 Commitment Day *ekhaya* at the sea. Tears of joy.

Yet it wasn't a 'once upon a time' fairy tale for me. Little did I know all those times sitting and breathing fresh sea air on my Kommetjie balcony that I could find love of the purest kind in my 45th year!

I want to share with you memories, echoes and chords from different parts of my life – recollections and insights that reflect patterns and common strands. This is my story. This is a story of

my time. This could be your story too. With your differences and your similarities.

This is a tale about what makes us human and gives us the spirit to lift our own clouds. And all of this as beacons and lights of hope on our journey of renewed life. Of positive, open living with HIV. Of creating a new, positive language as a way of expressing who we are.

My thought for the moment:

*Today is the first day of the rest of my life.*

My long life, as I invite you to join me on this journey.



*Starting to write in Hermanus.*