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Questions buzz around Beryl Markham like demented tsetse flies. Did she break up Isak Dinesen's great love affair? How was she connected with the British royal family? Was she the sole author of West with the Night, the memoir that made Hemingway gush? JAMES FOX visits the former aviatrix and racehorse trainer in Nairobi, and pieces together the puzzle

The Beryl Markham Mystery

Beryl Markham, who is eighty-two, lives alone in a bungalow on the edge of the Nairobi racecourse, her training stables, once the strongest in Kenya, now reduced to two horses. In recent years she had fallen on hard times: pursued by the local grocery store for bad debts, three times robbed and once badly beaten up, almost killed by a jumpy soldier who opened fire on the ancient Mercedes in which she was unwisely traveling during an attempted coup.

She owed her financial survival mostly to the generosity of the white racing community and the Jockey Club of Kenya; in the late 1950s and early '60s she was unrivaled as the top trainer in the country and won the Kenya Derby six times. But long before that she had enjoyed a wider fame. In 1936 she captured the imagination of the American public when she made the first solo flight across the Atlantic from England to Nova Scotia, ending up nose down in the mud after running out of fuel. At her ticker-tape reception in New York, she appeared with a fetching Band-Aid across one eyebrow where her head had collided with the cabin glass.

In those days the Atlantic was being crisscrossed by pioneer aviators in different combinations, but Beryl had a particular fascination for the American public. She flew in



Beryl the peril: the "Garbo-esque" Beryl Markham in 1936, *right*, after her solo transatlantic flight, and in 1984, *above*, in her Kenyan bungalow among her souvenirs.



the worst weather—fog, walls of wind—with no radio, and a sprig of heather in her cabin. She was also extremely good-looking: tall, broad-shouldered, and slim, with a mixture of tomboyishness and grace. She was likened to Garbo—and that was how she was photographed in her white flying helmet.

Six years later she suddenly produced her one and only book, *West with the Night*. It was ecstatically reviewed. "When a book like Markham's . . . comes along, it leaves a reviewer very humble. Words of praise used for other works seem trite and thin. . . . She writes with the clean sweep and grace of a bird or a plane flying against a cloudless sky" (New York *Herald Tribune*). The book then sank without a trace for over forty years. When it was republished last year, it was hailed as a forgotten masterpiece. "A book of such beauty, humor and wisdom," wrote the *Washington Post*, "that its virtual disappearance for nearly four decades is in equal measure shocking and mystifying."

Other reviewers expressed their surprise. Where had Beryl been for the last forty years? All that was known was that she was still alive and said to be training racehorses in East Africa. What else might she have written? To the disappointment of the literary jackdaws who were gathering around her bungalow, there were precious few "Beryl Markham papers."

The book's revival came about when a letter from Ernest Hemingway to Maxwell Perkins was brought to the attention of an enterprising editor. "Did you read Beryl Markham's book, *West with the Night*?" Hemingway had written in 1942. "I knew her fairly well in Africa and never would have suspected that she could and would put pen to paper except to write in her flyer's log book. As it is, she has written so well, and marvelously well, that I was completely ashamed of myself as a writer. . . . [She] can write rings around all of us who consider ourselves as writers. . . . I wish you would get it and read it because it is really a bloody, wonderful book."

The more effusive of the recent reviews have compared her to Dickens and the Brontës, others to Hemingway and Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen). The writer Martha Gellhorn, who was once married to Hemingway and has written an introduction to the British edition,

considers *West with the Night* a worthy companion piece to Dinesen's *Out of Africa*. "They seemed to rather like it," Beryl was recently quoted as saying. "I didn't think it was *that* good."

