

SIMONE DE CHAZAL

1894 – 1980

Simone>Édouard>Auguste>Edmond>Toussaint

If some people are unique due to the events they live through, my grandmother Simone was unique through her personality and the choices she made. She remains as such to me to this day because she was my grandmother, and I, her grandson. She knew how to impart values in me as well as a conviction that with great privileges come great responsibilities, although I'm not sure she was aware of the impact she had on me. Every time I reflect on this, words spoken long ago still resonate with me: 'I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.'¹ By trying to sketch the broad features of the person who gave me much, I will also try to revive, in some measure, the faces of those who were in her orbit, some of which we know little².

RALPH DOWSON AND HÉSILDA BONIEUX

Ralph and Hésilda were Simone's maternal grandparents. She mentioned them often because she grew up with them in their house until Hésilda's death, just before Simone's wedding. She adored them. To better understand their close bond, the photo below is helpful.



Curepipe, 1885, Ralph Dowson's country house.

¹ *The Bible*, 2 Timothy 1 :5

² All quotations from this article not otherwise cited are from our family archives.

The 1885 photo shows the Dowson³ and Bonieux families on the grounds of Ralph William Dowson's house on Lees Street, Curepipe. This house⁴, *the Lawn*, was rebuilt around 1950 according to the original plan (see later for the reason behind the original build) and, until her death in 2007, belonged to Lily Vigier de Latour, my grandmother's sister. The residence keeps its splendour, with camphor trees over a hundred years old planted by Dowson himself. My father, his mother and his grandmother were born there. I visited there several times as a youth, last taking my parents and my own family to see Lily there in 1992 and 1997.



The Lawn, October 1949.

Firstly, let's focus on the gentleman sitting comfortably in the armchair. He is of stout build with a beard and black moustache. The house is his. He is almost fifty years old and, on that day is surrounded by his family, relatives, friends and Indian servants. He is Ralph William Dowson, deputy director of the Mauritius Government Railways⁵, of which he later became managing director. His grandfather was William Dalrymple Dowson⁶, a Londoner and a merchant who married Sophia Henderson. They had a son, William Frank Dowson⁷ (1806-1841), also a merchant who, on November 29, 1832, married a Mauritian, Rosine Délie Bestel-Belmaison. William and Délie had three sons:

- Ralph William Dowson (April 26, 1836, Plaines Wilhems - May 30, 1911, Curepipe).

³ The family always wrote Dowson, but the name was sometimes spelled Dawson.

⁴ On the Chazal website (www.chazfest.com) there is a lyrical description of this house made by Denise Stafford-Mayer, one of Simone's sisters. *One moment in the well of time*, Denise de Chazal Stafford-Mayer.

⁵ The first line, the North Line, was officially inaugurated on May 23, 1864 when Sir Henry Barkly was governor. Amédée Nagapen, *Histoire de la colonie : Isle de France-Île-Maurice 1721-1968*, Port-Louis : Diocèse de Port-Louis, 1996.

⁶ Brigitte Garban, a cousin, has written a wonderful account of the Dowson family.

⁷ William died young in Calcutta and brought thousands of Indian indentured labourers into Mauritius.

- Harry Buckland Dowson (September 7, 1839, Calcutta - February 8, 1907, Sydney).
- Frederick Edmond Dowson (March 20, 1841, Calcutta - April 9, 1896, Guignicourt).
- Délie was the daughter of François Bestel-Belmaison and Marie Rosine Mélanie Piriou de Lezongard. François Bestel was born in 1775 in Sedan, France. He married in Port Louis on May 5, 1803 and died, also in Port Louis, on April 1, 1860. His wife had 13 children in the space of 18 years. He owned a large and successful sugar estate, "La Savanne", in the south of Mauritius.

Délie Bestel was born on September 25, 1809 in Port Louis and married William Frank Dowson on November 29, 1832 in Port Louis. Widowed in 1841 and with three children, Délie married Major Sir Georges Hamilton on January 10, 1850. After being widowed a second time, she married Sir Nicolas Gustave Bestel, her cousin, on August 5, 1864. She was 55 and he was 52. He had been in love with her from childhood and had never married. My father always doubled-up laughing as he told me the story of how Nicolas eventually summoned enough courage, and trembling like a leaf, went to see her to propose. He always considered Délie's children as his own and loved them. When Bestel died in 1887, Délie went to live with Ralph and Hésilda in Curepipe. A woman celebrated and much sought after for her great beauty, Délie moved in the world of the great and mighty and was frequently invited to dine at the Governor's. Even in her old age, she still fascinated. She died in April 1896. Our family archives give an order and dates for Délie's first two marriages which do not agree with those in P.J Barnwell's⁸ short biography of Gustave Bestel. Discrepancy over dates there may be, but there is agreement on the number of marriages.

Previously, Ralph lived in Pamplemousses near his father-in-law⁹, Charles Bonieux, but during an epidemic of malaria, around 1867, he did as much of the wealthy section of the population living on the coast did, and fled to the highlands where, it was said, the air was healthier. Like others, he hastily built a house for himself and the family (*The Lawn*, previously mentioned), then when the epidemic was over, he realized the area was liveable. It was called Curepipe. Ralph built this house, one of the first in Curepipe, then embellished it. He is buried in the Pamplemousses cemetery in his father-in-law's vault, Charles¹⁰ Bonieux. After Ralph's death¹¹, ties with the family in England loosened and ceased.

The lady to his right, behind the girl who is holding an umbrella, is his wife. Hésilda (or Ezilda) Marie Bonieux was born on February 22, 1845 and died on May 22, 1914 in Curepipe. She was twenty years old when she married Ralph on November 14, 1865, at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, Pamplemousses. My grandmother Simone always said Hésilda was her

⁸ *Dictionnaire de biographie Mauricienne / Dictionary of Mauritian Biography*, R. d'Unienville, Guy Rouillard, P. J. Barnwell.

⁹ As a reminder, Charles-Joseph's father, Charles Pierre-Jean Bonieux, was born on June 13, 1783 in Saint-Servan (Brittany) near Saint-Malo, of Pierre Bonieux or Bonniel (born in 1754) and of Françoise Marguerite Olivier (born in 1756). He died on June 16, 1854 in Pamplemousses, Mauritius. He came to Mauritius and married Nicole Joséphine Caboche on 23 Messidor Year 13 (July 12, 1805). Nicole was born July 12, 1805 in Rivière du Rempart and died in 1855. She was a daughter of Nicolas Antoine Caboche born in Paris around 1757, who died in 1833, and Anne Françoise Joséphine Lavocat (1771-1843). The wedding was celebrated in Pamplemousses and the contract was drawn up by Me Bombard. They had eight children including Félix Firmin Bonieux born in Pamplemousses, July 5, 1813 and who died in 1859. The latter married on April 1, 1837 Marie-Jeanne Jamet born in Saint-Servan and daughter of Olivier Jamet, a Merchant Navy captain and Perrine Adélaïde Quesnel, a seamstress. They had several children including a daughter, Léonide. This Léonide-Marie, born in Port-Louis on May 7, 1838 married André Arthur Bonnin in Pamplemousses on July 7, 1863. She died in Quatre-Bornes on July 12, 1924 at a very old age. Another of their children was Edgar Félix, born in 1847 who died unmarried in 1937. My father knew them both very well because they lived in Quatre-Bornes.

¹⁰ The Bonieux seemed to like Charles as a first name and they gave it to a child in each generation.

¹¹ In the first page of her recollections *One moment in the well of time* Denise de Chazal writes about his death although she was only two years old.

favourite grandmother¹², being a kind and gentle woman. Hésilda was the daughter of Charles Joseph Bonieux and Noémie Jamet (1825-1913) who got married on August 29, 1843. Charles Joseph was born on June 7, 1821 in Pamplémousses where the Bonieux family had settled. He died, still young, on February 4, 1870 at Rempart River.

Noémie Jamet was a daughter of Merchant Navy Captain Olivier Jamet, born in 1788 in St-Servan, St-Malo, and the first Jamet in our branch to settle in Mauritius, a little before 1824. The Jamet and Bonieux originated from Saint Servan, Saint Malo, Brittany, and had strong family links.

Ralph and Hésilda had three children, only one of whom survived childhood, Marie Rosine Lydie. Lydie can be seen leaning on her father's arm. She was about fifteen years old at the time of this photo. Seven years later, on February 8, 1892, Lydie Dowson married Édouard de Chazal and then inherited this house. She too had a reputation for gentleness. Lydie is my grandmother Simone de Chazal's mother, and she died on January 7, 1946 sixty-one years after this photo.

Far left, and holding a child in his arms, is Nemours Charles Bonieux. On all his photos Nemours sports long, thick sideburns. He looks a bit lost, like someone who has lost count of his children and would very much like to be elsewhere. Nemours is a brother of Hésilda's. Both siblings are therefore in this family photo. Nemours was born around 1848 and died at Rose-Hill on August 13, 1919. He married Caroline Bonieux, his cousin, on November 26, 1878. Caroline is the one we can see sitting in a white blouse on the bench. Caroline Augustine Adèle Bonieux was born in 1860 and died in 1948. Her father was Antoine Félix Bonieux (1832-1893). All the children scattered before them are theirs. Pictured are seven of their eleven children¹³.

To the right of Hésilda Dowson is a young lady. She is Angèle Jamet, a cousin of Hésilda's. Angèle's father and Noémie are brother and sister. Angèle was the daughter of stockbroker Olivier Jamet, himself the son of Merchant Navy captain Olivier Jamet, mentioned above. Angèle's mother was Jeanne Cornélie de Chaumont, a woman with a strong character. Angèle had a twin brother uninspiringly called Ange, who died unmarried around 1920. Angèle's eldest brother, Théodore-Eudoxe Jamet, familiarly known as 'Armand' Jamet (June 20, 1844 - † September 1, 1900) married Hélène Régnard on October 19, 1882, just before his mother's death. The couple had a son Armand, born in 1888, who later became Simone's husband.

