

# LIVING

## Some Revealing Remarks by the "Obsession Band"

by Fayza Haq

JUN N Patulot, the leader of the "Obsession Band", explained the choice for the name of his band. He said, "as the world over, people are 'obsessed' with the best genre of music, wherever and whenever they get the opportunity to hear it, the group chose its name".

Asked how the band managed to form a group, each member coming from different parts of the Philippines, Jun said, "The members are professional ones; they are provided by an agent from Manila, who assembles good talents, and who is good to work with. I met the girls at the office of the same agent, Mr Martinez, who organizes promotion bands."

Jun has been working for more than ten years now. He has worked in places such as Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, China and Italy. Apart from music he is also interested in sports, as a form of relaxation. Prompted and goaded to put in a few words, he added, "I have picked up my music from the radio, the video and the television. At our performances, some of our songs are, naturally, requested by our guests."

Renato Escobar, saying a few words in the forty-minute respite, that the band was allowed (within which they had to rest, and touch up their make-up) and having been asked about how long the four members of the band practised together, explained, "We have had individual practices, and we practise together as often as we can." Asked if the practices were sufficient for them he laughed a little, somewhat nervously, and said, "We feel that is enough." He added, "It would have been better if we had the opportunity to have practised together more often." He explained that his band had been adjusting to the new and unexpected situation in Bangladesh.

Speaking about his own country, he added, "Look at the girls, for instance, are they not beautiful? Philippines is just like that." The group had enjoyed buying souvenirs to take home, such as hand-rafts, Renato said.

Asked as how, coming from a third world country, the band had managed to play almost as well as many of the bands of western countries who sometimes believe that



Members of the "Obsession Band"



Brenda and Alida seen both dancing and singing

Photo: Amran Hossain

they supersede the east) he said, "It is not an easy task, I admit. We wish to play at different countries, the world over. Another factor that motivates us is that we must earn a living."

Renato admitted that most band players at bars, as is universally known, are part-time musicians. "I am an electrician, when I do moonlighting, and also work sometimes as a chauffeur or even a cook," he said.

He added, "My idols are Van Halen and Jimmy Hendrix. I play not on the guitar but also the drums, the saxophone, and keyboards." He felt that he could handle the four instruments adequately, given the correct time and place. He continued, "Mark the fact that it is not easy to shift from, say, a keyboard to a guitar. Therefore, I sometimes need to even practise an instrument 20 hours a day."

Brenda Hestand, with her large mole on the cheek of her angular face (and who, both sang and danced for the band), said, with her cream-on-coffee voice and an American accent and diction, like the rest of her colleagues, "I learnt to dance and sing as a child, at the age of nine. I was included in all my school's musical programmes."

Brenda began singing professionally in '87, when she was twenty-four years old. She has been in Malaysia, Taiwan, Indonesia and Hawaii. This was her first experience with "The Obsession Band". Her contract with her agent in Manila lasts for two years.

Adila A Ege, with her hair-length jet-black, obviously more confident about performing at a command performance, which one happened to witness, explained that the band members practised at a private home, and then, managed to get to know each other.

"In Bangladesh," she said, "the band did not feel quite at home, as we were limited to our allotted place in the hotel. We seldom went out, under the circumstances". She added, "Manila's culture is totally different from that of Bangladesh. Back home, we tend to be 'open' and there is a lot of entertainment there. It is nothing like Dhaka. During our day off, in our country, we

have various entertainments. On the other hand, our band has failed to have been exposed to any cultural activities in Dhaka. Here, at our hotel, at Dhaka, we see nobody but just us."

"When we went out in Dhaka, dressed as we did, we felt different from the rest of the people," she continued to say.

She informed me about the frequent visitors at the club of the local hotel, where the band had recently performed. They are foreigners, and Bangladeshi men, usually businessmen, who sometimes bring along their ladies."