The book is less an autobiography than an homage to Africa in the form of poetically written episodes from an extraordinary life: "When I was a child, I spent all my days with the Nandi Murani, hunting barefooted in the Rongai Valley or in the cedar forests of the Mau Escarpment." She had arrived at Njoro, in the fabled White Highlands on the western edge of the Great Rift Valley, in 1906, aged four, with her father, Charles Clutterbuck. He had been separated in England, leaving his son behind, taking only Beryl. He was a Sandhurst officer and a classical scholar whose first love was horses—the breeding, training, and racing of them—a passion which Beryl inherited and never lost. As she grows up, her hunting friend Kibii becomes the adult Arab Ruta, who turns up in her life again after many years to help race her horses and to swing her propeller, now calling her "Memsahib" and walking a few paces behind her. Their fortunes are linked throughout the story.

As a child, she hunted wild boar with the Nandi, and was once mauled by a large lion. She was as strong as any of these Nandi playmates and, it seems, quite uncontrollable. She was expelled from each of her schools and regularly evaded a succession of governesses to go hunting at dawn. Her hero worship of her father resonates throughout the book, which is peopled almost entirely with men. When her father was financially ruined by honoring a milling contract after a drought, he embarked for Peru, leaving Beryl behind, aged seventeen, with one horse called Pegasus and the contents of her saddlebags. By the age of eighteen she had trained her first classic winner for the Kenya St. Leger—Wise Child. Ten years later, she was a professional pilot, flying mail and medicine to inhospitable and often unsurveyed parts of Africa, whose landscapes Beryl the writer describes with skill and often beautifully. One can see why Hemingway was amazed by this woman of action for whom writing to such a standard seemed almost an accident.

But there are tantalizing lacunae in her book, which is written in the style of myth or fairy tale. One eagle-eyed

reviewer noticed that the Hemingway quote displayed on the jacket of the newly issued book was incomplete. The publisher had left out this intriguing line: "She omits some very fascinating stuff which I know about which would destroy much of the character of the heroine; but what is that anyhow in writing?" And Judith Thurman, in her recent biography of Karen Blixen, has written of Beryl, "Her private life was a subject of endless gossip and speculation."

Although Karen Blixen is never mentioned in the book, Beryl's fortunes were closely linked with her husband, the white hunter Bror Blixen, and with Denys Finch Hatton, the romantic adventurer with whom Karen Blixen fell in love. Beryl was the first to practice the dangerous art of elephant scouting by air; these safaris in the late 1920s included the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Gloucester, and American clients like Winston Guest. Martha Gellhorn writes of Beryl then: "Imagine Circe casting a spell on Ulysses so she could go along on the journey, learn navigation, see the world. In passing, she bewitched this company of men so that they did not resent her intrusion into their macho society, but welcomed her. It was easy to entrance the whole lot, that being her nature, and she knew what she wanted: knowledge and adventure." What distinguishes Beryl from that other Circe, the Danish aristocrat Karen Blixen, is that Beryl's experience of Kenya was that of an African.

Martha Gellhorn calls the book "a fascination and a mystery"—a freak event in Beryl's career. In the early 1970s, the two women were neighbors in Kenya, living sixteen miles apart. They met only once. "She looked very glamorous," Gellhorn writes, "fair hair, tanned face, splendid lean body, certainly not the least horsey as I would have expected. I jumped instantly to the wrong conclusions. This obvious darling of the Muthaiga Club, the ancient boring center of Nairobi social life, trained racehorses; whatever that meant, for amusement. . . . Now, more than ten years later, I regret my stupidity and the lost occasion. If I had read her book then, I would have pursued her with all the questions that *West with the Night* leaves unanswered."

Beryl's book ends with her epic flight in 1936. By this time she had been

twice married and had given birth to a son; none of this is mentioned. Her first marriage, in her teens, was to Jock Purves, an international Rugby player from Scotland “who told the same stories again and again and played very bad bridge,” according to local memory. This marriage lasted two years. In 1927 she married Mansfield Markham, who had worked for the British Foreign Office and emigrated to Kenya to farm and to breed horses. Cockie Hoogterp, Bror Blixen’s second wife, after Karen Blixen, remembers Beryl arriving after their honeymoon in Paris, transformed by unaccustomed luxury. “Mansfield had bought her the most wonderful trousseau,” she said. “Everything from Chanel, at least five evening dresses and a lovely fur coat. . . I don’t know when she wore them.” Two years later, after she and Mansfield were already separated, their son was born, but Beryl declared herself temperamentally unsuited to bringing him up and left him in the care of Markham’s mother. She and Markham were not divorced until 1942, in Laramie, Wyoming, where Beryl married her third husband, Raoul Schumacher.

