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# noseweek

ISSUE 233 MARCH 2019

**Shark spotting**  
Zuma and Myeni  
in shallow water

**'Outlier'** plastic  
surgeon gets on  
hospital's tits

**Guptas'** Eskom  
man now in  
dagga venture  
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*The incredible*  
**Watsons**





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ISSUE 233 • MARCH 2019



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# Letters

Letters to the editor should be sent by email to [editor@noseweek.co.za](mailto:editor@noseweek.co.za)

## Good reasons for police to reopen Lotz murder investigation

THERE ARE MANY REASONS FOR THE POLICE and NPA to reopen the Lotz murder investigation:

1. To fully clear Fred van der Vyver's name.
2. To bring the murderer to court and to extract justice; he has no right to expect that poor police work should set him free.
3. Police officers and witnesses guilty of perjury should be appropriately dealt with.

Inge Lotz deserves the truth regardless of who is hurt in the process.

**HKGK**  
Bloemfontein

*The book contains a fair amount of conjecture with which one might easily disagree, but there's no doubt the police and prosecution's handling of the case was scandalous. Ideally the investigation should be resumed for the sake of justice, but the chances of finding new evidence that will stand up in court so many years after the event, is small. – Ed.*

■ I'VE READ A BOOK BY ANTONY ALTBEKER, *Fruit of a poisoned tree*, describing much of the botched "evidence" by the State's

"experts" and also quoting verbatim from court records. The book ends with some surprising facts and other very possible suspects who were plainly ignored and "buried" in silence. This horrific crime is crying out for justice to be served.

**Anne-marie de Villiers**  
Gordon's Bay

■ RE-OPEN THE CASE. JUSTICE WAS NOT served. Is the name of the guest, "Mr X", divulged in Elsdon's book?

**Mike Turner**  
Randburg

*No. Much of what it is suspected he might have done is based on conjecture rather than provable fact so far. And he is but one of a number of possible suspects. – Ed.*

■ I RECALL TWO FOREIGN WORKERS (FROM Mozambique?) being mentioned in the initial reports as having worked in the building on the day of the murder. It seems they simply disappeared without being questioned.

**Sybrand Adema**  
By email

*Two tilers replacing broken tiles, and three general construction workers*

*were at the site that day. The tilers, both foreign nationals, had finished their job and left at about 1pm.*

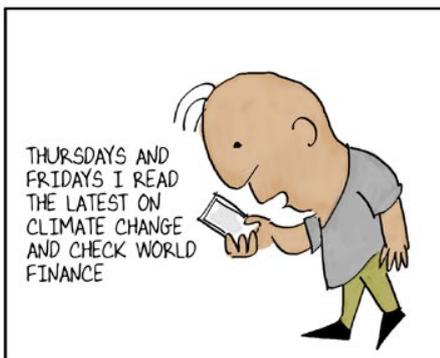
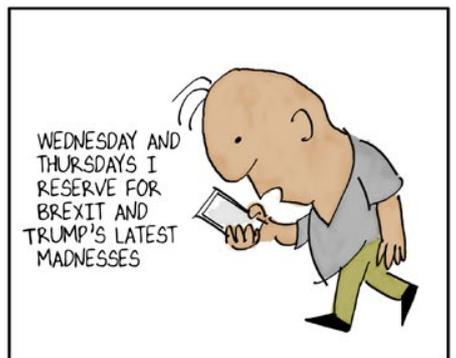
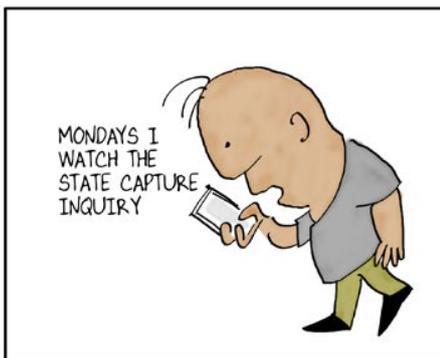
*They gave the police statements in which they stated that they had seen a white woman (presumably Inge) arrive at her apartment shortly before they left. Their fingerprints were taken and none matched any fingerprints found in the apartment.*

*The same happened with the three construction workers. They had left the site only at about 4pm. Two said they had seen Inge arrive in a silver Golf shortly before they left. The third had not.*

