

The Road to Malaba

By Otto Koene

Published by Lulu.com and available as a book and an e-book

About ten years ago, Otto Koene, a successful lawyer and real estate agent, asked me to meet him. He was considering applying for the position of administrator in a small Steiner School in Kenya and wanted my advice. It was a small school with fewer than 100 children, the majority of them poor and suffering from AIDS. Its three main teachers had come from England; the rest and the workers were native Kenyans. Koene seemed to be the perfect choice for this work; the perfect blend of practical expertise and idealism.

He left soon after with his much loved Labrador dog, Benjamin. It was the challenge he had been looking for and he intended to put all his energy and knowledge into making a success of it. The last thing he expected was the opposition from the three European teachers who regarded him as a nuisance, and the obstacles put in his way by the government bureaucrats.

After his return to his native Holland, he recounted his experiences in novel form, and *The Road to Malaba* is the result. He has changed his name in the novel to Daniel van Dam.

What van Dam found soon after his arrival in Kenya was the hostility of the European teachers who, although able educators, were sadly lacking in practical skills. They did everything they could to thwart his efforts and were reluctant to acknowledge the improvements that were soon evident; e.g., the supply of healthy drinking water that replaced the highly toxic over-fluoridated water the children had been drinking. Neither did the teachers take kindly to his growing popularity amongst the children and the Kenyan teachers and workers. The rift between the trustees who appreciated van Dam's skills and progress and the teachers kept widening. His dealings with equally hostile government departments and the thinly veiled accusation of 'devil worship' by faceless officials added to van Dam's problems.

Interspersed with his work at the school are descriptions of Kenya's beautiful country: the Ngong Hills Reserve, the Rift Valley and the Maasai with their giraffes, zebras, impala and gazelles; and his growing love for the shy little boy Ali Nattaho who suffered from AIDS and who gradually opened his heart to him and whom van Dam wished to adopt.

The Road to Malaba is published by Lulu.com and printed in Australia, the USA and the UK, and is a fine print presentation on quality paper. For a readership unfamiliar with Waldorf education, a brief introduction to such things as main lessons, circles, morning verse, eurythmy and story telling would have been advisable, and this could easily be remedied in a future edition, which this book deserves.

I found the 398 pages of *The Road to Malaba* exciting and rewarding reading, and happily recommend it to all interested in education and life in a third world country.

Carl Hoffmann

The proceeds of this book will go to Steiner School projects and to a biodynamic farm/kindergarten in East Africa, sponsored by International Hulpfonds.