Beryl met Schumacher in California, where she settled after her flight. Very little is known about her life there and the circumstances surrounding the production of her book. On the copyright page she expresses her gratitude to Schumacher for his “constant encouragement and his assistance.” *West with the Night* is a highly professional, polished piece of writing, and because Beryl has never given any sign of being a woman of letters before or since, people have wondered whether Schumacher’s contribution to her single literary achievement might have gone farther than encouragement and assistance.

But what exactly was the “fascinating stuff” Hemingway thought could damage Beryl’s reputation?

She entered the well-documented world of Karen Blixen in 1928. Recent biographies have elevated Beryl from a footnote to a major character in the drama of Karen Blixen’s relationship with Denys Finch Hatton (a drama soon to be filmed, in which Robert Redford is expected to play Denys). Judith Thurman describes a dinner party given for the Prince of Wales by Karen Blixen and cooked by her African servant Kamante before a Masai *ngoma*—or tribal

dance—that Blixen had organized for the prince: “It was the evening of Kamante’s greatest triumph, with a meal that began with his famous clear soup and was followed by Mombasa turbot served with hollandaise, ham poached in champagne, partridges with peas—the birds brought by the Masai—a pasta with cream and truffles, greens, pearl onions and tomato salad, wild mushroom *croustades*, a savarin, strawberries, and grenadines from the garden. Denys provided the wines and cigars.”

Karen Blixen had invited a beauty called Vivienne de Watteville (who lat-

ed by competition, however formidable. She was the opposite of her rival, entirely lacking the jealousy and possessiveness which poisoned so many of Blixen’s relationships, and this must have attracted the emotionally untouchable Finch Hatton. In 1931 he was killed when his plane crashed. He had invited Beryl on that trip (Karen Blixen later wrote that she herself was *not* invited), but a premonition prevented her from going. Beryl told Finch Hatton’s biographer, Errol Trzebinski, “Denys’s death was the turning point for Tania [Karen Blixen] because she could then claim him as her own, which she would not have been able to do if he had remained alive in Africa.”

But Beryl’s friendship with the Duke of Gloucester, whom she met in Kenya in 1928 and in London later that year, is not mentioned in these histories. A brother of the Prince of Wales’s, he was an unlikely partner for Beryl—a distant and Germanic figure, tongue-tied and with a whinnying laugh. He would send cartloads of white flowers by Shetland pony to the R.A.F. Club in Piccadilly, where Beryl was staying. She flaunted the duke’s racing colors on the collar of her dog and would run about the palatial corridors with bare feet, like a Nandi warrior. Cockie Hoogterp, who was invited by the Prince of Wales on safari that same year, said, “The Prince of Wales told me he was delighted with the whole affair because the Duke of Gloucester up until then had been looked upon as the blue-eyed boy.”

The following year her son, Gervase, was born, and Beryl left England and returned alone to Kenya to a bungalow on the grounds of the Muthaiga Country Club. Gervase died in a road accident in France in the early 1970s, leaving a widow and two children. Beryl has never seen her grandchildren.

Five years ago I went to Kenya to investigate a famous unsolved mystery—the murder in 1941 of Lord Erroll, the hereditary high constable of Scotland. I carried notebooks left to me in his will by Cyril Connolly, with whom I had worked on the story for a newspaper article some years before. There was only one mention of Beryl Markham in his extensive notes on the characters who had been members of the “Happy Valley” set. (This was the term used disapprovingly to describe a group of well- (Continued on page 110)

Above the Serengeti Plain

An excerpt from Beryl Markham’s
West with the Night

The forerunners of a huge herd of impala, wildebeest, and zebra plunged in flight before the shadow of my wings. I circled, throttled down and lost height until my propeller cut into the fringe of the dust, and particles of it burned in my nostrils.