*When the judge asked in court if they were going to be called as witnesses, the police said they were unable to trace them as their employer had closed down and they were foreign nationals.*

*In fact all three were locals, one of whom was said by police to have seen Inge arrive at about 4pm. That person, "Alfred", has since been traced by Elsdon.*

*Alfred recalled having been interviewed by police on that day, but denied having given a statement at all, or having seen Inge arrive. – Ed.*



**Stent**

# Letters

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## Buying respectability

REGARDING THE STADIUM BOSS WHO BOUGHT vanity awards for image enhancement, thank you for the most interesting and entertaining article. Well done on the thorough research. Your readers welcome diversions of this nature.

**Neil de Jager**  
Sandton

■ RE “DR HON”, THERE ARE DOZENS OF them! I have a friend who bought her honorary doctorate for R5,000 online. She didn't even have to pitch for the awards ceremony... the certificate was posted to her. It helped her to secure a job in a government department.

**M.H.**  
Stellenbosch

■ ONE WONDERS HOW MANY PURCHASED “doctorates” are in the higher positions of government, business and even academia in RSA.

**Dr (Hon)**  
Plettenberg Bay

## SARS Rogue Unit and tall stories

MORE HOCUS-POCUS. IT DOES HOWEVER confirm what I've been saying all along – that captured multi-agency tobacco task team members were behind the initial attacks on me and on SARS. Their motive was simple – a dead cat strategy: deflect, accuse. Anything to prevent their sins from being exposed. A one-sided affair, as per usual. No opportunity to put my side to the bogus accusations.

Wouldn't have suited at the time, you see? But truth will out, one way or another, regardless of how long it may take. I don't attach any value to this so-called IGI report. It's biased, wrong and flawed. How come nobody asks what were the 34 (some of the original 38, by agreement, were clustered) matters I wished to canvass in my evidence [request denied] and who were the 64 people I advised should be interviewed – and more importantly, why?

**Johann van Loggerenberg**

*While the Inspector General of Intelligence's refusal to investigate the motives of those testifying against you clearly emerges from her report – and is*

*indicative of bias (as was her all-too-ready acceptance of the bald denials of the spy agency witnesses, one after the other), it is also true that her main brief was to investigate the legitimacy of your unit and its spying activities, not theirs. It might similarly be argued that your requesting to call 64 witnesses was a strategy to “throw sand in the gearbox” and effectively derail the commission from its task.*

*At Noseweek we believe in the sunshine test: publish what was in the IGI's report so that readers can judge for themselves.*

*Your comment proves the point. Tell us more about those 34 matters and 64 witnesses. – Ed.*

■ HAS IQBAL SURVÉ TAKEN OVER NOSEWEEK with more PIC money? There must be some reason for the fake news splat from *Noseweek*.

**Carole Ann Sherratt**  
Cape Town

*Sadly you appear to function on cheap prejudice peddled on Facebook. The IGI's report might be wrong, but it is real and needs to be dealt with openly. – Ed.*

■ IT HAS BEEN PROVEN OVER AND OVER AGAIN that the “rogue unit” was a fallacy dreamt up in the corridors of Luthuli House.

You could start building credibility by researching and reporting on the ANC and its dubious actions over the last 24 years? Or are you, too, receiving funds from the friends of Zuma and Moyane?

**Jeanette Noble**  
Cape Town

*Jeanette Noble, meet Carole Ann Sherratt. You both appear to operate on the assumption that anyone who does not share your views must be on the take, or is it simply your go-to slander?*

*Our credibility has been built up over the past 25 years reporting, in large measure, on the ANC and its dubious actions over all those years. But you wouldn't know about that. And you are extremely naive to still believe that SARS had no spy unit. All that remains to be credibly established is whether the unit was per se “rogue”, and / or whether its spying was conducted by lawful methods against targets that fell within SARS's lawful brief. As Johann van Loggerenberg says, sooner or later the truth will out. – Ed.*

## Where have great whites gone?

THE SHARK FISHERY FOLK NEED TO PROVE IT'S not them [responsible for disappearance of great white sharks] because it so obviously could be. Their shark fishing allocations need to be TAC-based not TAE, which allows for shenanigans aplenty.