Adila concluded by saying that the band members would have enjoyed performing more at Dhaka, if there had been more ladies in the audience, as occurs at most bars back in Manila, and the places abroad, which the band had the opportunity to visit. "The people in Dhaka have warmth and charm," the band members said, in conclusion, as goes the favourite comment of visitors from abroad. This band had been performing at the bar, of a local hotel for a month.

It would be wrong to judge the performance of the "Obsession Band" harshly, if one compared it to say, the ones that accompany Madonna's or Michael Jackson's live performances on stage. Even if one compared it with that of an open concert held fairly recently, at another local hotel; or even another one, held, also fairly recently, at Alliance Francese, not so long ago; it would suffer severely. The local bands, that one has watched on BTV, are certainly far superior to the "Obsession Band". Even the bolero type costume, shoes and the earnings that, the ladies wore, were unmatching ones. Yet, the band members tried their level best to please.

Despite their limited experience, with no earlier exposure to any press, they were lively and quick-witted. They had a charm of their own. One realises this, when one compares their command over the English language; over, say, some other band from overseas, that one has spoken to in the recent past. From their first performance of "I just called to say" to the last one, "Lambada," took one away to one's recent past, with its popular "hit" songs.

## French Gastronomy in Rome

by Camille Herisson

**There is nothing unusual in finding a French restaurant in Rome. But "Living Water" is enough to have amused Stendhal if, on his wanderings through the Eternal City, he had chanced that way.**

THERE are small double doors in Via Moritone, near the Pantheon, in the heart of Rome's historical centre. They open in the imposing facade of a palace, built in the 15th century, for the Della Rovere family which provided Christianity with two pontiffs.

The doors lead to the former stables of Julius II, where their vaulted ceilings and whitewashed walls. The peaceful, muffled atmosphere contrasts with the noisy bustle in the Roman street.

The institution was founded 25 years ago, by a French priest with a missionary spirit, Marcel Roussel-Galle, who comes from Franche-Comte and is called "Living Water". There is a dual purpose in opening restaurants: That of spreading the good word and promoting French cooking. The founder, who is fond of good food, knew that a convivial gathering, at well-filled tables, is propitious to dialogues and receptive to messages.

Those in Via Moritone no longer risk anything. At the most, they sometimes angelically put up with mischievous smiles from the customers, who take to "gluttony" — a capital sin — according to Christianity.

The women of "Living Water" in Rome, come from twelve nationalities: French, Zairian, Argentinian, Peruvian, etc. Under their white aprons, they wear their national costumes: African and Wallisian women in multi-coloured wraps, Vietnamese women in tunics, Philippine women in embroidered dresses, etc. It is a palette of colours which adds to the pleasantness of the place.

### How Women do the Cooking

Jacqueline, a woman of about fifty, from the Pyrenees, presides over the destiny of the restaurant. In the kitchen, virgins, some of whom followed courses at the "Cordon Bleu" school in Paris, conjure up specialities of French cuisine, with such regional delights as *delices du Dauphine*, *feuilletes d'escargots au Chablis*, *terrine Quercycoise*, *flan d'asperge fide-France*, *coquelet a la*

*jurassienne*, *canard a l'orange*, etc.

Without any complex, on occasions they make the dishes of the most famous French chefs such as Robuchon, Lenotre and Olympe. "We take care to keep up to date with the most recent recipes and we feast our clients at very reasonable prices," says Jacqueline. They are highly successful, judging by their very eclectic faithful customers.

The restaurant is very popular. Politicians, senators, deputies and diplomats eat together with prelates of importance. Karol Wojtyla, the archbishop of Cracow, used to eat there when passing through Rome, before he became the Pope.

