

# **Breakfast with Kamuzu**



**a novel**

**By Hubert A. Allen, Jr.**

## **Breakfast with Kamuzu**

**By Hubert A. Allen, Jr.**

Published by:  
Hubert Allen and Associates  
720-25 Tramway Lane NE, Albuquerque  
NM 87122 U.S.A.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieved system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Copyright owner.

Copyright © 2000, 2008 by Hubert A. Allen, Jr.  
720-25 Tramway Lane NE, Albuquerque  
New Mexico 87122 USA  
Tel:(505)797-3520; Fax:(505)797-3520;  
E-mail: HubertAllen@comcast.net

First Edition 2001, First Electronic Edition 2008  
Prepared in the United States of America

### **Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication**

Allen, Hubert A.  
Breakfast with Kamuzu / Hubert A. Allen, Jr. -- 1st  
ed.  
p. cm.  
Includes bibliographic references.  
ISBN 10 0-9792740-1-X  
ISBN 13 978-0-9792740-1-5

1. Malawi--History--Fiction. 2. Afro-Americans--  
History--Fiction. I. Title.

PS3501.L535B74 2001 813'.54  
QBI00-900575

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| 1 His Excellency's Departure .....  | 5   |
| 2 The Bottom Hospital .....         | 11  |
| 3 Echoes Past .....                 | 13  |
| 4 Banda's Youth .....               | 15  |
| 5 Africa's Longest Rock Climb ..... | 17  |
| 6 An Interest .....                 | 21  |
| 7 Banda in America .....            | 25  |
| 8 A Man with Good Power .....       | 31  |
| 9 The Gold Coast .....              | 35  |
| 10 Ants in the Tree .....           | 37  |
| 11 Return .....                     | 43  |
| 12 Wildfire .....                   | 45  |
| 13 The Matter .....                 | 49  |
| 14 Clocktower Incident .....        | 53  |
| 15 Potato Rock .....                | 55  |
| 16 African Poet .....               | 59  |
| 17 Political Prisoner .....         | 67  |
| 18 Tree Planting Day .....          | 69  |
| 19 Towards Independence .....       | 73  |
| 20 African Arts .....               | 75  |
| 21 Freedom .....                    | 79  |
| 22 Kasungu Adventure .....          | 83  |
| 23 The Great Game .....             | 89  |
| 24 Call to Dance .....              | 93  |
| 25 The Dance .....                  | 95  |
| 26 Absolute Power .....             | 97  |
| 27 Chambe Peak .....                | 101 |
| 28 Turning Point .....              | 107 |
| 29 Shadows on the Wall .....        | 109 |
| 30 The Right Turn .....             | 115 |
| Glossary .....                      | 124 |
| Bibliography .....                  | 125 |

# Map of Africa 1890

## About the Time of Kamuzu Banda's Birth



## *His Excellency's Departure*

The stadium bulged with ten thousand ebony skinned Africans. At the foot of the stands the Party regulars, big African men wearing identical black suits with dark brown pinstripes, controlled the action. Thousands of well-behaved school children wearing uniforms of white shirts and navy blue skirts or trousers were seated.

The most colorfully dressed were the women, in wrap-around skirts bearing *his* face; not that of an octogenarian but as it looked some thirty years ago. The packed stadium waited in anticipation for the appearance of their self-styled President for Life, Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, *Ngwazi* or Savior of the Malawian people.

I was the only white face in the crowd, an outsider, an American. I heard that foreigners were welcome to attend Kamuzu's send-off for annual crop inspection and I accepted the offer, apparently the only one. In the Central Region events began at the stadium adjacent to his palace in Lilongwe, the capital city of the African nation of Malawi.

The chatter from the people was loud and musical, and although I was the only stranger, I did not fear at all for my safety, as Kamuzu told his people to respect the visitors. He only tolerated such outsiders because we were invited, a small group of technical experts, here to supplement the small Malawian technocracy. Over ninety percent of the people lived rural, agricultural, subsistence lives. Crops were of paramount importance.

The annual crop inspection took place in January, which south of the equator is summer, beginning at the south end of the long, thin country and moving northwards over a period of several weeks. Lilongwe was in the Central Region. It was a hot day, though it was still early, and a bright, cloudless sky spread over the stadium like a great flowing sea. It was not known exactly when His Excellency would appear, but today he was heading far into the countryside, and time would be of the essence.

## *Banda in America*

The historic path of young Hastings Banda deepened in the gold mines of South Africa after his epic march south. There, like all the African workers, he spent interminable hours deep in the earth - twelve, thirteen, fourteen hours a day. He lived in the slum of worker dorms. One shower per five hundred workers, and two toilets. There were no women or children there, only thousands upon thousands of dirt poor African men, sweating daily to extract ounce after ounce of wealth for the whites.

His ambition did not end in a dark hole in the earth, spading for gold. He rose to a clerk's position and extracted himself from the thankless mines. A white minister took young Banda under his wing, schooling him further until he completed the equivalent of eighth grade.

In South Africa, Banda joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church, an Ethiopian, black separatist church. He became devout and committed to the church's doctrine that black men should run their own affairs in Africa. He taught Sunday School for many years. At one of the church's annual conferences in the early 1920s, Banda presented a visiting American Bishop with a ceremonial lion-tail fly whisk. The Bishop agreed to underwrite Banda's education.

The next stage of his journey was more audacious and considerably farther from home. Hastings Banda went to America. He sailed on a freighter named Dawn. He grew violently sea-sick at first but improved by mid-Atlantic. When he saw the Manhattan skyline, it was like a vision of a future century. Like so many others, Kamuzu Banda arrived in New York City virtually penniless, although not without dreams.