Louise Angèle married Édouard Arnulphy¹⁴, on October 3, 1898 a Mauritian merchant from Madagascar. She lost her husband very early and never married again. Having no children to look after she dedicated the rest of her life to taking care of her nephews and nieces. She then retired to Antsirabe, Madagascar where Robert Jamet, Simone's son, visited her with his parents and Hélène Régnard in July 1923. Angèle was living in a convent, to which she had given all her possessions in exchange for care and a lifetime pension.

It was while visiting her in 1935 that the de Lastelle family, who owned a large house in Antsirabe, saw Olga's photo and showed it to their son Lionel. Olga was Simone's daughter, a young woman of great beauty, lively and worldly. Lionel fell desperately in love with her on the spot. In order not to lose their son, the de Lastelle wrote to the Jamet's, after which Lionel

¹² Simone seems to forget that she was only one year old when her other grandmother, Laurence Mathilde Mayer (1843-1895), died. Mathilde was a daughter of Edward Mayer (1807-1877).

¹³ Given the date written on the photo, they may well not all be Nemours' children. In a photo from 1915, the year Robert Jamet was born, we can clearly see three of their daughters. They are Marcelle, spouse Rougier, who died in Durban in May 1939, Mary, spouse Desmarais, and Ida, spouse Lemaire. Four children of Mary and one of Marcelle are also pictured.

¹⁴ Marie François Edouard Arnulphy whose grandfather, Louis Noé Delphine Arnulphy, was a Privateer at the King's Service.

made the trip to Mauritius and they very quickly became engaged. They married in Madagascar at the end of 1936.

A few years later, on returning from their honeymoon on April 15, 1938, Robert and Winifred Jamet, my parents, visited Angèle in her convent. She was very old by then and died on February 25, 1943. All that remains of her is this hesitant silhouette in a faded photo. Angèle died 58 years after this photo. Armand who was Robert, my father's father, died in 1941. My parents also lost a child, Annick, in 1941. She was 14 months.



Ralph Dowson, Hésilda Bonieux and Noémie Jamet, Guignicourt, France, ca. 1896.

Now let's delve further into the Dowson-Bonieux family setting since this was the environment my grandmother Simone grew up in and in which too, she always felt secure. To this end, let's look attentively at another photo, this time taken in France. The photo shows the close-knit family ties and one can easily imagine the collective strong feeling of identity and emotional wellbeing that everybody could get. Before we do so though, it should be noted that these people were Catholic, fiercely attached to their priests and religious schools with, on the Jamet

side, many priests from Britany, the first Apostolic Vicar of Mauritius¹⁵ and the founders¹⁶ of two charitable religious orders.

The photo above was taken in Guignicourt, near Reims, France, around 1896 during a visit Ralph and Hésilda Dowson made to Hésilda's sisters¹⁷ and niece, little Mary Dowson. Simone, my grandmother, was two years old then and was with her parents in Mauritius.

The three younger women pictured are three sisters with their mother on the far right. So, we have from left to right: George Millet (Marie Noémie Bonieux' husband) with little Mary France Dowson (September 16, 1895 - December 21, 1954), Marie Noémie Bonieux (1850-1940), Ralph Dowson, Marie Camille Bonieux (Dec 28, 1850 - Oct 20, 1937) widow of Frederick Dowson and mother of Mary Dowson, Marie Hésilda Bonieux (Ralph Dowson's wife) and Noémie¹⁸ Bonieux née Jamet (1827-1910), widow of Charles Joseph Bonieux and mother of the three sisters. A fourth sister, Alice, who also came to Guignicourt is not in the photo. She died in 1898 at the age of 31.

¹⁵ Msgr. Francois Contenot, Apostolic Prefect (1768-1781) and uncle of Jean-Baptiste Régnard. Marie Jamet, Marie-Augustine of Compassion in religion, a Breton and a cousin of my ancestor, founded with Jeanne Jugan in 1839 the Order of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Jeanne Jugan was canonized in 1995. Caroline Adélaïde Lenferna de Laresle, a Mauritian, sister Marie-Augustine in religion, founded The Congregation of Sisters of Charity of Notre Dame of Good Works and Succour in 1850. Perpetual, because the Order was accountable to the Pope only and not to the diocese and had no time limit. Caroline was descended from de Chaumont.

¹⁶ The photos of the founders are on the last page of this article.

¹⁷ One of their sisters, Camille Bonieux (1852-1937), married Frederick Dowson, a brother of Ralph Dowson's. Another brother, Henri Bonieux, was married to Jeanne Millet, a daughter of the painter Millet. Another sister, Marie Bonieux (1850-1940), married Georges Millet, the eldest son of the same painter Jean-François Millet.

¹⁸ Noémie, a daughter of Merchant Navy captain Jamet, is the mother of Hésilda, Marie, Marie Camille, Alice and Nemours. At that time Noémie was said to be an 'annuitant' and lived at 45 Wagram Avenue, Paris. It is well documented that Noémie Jamet was already living in France in 1887, the year of her son Henri's wedding to Jeanne Millet. When he was not yet married to Marie-Camille, Frederick Dowson used to put up at Noémie's house. Thus, 5 years before the death of his first wife, in 1887 and 1888, he is recorded as having lived there. We can see how strong the Bonieux-Dowson ties were.



Famille Nemours and Caroline Bonieux 1906-1907¹⁹

The photo²⁰ above is interesting too as it shows one of Hésilda's brothers, Nemours, with his family and relatives. These relatives could only reinforce the feeling of belonging to a large family from which they could get help and support in times of need.

In the first row from the left we have Marcelle²¹ Rougier, Maxime Bonieux, Ida Bonieux (born 1903) and Henri Bonieux. Then, in the second row, we recognize Nemours, never without his conspicuous sideburns and his bored look. To his right we have his mother-in-law, Suzanne Berthet, and further to the right Caroline, his wife, Suzanne's daughter. Caroline and Nemours are first cousins. Nemours holds a child on his lap. Finally, in the last row: André Bonieux, Marie²² and Gaston Desmarais, Suzanne (1880-1970) and Emmanuel Bouffé (1867-1941), Félix Bonieux, Joseph Pilot, Édith Bonieux and Émile Bonieux.

¹⁹ Photo kindly provided by Brigitte Garban, my cousin and a descendent of Mary Dawson's.

²⁰ Photo: Nemours family and Caroline Bonieux 1906-1907

²¹ Marcelle, a daughter of Nemours was married to Eugene Rougier and died in Durban in May 1939. Ida is another daughter of Nemours. Suzanne Adèle Berthet was married to Antoine Félix Bonieux (December 23, 1832 - April 25, 1893), a son of Charles Pierre Jean Bonieux, of Saint Servan and Nicole Joséphine Caboche. She died in 1908.

²² Marie is another daughter of Nemours. Marie Félicie Bonieux was born October 20, 1883, Réunion Island, and died December 15, 1981 at the age of 98. Antoine Gaston Evenor Desmarais, her husband, was born on July 1, 1876 in Rodrigues and died on March 10, 1951, at the age of 74. All his life he remained very tall, straight and slim. Robert Jamet knew them well, when he was young, and met them again during a visit of Mauritius in 1949. Gaston asked him if Procters & Brothers still existed in Mananjary, Madagascar. Procters & Brothers was the



Suzanne Bonieux and Emmanuel Bouffé, ‘Mon Rêve’, Curepipe.

Many of these relatives lived in Quatre-Bornes and, of course, my father knew them all and often told me funny or tragic anecdotes. One can safely say that the Bonieux and Dowson were part of a large network of close-knit and united families. They all spoke French, were all Catholic and often had many children. These men and women had all received basic education too. They did not indulge in religious speculation and usually took pretty good care of their own. They were above all enterprising and were representatives of the wealthy and conservative bourgeoisie of Mauritius of their days.

ÉDOUARD DE CHAZAL

Antoine Édouard is Simone's father. He was born on July 22, 1864 in Pamplémousses. He is a son of Antoine Auguste de Chazal and Germaine Laurence Eugénie Mathilde Mayer²³.

trading company that, around 1903, invited Wilfred E Pollett, my maternal grandfather, to Madagascar. Gaston had visited Madagascar around 1905, the year of his wedding.

²³ Patrick Harel, probably the most knowledgeable genealogist in Mauritius, once remarked that religion or love - or even both - often united the Chazal and the Mayer. To mention but a few of these unions, George Clifford Mayer (1837-1900), married Charlotte Eugénie Mathilde de Chazal (1813-1880) sister of his friend Edmond de Chazal. Their son George was to marry Lucie, a daughter of Edmond, although Lucie preferred her cousin Pierre-Edmond de Chazal. Lucie was barely 13 years old at the time. This wedding, in 1859, caused two foreseeable and concurrent events: Edmond's departure from the Catholic Church and the birth of Dr. Lucien de Chazal who became the leader of the New Church in Mauritius. Undeterred but rather feeling stimulated, George subsequently married two other daughters of Edmond's: Antonia Virginie (1847-1866) and then, having become a widower, he married Antoinette Eugénie Berthe (1856-1891). George and Berthe would then go on to have Ralph Mayer. Edouard's father, Auguste, married Mathilde Mayer. Later, Madeleine, one of Edward's daughters, married Edward Harold Mayer (1885-1951) and Denise, another daughter, married George Stafford Mayer.

At the age of 13, in 1877, he left Mauritius with his parents for South Africa where his father bought some sugar cane plantations²⁴. There, Édouard specialized in the design and manufacture of railways rolling stock and machinery for sugar factories. He worked for about three years in the design offices and foundry workshops of the South African Government Railways in Natal. His professional training completed, at age 21 he returned to Mauritius where he was assistant engineer at the Forges and Foundries²⁵ for almost 13 years. His father, Auguste, was back in Mauritius and heading the New Church. A man of immense interpersonal skills, Édouard was fluent in English and was well introduced into the English-speaking circles of Mauritius.