As the herd moved it became a carpet of rust-brown and grey and dull red. It was not like a herd of cattle or of sheep, because it was wild, and it carried with it the stamp of wilderness and the freedom of a land still more a possession of Nature than of men. To see ten thousand animals untamed and not branded with the symbols of human commerce is like scaling an unconquered mountain for the first time, or like finding a forest without roads or footpaths, or the blemish of an axe. You know then what you had always been told—that the world once lived and grew without adding machines and newsprint and brick-walled streets and the tyranny of clocks.

er wrote a book entitled *Out in the Blue*—more poetic ecstasy about Africa) and Beryl, who was on her way to join her husband in England: three budding women writers to entertain the prince and his aides.

Karen Blixen generously described Beryl, whom she placed next to the Prince of Wales, as looking “ravishing” that night. Biographers of Blixen and Finch Hatton agree that Beryl had a “little walk-out” with Finch Hatton at this time which sparked off a row and ended his love affair with Karen Blixen. Then as later, Beryl was quite undaunt-

GROSS BUSTER

(Continued from page 45) from a cliff in Hawaii in 1980. But Ramis was able to handle it.

"The worst part of this business," Ramis once said, "and the thing that has cost the lives of maybe John Belushi and Doug Kenney, is that if you remain childish, unless your expectations mature, it's very hard to survive. . . . There's no amount of reinforcement you can get from other people that will convince you that you are worthy. If you don't have it inside yourself, forget it.

"I've learned to keep the need for fame at bay. I just try and inject my work with my best values. But I don't have a message. I don't need a soapbox. It's just my work. I do it and go home early."

Usually by six P.M.

Ramis is also learning how to control the schlemiel syndrome. In *Ghostbusters* he and Aykroyd gave all the good lines to Bill Murray. In his own films Ramis wants to start "cutting loose the exploitative stuff." He adds, "My next goal is to make a movie without any gratuitous nudity."

Because of such sacrifices, Ramis can live a genteel, low-profile life in Santa Monica with his family. He was in his backyard, cleaning a sliding glass door, when I parked across the street from his new home. He'd just returned from scouting locations in the Caribbean for *Club Paradise*.

Casa Ramis is a live-in object of Deco-blendo art in a California-Spanish shell. Colored tile dominates the design scheme. Anne Ramis's studio—she paints—leads to a tiled veranda. The dining room's S-curved glass-block wall lets in the afternoon sun. The foyer is paneled with engraved Deco metal

siding from a recently destroyed downtown-Los Angeles building. A deep black-tiled tunnel leads past a niche to the kitchen, with its *pièce de résistance*: table and chairs in the form of huge laminated wooden fruits and vegetables. "It's called 'Vegetable Kingdom,'" said Ramis.

He was wearing his usual campus casuals: Gumby-green cotton shirt, black corduroys, and jogging shoes. The silver flecks in his wavy dark-brown hair made him look even more studious. Ramis poured two sodas, and we settled in the living room. He stretched his six-foot-plus frame across an antique-green Deco couch. Apparently, Ramis's island-hopping for locations had given him more than a suntan.

"My old revolutionary consciousness was awakened," he said. "I discovered I wasn't interested in just doing something about how American tourists have their fun. That seemed like an adult *Meatballs*. The more I talked to Murray and Cleese about it, the more I heard that they didn't want to play the characters they'd always played, either. Even though it was their bread and butter.

"Now I see a funny little political comedy. Shenberg and I sat and talked about our values related to the Caribbean. Our big discussion today was the audience's expectation that black people in resorts are hostile and forbidding, and look at you with deadly eyes. We were trying to decide if we should get our laugh by playing that stereotype or by violating it.

"There are lots of ways to get laughs," he said. "These days, I'd just as soon get the clean, moral one."

Does this mean we've seen the last of such all-time favorites as Belushi's food fight in *Animal House*? The swimming-pool scene in *Caddyshack*? The shower scenes in *Stripes*? Or the "burying

granny" and "where's the dog?" routines from *Vacation*?

