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Agnes Leakey Hofmeyr . . . a remarkable story to tell. ● Picture by Wayne Fisher.

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A salute to Kenya's fabled Leakey family

A visitor to the Stoeep recently was Agnes Leakey Hofmeyr, on her way to Europe with her husband Bremer Hofmeyr to promote her engrossing book, "Beyond Violence" just published by Grosvenor Books.



Stoeep Talk

OLGA HOROWITZ

In combining fine writing with unusual personal experience, Mrs Hofmeyr follows in the great traditions of the famous Leakey family of Kenya.

Among them was Louis Leakey, the elder son of a missionary couple working among the Kikuyu, who became one of Africa's most famous authorities on prehistoric archaeology and paleontology.

Louis and his wife, Dr Mary, also an archaeologist, are today followed by their three sons, all closely identified with Kenya in their pursuit of science.

Jonathan is a snake farmer who sends snake serum abroad. Richard, heir to the renowned name in anthropology, is Kenya's outspoken director of wildlife conservation, while Philip is the only white man in the Kenyan Parliament.

Now, in "Beyond Violence", Agnes Leakey Hofmeyr has woven together the threads of an astonishing and absorbing series of events in the history of another branch of the family.

Agnes is the daughter of Gray Leakey, a first cousin of Louis Leakey. He came to Kenya in 1908 to help his uncle, Louis Leakey's missionary father, to build the church and school for the mission at Limuru.

Agnes, born in Kenya, inherited, like all the Leakeys, a passion for wildlife, and had a marvellous childhood there.

She went to school in England but found her life's task in Africa where, above all else, she achieved a per-

sonal perception and philosophy in the field of human relations.

After World War 2 she married South African Bremer Hofmeyr in England. As soon as possible they returned to Africa, living in South Africa but spending much of their time in East Africa as workers for Moral Rearmament.

In the early '50s the violence of Mau Mau erupted in Kenya. A prophetess of the Mau Mau decreed that "a good white man" must be offered to their gods as a human sacrifice.

Because the author's father was held in honour by the Kikuyu he was chosen, abducted and buried alive on Mount Kenya.

In this true narrative, the author battles through dark days to come to terms with disaster. Within a year she is back in Kenya in the midst of the war with the Mau Mau.

Visiting a Mau Mau detention camp she begins to understand some of the things the whites have done to alienate the blacks.

Some of the Mau Mau return to their Christian faith, and Agnes and her husband work with them to bring healing to Africa. Some years later a former Mau Mau man opens his heart to Agnes and she learns he was one of the committee that planned her father's death.

He also tells her how, later, he helped to get her cousin Philip Leakey elected as the only white member and a junior minister in the Kenya parliament.

Back in South Africa she and her husband helped to start an action for all races with large inter-racial assemblies — an unusual concept at the time.

The story, very personal, is very timely.

Agnes says: "In South Africa today the stakes are so high that nothing should be withheld if it might in any way help the estranged peoples of our country to find one another in the new South Africa."

"Beyond Violence" is superbly titled. It is a story of hurt, hate — and profoundly moving faith and hope.