From the boardroom to the corridors of power

Joe Wanjui's story

P.4-5
In December 2009.
m NJambi, in 2009.

Wanjui

was particularly relevant at a time when reports of further demands amounting to Sh3 billion.

brought down the Kibaki administration. President Uhuru

Party founder members'; "Muthaiga Golf

Champagne" after supposedly fixing Gi-

turns.

It’s Our

and his friends - supposedly part of a

growing up between what is now Kiambu

County and N’iRo- where he lived with

his mother and siblings after his parents

separated — Wanjui started his basic ed-
cuation in Kihoho in 1945 and ended it in

Naivobi where he had gone to live with his

brother James Mbatia. He later attended

Glenmore Boys High School, and joined Naivobi

High School between 1951-1957.

But it is a decision he took after com-

pleting high school that some would have

considered irrational: he declined a chance
to join the prestigious Makerere University

in Uganda, the only such institution in the

region then, much to the dismay of the

British colonialists. Instead, he saw better

discriminination was rife.

but life abroad was not easy, especially for a rural African

man in a country where racial dis-

crimination was back home in colonial

Kenya.

Wanjui says: "America can be an intimi-
dating place, especially for a rural African

man. His involvement in capital venture

Investment also provides useful lessons.

As he his career grew from the 1960s, so

did his family. The couple had two more

children, Linus and Amos. By 1972, he

and Elizabeth had been married for 25

years, with whom he has a son, Joseph Wan-

jui. "For Wanjui to travel to America, the

opening of a window to Kenya’s history.

the anthropology of the Agikuyu and the

life of a public figure and inspire the spirit

of entrepreneurship, but also because of

relationship. But at the same time his story

tells more of what Kenya could have been

- or still could be - with the establishment

of an effective regulatory environment.

Kenya: ‘I could not honestly say my

marriage was heaven’ did not last and they divorced in 1972.

At some point, the relationship began to get strained. Neither Elizabeth nor I found it easy to put a finger on what exactly went wrong. Was it the pressure of our careers, combined with that of the new life we had suddenly been thrust into? Or was it our expectations and fear of failure? I do not know," he writes.

After bringing up the children as a single parent, he later remarried Anne Njambi ki-

arie, with whom he has a son, Joseph Wan-

jui, and a daughter, Jean-Anne Wanjui. He,

however, remarried and divorced Elizabeth until her death in 1998. Wanjui represents the pioneer African Kenyan capitalist class with a global connection.

But at the same time his story tells more of what Kenya could have been — or still could be — with the establishment of an effective regulatory environment.

Key events

- The birth of twins in Naivobi near Nairobi in 1960

- Wanjui was born in 1937.

- He married Anne Njambi Maria before his first marriage was dissolved.

- The book is available at the University of Nairobi bookshop and other outlets at Sh2,000.
The former University of Nairobi Chancellor is one of the pioneer Kenyan decision-makers who have influenced the direction of both business and politics since independence. He shares his experiences in his latest autobiography

I CAN IMAGINE THE RAW, PERSONAL FEELINGS OF BETRAYAL OF THOSE WHO FOUND OUT THEY HAD BEEN SURREPTITIOUSLY TYPED BY JOHN. THE AUTHORITY WHO GAVE JOHN THE STATE HOUSE JOB MUST HAVE FELT EQUALLY BETRAYED

The give and take of democracy is always messy. Yet in the end, it is the most liberating factor of all, he writes.

I am not a politician, but the ethos and spirit of free enterprise is an insight into the policies and philosophies that drive business, trade and industry, he also inevitably captures some of the country's most critical political moments.

Wanjui, whose most recent role has been as Chancellor of the University of Nairobi from where he holds an honorary doctorate, has seen four Kenyan presidents since Independence, but his perceived influence during Mwai Kibaki's time fundraising to build schools and promoting education, at the same time "drowned strange assertion to educated people."

"He was more comfortable surrounding himself with cronies who had barely gone to school like Ezekiel Barrack, et thet. Karuki Chotara and Mulu Muluayu, writes Wanjui."

This may have reflected on Kenya's policies for decades, even though he admits Moi is a pleasant man at a personal level. "Moi may not have been like (Uganda's) Idi Amin, but his obsession with political survival and his lack of economic imagination drove Kenya to its lowest post-Independence level, just as Amin did with Uganda," he writes, criticizing the killing of investment during the Nyayo era.

Wanjui acknowledges the transformative power of Kibaki's 10 years in office. The new Constitution, economic progress, big infrastructure projects, freedoms, regional integration, free primary education, and improved tax collection are among the highlights.

But he does not shy away from tackling head-on one of the most high-profile corruption controversies in Kenya's history. Wanjui is scathing in his description of John Githongo, the Narc anti-corruption czar who would later metastasize into a whistle-blower — or traitor to some.

By way of background, Wanjui also reveals a "little-known secret" about the origins of Transparency International, the respected global anti-corruption watchdog: it was conceived in Kenya before Europe adopted it.

"I can imagine the raw, personal feelings of betrayal of those who found out they had been surreptitiously typed by John. The authority who gave John the state house job must have felt equally betrayed."

Dr Joseph Barrage Wanjui with his daughters Chamie (right) and Ciru on Friday.

I will not go into the details of the job. President Kibaki was to later form the Grand Coalition Government in 2008 with Odinga as PM in the wake of the post-election violence.

Nonetheless, Wanjui believes that Kenyans have become so used to Moi's dictatorship for more than two decades that when President Kibaki took over in 2003, they had trouble adjusting to the new reality and kept asking, "Why isn't the President speaking? Why isn't he coming to the table?" writes Wanjui. But this father-son relationship started unraveling in 2003 after Githongo, who was appointed the Government Ethics PS under Narc, got to work at State House Wanjui says they often spoke but did not get into the details of the job.

"What I remember him doing most of the time he came along was to rust something in Kikuyu to the effect that at Kikuyu (things are hot) which I took to mean he was encountering resistance in the course of his work," he writes.

Githongo'sJar was to be spectacularly and shortly fall out with the Narc administration in 2006 over the Anglo Leasing scandal, which he alleged some senior State officials were involved in. He resigned and fled to London fearing for his life. He later leaked to the BBC recorded conversations with then Justice Minister Kiraitu Murungi an dossier suggesting high level corruption.

In The Native Son, Wanjui does no hide his disdain for Githongo for his being unethical by secretly recording conversations with people who trusted him with access to "sensitive moments.""I can imagine the raw, personal feelings of betrayal of those who found out they had been surreptitiously tape