**Mountainman**  
Kommetjie

*I'm sorry that you choose to contribute to the discussion under a pseudonym. Is there something shameful about your view? You might even be frightening off other potential participants in the debate because you are suggesting there is something to fear here. I can't see it. – Ed.*

## Xolobeni's hidden treasure

PONDOLAND HAS ITS VERY OWN Cradle of Mankind. Researchers – paleoanthropologists – are due there soon to do more research. Sustainable tourism with a historic angle, will be great for Xolobeni's future.

**Kathryn Costello**  
Port St Johns

## McLaren's latest revelations

AFTER PROPERTY RATES CRUSADER ROB McLaren's latest property revaluations (*nose231*) I'm surprised this guy has only been tarred and feathered once.

**Dave Rigby**  
Pietermaritzburg

## Aghast at Survé's audacity

TOP OF MY WISH LIST IS TO SEE MEGALOMANIAC and closet-racist Dr Iqbal Survé get his come-uppance.

Survé, who claims to champion black empowerment, has simply replaced one form of racism with another. That the PIC could invest R4.5 billion into his Ayo house of cards – paying R43 per share when in reality they are worth closer to 15 cents each – leaves one dumbfounded. The entire PIC/Ayo link is not only a sham but contravenes basic fiduciary regulations.

Survé's pre-Sona dinner party costing millions should leave the ANC red-faced. Who wrote the cheque for it?

Is South Africa just one big Bosasa?

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# Hanging out with sharks

ON TUESDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2019 THE Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture was hearing evidence from its own investigator Frank Dutton. He told the commission, headed by Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo, that Dudu Myeni, the chairperson of the Jacob G Zuma Foundation, had somehow got access to a confidential anti-corruption task team docket in which management services firm Bosasa, now known as African Global Operations, was implicated in corruption.

The docket, said Dutton, had been shown to former Bosasa COO Angelo Agrizzi by Myeni at the Sheraton Hotel in Pretoria, some time between 22-23 September 2015. It was confirmed that Myeni had been booked into room 616 of the hotel at that time. (Agrizzi had earlier testified that he bought her a Louis Vuitton handbag and that before it was handed to her, it had been stuffed with R300,000 in cash.)

At about the same time that

Dutton was testifying, *Noseweek* journalist Jonathan Erasmus walked into the offices of the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board, a provincial government building in Durban. *Noseweek* had been tipped off that, fittingly, the Jacob G Zuma Foundation shared the Sharks Board premises – and that Myeni had her office there.

The centerpiece of the entrance lobby is a chess board. When Erasmus looked at it, the White King was in check by his black opponent's Queen supported by a juvenile Pawn. A superficial look would suggest that the white king was in trouble, but on closer inspection an experienced chess player would quickly realise that the board has been fixed – the placements were just too unnatural to occur in normal play. Someone had captured the game. It was rigged.

On the board, the words “this is life,

make the right move” are inscribed. Below the board is a picture of former president Jacob Zuma.

To the left, is the entrance to the Sharks Board's shop offering a variety of gifts for tourists to buy. To the right, behind the chess board is a door with a notice declaring it to be the entrance to the Jacob G Zuma Foundation. Erasmus knocked on the door, but there was no response. He then tried the door and found it open, so entered, to find no-one seated at the reception desk. He filmed the scene with his phone, while calling out “Is anybody at home?” Which was when a flustered Ms Myeni emerged from a side door.

After an exchange of greetings, Erasmus said he wished to have her comment on the revelations at the Zondo Commission concerning herself. “You will need to make an appointment. I am meeting with an Inkosi right now and am very busy,” she replied and then, wide-eyed, like a rabbit

caught in the headlights, she escorted Erasmus to the door, took a quick glance outside and asked “Did you take any pictures?”

“Yes,” replied Erasmus.

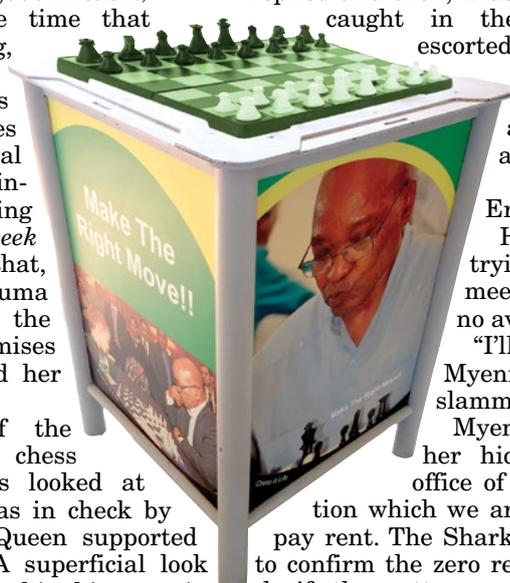
He persisted in trying to set up a meeting with her, but to no avail.