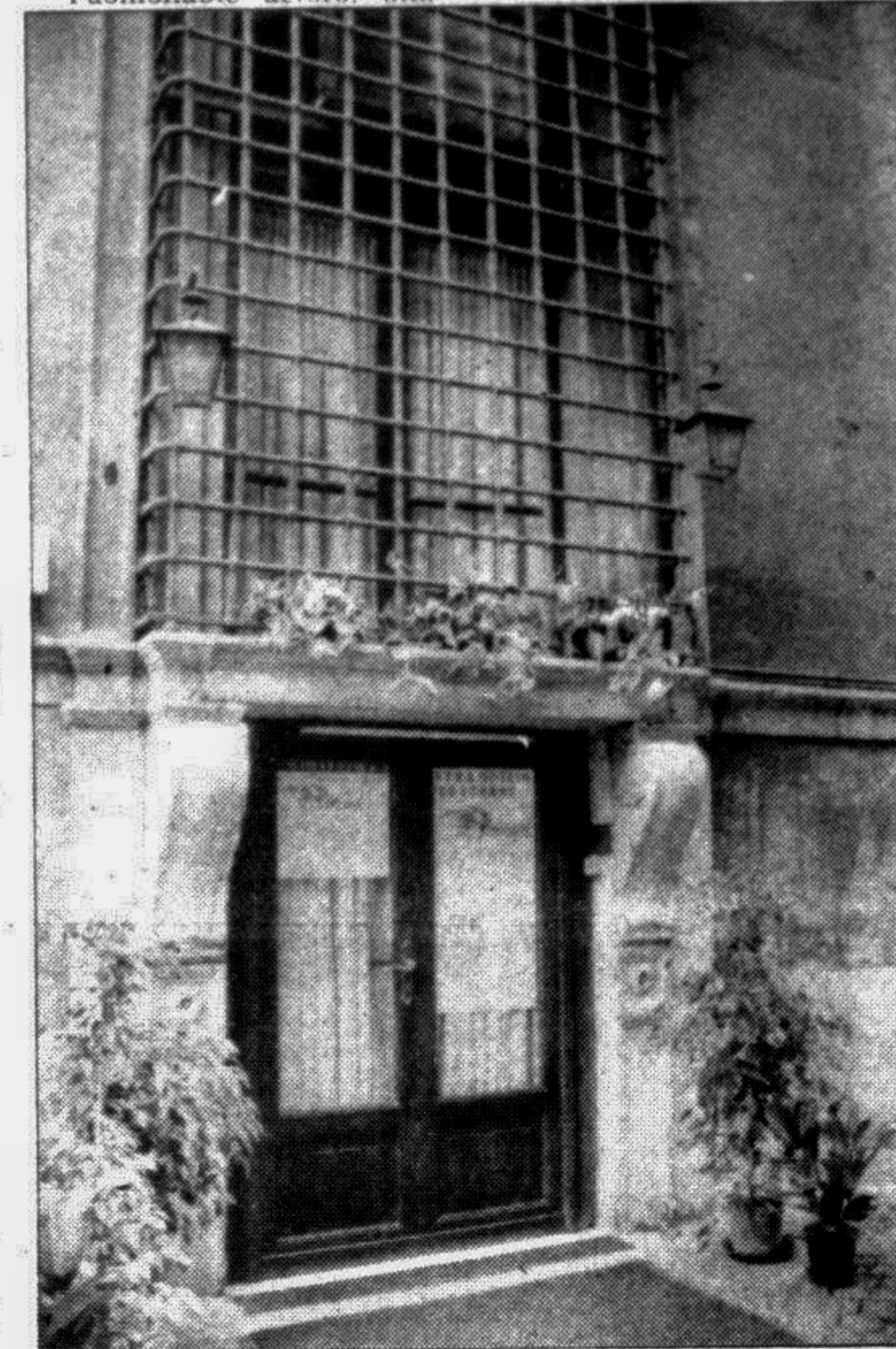
Fashionable actors, and

famous film-makers such as Fellini and Zaffirelli, and producers and directors of Italian radio and television (RAI) get together at the restaurant.

At "Living Water," up to 200 meals are served a day, not counting weddings and banquets. It is a successful business. The profits are firstly used for the community. The remainder goes to opening other establishments. There are already half a dozen of them in the world.

A final surprise for the uninitiated is that, on the stroke of ten, a waitress goes from table to table, serving the diners who are invited to join those gathered on the threshold of the kitchen.