On February 8, 1892 in St Thérèse church, Curepipe, Édouard married Lydie Dowson, John Rouillard²⁶ being one of the witnesses. Lydie, born in 1872 in England, was the daughter of Ralph Dowson and Hésilda Bonieux. This wedding brought beads of sweat to many foreheads and hands. Indeed, Édouard stood out as a member of a family of Swedenborgians who were drawn to religious speculation and had broken away with the Catholic Church. Lydie came from a traditional and rock-solid Catholic family. However, Lydie quickly talked Édouard into joining the Catholic Church²⁷. He accepted because, being a man very attached to his family, he had become aware that holding family reunions, weddings, baptisms, etc. was posing constraints that made things difficult, Lydie's family feeling uncomfortable with 'heretics'...



²⁴ His father had sold his shares in the Saint Antoine Sugar Estate. The South African venture was a total washout.

²⁵ Toussaint Antoine Régis, his uncle, was a consulting engineer there for several years. For a summary of Édouard's career please refer to Allister Macmillan, *Mauritius illustrated: historical and descriptive, commercial and industrial facts, figures, and resources*, 1914, London, W.H. & L. Collingridge. p.223. There is also a facsimile edition, 2000.

²⁶ Édouard's mother was, of course, John's relative. François Joachim John ROUILLARD (1834-1897) was a Royal College Laureate (1853) and became a judge of the Supreme Court (1897). He was married to Marie Antoinette Edmée de CHAZAL (1840-1929), a daughter of Edmond de CHAZAL and Marguerite Claire ROUILLARD. They had 11 children. One of their sons, Jean Edmond ROUILLARD (1868-1936), married on July 2, 1895, Curepipe, Berthe Ida de CHAZAL (1875-1955), a daughter of Antoine Evenor.

²⁷ In June 1918, their daughter Madeleine married her cousin Harold Mayer. Dr. Lucien came to their wedding and thus started the beginning of a reconciliation.

Lydie et Édouard de Chazal

So, Simone was born into a Catholic family. Later, by marrying a Jamet, she joined an ultra-Catholic family closely linked to Missions and Religious Orders. Oddly enough, the Jamet often entertained Protestant pastors and bishops at their homes! However, when my father got engaged to a practicing Protestant, this little world held its breath, for a moment gawking and incredulous, and when they got married at the Protestant Temple, on a Good Friday, it first stopped breathing, then choked. No one came to the wedding except the bride's and bridegroom's fathers, two men totally indifferent to religion! My parents never held a grudge against them.

In Mahébourg, near his beach house, and in Rivière des Anguilles, Édouard also had workshops where he designed boats and repaired or manufactured parts for sugar factories. His workshops were very well equipped with machine tools, employing, in 1910, a hundred workers for repair work of general engineering and metallurgy. The site occupied 6,000m², i.e. 1½ acres, and had a private track connecting it to the main Railway tracks. Édouard was under contract with the Mauritius Government Railways²⁸ for the supply of cast metal parts which he delivered with his own rail cars. He was also under contract with the Forestry Department and the Sugar Industry, the boilers of which he repaired. An engineer, Édouard was also an excellent draftsman and had shown real talents as an architect and a Naval architect.

Édouard had an independent spirit and was sometimes strong headed. He was prosecuted by the Attorney General KOENIG who made a motion in the Supreme Court 'to call Mr. Édouard de CHAZAL to say why he would not be sentenced to prison or otherwise punished for contempt towards the Supreme Court and the District Court of Curepipe. And this, for having written, signed and addressed to Mr. LLOYD, now a magistrate at Grand-Port, a letter containing scandalous things towards these two courts of justice, about two judgments delivered by the said Mr. LLOYD, then magistrate de Curepipe in two cases by Inspector SALÈCE against Édouard de CHAZAL and a judgment of the Supreme Court by which the two above judgments were confirmed by an appeal 'by way of certiorari'²⁹. The said letter was clearly and undoubtedly written, signed and addressed in order to scandalize, discredit and demean the authorities of said courts. He was defended by Mr. ROUILLARD, who requested a referral to February 18, 1916. The matter was then submitted for discussion'³⁰

Édouard was of a jovial temperament and had simple tastes. He carefully oversaw the artistic development of his children and invested massively in their education and social skills. In 1961, Simone, his daughter, wrote: 'He was of a charming nature, unfortunately too confident in the honesty of some of his associates and some of his family members. His profession³¹ had been lucrative, and he could have left his family with all the security he wanted if he hadn't dealt with unscrupulous people. He was a sincere friend to be trusted, an exemplary husband and father³²'.

²⁸ As a reminder, his stepfather, Ralph Dowson, was the director of the Mauritius Government Railways.

²⁹ I.e. before a Court of Appeal

³⁰ Le Cernéen, February 19, 1916. in Patrick HAREL, *Essai d'histoire généalogique de la famille MAYER*, février 2016.

³¹ Édouard was possessed of a fertile and agile mind. He also had the genius to apply technologies adapted to the architectural challenges of his time. An engineer at heart, he had set up factories in Mauritius including one in Saint Antoine, in Madagascar, Réunion island and also for his brother Clifford Daniel, who worked in the Sugar Estate "La Mercy" and then owned "The Hope" in Durban, Natal. Robert could vividly remember how in 1923 Édouard brought some chocolate from Réunion Island for him. Édouard also built the bell tower of the Sainte Thérèse church in Curepipe and its front, parts of the Collège Laval in Quatre Bornes as well as various buildings in Mauritius.

³² Extract from his daughter Simone's diaries, 1966.

He died of arteriosclerosis in Curepipe on June 26, 1930, and Lydie, his wife, followed him on January 19, 1946.



Postcard³³ announcing Édouard's death.

ÉDOUARD AND HIS CHILDREN

Now, let's take a closer look at Simone's siblings³⁴. The photo below dates from 1915 and was taken at a beach house Édouard owned in Mahébourg. He often brought his family down there on vacation or for a weekend. When they were there, other family members and friends would spend the day there or drop by if they lived in the neighbourhood themselves.

On the day the photo was taken, Édouard was surrounded by his children, parents and family friends. Édouard can be seen on the left, clearly recognizable, his colonial pith helmet sitting on the bottom shelf of a small table. With a twinkling in the eye, he pretends to pour himself a drink. One child is missing: Marie-Antoinette **Germaine**, baptized at 5 months on June 25, 1893, Ste-Thérèse, and who died as an infant. Her godfather was Ralph DOWSON and her godmother, Marcelle BONIEUX. Also missing are Lise "**Lily**", born later in 1916, and **Simone**, probably because the latter was due to give birth to my father, Robert Jamet.

³³ This postcard announcing Édouard's death is from Mary Dowson. Brigitte Garban wrote: 'Postcard written by my grandmother Mary Dowson (spouse Besnier), addressed to her sister-in-law Marcelle Besnier (spouse de Bechillon, my grandfather's sister), announcing Édouard de Chazal's death. The Antony mentioned is Antony Paquet. The Bonieux and Paquet had very strong links between them going back to St. Servan, Brittany.'

³⁴ I will only mention their names and not go into details as I would like to focus on Simone only.



Édouard and children, Mahébourg 1915

In the background on the left, standing against the wall of thin bamboo stems, stands **Madeleine**. Then, we can see **Roger** and, on the right, **Philippe**. Next, there is Eugène Rougier and finally **Raymond**. The young man with the beret is a Fanucci. In the second row we find Odette on her father's lap next **Denise** and then **Alix**. The last three on the right are three sisters³⁵. They are Marcelle, Mary and Ida Bonieux. All these people are related to each other except Fanucci who is distantly related.

Eugène Rougier was the grandson of Olivier Jamet³⁶. He was a businessman and died in 1929. His wife was Marcelle Bonieux. She died in Durban in May 1939. Eugene and Marcelle first lived in Curepipe then moved to Quatre Bornes. After her husband's death, she left for Durban with her children with some financial help from the Desmarais. She had a stroke and fell dead in the street. At Quatre Bornes, their children Lydie and Jacques were friends with Robert

³⁵ They all were Nemours Bonieux' daughters. Nemours was born around 1848 and died at Rose-Hill on August 13, 1909. He married Caroline Bonieux, his cousin, on November 26, 1878. They can be seen in a photo dating from 1885. They had eleven children. Caroline Augustine Adèle Bonieux was born in 1860 and died in 1948. Her father was Antoine Félix Bonieux (1832-1893). Robert Jamet knew her as she lived in Quatre Bornes too. She was an old thin lady with a wizened face. Robert used to visit her about four times a year. She enjoyed talking about old times 'when everything was much better' and, in her conversations, recalled Robert's ancestors: 'your grandfather Armand, your grandfather Ange Régnard, etc.'

³⁶ Olivier Jamet, a son of the famous captain, was born in Saint-Servan on November 10, 1812 and married, in Pamplémousses, Jeanne Cornelia (or Cornélie) de Chaumont born on March 10, 1824. Olivier and Cornélie had nine children including Amanda, who married Louis Rougier, clerk at the Commercial Bank of Port-Louis where he also lived above the offices. Eugène is one of their sons.

Jamet, Jacques and Robert being the same age. Mary Bonieux married Gaston Desmarais³⁷ and in the photo she is about 34 years old. Ida³⁸ Bonieux (born 1903) was married in October 1933 to Joseph Marie Robert Le Maire, the brother of Roger Le Maire, the one who married Odette de Chazal (in this photo) in late 1930. Ida died in childbirth in 1940.

Some of Mary and Marcelle's children are also pictured. Sitting on the grass, the two on the left and right are Desmarais children. The fourth to the right, a Desmarais, became an engineer and his brother, Max Desmarais, at the end of the row became a doctor in Canada. The child in the center is a Rougier who might well be Lydie Rougier better known as 'Mamy'.