“I'll call you,” said Myeni. The door was slammed shut and locked.

Myeni was after all in her hiding place, in the office of the failing foundation

which we are told doesn't even pay rent. The Sharks Board was asked to confirm the zero rental but refused to clarify the matter.

Besides wanting to ask Myeni the obvious questions such as “did you take money from Agrizzi?” and “would you have preferred a Chanel handbag instead?” we were also curious as to why the Jacob G Zuma Foundation was based at the Sharks Board office. Is the Sharks Board now





**Jacob Zuma and Dudu Myeni**

protecting a different kind of shark?

But on 7 February, all *Noseweek's* attempts to get answers were thwarted. Instead, Erasmus received a call from a man claiming to be "Colonel Zungu" from the "presidential task team office".

He said his "directorate is responsible for the protection of imminent persons particularly politicians in the Republic". He refused to state his full name, reveal where he is stationed or provide his telephone number. The voice sounded like that of a young boy. You can listen to it on *Noseweek's* website [www.noseweek.co.za](http://www.noseweek.co.za).

He then went on to claim that Erasmus had "attempted an invasion on the offices of the Jacob Zuma Foundation", that he had been "found trespassing on the premises" and that this was "in the presence of the former president". He said Erasmus had "sneaked in and had the intention to do something" and there was a claim that Erasmus was "attempting to violate or present some kind of danger" to Zuma.

"Colonel Zungu" then said Erasmus should come to "Durban Central Police Station" and that he "will soon know" who he is. Erasmus declined

his offer and said he should get a "real policeman" to call.

*Noseweek* later learnt that no-one called "Colonel Zungu" works for the "Presidential Task team unit" which in itself doesn't exist (The unit is called Presidential Protection Unit).

Only three people knew of Erasmus's visit to the Zuma Foundation and his meeting with Myeni: *Noseweek* editor Martin Welz, Erasmus and Myeni herself. Had she put someone up to impersonating a police officer?

There was no obvious presence of Zuma in the building. No guards were stationed in or around the building and no cavalcade was parked outside. If he was there he was there alone. Zuma's spokesman Vukile Mathabela was asked to confirm whether Zuma had indeed been at the foundation that day and if a "Col Zungu" had been asked to call. He said rather opaquely: "My job is to alert the police about the call and they will call you."

The following day a real policeman did call – Detective Scelo Ntombela from the Durban North Police Station. He informed Erasmus that Myeni had opened a criminal case against Erasmus for "criminal defamation" under case number 65/02/2019.

Durban North needs no introduction. It is the police station famously used by Zuma's cronies to harass journalists such as author of *The President's Keepers*, Jacques Pauw and *News24* investigative journalist Pieter-Louis Myburgh.

Ntombela said the crime committed was taking photos of Myeni's office "without her permission" and that he had been "instructed by a superior" to obtain Erasmus's statement.

Myeni has for a long time been that Black Queen, always in position holding her opponent in check after her boss had "fixed" the board. But, as a closer look at the board outside that office revealed, the White King, even on the rigged board, still had an exit. The problem with cheating is you are always hiding a weakness.

Myeni has fallen far from grace. She who once only flew first-class, ruled and ruined SAA and a host of other parastatals and commanded such power throughout the land, has been reduced to a sad, scared woman hiding in a tiny office, getting young boys to threaten journalists on her behalf.

*Noseweek's* attorney has informed the appropriate authorities of the incident.

**The Editor**

# Ravele on SARS shortlist despite shady past

## Van Loggerenberg's boss in line to be commissioner

ONE OF THE CANDIDATES ON Trevor Manuel's shortlist for the high profile vacancy of Commissioner of the South African Revenue Service is Gene Ravele, who as SARS's former Enforcement chief was the immediate boss of Johann van Loggerenberg, head of the controversial High Risk Investigations Unit. An email exchange reveals their precarious relationship and *Noseweek* presents Ravele's strange U-turn over the "rogue unit".

