

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Kathleen and I feel immense appreciation to the people of Burundi for sharing themselves and extending their friendship to us, and to President Bill Clinton, who assigned me as ambassador to Burundi and who continuously expressed personal support for my actions there, even when some people in the State Department questioned them. Together they have given us a life-enriching experience.

Following our departure from Burundi, Kathleen spent many midnight hours reviewing home videos of our time there, consulting her diary and re-visiting documents and conversations as she began writing an account of our family's experience in that treasured but troubled land. As she was completing her manuscript, I had occasion to visit Merton College, Oxford, where I had earned my doctorate many years ago. When I related some of my observations and experiences in Burundi to the Merton Professor of English Literature, Dr. John Carey, he said, "You've written about this, haven't you, Bob?" I replied that I hadn't, since my time was currently fully occupied as ambassador to Botswana. "Once you finish that assignment, let me know, and we will give you a position as visiting research fellow at Merton to write about Burundi. This is a story that must be told."

When I returned to Botswana a few days later, Kathleen very generously suggested, "Why don't we do a book together?" We agreed that offering two perspectives—that of a mother rearing children amid genocide and satisfying the many responsibilities of a diplomatic spouse, and that of an ambassador seeking to assist in preserving what could be saved of Burundi's fragile democratic institutions—would offer a more complete, and we hoped a more engaging, picture than could be provided by either of us alone.

When our family arrived in Oxford a year later, the assistance of many people in that venerable university and the special hospitality of the warden, fellows, and administrative staff of Merton College were exceptional and deeply appreciated. Not only did John Carey review and offer encouragement

and helpful advice for our manuscript, but so did many of the old Mertonians with whom I had studied forty years ago. Three in particular gave their time and suggestions as our manuscript was being prepared: Oliver Miles, who served the UK in three ambassadorial posts; Tony Nuttall, fellow of New College; and Joe McDonald, a classicist now retired after many years of teaching. Mauro de Lorenzo of Linacre College brought to me his extensive knowledge of central Africa on many occasions and his impeccable French, as he accompanied me to Belgium to interview Mme Laurence Ndadaye, the widow of Burundi's assassinated president. Frances Wickes, who served as my incomparable personal secretary in Washington, Burundi, Botswana, and Oxford, offered help in many ways, for many years.

The generous assistance of these friends was but one more reminder of the depth of my lifelong debt to Oxford University, and to my college, now almost 750 years old, which graciously accepted a young man from a small town in Texas, many years ago, and offered me an opportunity to expand my horizons, nurturing my aspirations and never belittling my failings. Many of the roots, the cultivation, and the fruits of this book are grounded in Merton College, an institution to which I am deeply grateful.

Finally, although I owe thanks to countless Burundians who in many ways made this book possible, I shall here publicly mention only one, my good friend, the former foreign minister, and now member of Parliament, Jean-Marie Ngendahayo. We lived next door to one another, were side-by-side when assassins sought to kill us both, and have remained in touch through all the years since. He not only shared information and experience available nowhere else, but read our entire manuscript, correcting my errors with patience and goodwill. He is a true patriot and a great servant of democracy in Burundi. And Kathleen and I are proud to be considered his friends.