The young man with a beret had a brother, Robert Fanucci, a Mauritian who had emigrated to Reunion and was the British consul there for some time. His mother was a Bouffé³⁹ and the Bouffé were related to the Bonieux. My father and Robert Fanucci were longtime friends.

Robert, my father, remembered Édouard as a very good man, always in a good mood, a generous and hospitable person, and his grandmother Lydie as a generous and 'rather proud woman who carefully chose her friends'. This privileged set led a lifestyle⁴⁰ where servants were numerous and called them 'the Masters'.

SIMONE DE CHAZAL

Marie Mathilde Simone de Chazal was born on April 8, 1894 and was baptized on May 24, 1894. She married Armand Jamet, a young widower, on July 15, 1914 in St-Thérèse. They were distant cousins, Simone having some Jamet in her family. She died on August 28, 1980, in Curepipe, and was buried in the Bigara cemetery in her brother Philippe's grave. Simone did not want to lie next to her mother-in-law in the Jamet's vault in the St. Jean cemetery, Quatre-Bornes.

Simone grew up on rue Lees, Curepipe, and had a happy childhood surrounded by her grandparents and parents. She adored her grandmother Eliza Dowson née Bonieux. Simone was the eldest of her siblings whose number grew over twenty years and with whom she always kept close ties. She was also possessed of a respected and even sought-after moral stature, as manifested in the devotion that many nephews and nieces held for her well into old age. She went to the Sisters of Loreto, at Curepipe, not far from their home, where she received a more than basic education. All her life she remained devoted to the Sisters of Loreto. Simone had a straight, honest and loyal character. She was a serious-minded woman although not devoid of humour. She was a good judge of character, called a spade a spade and was direct. Sometimes, during a conversation, she would gaze at me intently and interrupt me abruptly with a strong Mauritian accent:

- 'Tell me, Robert ...'.

³⁷ Antoine Gaston Evenor Desmarais was born on July 1, 1876 in Rodrigues and died on March 10, 1951, at the age of 74. His wife, Alice Félicie Mary 'Merry' Bonieux, was born October 20, 1883, Réunion Island, and died December 15, 1981 at the age of 98. Robert Jamet knew them well.

³⁸ It was at his wedding, that Robert remembers as having happened at the City Hall of Quatre Bornes, that Robert Jamet wore his first suit with long pants. Robert Le Maire's father was a Sugar Estate Chief Engineer. Robert himself was very wealthy and imported Hillman cars. Having drunk some household acid by accident, he went to France for treatment and was accompanied by his younger brother Roger, who took advantage of this stay there to take singing lessons. On returning to Mauritius his health improved and ten years later he recovered from his stomach burns. Ida died very young, leaving a daughter. A good many years later, Robert Le Maire remarried.

³⁹ Nemours Bonieux had a daughter, Suzanne, who married Emmanuel Bouffé, a man related to the Fanucci. A Fanucci had married a Chazal years before. Another son, Charles André Bonieux, worked with his brother-in-law Desmarais. He had married Louise Marie 'Marthe' Harel who was the maternal aunt of the man who would become Bishop Margéot. They lived in Quatre Bornes. Another son (1899-1924), Maxime, played tennis well and died during a gastric operation.

⁴⁰ Robert used to say, 'It was a time when feudalism still reigned.' Marcelle Lagesse, *La diligence s'éloigne à l'aube*, 1958, éditions de l'Océan Indien, is a book that evokes life back then.

I knew then I was in trouble and she was going to ask me some embarrassing question. All her life she was respected and even a little feared because she knew many secrets about Mauritian families ...



Simone, Antananarivo, 1945 - Noelle, Durban, 1948

Simone was a practising Catholic who had almost taken up residence in the Sainte Thérèse Church, Curepipe. She had been baptized there, made her first communion there, and married there. Her father even drew up plans for a renovation of this church. In a word, she was at home there.

Oddly enough, she got along very well with her first cousin, Noelle Cuniffe, a daughter of Rivaltz de Chazal and Jeanne Marrier d'Unienville. Noelle was a slim and feisty Swedenborgian of great scholarship and always ready to argue. She had grown up in Durban, lived in Ireland and was an intellectual who admired her cousin Malcolm de Chazal. She went to all the conferences held in Mauritius, read a lot⁴¹, had a passion for theater and got to know some artists and authors. She was very different from Simone who used to read Victor Hugo, a non-controversial author, and Francois Mauriac. Simone's culture, however, was discreet and above all musical, and often in the evening, while waiting for dinner, she played operetta overtures for me on the piano and then we talked about them. One evening, to make me happy she said, she played the overture of the opera 'The Huguenots' by Meyerbeer ... Sometimes, I

⁴¹ We sometimes read together Malcolm's *Pensées* and Paul-Jean Toulet's *Contrerimes*. We also enjoyed discussing *Le Notaire des Pauvres* by Lois Masson or Edward-Hart's mystical poetry. I've always found Hart's poetry obscure though, however, Noelle loved it! One day Simone and I were visiting Hart's bolt hole by the sea in Souillac when Noelle turned up unexpectedly with some of Hart's poems in her handbag!

listened discreetly to her students as they agonized on the Boccherini minuet⁴². When I went to mass with Simone, she would tell everyone that I was ‘a Huguenot’ and when I went to the New Church, rue Remono, with Noelle, Noelle would also tell everyone I was ‘a Huguenot’. Great minds think alike...A wisp of a girl with a high-pitched voice and a zesty spirit, always staying on top of things, Noelle shone during these meals that we had together. She lapped up her desserts like a kitten, with measured little licks, and smacked her lips when it was all done. She spoke the King’s English and made the most delightful chortle noises with her throat when, to tease me, she used a rare word. Noelle loved words and juggled them in a rich gestural depiction while discussing concepts that sometimes touched on the mystical. Simone, being a down-to-earth sort of person, used simple and functional language but played musical structures so complex and with such finesse that we could discover patterns just as intellectual and emotional as Noelle’s.



Lydie Dowson, Madeleine Mayer, Roger and Odette Lemaire and children, 1942.

Simone loved visiting cemeteries, churches and tearooms - always in that order. She always found that I was the perfect companion to accompany her in her wanderings. For example, we used to go down by taxi to Pamplémousses to visit the Bonieux and Dowson graves to name just these places. And the name that popped up most often was her grandmother Hésilda. These people had represented a kind of safe place, a bubble, a happy time forever lost before she entered the Jamet family...! Simone used to say with a declamatory tone:

- ‘Here are your ancestors’.

Gifted with a phenomenal memory, she had no lack of anecdotes about these people and their ways of living long gone. We used to visit a small museum where a fob watch was on display. It was a watch that Napoleon had given to Father Buonavita, a Corsican and his chaplain in Saint Helena,. That odd bit of information obviously came from the Bonieux. These visits always followed a ritual. In Pamplémousses we visited the local church first, a place where so many ancestors had married, including Hésilda in 1865 and her in-laws, in 1882. Hélène

⁴² Luigi Boccherini, the third movement of the String Quintet in E major for two cellos, op. 11 no 5 (G.275).

Régnard herself had her Solemn Communion and Confirmation there around 1872 holding a large square of Chinese silk that I still have in my possession.

Noëlle often came along, and no matter what place we visited, as soon as the church tour was over, it gave rise to sharp discussions that always ended around tea and cakes. One was a practicing Catholic who prayed to the saints and whose errant husband returned to her, whilst the other had a speculative Swedenborgian mind, listened to angels, and had escaped from her husband with no intention of ever returning to him. However, they loved each other very much, supported each other in their difficulties, and loved... mid- afternoon cream teas.