Back in the dark days of apartheid, Gene Ravele, youthful member of the politico-military movement of the ANC, was in and out of detention. Finally in 1988, aged 18, he was detained without trial and held in solitary confinement for 272 days in Nylstroom Prison, where he was subjected to physical and psychological torture.

In 1992, when he was 23, Johann van Loggerenberg joined the apartheid police's Republican Spy Programme. As agent RS 536, his was the dangerous double life of safe houses, false names, lies and betrayal.

For both men, the apartheid years took a heavy toll. Young Ravele emerged from prison suffering from post traumatic stress disorder and spent the better part of a year undergoing psychological treatment before he was able to enrol at university for a law degree, which he successfully completed in 1993.

Van Loggerenberg, who says he spent his police undercover years infiltrating organised crime syndicates,

also emerged suffering from post traumatic stress. Post apartheid – first seconded to the National Intelligence Agency, then a spell in the Secret Service – his condition developed into social anxiety disorder, panic attacks and finally a 2010 diagnosis of bipolar 11. By 2014 he had clocked up 113 sessions with a counselling psychologist.

Both men joined SARS in 1998, just a year after the fledgling national tax agency came into being. Ravele arrived after responding to a Sunday newspaper advertisement for an assistant director: labour relations. "Contrary to public opinion, I was not a political 'deployee', neither was I brought to SARS by Pravin Gordhan," he later maintained.

Van Loggerenberg was head-hunted by Ivan Pillay, a former senior member of Operation Vula in the ANC's military wing Umkhonto weSizwe (MK), who was about to join SARS as general manager: Special Investigations. Pillay's former

Vula comrade Pravin Gordhan, a key figure in the ANC underground network and then deployed as SARS's deputy commissioner, was determined to develop an intelligence capacity within SARS and Van Loggerenberg's background met

the required profile.

Gene Ravele joined Pillay's Special Investigations in April 1999, as manager: anti-corruption investigations. As such the one-time teenage activist was Johann van Loggerenberg's first manager. As assistant director in Special Investigations, Van Loggerenberg introduced the concept of intelligence-driven investigations, assembling a team of desk-bound analysts who produced reports identifying high risk areas.

In December 2002 Ravele was moved from Enforcement to be head of Internal Investigations and Security, and it was to be ten years before he moved back to Enforcement as Chief Officer: Enforcement Investigations in April 2012. By that time Van Loggerenberg was running the covert High Risk Unit, successor to the controversial National Research Group. Van Loggerenberg again reported to Gene Ravele.

The time bomb that was to devastate SARS burst, a bare two years later, in 2014. Van Loggerenberg took a girlfriend to a Pretoria East pub where he presented his lover Belinda Walter to his girlfriend as a source in the illicit tobacco sector. Furious at this slight, Walter stormed out to walk five kilometres home in the rain. And she went to the *Sunday Times* with her story of a rogue unit, headed by Van Loggerenberg, operating illegally within SARS.

Among the slough of investigations that followed, acting commissioner Pillay appointed an external panel headed by advocate Muzi Sikhakhane SC to probe allegations of impropriety against Van Loggerenberg. And a bare fortnight into his investigation, Tom Moyane arrived as new Commissioner of SARS.



In the tense days as Van Loggerenberg and Ravele waited to give testimony to Sikhakhane, there was a lengthy exchange of text messages between the two SARS men. Ravele was to sum it up in a confidential report he delivered to Moyane soon after in a desperate bid to save his job. "It is clearly evident from the above texts that JvL [*Van Loggerenberg*] was trying to manipulate, intimidate, threaten and blackmail me into submission," wrote Ravele. "He also tried to instruct as what to say at the Sikhakhane panel."

Some extracts from this email exchange:

From JvL, 20 October 2014, 9.40am: "Gene, you were the very first person I ever worked with at SARS and met you almost to the month 16 years ago. What I have discovered now has really disappointed me. You did not give effect to your duty of care to me throughout the BW [*Belinda Walter*] matter, nor certain officials under your care. You have been dishonest to the new Commissioner for SARS and I don't understand why.