"There was a time when the operating dictum, especially at the *National Lampoon*, was that everything is fair game," said Ramis. "Whenever we would be attacked for being irreverent, cruel, or sick, we would say nothing was sacred, that it was comedic license. But over the years there have been voices I haven't listened to that say certain things are sacred." To keep himself honest in *Club Paradise*, Ramis has asked the film's associate producer to "monitor the cheapness of the comedy. He's supposed to tell me when the jokes are too dumb."

Still, Ramis is not willing to disavow his earlier films. He may call them "slob comedies," but he insists that that does not necessarily imply sloppy filmmaking. In fact, to Ramis, those films are much more than food fights and gopher hunting with explosives.

It bothers Ramis that so many bad films derivative of *Animal House* have been made. "People saw that success and said, 'Let's do a disgusting cop movie.' Or a disgusting kids-at-camp movie. They saw things as black and white, good guys and bad guys. The content of *Animal House* became the style of other films."

Ramis's new challenge is to make the intelligent comedy. He wants to do films that are broadly funny but still connected to emotional, real characters. Films that appeal to more than just the twelve-to-twenty-one age group.

"But it's not like I'm trying to make the leap from *Meatballs* to *8½*. I'm just trying to expand my niche and do a slightly more elegant version of what I've been doing."

Ramis claims that the pressure to grow is all his own, and that, at times, his talk of transition is "just talk."

Don't believe it. For once, Harold Ramis is completely serious. □

BERYL MARKHAM

(Continued from page 92) born expatriates leading supposedly dissolute lives in the White Highlands.) "Markham," Connolly wrote, "threatened to cite Duke of Gloucester. Rollo [a well-known divorce lawyer of the period] went to the Palace. Said they had only two days to settle. Duke settled large sum on Beryl." The date was 1929.

On that trip to Nairobi in 1979, Beryl invited me up to her racecourse bungalow. She was being waited on there by two men, an owner and a live-in jockey from whom she was "gracefully accepting drinks" (brandy, neat, with ice). She looked incredibly young, lithe, almost coltish, getting up and down from her chair like a thirty-year-old woman although she was then seventy-seven. She was attentively flirtatious, with restless movements like an impatient

teenager's, and she clearly loved the presence of men. She described the aristocratic adventurers of her past as if they were horses. Lord Erroll was "a wonderful creature"; Finch Hatton "brilliantly bred." "Were you at Eton?" she asked. "Oh, well done!" She continually burst into delighted laughter. Later I saw her at the racecourse, alone at the bar, drinking vodka and Dubonnet and muttering angrily about one of her owners, "He says the

filly won't stay."

Beryl was never a member of Happy Valley, but she knew all the characters, including the notoriously evil and sadistic Lord Carberry, a brilliant flier who had turned against England, dropped his title, and adopted an American accent. It was he, with his morbid gambling instincts, who had urged Beryl to fly the Atlantic in 1936 and had paid for the flight. "Think of all that black water!" he told her. "Think how cold it is!" She enjoyed the company of the aristocratic bucks, among whom she had many admirers, but was too ambitious and independent to be suborned by their hedonistic life. She would fly them, but she would charge them mileage, too.

I took her to lunch at the Muthaiga Club with a group of young people. She was amusing and assured, still fiercely her own woman, as if the years had made no difference. That afternoon she took me to the place where Lord Erroll had been found murdered in his Buick, along the road where as a young woman she used to walk Karen Blixen's dogs. I missed the opportunity to ask about her life, but I did ask about Connolly's note. "How did you know about that?" she said. Beryl is always admirably discreet about the details of her personal life and doesn't encourage speculation. I never broached the subject again, although I have since discovered by an odd chance and without anybody's betraying these rather formidable confidences that Connolly's note was substantially correct and that a capital sum was paid out in 1929 through the royal purse at the time of Beryl's separation from Mansfield.

In April of this year I drove again up the potholed murrum road by the racecourse and found Beryl standing in her doorway with bare feet, wearing pink flared jeans and a loose shirt, her scarf pinned with a little gold propeller. "Hello, sweetie," she said. "I knew you'd come."