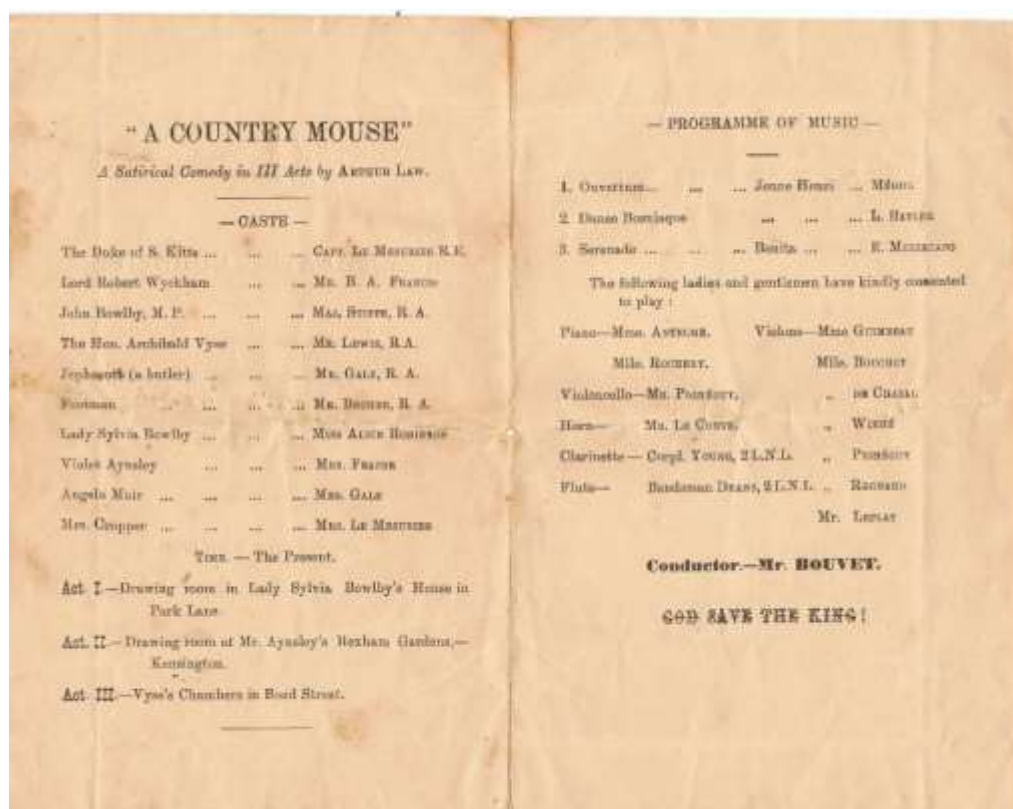
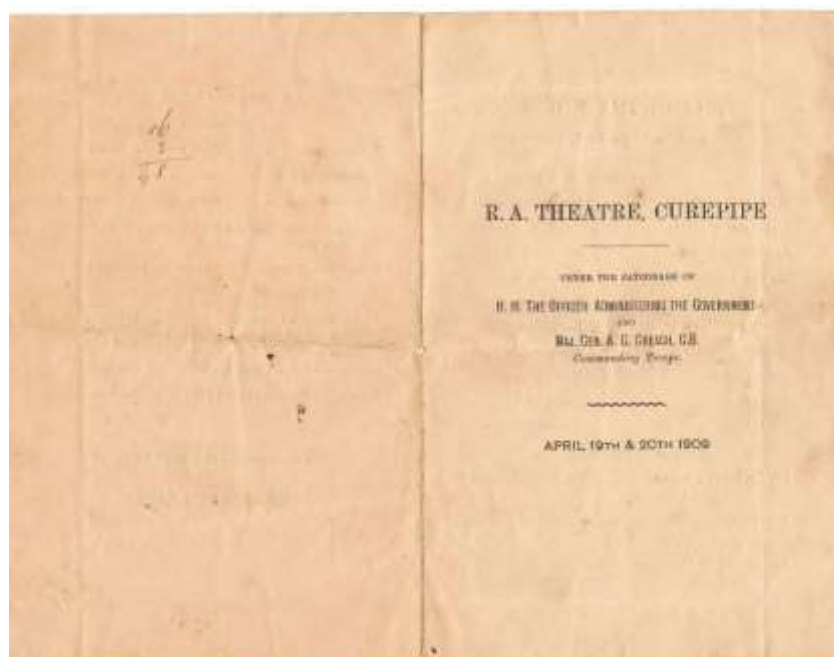
Simone and her siblings⁴³, Curepipe, 1917.

Simone, as it might have been guessed, was an accomplished concert violinist and often played at charity concerts starting at the age of thirteen. For example, on April 19 and 20, 1909, and to an audience that included the Acting Governor, Simone played in the orchestra that accompanied Arthur Country's satirical play *A Country Mouse*, which was showing at the Curepipe theatre. She was then 15 years old.

She had been a student of Professor Maurice Le Plat, a virtuoso violinist who taught in Mauritius around 1905 and often travelled to Australia to give concerts. 1913 he left Mauritius and embarked on a prestigious career in France and the United States.⁴⁴ His photo was even

⁴³ Standing from left to right: Madeleine, Philippe, Simone and Roger. Sitting: Odette, Raymond, Denise, Alix and baby Lily.

⁴⁴ In 1921-1922 he was in the USA [*The Oregon Daily Journal from Portland, Oregon*, July 31, 1921 Page 41] At the end of 1927 he could be found in Singapore and Hong-Kong where his solos delighted listeners. See *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (1884-1942), October 10, 1927, Page 1. *The Straits Times*, November 21, 1927, Page 11.



Concert before Sir John Bower⁴⁵ representing Sir Cavendish Boyle at the Curepipe Theatre, April 19 & 20, 1909.

published in Le Monde Musical around 1930. He played with world celebrities like Alfred Cortot and Pablo Casals. He returned to Mauritius around 1932 and then disappeared. After Le

⁴⁵ Sir Graham John Bower KCMG (1848–1933) had been Colonial Secretary of Mauritius since 1898. Sir Charles Cavendish Boyle KCMG (May 29, 1849 - September 17, 1916) was Governor of Mauritius from August 20, 1904 to April 10, 1911.

Plat, Simone studied under Professor Halbwachs, an Alsatian church organist at Curepipe. Her aunt, Mrs. Régis de Chazal⁴⁶, wanted to take her to France to study at the Conservatory, however Lydie did not want to part with her daughter, deeming her too young for such an enterprise.

In 1909, aged 15, Simone attended the wedding of Armand Jamet, a distant cousin, and of Anita de Lenferna. Fate would intervene four years later when, at a family event in 1913, she met Armand again. This time, however, he had been a widower for nigh on three years. Simone had become an accomplished violinist by then and, as luck would have it, Armand was a virtuoso flautist. They developed feelings for each other very quickly, bonding over their great musical culture.

ARMAND JAMET



Armand Jamet, October 1909

Marie Joseph Antoine Armand Jamet was born⁴⁷ on January 28, 1888 to Théodore-Eudoxe 'Armand' Jamet, merchant, and Hélène Régnard. Helen's father was the managing director of a Sugar Estate called "Trianon" and it was in this splendid mansion that Armand was born to anxious parents - he was their only surviving child - and where he grew up. He lived there until

⁴⁶ She was Marie Caroline Éléonore Le Maire, daughter of Arthur Lemaire and Adèle Sauzier, who married Antoine Toussaint Régis, Edouard's uncle.

⁴⁷ At his birth in 1888, his mother consulted a Hindu astrologer and asked him to cast Armand's horoscope for every year of his life. The astrologer wrote everything in an exercise book, and I witnessed Robert, my dad, burning this book in 1993. The astrologer had predicted wealth and a long life to Armand. Armand lost his fortune in 1935 and died, aged 53, in 1941.

his grandfather's death in 1893. Then, the family left Trianon and moved to Quatre-Bornes in a villa that Théodore-Eudoxe bought, *The Charmilles*⁴⁸.



Armand and Hélène Jamet, 1920.

Growing up as a spoiled child and then into a handsome boy, Armand studied at St. Joseph's College run by the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Curepipe. However, he was not gifted academically, and a vocational school with an emphasis on practical skills would have better suited him. Very early on, he expressed the desire to study in France to work on merchant ships, just as his ancestor, Olivier Jamet, had done a century before. His mother, having a phobia of shipwrecks, however, did not want to part with him. The intimate conviction of the parish priests, who declared that in France he would fall into the nets of gold diggers, carried the day and he remained in Mauritius. Meanwhile, he developed a real passion for music. He set himself to studying the flute, and excelled in the hands of an excellent flautist, M. Léopold Pierre de CLOSETS d'ERRAY⁴⁹, himself fresh off the boat from France.

Théodore-Eudoxe died in 1902. Armand was then 14 years old and the only heir to the fortunes of his father and grandfather. Hélène, with the help of various solicitors, managed the family fortune until Armand came of age and decided to do it alone.

In 1908, Armand proposed to the girl who would be his first wife: Marie Joséphine Renée Anita Lenferna de La Motte⁵⁰, whose family had a beach house near his in Mahébourg. They married on April 22, 1909 in Sainte Thérèse, Curepipe. The witnesses were: Amédée HUGNIN, L. LENFERNA, J. LENFERNA, A. ESNOUF⁵¹. He was 21 years old and she was 19 years old. They settled in Quatre Bornes, and Anita and Hélène got on like a house on fire. Anita, however, was thin with a narrow pelvis, and whilst her doctors recommended that she wait to have children until she could access the right clinics in France, the couple ignored the advice and Anita quickly became pregnant. On June 21, 1910 she died in childbirth a few days after the death of her little daughter Myriam who only lived three days. Both are buried in the Saint

⁴⁸ A house where there is a tree tunnel originally made up of hornbeams.

⁴⁹ Every year Armand went to pay his dues on his grave.

⁵⁰ Her parents were Marie François Léopold LENFERNA de La MOTTE, a Sugar Estate Director, and Marie Joséphine Julie de MÉZIÈRES de LEPERVANCHE

⁵¹ This was the famous Auguste Esnouf who wrote the novel *Polyte* under the pen name of Savinien Meredac. His wife was a Bérenger and they were therefore the grandparents of Paul Bérenger.

Jean cemetery, Quatre Bornes, in the Jamet vault. Armand continued to live in *the Charmilles* with his mother until his marriage to Simone.



Card sent to H  l  ne Jamet, 1908.

Around 1898, a certain Gaston Toulorge⁵² came to settle in Quatre-Bornes with his wife and children and lived there until 1911. Almost forty years later, just after losing his wife, he fondly remembered life in Quatre-Bornes at the turn of the century and in his writings mentioned his neighbours, **the Jamet**! He evoked the period when they lived at *the Charmilles*. First, there was Th  odore-Eudoxe 'Armand' until his death in 1902, then H  l  ne and Armand and finally Anita, who joined them from 1909 to 1910. It was the tail end of the Victorian years dovetailing into the Edwardian era, a triumphant period of refinement, comfort and pursuit of pleasure that any well-off and civilized person with good manners was entitled to expect from life. The Great war was just a couple of years away.

- 'This lovely district of Quatre Bornes attracted us in 1898 when Julien Couve found for me the Rault's country house on the St Jean road, where we lived for thirteen years! [...] We used to go to church every Sunday in procession to the 8  1  2 a.m. mass in St Jean and as it was necessary to dress 10 children before thinking of oneself, we were generally behind the clock of Father Haby. The old brother Faustin, who was one of the parish clerics, nicknamed us 'The Gloria Family' because it was at this time of Mass that we triumphantly entered the Church. We had as neighbours on one side the Charles Rousset family, **the Jamet**; behind, the Ribet, and, for some time, on the right the Browns then Ernest Lacoste who had married Val  rie

⁵² Gaston was born on April 7, 1860, Saint-Denis, R  union, and died on October 29, 1945, Mauritius. He was an accountant. His father, a pharmacist, died in 1898. Gaston's mother was Julie Claire Alice de Chazal, a daughter of Pierre Eugene Furcy de Chazal, himself a son of Toussaint. His wife was Marie Marguerite Philom  ne Gabrielle Koenig. They had 10 children, at least three of whom married their Koenig cousins, just as some of Gaston's own siblings had done so before.