Banda's early years in America were spent at an African Methodist Episcopal Church Institute in Ohio where he completed high school. Records show that he then attended the University of Indiana at Bloomington for two years. Banda then transferred to the University of Chicago in 1930 where he studied history and political science and was awarded a Bachelor of Philosophy

## *A Man with Good Power*

The problem of a rock climbing partner was not easily solved. I tried teaming up with several British expatriates but found myself frustrated. There was the no show problem.

“Sorry mate,” Ian called me to say. “Too much bloody booze last night, can't make it today.” That cut my Saturday adventure short on more than one occasion. There was a small crowd of long-term, white Malawians, as they called themselves; some were pioneers like Frank Kippax.

The guidebook to Mulanje listed several climbs by Kippax and we had both spoken and done some short, top-roped climbs together. But Frank was almost sixty. He hadn't done serious climbing in over twenty years, so I valued his friendship but could not count on him as a partner for the West Face of Chambe Peak.

I had to think more creatively. Looking out a window into my garden, I noticed the tremendous progress my gardener had made. The yard, almost two acres, began with nothing but bare, red, laterite earth because the house was new and I was the first tenant. A year had passed.

Now the garden beds were established and the plants grew at a fevered pitch. My cactus and succulent garden had over forty species. Between the beds, a plush carpet of green grass, each blade planted one-by-one in the African fashion grew thickly. I had a line of seven foot tall acacias planted by the front driveway, and purple flowering jacarandas dispersed around the yard for shade.

As I sat pondering the climbing problem, the gardener, a young man named Cite (pronounced Sea-tay), short and muscular as a bull, toiled away energetically in the vegetable patch under a hot sun.

Just then an idea crossed my mind: Could Cite become my climbing partner? He was the hardest worker I had ever seen, never complaining, constant, spirited. The one big problem between us would be communication. I did not speak the local language, Chichewa, and Cite did not speak English. But climbers

## *Ants in the Tree*

Through the cultural looking glass, foreigners may be quick to judge, prone to misinterpret, and apt to misuse. I found this out over lunch. It was flying ant season, at the very start of the rains.

Flying ants are one stage in the life of African termites. It is their most rapid mode of dispersal. At the end of the dry season, when the first rains come, out of giant, red termite mounds burst droves of winged termites throughout the effected lands. Not just a few hundred, but thousands upon tens of thousands, upon millions in just a few hours. The wings are delicate as snow flakes, and if you sit behind glass, on the night of the first rain, looking out into a lighted area, you may think it is snowing. A blizzard of living insects fills the air.

Far from being a plague upon the Africans, the flying ants are a moving feast. Cooking them is not required. Simply pluck a live one from the sky, grab the succulent body, pull off the wings, and toss the wriggling corpus into your mouth.

People of all sorts come out to enjoy the free meal. Businessmen in suits, security guards in green uniforms, women in bright *chitenje*, small, naked children. It is not done hurriedly but calmly, deliberately, in moderation. There is more than enough for all to indulge. It does not last long, the abundant gift from the earth; a few hours, a night, half a day at a time. There may be a few waves at the start of the rains but fewer as the season moves on.

Some restaurants offer a dish called “Ants in the Tree.” In this recipe the “ants” consist of ground beef, chopped onions, a touch of tomato sauteed in oil. The “tree” will be large fan-like leaves of lettuce. Drop a spoon full of “ants” into a “tree,” roll the lettuce leaf closed and voila, you have a portion of “Ants in the Tree.” It is a popular dish in Lilongwe restaurants.

Spurred by the seasonal outburst of flying ants and my knowledge of the ants in the tree recipe, I asked Nelson if he could

## *Kasungu Adventure*

I picked Karen up at her flat and we started north to Kasungu National Park on the M1 highway. At first the land was broad and empty but became pock-marked with unnamed granitic peaks further north. I was happy having her next to me, and I kept her appraised of the climbing. This was my last picnic before the bid on the West Face of Chambe Peak.

“You really think that Cite is good enough to climb that face?” she asked.

“I really think that he is damn good,” I responded, somewhat testily.

“But I've heard that others, really expert teams, have tried and...”

I finished her sentence, “died.”

“Yes,” she acknowledged.

“They were drop-in climbers. Didn't know the country. Weren't acclimatized,” I argued, trying equally to convince myself and Karen.

Conversation ceased, the miracle of the African landscape enveloping our silence. On this road you roared. There were few people about.

In just a couple of hours we reached the town of Kasungu. Turning west on a paved road, we could see the president's palace at the foot of a mountain.

“The haunted palace?” I asked.

“So thinks H.E.,” said Karen, reaching her hand over to mine and covering it softly.

Soon the pavement ended and the road became a thin sand path in the wilderness. I stopped the jeep, got out and locked the wheels into four wheel drive. Acacia, thorn bush, and a hundred other exotic species surrounded the thin track in the bush. A huge pile of elephant manure sat in the middle of the road.

“Don't you love it,” Karen said enthusiastically, referring to the spoor.

“Yes,” I said, thinking of her and not the dung.

# Fiction

Breakfast with Kamuzu



**Chambe Peak, Malawi, Central Africa**

**If you last went to Africa with  
Hemingway, Dineson or Haley,  
it's time for your next visit...**



**The Author**

**US\$ 5.00**

ISBN 978-0-9792740-1-5

By Hubert A. Allen, Jr.