"You have accused me of breaking into your office... Subsequently you have now disavowed the High Risk Investigations Unit and claim you never knew anything about them. You lied, Gene. Those guys never did anything illegal and you know that. They used to drive by your house for months, night and day, to make sure you and your family were safe, at your own request. You ignored every cry for help from me to you when the Belinda investigation started. You just withdrew. You did not think it necessary to discuss anything with me then either. I am very upset and have been subjected to the most humiliating experience of my life. My office lock was changed and Security at the gate had a direct instruction to not allow me in."

From GR [*Gene Ravele*], 20 October, 11.02 am: "For starters, new Commissioner has not asked me about the existence of the unit. All I said was that I took full responsibility for it and he then said he holds me accountable for the whole thing as CO [*Chief Officer*] involved. All these other things you're saying are not true."

From JvL, 20 October, 11.11am: "If you say so Gene. I know much more now than what you may realise at this stage. I will present affidavits, record-



**Trevor Manuel**

ings, emails and texts from you. I have my own life and reputation to defend on my own now and I am focusing on that for now. We must all live with what life throws at us."

From JvL, 20 October, 2.47pm: "Gene, I'm just sad and heartbroken. I think it would be good if you could meet the [*HRIU*] team. They are scared and unsure and need you now. They have done good work on, [*Radovan*] Krejcir, [*Glenn*] Agliotti and other crooks and they've been exposed now. They all want to do polygraphs based on the media articles. It's not a bad idea."

From JvL, 20 October, 3.37pm: "Gene, it's a difficult time for all of us at SARS. For some more than others. I am trying very hard to focus on Belinda's issues now and I cannot really think straight anymore. I am under terrible stress. My romantic choice has cost so much. My future is uncertain. I am isolated. I have been warning and warning this was coming. If it wasn't Belinda it would have been something else. The SSA [*State Security Agency*] and Tisa [*Tobacco Institute of Southern Africa*] are very powerful lobby groups on their own. Put together they are mightier than anything in our country. Please meet the team in the meantime and just assure them. They need to hear what you are thinking from you. Not anyone else. You are the boss."

From JvL, 21 October, 10.49am: "I

am appearing before Sikhakhane on Friday. I am going to ask for a meeting with the new Commissioner. I have been hung out to dry for no reason."

From JvL, 21 October, 11am: "The senior [*SARS*] leaders and in particular you, Gene, with your insight in the matters, should be in the forefront of managing this thing. But you are quiet. You are leaving things to a Commissioner who is new and won't have insight. As you said yourself, PG [*Pravin Gordhan*] isn't our Minister any more. You are leaving this for IP [*Ivan Pillay*] and Pete [*Peter Richer*] to deal with alone and they are not fully aware of the nuances."

From JvL, 21 October, 11.04am: "The Hawks case is not just against me. It's against IP and you too. The affidavits include BW, Peega, Mpinganjira and Piet Swart. The charges are relating to running an illegal covert unit. The investigating officer is a Colonel Herby Heap."

From GR, 22 October, 3.16am: "Johann, I think I have reached the end of the road in SARS. I haven't been sleeping at all, all I have been thinking about is all these things happening around me. Things are gonna get nasty. I now have to make a choice between SARS and my family! I'm tired of the veiled threats and blackmail from all and sundry. It feels like I'm being held to ransom by two warring forces. At this stage I don't

know what I'll do when I leave SARS. I guess that's the risk one has to take. My health and family should come first!!"

From JvL, 22 October, 9.13 am: "Hang in there! We all have enemies. You're not alone. When are we meeting with IP? And Gene, if you are going to be dishonest at that meeting I'm leaving. I was at the [Sikhakhane] panel yesterday and they gave me hell. I'm not a 'fall guy'. I refuse to disavow the legacy of PG and Ivan. I'm not scared at all. I'm at a point where it's no longer about me. So you must now be the manager and make your back straight. We are under attack and you've been twiddling your thumbs while Rome was burning. Time to stand up and protect SARS and our higher purpose."