Ducray⁵³ at his first marriage and, at his second, a cousin of his: Miss Madeleine Lacoste, from Bordeaux.⁵⁴

Armand and Simone got married in 1914⁵⁵, just after Hésilda Dowson's death, and they set up house with her parents at Curepipe, rue Lees. They gave themselves time to make the transition from Curepipe to Quatre-Bornes⁵⁶. They stayed for a little over a year and then, with their first child, Robert Jamet, they moved to Quatre Bornes. Armand no longer wanted to live in a house that reminded him of Anita, his first wife. He put *the Charmilles* up for sale and bought a house which would be the Jamet's home until 1936: Eden Villa, 13 Rue Stanley. Hélène took up the upper apartments and the couple lived below.

Eden Villa was a magnificent villa that required a lot of maintenance and therefore also required a lot of servants⁵⁷. The property was large and across the street were cane fields planted with trees and a vegetable garden. There were also a few small eucalyptus trees and small houses. All these lands belonged to Armand and Simone. There were many vegetable gardens in the area, since their house was located on the outskirts of the city. They had six servants, a horse-drawn carriage and motorboats for weekend sea outings.

Armand and Simone had several large houses (at least six) which they rented out, a beach house in Mahébourg⁵⁸, in addition to land and rents coming from money invested. Initially, they had two cars -a Ford and a Willys- and then only one. Every day Armand trained down to Port Louis for business, returned in the afternoon and read '*The Radical*'⁵⁹, a local newspaper with a gossip column.

⁵³ She is Elizabeth Mary Valérie Giblot Ducray born in 1873 who married Pierre Antoine Ernest Lacoste in 1891.

⁵⁴ Extract from the journal of Gaston Toulorge dated Thursday, February 23, 1939. Following the cyclone of 1913, he published a small pamphlet reporting his observations and those of many others on what will later be called "the eye of a cyclone". In Jean Bertho, *Rapport sur le cyclone des 4 et 5 mars 1913 à La Réunion*, in Académie de l'Île de la Réunion, bulletin 1913-1914, vol. 1er, imp. De Mme Veuve Drouhet Fils, Saint Denis, La Réunion, France, 1914, page 59. This cyclone was described and analysed by Isabelle Mayer Jouanjean, *L'île de La Réunion sous l'œil du cyclone au XXème siècle. Histoire, société et catastrophe naturelle*. Histoire. Université de la Réunion, 2011.

⁵⁵ July 15, 1914 with witnesses: Roger de CHAZAL (Simone's brother), Maxime DROUIN, William DOWSON, Rivaltz de CHAZAL (Edouard's younger brother and father of Noëlle Cuniffe, Simone's cousin). The presence at this wedding of a William Dowson is unusual because we don't know who he was. Maxime Drouin was born on July 15, 1883 and died on January 25, 1939, at the age of 55. He is buried in the Saint-Jean Cemetery. His parents were Jean Théobald Léon Drouin (1850-1925) and Marie Louise Gabrielle Dupin. Maxime married on January 24 Marie Bouic (1889-1972). His mother, a Dupin, was a daughter of Marie-Hélène Régnard, niece of Ange Régnard. So, he's a cousin twice removed of Armand.

⁵⁶ The origin of the name Quatre Bornes (Q-B) is hotly disputed. However, we know the origin of the Plaines Wilhems which take their name from a Prussian officer who settled in Mauritius in 1721: Wilhem Leicknig. In 1850 the Saint Jean church was built and in 1854 the railway linked Q-B to the capital. This leveled up its development. In 1904, the Sisters of Loreto moved there. In 1915, the Chairman of the municipality was Arthur Broad; 1918: Captain H.G. Hitchcock M.B.E; 1921: Ernest Leclezio; 1923: Léon Koenig; 1923: Alfred W. Brown; 1926: Dr. Leo Castel; 1928: Hon. T. d'Avise O.B.E.

⁵⁷ One day when a servant asked him for a half day off, Armand was very surprised and asked her why. She wanted to bury her daughter. Shocked to hear that the girl had died because the mother had no money to buy medicine, he exclaimed, "But you could have told me, and I would have given you some money!" Commenting on this many years later his son Robert would say, "In fact the masters knew absolutely nothing about their servants' private lives. They simply didn't care!"

⁵⁸ Formerly, Mahébourg was an important small town with a pharmacy, a solicitor (Me Lazare), a train station, a post office, a police station, a court, a dispensary, a doctor and a photographer. Armand participated in regattas at Pointe aux Régates about two or three times a year. Simone and Armand owned two sailing boats there. It was a Reunionese, Michel Rivière, who took care of the boats. Rivière used the boats to fish and earn a living and was required to maintain them. Armand took the Jamet family out on the boats on Sundays and, in the evening, they got back in a Ford car to Q-Bornes.

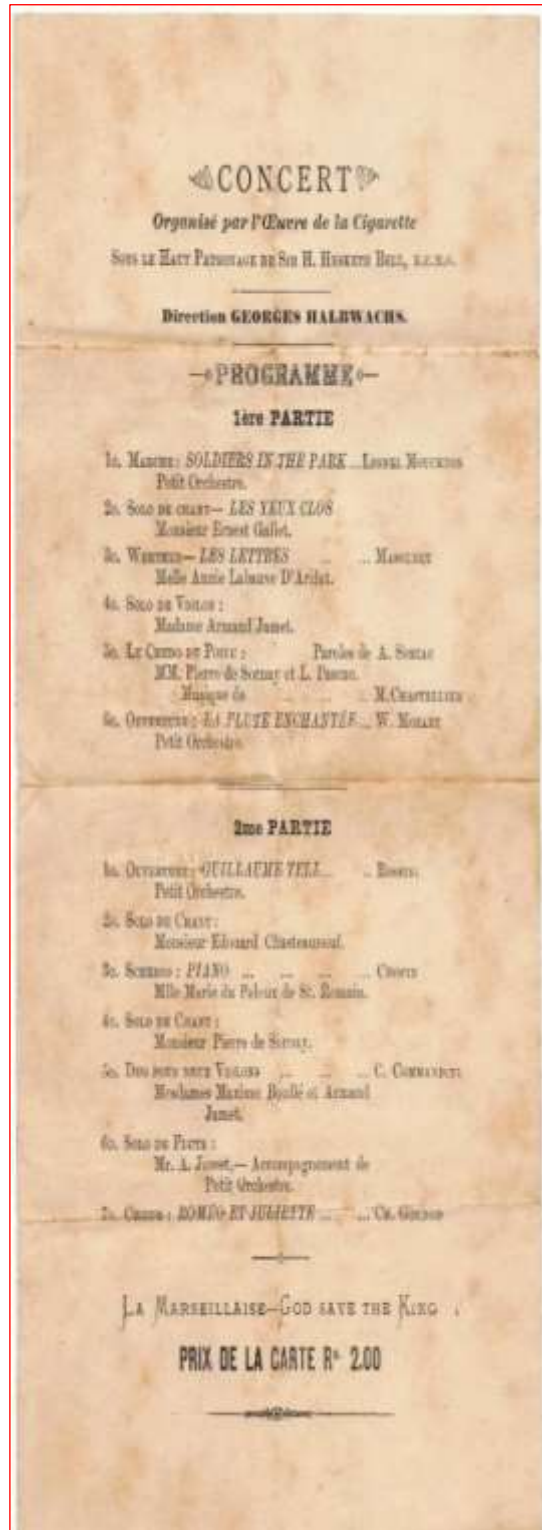
⁵⁹ As early as the 1830s Maurice had obtained from London the privilege of publishing newspapers with considerable freedom. The *Radical* was founded in 1898 by F.L Morel who was its owner and editor. It was the



Eden Villa, Quatre Bornes and a postcard dated 6 December 1915



first newspaper to be published at 1 p.m. every day, i.e. two hours before the others. From 1909, a second edition came out at 2 p.m. containing three columns of the most recent news. It was a very varied but primarily political newspaper which welcomed contributions from those who belonged to the ruling class. It sold at Port Louis at the station before the afternoon trains left. In 1914 it sold 2,000 copies a day and was in fact very popular. Savinien Meredac had a column in the *Radical*.



Concert⁶⁰ given by Armand and Simone between 1916 and 1924 under the patronage of Governor Hesketh Bell.

⁶⁰ The concert was sponsored by 'The Cigarette Charity' because Governor Hesketh-Bell was the one who gave a new impetus to tobacco cultivation in Mauritius while Dr. A. R. Tempany was director of the Department of Agriculture. In 1927, the British American Tobacco came to Mauritius and flourished almost instantly.

Simone led a very rich social life entirely dedicated to her children (Robert, Olga and Andrée), to her extended family and to her hobbies. By then a lusty mature man with an engaging and charming temperament, Armand was above all very social without being mundane. Both Simone and Armand led a life full of fun, music, dinners and social calls, in short, the colonial and easy-going life of the interwar period during which Mauritius prospered.

SIMONE AND QUATRE-BORNES

On May 15, 1915 Armand and Simone had their first child. Robert was born in Curepipe at his grandparents' house. His grandfather Édouard was his godfather and offered him an exquisitely engraved Christening silver cup, one that I still have.

Olga was born in 1917, then after a break, Andrée was born in 1929. The children grew up in a harmonious and artistic environment spending an enormous amount of time with their relatives of Quatre Bornes (the Bonieux) and those of Curepipe and Vacoas (the Chazal). The family often went to the beach either at their beach house in Mahébourg or to visit friends. In Tamarin, as the lagoon was sometimes infested with sharks, the parents would then stand on some sort of scaffolding floating on the water and take potshots at the small sharks that ventured there.