At the age of eighty-two she still had the glamour that men had always found irresistible—the blue eyes, the coltish manner, and the wit. The success of her book had made her financially buoyant for the first time in her life. Despite her conquests, money had "never stuck" to Beryl, just as it had always eluded her father. Her material needs remained as basic as ever: groceries, vodka, and Sportsman cigarettes from the local *duka*. She had finally given up on the thirty-five-year-old Mercedes that had

protected her during the attempted coup against President Moi two years earlier. The day it happened was a Sunday; there was no racing, so Beryl decided to drive out to the Muthaiga Club for lunch, a nine-mile trip across Nairobi. News of a curfew hadn't reached her, nor was she alerted by the absence of traffic on the road. She ignored the soldier who waved her down, and he opened fire. Seven bullets hit the car, and one of them grazed her chin. She arrived, eventually, at the club, blood pouring from her face. "They were very nice to me," she said. "They let me stay five days. But it didn't do the car much good."

Her memory had deteriorated badly. Events were telescoped in time, which gave her an odd economy of expression. "We used to spend hours and hours at the Muthaiga Club," she said, "then we went back and found everybody had committed suicide." (Happy Valley did indeed have its casualties.) At one point forgetting her mother's Christian name, she was pricked with guilt. Since her mother had only once ventured out to Kenya to see her daughter, I suggested this was understandable. "Yes, she came," said Beryl. "I found her an awful bore."

Beryl took a small drink at eleven A.M. "You'll probably hear people saying that I drink too much vodka." She raised her voice in incredulity. "Vodka!" When she offered me a drink, vodka was the only choice. I said it was exactly what I wanted. "Oh, thank you so much," she said.

It was hard to tell whether it was memory failure or defensive amnesia which affected Beryl as soon as I began asking about the past. To more than one of my questions she replied, "It's too early in the morning and too long ago."

Since her book was republished, the bungalow has been visited regularly by reporters, literary sleuths, film crews, and even an American librarian, all trying to piece together the missing years. She has become a star, and the Beryl fan club an uneasy gang of proprietorial courtiers.

But some of the photographs in her collection fill some of the gaps in her life in California after her Atlantic flight. Carberry, with his mania for spoiling pleasure, repossessed Beryl's plane, depriving her of a lucrative flying tour of America. "It was dumped in the sea someplace," said Beryl. "I nev-



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BERYL MARKHAM

er saw it again. I wanted to put it in a museum." For a while she flew for Paramount Pictures, as an adviser on its African films. A photograph shows her with Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., during the making of *Safari*. "The cowboys were wonderful," she said. "I used to go out and play with them for hours and hours." Another picture has her flying for a civil-defense program after Pearl Harbor, patrolling the California coast, on the lookout for a Japanese landing. She was even put under contract to make a film of her life, but it never came off.

She invited me to dinner. Her cook, with whom she has an irascible relationship, disappeared for an unduly long time. Beryl cursed in Swahili at the kitchen door. Getting no reply, she turned to me and said, "He's probably killed himself."

Her greatest complaint was boredom—boredom brought on by the solitude and inactivity of old age—alleviated marginally by her twice-daily visits to the nearby racecourse, where her own horse and that of one remaining owner are stabled. During the next two weeks I visited Beryl four times. Once, we lunched with her neighbors in a house overlooking the Ngong hills. She talked of her father—"a brilliant man" who taught her self-reliance. "And I ended up flying the Atlantic, which wasn't very clever... I don't know... it's rather stupid. Very lucky to be alive." She talked of the terrifying moment, so lucidly described in the book, when the engine of her Vega Gull cut out over the Atlantic and Beryl, torch in hand, was frantically trying to switch fuel tanks as the altimeter spun backward. The engine restarted when she was two or three hundred feet above the water. "It wasn't too difficult. I just went pinker pinker pinker"—she waved her hands at imaginary fuel valves at her feet. When I asked her how one manages the natural functions over a twenty-one-hour flight, she said, "I never needed to spend a penny, and I hardly ate a thing."