— Courtesy AFP



The French restaurant "Living Water"

Photo: John Swannell

## Tracing Down the Traditional "Sari"

by Anita A Mueyed

TODAY, in Dhaka, we witness two garments, worn in the Subcontinent, sometimes the *dhoti* worn by men, and the *sari* worn by women. If we trace the genesis of these clothes we realize that, how much we have diverged and created our own Muslim identity, while our Hindu heritage still follows closely.

While travelling back in time, in pursuit of the evolution of our traditional Bangladeshi costume, through layers of fabric and time, we unfold a picturesque blend of two beautiful cultures — both Hindu and Muslim.

The ancient origin of these graceful garbs is verifiable in sculptured reliefs dating back as far as the second century BC.

In these, and slightly later reliefs, some of which can be observed at the Dhaka Museum today, both men and women are depicted as wearing a long piece of cloth wrapped around the hips, and drawn between the legs, in such a fashion that it forms a series of folds down the front. The upper bodies of both men and women are bare, with women wrapping a narrow cloth girdle around the waist. Men are sometimes pictured as wearing large turbans, while women with head scarves that fall elegantly to the hips. Women in the past usually wore a great amount of jewelry on their bodies — bracelets, necklaces, anklets, and girdles. Men's ornaments consist solely of bracelets.

No major change of costume seem to have taken place before the twelfth century AD, before the Muslims conquered north and central India. In what is now Bangladesh, radi-

cal new dress styles were adopted to conform with Muslim practice, which required that the body be covered as completely as possible. Men's costumes, thereafter, consisted of the *jama*, a long sleeved coat that reached to the knees or below and was belted with a sash, and wide trousers. These garments and a long, gown-like coat with short sleeves, which was worn by priests, scholars, and high officials, were made of cotton or wood. Somewhat modified, these attires continue to be worn by upper class men of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Of these many altered forms, the male wedding costume in Dhaka is reminiscent of the original suit.

Women's garments, determined by the Muslim conquerors, accordingly, consisted of wide-topped trousers, snugly fitted around the calves of the legs, a long shirtlike garment, and a short one fitted outer jacket. Highborn women, spending their lives in seclusion, spent a considerable amount and money to their costumes. And they still do, whether in sequestration or not. The Mughal Emperor Akbar's Rajput wives, inspired by the profusion of luxurious fabrics, especially silk available in India, designed a graceful new style of dress, which Muslim women adopted forthwith.

This guise would be the predecessor to our undergarments, the blouse; the petticoat and after a series of subsequent modifications, the revival of the *sari*. This costume consisted of an open-front pleated skirt, or *ghagra*, worn with a long apronlike panel, over the front opening, and a short-sleeved, breast length

jacket. This attire continues to be basic element of Bangladeshi Muslim women's dress. With time, the loose front

panel had been replaced by the traditional *sari*, which is worn as an overgarment, one end draped around the hips, the other carried up over the shoulder or head.

Today, millions wear and cherish this beautiful garb which has been handed down to us through centuries of peace, war, harmony and artistic creativity.



Full pleated Moghul-style waisted shirt in white cotton "khadi". The front panel and hem are embroidered in white silk, thread, and mirrors. This is worn over a white "shalwar" with pin tucks.



Cool pink cotton "khadi" sleeveless short shirt worn over a pin-tucked shalwar. The sleeveless shirt has silver bead and pearl embroidered down along the front panel. The shoulders are embroidered.

Courtesy: Libas International

## Rollercoasting in Life

by A S M Nurunnabi

COMING to terms with the death of a loved one, a divorce, a critical illness or loss of a job is always painful. Yet, there are some individuals who move through such transitions with comparative ease. How do they manage this?

Experienced psychologists, who have studied human behaviour and the process of change, have identified distinctive strategies for coping with life.