Postcard from Belgium arrived on July 8, 1923 at Quatre Bornes and forwarded to Madagascar.

In 1923, the whole family and Hélène decided to go on holiday to Madagascar, to Antsirabe, where Hélène Arnulphy, Hélène's sister-in-law, still lived. Armand took the opportunity to buy some land. Little Robert was dazzled by the beauty of the landscapes and the Malagasy people. He could finally see with his own eyes the country where his grandfather Jamet had worked and lived for almost 15 years, and which he only knew from the stories told to him by his grandmother. A postcard from Belgium from one of Hélène's correspondents, dated May 29, 1923 and with an arrival handstamp at Port Louis, arrived on July 8, 1923 at Quatre Bornes.

Someone added a handwritten note requesting to forward the postcard to Madagascar, Antsirabe, without giving any specific address. Two words only would suffice. The card duly reached them and ended its journey in a huge collection of cards from all over the world. Helen had correspondents as far afield as Turkey, Japan or Italy. In the years 1918-1921, the Jamet family participated in the debate on the 'Retrocession'⁶¹ (the Reunification) of Mauritius to France. This debate aroused both wild hopes in those who identified French and hostile attitudes in those who largely benefited from trade with the British Empire. It threatened to divide the family which, in the whole, was for the attachment to England from which it largely benefited. In Mauritius, the majority of those in favour of returning the island to France were the poor white people who suffered from having neither the education nor the lifestyle of wealthy families.

At the age of 12, in 1927, Robert watched the Duke of York, the future King George VI, and his wife passing by in a horse-drawn carriage at Rose Hill. He was standing in the front row when at some point the duke gestured with his hand and Robert all his life had the impression that the Duke had spotted him in the crowd ...



Robert, Olga and Edgar the coachman, Eden Villa, September 20, 1920

Artists and writers resided at Quatre Bornes and everyone met quite freely at Simone's. Simone's children were immersed in a genuine and high-level cultural and musical environment. All her life, their grandmother H  l  ne, who lived upstairs, remained an intellectual and an artist, an indomitable spirit attracted by the unusual if not even, at a certain

⁶¹ Waslay Ithier, a professor and Q-B resident, gave a well-researched historical presentation of the Retrocession movement in his Ph.D. dissertation, J.J. Waslay Ithier, *La litt  rature de langue fran  aise    l'  le Maurice*, Slatkine, Geneva, 1981. Reprint of the author's thesis.

period, by the occult⁶². All her life also she was perceived as unconventional with a touch of eccentricity. Despite her son Armand's car being at her disposal, she had retained the use⁶³ of a horse-drawn carriage with a coachman named Edgard. She was first and foremost a brilliant conversationalist who could hold her public under her spell. She had been well educated by tutors at home, she loved all forms of literature and she could still recite Racine⁶⁴ well into old age. Angel, her father, corresponded all over the world with scientific societies and H  l  ne also had correspondents for exchange of postcards⁶⁵ and letters. She drew and painted very well. She played the piano - waltzes in particular - and enjoyed the company of artists, composers and intellectuals. One of these composers was the nephew of Ambroise Thomas (1811-1896), the famous composer⁶⁶. Called to Paris by his uncle, this nephew never got used to Parisian life and ended up working for Cable & Wireless. One of these painters was a descendant of Germans, Worsfold. Gifted with an artistic and whimsical temperament, H  l  ne Jamet loved the company of young people and encouraged them to create.

Here is a list of their friends - including those of H  l  ne's -, parents and craftsmen who, in the years 1920-1930 gravitated around the couple and their house:

- Captain Hitchcock⁶⁷, M.B.E, who was their neighbour, just before arriving at their house. He was an Englishman, a pensioner whose daughter, Elsie, came to play with the Jamets. An English professor from the Royal College one day wanted to marry his eldest daughter, but the captain refused. Robert was about seven years old when the captain's wife died. The captain then left the country with his son, Cecil, who was about 13 years old, and their youngest daughter. The eldest daughter left town for Curepipe where she married.
- Ralph, the Anglican pastor. He was a medium-sized man, about 50 years old, with a thin, pale wife. They lived in a small house with a shingle roof and a beautiful courtyard. They owned a new Austin and every night went for a walk in the fields. He kept the old way of getting dressed of British clergymen and always answered Robert with a:
- 'God be with you!' when Robert met him. One afternoon Robert followed him into his church, Ralph was intrigued by Robert's presence but said nothing. There were also some English families in Quatre Bornes.
- R.P. Ditner C.S.Sp, German priest, who had prepared Robert for his first communion.
- Giraud, a pensioner.
- Mr. Ransley⁶⁸, who had married a divorcee⁶⁹. The couple were frowned upon by society.
- Mr. Lecourt, who had a repair workshop.

⁶² Helen practiced spiritism seances until the bishop put a stop to it. Franco-German Jesuit and Bishop of Mauritius from 1887 to 1895, Bishop Johann Gabriel Leo Meurin (1825-1895) left a deep imprint on the diocese. He was a missionary in India, proved to be an Orientalist scholar, and became the Apostolic Vicar of Bombay. He arrived in Mauritius in his late sixties, the first of the prelates to hold an archdiocese. A lively and ardent man, he did not hesitate to engage in public controversy over issues of religious interest, including spiritualism and Freemasonry. He had voted against the dogma of the pope's infallibility.

⁶³ Mainly used by H  l  ne who was wary of cars. In 1997, Lily Vigier de Latour was still talking to me about Edgard who, in the mid-1920s, used to pick her up in a carriage from Curepipe to spend the day with Robert and Olga down in Q-B.

⁶⁴ In the 1930s she still recited by heart long tirades of French classical playwrights and was very familiar with French and English literature. She also wrote admirably.

⁶⁵ Of which there is still an important collection dating from 1904 to 1928.

⁶⁶ Thomas was the first musician to be made Commander of the L  gion d'Honneur and was given its insignia by Napoleon III himself.

⁶⁷ In 1918, the administrator of Quatre-Bornes happened to be Captain H.G. Hitchcock M.B.E.

⁶⁸ Probably William Henry Ransley.

⁶⁹ Maybe Lucie Allot.

- Mr. d'Abbadie, who had applied to be a member of parliament in France and lost the elections. A highly educated man, he wrote in the newspapers and had 12 children. One of his sons became chief of staff at Bellepierre Hospital in St. Denis, Réunion.
- Touillet or Touyé, an educated man and a father of twelve children; Irene Touyé was the teacher of Olga, my aunt. Robert and Winifred met her again in Mauritius fifty years later in 1981.
- Baissac, a pensioner.
- Robillard, a grocer.
- Lapelin Dumont⁷⁰.
- de Gaforry, the Consul of France.
- Lambert, the Vice-Consul of France.
- Loveday, an employee at Cable.
- Eating Pavilion.
- Kroft.



Robert and Olga, Eden Villa, Quatre-Bornes, October 27, 1924.

⁷⁰ Father: Dumont; mother: de Lapelin Chaumardy.

- de Fondaumiere.
- de Gersigny.
- Durand.
- Dupont.
- Cogan.
- Koenig.
- Dussac.
- de Chaumont, relatives.
- Rev. Fowler⁷¹, a vicar and principal of the Royal College.
- Baudot.
- Langlois.
- Lournau.
- Tourette.
- Colard.
- Philippe-Louis La Hausse de La Louvière, a solicitor (1886-1942).
- Arnulphy.
- de Court.
- Pougnet.
- Larripierre, a dentist and a lawyer.
- Brouard, a magistrate.
- de Senneville.
- Parson, an Englishman and Armand's friend, who lived with his sister.
- The Hatcher ladies, English friends of Hélène Régnard's.
- The young Robertsons, three English girls, friends of Hélène Régnard's. Bertha Robertson married Claude Desmarais at Q-Bornes. Claude is Fernand Desmarais' and Edith Hall's son.
- Castelain, an engineer, married to a Frenchwoman, 2 avenue Stanley.
- Florent, who owned a beautiful house.
- De Guardia, an old French pensioner.
- Giraud.
- Carbonel.
- Pascaut.
- Pouguente / Pouguen, who owned a beautiful house with a mysterious wooded courtyard.
- Tourette, three old ladies.
- Duverger, a sugarcane farmer; one of his daughters was Robert Jamet's teacher at the Sisters of Loreto school. Another lived with an Englishman, a captain in the port, and was ostracized by society because she had not married religiously. Her husband may have had another religion or was an atheist.
- de Prévost de Langristin, a distinguished and kind man who lived in a small, clean house. He had two sons and a daughter. One of his sons was Robert's comrade when he was around four years old. People whispered that he had found Armand Jamet's dentist at home dead after a heart attack while Prevost was away from home. Their son, Guy, went to the same school as Robert and even there, the students talked about this unpleasant affair among themselves. Hélène Régnard then warned Robert not to marry (!) into this family although their daughter, Anne-Marie, went to the Sisters of Loreto school with Robert when they both were 9 years old. Hélène also warned other families to be wary of them 'because they included hemophiliacs,

⁷¹ James Robinson Fowler (1875-1952) was Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam's English teacher. Read his biography in *Dictionnaire de biographie Mauricienne / Dictionary of Mauritian Biography*, R. d'Unienville, Guy Rouillard, P. J. Barnwell, 1996, Issue 51, July, page 1614.

people with TB disease and even lepers (sic)'. It was, of course, inappropriate to marry divorcees in her opinion.

