



Dear Lorraine,

An Old Friend.....now retired.

Firstly, thank you for publishing this rather handsome photograph of me in the "Nibbles" column in an edition of SAPJ earlier this year.

Here I am displayed in my Sunday best, filled to the brim with a perfectly poured beer and covered in a light blanket of cool, dripping, condensation. Certainly a sight to behold for those who appreciate a good cold beer on a hot summers day!



Sadly I must inform you that, through no fault of my own, I have been forced into early retirement. It all happened quite suddenly and has come as quite a shock. The story goes like this.....

My good friend (and master) Gary Black has, from time to time, required me to go the extra mile, far beyond my primary purpose of accompanying him around the *braai* fire hosting the cold beer he so enjoys. Mind you, this in itself has been hard work over the past 25-odd years...a lifetime of housing his cold beers, hearing the same old stories and jokes a million times over, told by him in his rather slow, verbose style. I must therefore confess that I have also regularly agreed to be used as the vehicle for some ice-cold *water* for him to sip at through the middle of the day while he types away at his computer, recording another silly story or working on his next article under the title "from my Little Black Book of pharmacy practice". While I will always be proudly a beer mug, I am also secretly proud of being chosen to bear some cold water (rather than beer!) in relieving Gary's thirst during his working hours too! (and contributing to his sobriety!)

The end of my days as a bearer of cold, refreshing liquids was both sudden and undignified. It all happened in a flash one day when my friend Gary was working away on his computer in his "study", a converted, large "Wendy" house situated in the furthest corner of the garden (far from the madding crowd of seven grandchildren). In the heat of October, despite the ever present south-easterly winds of Fish Hoek, the study was hot and sticky. So I was called on to perform my secondary role, the bearer of some cold water.

Having filled me to the brim with ice and water, tragedy struck on the way back to the study. It was the toe of Gary's loose, size 12 sandal that caught on the second step leading up to the study which brought us both crashing down. We both cursed instantly, using numerous expletives best not repeated in your gentele company.

Fortunately Gary emerged with only a minor scratch and bump on the knee. I, on the other hand, was not so lucky, having suffered a serious crack and chip out of my top near the handle. In a few fateful seconds I had been rendered useless as a jolly drinking mug forever. I must confess that I was at once thrown into a complete panic....what was to become of me now that I could no longer fulfil my prime purpose? What was left for me to do? Had I suddenly become totally redundant?

"*Oh ye of little faith!*" My good friend and master did not abandon me or sentence me to the glass recycling bin. No! He found another use for me, giving me a new purpose in life. As you can see from the photo attached, I now sit comfortably on his desk serving as a holder of pens, pencils and all manner of bits and pieces which are the tools of a writer's trade. So, dear Lorraine, my forced early retirement is not the end, but rather the dawn of a new chapter in my life. While I will never again experience the cold beer and jolly banter around the *braai* fire, I still have the opportunity to spend many hours with my friend Gary. Sitting here quietly in his study, we can gaze at each other across the desk and reminisce about the good old days of beer swilling fun and remember that, once upon a time, we both were young and fit! The study is also situated only a few meters from the *braai*-place so I still get the waft of the *braai* carried in on the wings of the south-easterly breezes. Thankfully, I am out of earshot and am spared any mindless banter and rude jokes usually told around the fire!

Better still, every so often, Gary will reach out, pick me up by my sturdy handle and help himself to one of the pens that I bear, making me feel useful and wanted again. What more could a tired, battered old mug like me wish for?

Ek vra maar net?

An Old Friend