On the day of a carefully organized anti-amnesia tête-à-tête at the Muthaiga Club, Hilary Hook comes across the bar to talk to us. He is a splendid fellow, an officer, a horseman, above all a polo player who has "done," as the French

say, India, the Sudan, and Kenya, and who has lines of poetry by heart—a good man in Africa who is about to leave it for good, bound for a cottage in Wiltshire. He is spending his last convivial few hours in the hallowed precincts of the club. He hasn't seen Beryl for some time, and there is no chance to tell him before he invites himself to our lunch table that Beryl's memory has faded badly, particularly for names. Names are Hilary's forte, especially names of great English houses. A kind of reverential tremor comes across his face as he pronounces "Chatsworth," for example.

But names are mostly lost on Beryl now. She refers to almost everyone, including present company, as "Whatnot." Hilary persists. "D'you remember Alastair Gibb, Beryl? Died playing polo. Surely you remember Alastair Gibb?"

"Polo? Where?" says Beryl.

"Cowdray," says Hilary resoundingly.

"Polo," says Beryl, waving her hand, "is so easy."

"Beryl. Beryl!" says Hilary, leaning toward her in amazement. "It was my life."

I left for the coast in search of Sonny Bumpus, the jockey who had ridden Beryl's first classic winner when she was eighteen and had just started as a trainer. He was sitting on his veranda at Watamu, looking over the vanilla waves of the Indian Ocean. He hadn't seen Beryl for twenty-five years, but he remembered her at school. "She was a great big gangling sort of girl who liked to organize everyone to play cricket, and I was one who didn't like being organized. She was a bit of a bloody headache. She was a tough sort of person all her life. Paddled her own canoe."

"Tell me about winning on Wise Child," I said. I knew from Beryl's book that this horse had a spirit for racing but weak tendons, jarred too early against a hard track. At Lake Nakuru, Beryl slept in the grandstand, and worked to build up its legs on the soft moist ground along the shore among the flamingos.

"We were very lucky," said Bumpus. "The mare had broken-down tendons at the end of the race. She ran the last hundred yards on three legs. From the time the trap went until the post, I nursed the horse the whole way. I was particularly out to win that race because

the favorite, Wrack, was a stone-cold certainty, a crackerjack, and the bloody fool of an owner had taken it away from Beryl and left her high and dry. Eric Gooch [Wise Child's owner] said, 'O.K., sweetie, let's race the filly.' When we got back from the race, she was speechless. She couldn't say a word."

I took Beryl to the Kenya Derby. We walked slowly once around the paddock and into the owners and trainers' bar, where we spent the rest of the afternoon. Here her memory revived a little, and she talked of the men in her life, most fondly of Denys Finch Hatton, whom she had often visited when he was living with Karen Blixen. "Every time I was there he would say, 'Beryl, come and roll my back up and down,' and she [Karen Blixen] would go on painting. She was really after him. I was very young and I suppose no competition. The thing is, he did like lovely food and good things, and she was very good at looking after everything, and, of course, he was very well-bred, but I don't think it really happened. I think that's what bugged up everybody."

And did Beryl have an affair with Denys?

"Ah, I thought the world of him. A person like that might be worth having an affair with. He wasn't the sort of chap who wanted to have affairs. He was too whatnot in himself, but I knew afterwards, when he said please come on that flight when he was killed, I knew he liked me."

And she had not entirely forgotten the Duke of Gloucester. "He was very quiet and funny," she said. "I saw a lot of him because I practically lived there, where they lived, in that palace. I was there all the time. Somebody thought he was having an affair with me. He was very *kali* [angry] about it. I think he quite liked me because I was a bit lonely myself and I wasn't with *them* all the time."

But she would say little about her husbands. Why had she married them? "I couldn't possibly say. I suppose I liked them at the time. Didn't like them afterwards. No, I liked Mansfield. It was probably my fault—just going off. I couldn't stand it anymore."