- Bérenger, the parents of the future Prime Minister, Paul Bérenger.
- Margéot, whose son, Jean, became bishop. Jean remained Robert Jamet's friend all his life.
- André Bonieux, one of Nemours' sons, who was married to Louise Marie 'Marthe' Harel (they had a son, Pierre, and a daughter). One of Louise's sisters had married Margéot, the father of Msgr. Margéot. The Margeot lived in Quatre Bornes and imported Willys cars. During the war, some jeeps were manufactured by Willys workshops (American) and bought by General Motors. A. Bonieux worked with his brother-in-law Desmarais in stevedoring.
- Edgar Bonieux, an elderly man, a grandson of Captain Jamet.
- Bouffé, relatives.
- Desmarais⁷², married to an Englishwoman.
- Le Clézio, a lawyer.
- Hardé.
- Avice du Buisson⁷³, related to Lemaire.
- de Saint Romain.
- Dauray.
- Bestel.
- Hogue.
- Dr. Leo Castel, a pensioner, who had delivered Armand Jamet in Trianon and whose name was given to a street in Quatre Bornes.
- Lagesse, a chemist on a Sugar Estate.
- de Chaumont, cousins.
- Rivalland, a pharmacist.
- Lailvaux, lived in Quatre Bornes but owned a grocery store in Rose-Hill.
- Ozoux, the nephew of Maurice Ozoux; married to one of the granddaughters of Lailvaux.
- Miss Gérard, a painter.
- Loumeaux, a chemist.
- Carbonel.
- Pascaut.
- Ithier⁷⁴.
- Ferriere, Miss.
- Perdriel, a professor.
- Harde, a pensioner.
- Loiseau, in the sugar industry.
- Lamusse.
- Duvivier, a Royal College Laureate who shared his scholarship with his brother and became a GP. Dr. Duvivier operated on Robert Jamet's tonsils at the age of 17.
- Lafleur, an eccentric watchmaker who had given his six daughters names of flowers. Tall and skinny, always dressed in black and with a tie, he wore glasses with a round steel frame and carried a suitcase in which he kept his oil dispensers.
- Mr. Worsfold, a painter.
- Miss Berthe Langlois, born Henriette Mélanie Berthe Latapie (1866-1945), a sugarcane farmer; her house was like a museum.

⁷² Fernand Desmarais (1874-1937), a brother of Gaston Desmarais, married Edith Hall (1878-1911). Then, as a widower, he married her sister, Angèle Ines Hall (1883-1975).

⁷³ Charles Belony Joseph Eugène Avice du Buisson 1872-1951. There was also a Tristan Avice.

⁷⁴ Waslay Ithier had studied at the Sorbonne, Paris, and returned to Mauritius with a Ph.D. in Mauritian literature. He was the first to show the depth and originality of this literature. He became a professor at the Royal College. Read: Ithier, Waslay, *La Littérature de langue française à l'Île Maurice* (Thèse Lettres, 1930).

- The three Collard ladies.
- Mr. Georges-Frédéric Feuilherade, a pensioner and a clarinetist whose sister, Marie-Elena Béatrice, was married to Marie-Joseph Georges Halbwachs (1856-1937), Simone's music teacher.
- Dr. Lincoln.



Olga Jamet, décembre 1944



Robert Jamet, août 1933



Andrée Jamet, 1950

- Hall.
- The Asher, English ladies with a well-kept house.
- The Robertson, English ladies with a glazed house.
- Mr. and Mrs. Denis Martin, a ship captain.
- Wilfred⁷⁵ Mayer (1872-1956), Auctioneer, Freemason, Anglican and a cousin of Harold Mayer, Madeleine de Chazal's husband. Hélène Jamet used to urge him to leave the Freemasonry shouting:
- 'Get out of there! You are in the hands of the Devil!'
He always replied doubled-up in laughter:
- 'No, Hélène! Come and see for yourself!'
- Bonieux, all related to the Jamet, very united and often gathered at Hésilda Dowson's in Curepipe.
- Naina, a 50-year-old Hindu, was the clothes washer. He had a laundry business behind his house and a dozen of clients. The back of his yard was filled with multi-colored Hindu buntings. His wife and children helped with his business.
- Soumarou, a hairdresser who cut Armand's hair.
- Rangoolam, the gardener. He had been part of a troop of circus acrobats.

⁷⁵ Wilfred and his brother Edward Edgar were both grandchildren of Edward Mayer the one who introduced the Swedenborgian teachings to Mauritius. The latter was married to Matilde, a sister of Edmond de Chazal, 'the Eternal Father'. Edward Edgar had been Grand Master of the Masonic Lodge several times as was Evenor de Chazal, his cousin. Wilfred and Edward Edgar ran an auctioneer company founded by their grandfather. Edwin was 'sworn auctioneer and Government Vendue-Master' i.e. an auctioneer or one who is authorized to sell any property by vendue, as well as 'General Commission Agent'.

- Various tradesmen who worked for the local residents: the knife grinder (a Creole), an umbrella repairer, a mattress maker, a roaster, a saddler, a wheelwright, a blacksmith, a bottle picker, a tinsmith who repaired the hanging edges of verandas, Chinese people who sold fabric or paraffin.

Around 1932, Armand invested in coconut groves in the Seychelles, in plantations which were to produce copra and oil. However, the Great Depression, fly-by-night partners and a crooked solicitor put an end to this venture. He started to lose a lot of money. Ironically, during the war there was a big demand for oil, and after some time, the coconut groves started to yield, but it was too late for Armand. At this juncture, Armand's life became more difficult to track. He became secretive too and said nothing about his business activities. His wife did not seem to know much about this aspect of his life nor did Robert who always hinted at knowing next to nothing.

Robert finished high school with flying colours and was accepted to the University of London (UCL). However, the family could no longer afford to pay for his studies. They had to sell everything and decided to emigrate to Madagascar where their daughter was going to get married soon. Armand first travelled to Europe alone in 1935 and stayed there for a year. Simone left Mauritius in 1936 with her two daughters and my father. Armand joined them in Madagascar at the end of 1936. Olga married Lionel de Lastelle at Antsirabe at the end of November 1936⁷⁶. Andrée married Jean Turpin, a Frenchman and a War Veteran, in 1949, and Robert, my father, married Winifred Pollett in 1938.

In Madagascar Armand and Simone lived off their savings for a few years, then they sold all the land they owned there and finally they founded an orchestra. In November 1941, Armand developed gross hematuria and fever compounded with uremia, i.e. severe kidney disease. He started to reflect on his life and asked for a priest. For some time then he had returned to the church. Two days after being given the last rites, on November 13, he drew his last breath. He was buried in Anjanary cemetery in Antananarivo. His mother Hélène died in January 1948 in Mauritius. Governor Sir Donald Mackenzie-Kennedy, who was absent from the island, sent his aide-de-camp to her funeral.

Olga died very young in 1952, closely followed by Andrée in 1958 at the age of 29. Robert left Madagascar in 1949 and Simone found herself alone in the country. The years of splendour were over and some difficult years began. She started to count her pennies. She was helped financially by her son, but it became rapidly clear that the old way of life had gone. She learned to be grateful for what she had received and to comfort those who had suffered from disappointments in life.

She taught music in Antananarivo and was active in her parish. She never really got used to her new life in Madagascar as she always felt she was a foreigner and besides, she badly missed her family. She was overwhelmed by the loss of her two daughters and with her grandchildren living abroad she nevertheless never complained. After their mother's death Jacques and Yves, Olga's very young sons, went to live in France. It was not until shortly before she died that she could see Yves again. She retained a sense of humour though and welcomed visits from her other grandsons. Around 1959, Simone returned to Mauritius and taught at the Sisters of Loreto in Curepipe. Through Cyril⁷⁷ de Chazal, the then director of the MBC, she gave radio broadcast. Then, she retired but continued to give private violin lessons. She kept close to her sisters and

⁷⁶ Olivier Alcide de Chazal, a son of Evenor, attended the wedding. He lived in Tamatave and ran an import-export business: Chazal-Rollo.

⁷⁷ Christopher's dad.

nieces who cared for and visited her. After 36 years of separation she had the joy of seeing her sister Denise again in 1971⁷⁸. Simone died in 1980⁷⁹.

All her life she never gossiped, she never complained, and she never took refuge in the past. She tasted some of the bitterness of life often, however, she never expressed any bitterness herself, as she never let this poison come anywhere near her heart.



Simone, Antananarivo 1945.

Just like Eos, the Greek rosy-fingered goddess personifying *dawn*, opening the gates of heaven for the Sun to start its race, so she bathed in light the child I was. Then she enlightened the difficult adolescent that I was and in the sunset of her life she threw her last lights just when another lighthouse was lighting in my life.

She was the humble heart I used to call ‘granny’.

⁷⁸ See photo below. Denise had left Mauritius in 1934 and didn’t come back until 1971.

⁷⁹ Sometime after her funeral, I watched a performance of André Campra's *Requiem* (1723). This Requiem is a serene work, full of hope and from which the *Dies Irae* is absent.



**The sisters, L to R: Denise Stafford-Mayer, Alix Cugnet, Odette Lemaire.
Sitting: Madeleine Mayer, Simone and Lily Vigier de Latour.
Rivière Noire, Tamarin, 1971.**



Simone, Alix, Odette, Robert Jamet⁸⁰, Lily, Winifred Jamet⁸¹ and Madeleine, 1973.

⁸⁰ My father. Odette will pass away the following year.

⁸¹ My mother.



Simone and Jacques de Lastelle du Pré, a grandson, Mauritius, 1977.



Marie-Caroline Adélaïde Lenferna de Larese⁸² and Marie Jamet⁸³.

Robert Jamet July 2020.

⁸²Diocese of Port Louis. <https://www.dioceseportlouis.org/2017/08/28/semaine-dactivites-autour-de-la-fondatrice-de-la-congregation-du-bps-mere-augustine/mere-augustine/>

⁸³ Jean Paul Getty Museum. <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/39482/nadar-gaspard-felix-tournachon-superieure-petites-soeurs-des-pauvres-french-1860-1865/>