1. **Optimism pays:** A popular misconception is that optimism pays. In many cases, experience has shown that it is the pessimist who is the worst cope the one blinded by a negative attitude to viable solutions. The optimist proves to be happier, healthier, and a better problem-solver. Optimists believe that things will improve and so they behave accordingly. These people turn whatever situation they are in to their own advantage. Of course, some situations are so awful that it is difficult to view them with hope or put up a good face.

Jabin Khan was 35 year-old, when her husband died unexpectedly, leaving her with two young daughters. "After the grief of my husband's death," says Jabin, "came a wave of terror. How could I survive without any asset, left by my husband, to provide for my children? I worried until I realised I was wasting energy."

Luckily for her, she got a share of her father's property: a small flat. She had also a post-graduate degree in Sociology. Taking these as her only assets, she began tutoring a small group of school children at her flat. This provided her the means of bare livelihood. As she says, "I live a day at a time — no 'Five-Year-Plan' or even a 'One-year plan'! 'I just a plan for each day'."

This approach keeps her

from being overwhelmed by her present situation of "breaking things down into segments, as little as fifteen minutes, and helps her cope with life today. The question becomes not, "How can I get along for the rest of my life?" but "How can I get along for the next fifteen minutes?" This encourages people to stop worrying and begin working.

**Tips on how to handle the vicissitudes, which crop up during every day life. The trick is to be optimistic, and to keep a stiff upper chin. No matter how grave the situations is, it can be overcome, with wit and will. Hope and endeavour are two elements that one should never abandon.**

This approach now helps Jabin, to gradually gain, in course of time, a steady buildup of self-confidence. Her educational qualifications ultimately helped her to get a responsible job in an NGO.

Jabin once doubted that she would come to terms with the death of her husband. She gradually began to realise that she had got used to her loss. "How can I live without him?" helplessness began to fade, when she saw herself organising her official work, raising her own children, and running the household.

2. **Keeping your faith:** Most psychiatrists consider this a vital ingredient of the resilience that is needed to cope with a personal crisis. Faith fosters hope. Prayer reminds us that there can be a design for our lives that we may not fully grasped, but we can live

up to it if we move with events as they come. Individuals, in crisis often share a sense of "being tested," the purposes and rewards of which, are revealed only much later — if ever.

3. **Take a stock:** Being hopeful doesn't mean being blind. Success in coping depends on accurately analysing the situation. Our basic beliefs are helpful but they don't change realities.

4. **Take an inventory of your assets:** In a crisis the practical role of money is often overlooked. Money is extremely important in difficult circumstances. It increases one's options. For instance, someone unemployed, but with money in the bank, can say, wait for a more suitable job offer, instead of accepting the first opportunity, that comes along.

Relatives, friends and neighbours, who can offer advice and moral support are another asset. There is, perhaps, no more effective way to relieve psychic pain than to be in contact with another human being, who understands what you are going through.

Not everyone benefits from every crisis, and not many go through the strengthening experience of change successfully, emerging better prepared to meet whatever challenge comes their way. The important thing to remember is that it is not commitment to a particular strategy that makes the difference, it is the commitment to mobilising one's resources, to try to do new things. Expect trouble as an inevitable part of life; and when it comes, hold your head high, and say, "I will not accept defeat." Then repeat to yourself the most comforting of all words in a grave or perplexing situation, "This too shall pass."

### Cookery

#### Milk Chocolate Cake

175g self-raising flour (7 oz)  
200g caster sugar (8 oz)  
1x2.5 ml spoon salt (1/2 tsp)  
25g cocoa (1 oz)  
100g margarine (4 oz)  
2 eggs beaten with 75 ml evaporated milk (5 tbsp)

75 ml water (5 tbsp)  
few drops vanilla essence.  
1 Sieve flour, sugar, salt and cocoa.

2 Rub in margarine.  
3 Stir in eggs, essence and liquid; beat well.  
4 Grease and flour 2x20.5 cm tins, not loose-bottomed as the mixture would run out; divide mixture between them.  
5 Bake in a moderate oven, 180° C, 350°F, Gas mark 4 for about 30-35 minutes. — S.L.