As far as she can remember, Beryl wrote *West with the Night* after Pearl Harbor, when Schumacher had joined the army. "He was certainly very intelligent, and he did write," she told me.

"I heard that somebody had told somebody else, 'Don't think Beryl wrote that book—Schumacher did.' They are funny, people, aren't they? I wrote that book out of boredom when I was living by myself and the war was on. He was a very nice chap. I didn't get along with him. He drank too much, and I got rid of him. I got rid of them all."

A chapter of Beryl's book opens with a page-long eulogy of flying maps. It ends: "No map I have ever flown by has ever been lost or thrown away. I have a trunk containing continents." She told me that this trunk was still with her, in a back room at the bungalow, and she offered to show it to me. Its contents were in some disorder, but the maps were there, with their elegant linen folds, charting the Nile and the route to Europe. So were the old instruments of Beryl's profession—her compass and dividers and her logbook, neatly and sparsely filled in. She had kept, too, the long silk streamers in her racing colors of blue and yellow, weighted at the end, which had carried down her messages to Bror Blixen when she scouted for his safaris. One of these ended: "Large herd of buffalos SW of elephant. No rhino sighted. Your course 220 degrees. Distance about ten miles. Will be back in one hour. Work hard, trust in God and keep your bowels open—Oliver Cromwell."

Among the piles of racing cuttings and odd bits of discarded jewelry were typed pages from the manuscript of *West with the Night* which showed some fundamental editing in pencil, indeed the writing of whole paragraphs that subsequently appeared in the book, in a hand not her own. But there were also detailed typed notes on the anthropology, landscape, and live characters of her Kenyan universe—clearly provided by Beryl—which are the stuff of the vivid reminiscences of her book. She has described herself as "illiterate" at the time she visited Finch Hatton, so it is likely that Schumacher made an important contribution to the structure and the prose.

But who was Schumacher? Beryl would say little, and in New York and Los Angeles, I drew a blank. It was, curiously, in Nairobi that I heard about him. A woman who had lived there for some time told me that she had been a close neighbor and friend of Beryl and Raoul Schumacher's in Montecito, California, during the war. Schumacher,

she said, was an editor and ghostwriter who had come from New York. She gathered that he had been assigned to Beryl by the publishers to help her write her book. "He was a very interesting guy, extremely talented and gifted, who wrote short stories. But all his work was written under other bylines than his own. After he helped Beryl and they got married, he wrote several stories under Beryl's name. Beryl was still very much a V.I.P. They were a part of the rather frivolous and expensive social scene in Montecito. She was rather busy with her image. Raoul played a great deal of Ping-Pong. He was lazy, liked drinking and eating well; he wasn't a great intellect, and he wasn't interested in other writers. In the late forties the drinking really became a problem. Beryl threw him out. I think Beryl thought she could continue sending off stories—this time written by her—but it didn't seem to work, and the next thing I knew she'd gone back to Kenya."

Within two years of her return, Beryl established her supremacy over rival trainers. Beginning in 1958 she won the top trainer's award for five years, then the Kenya Derby for six years. "Beryl could always make a horse win for you," one of the owners told me, and the rumor persists that Beryl gave her horses some concoction known only to herself and her Nandi tribesmen. More realistically, Beryl, with her will to win, worked her horses particularly hard. She was often arrogant, "impossible" at times—which weighed against her. Then in 1963 her elegant stables on Lake Naivasha were devastated by a strange virus—the "Beryl Bloom"—a disease in which the horses continued to look magnificent but were unable to run. She went to South Africa to train for Enid, Countess of Kenmare, and when she returned, in the late 1960s, her career was in decline.

Now, morning and evening, she drives slowly in an old Ford to her stables on the racecourse and presides over the two buckets of feed for her horses. She sits in an empty stall with two courteous African grooms, spooning substances from glass jars into the feed, muttering in Swahili like a sorceress.

At our last meeting, at Alan Bobbe's Bistro in Nairobi, where she had ordered borscht and brains, she said to me, "I hear you have been married four times. Tell me, where did you get them and what tribe do they come from?" □

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