From GR, 26 October, 8.03am: "This has nothing to do with the PG and IP legacy! The reality of the matter is that we have a new minister [Nhlanhla Nene] and commissioner [Tom Moyane] who demand that things be done in a particular fashion. I cannot defy them. I didn't defy Trevor [Manuel] and PG as I didn't during the PG and Oupa [Magashula] time. I'm a career civil servant who has vowed to serve the government of the day and implement its policies and directives with no fear. J, none of

my three girls are at varsity yet – in fact my youngest starts Grade 1 only next year. They are the centre of my universe – it is my responsibility to secure them a brighter future and no one else's!

"There is a strong tidal wave/current coming which presents me with three choices: swim along, or swim against, or step back and not swim at all. I have chosen the last option for the above stated reasons. If by choosing this option I'm seen by all people involved as a spineless, individualistic and selfish person, I will gladly accept that. However, if I continue to get veiled threats and blackmail aimed at forcing me to choose either side, I won't stay in SARS. I will give SARS 24-hr notice. I'm not going to stay on and 'fight' as many people may suggest. When you fight in order to defend and preserve PG and IP's legacy and the higher purpose [*that continues to be intangible*], who do you fight exactly? The new minister and commissioner? These are the questions in my head at the moment."

From JvL, 26 October, 8.43 am: "As for the Sikhakhane panel and 'Clifford's panel' [Clifford Collings, head of the Anti-Corruption and Security unit], both are looking at me on aspects that didn't even concern BW's complaint. It was just people

seeking a reason to get rid of me. Since May I've been through absolute hell. People were happy to accept BW and Peega's word and accusations. And then everyone jumped on the bandwagon to discredit IP. First about legal fees and then his retirement. You must do what you believe is right, Gene. I have always been loyal to you. To have read what you said about me broke my heart."

From JvL, 26 October, 9.12am: "I did my best at all times for the higher purpose. But people queued up to tell Sikhakhane how bad I am. Nobody stood up for me. Nobody thought to go tell Sikhakhane what was really going on here. We just allowed everyone and anyone to go there and say whatever they wanted to as fact."

From GR, 26 October, 9.31am: "I wouldn't know who appeared before the panel. In fact, I'm only meeting them this coming Thursday in Sandton."

From JvL, 26 October, 9.36am: "Gene, you are not alone under attack. We all are. You will survive this. It's about all pulling together in a time of uncertainty and ensuring the Minister and Commissioner understand the dynamics at play. It's not about you, IP or me. I'm glad if you are appearing, because hopefully you will be able to give context and perspective. Nobody else seems to have wanted to and they weren't interested in what I had to say. They just kept on about IP and my relationship, Wachizungu [Van Loggerenberg's charity] and how my relationship with the media was problematic."

"They had absolutely no interest in what the real issues were. Even they put to me as a fact that you did not know about the existence of the High Risk Investigations Unit. It's a hatchet job of the worst I've ever seen. I can only hope that you get an opportunity to enlighten them because from where I'm sitting they've already decided."

From JvL, 26 October, 9.48am: "And if anyone in SARS does have 'spying equipment' its Acas [Anti-Corruption and Security unit]. I've seen the BMW with the hidden cameras with my own eyes. I've seen the procurement lists for mini-cameras and recording devices that Acas purchased. I've seen with my own eyes the contract with Steve Whitehead which Denath signed and Acas didn't follow the procurement rules. But that's okay for SARS."



Johann van Loggerenberg

If Johann van Loggerenberg hoped that all this would yield some supportive testimony by Gene Ravele to the Sikhakhane panel, it is doubtful that this materialised. Sikhakhane heard from some 25 witnesses, but the verbatim detail of their testimony has been kept secret, with few aspects in the panel's report attributed to specific people.

All we have to go on is para 77, which reads: "Mr Ravele indicated that he was kept in the dark until very recently about the existence of the NRG [*National Research Group*] and that he was only begrudgingly provided with scant information by Ms Langa at the instruction of Mr Van Loggerenberg after pestering both for such information as people who reported to him."

However, 19 days after his October 30 testimony to Sikhakhane, Ravele delivered a confidential report to Commissioner Moyane. In it he complained that in the two years since he returned to head Enforcement in April 2012 he had only received two reports from Van Loggerenberg outlining the activities of the High Risk Investigations Units [*HRIU*].

Ravele added: "I have also made the Minister of Finance [*Nhlanhla Nene*] aware of the HRIU's existence, albeit unofficially. After his appointment the minister requested me to assist him with identifying the Organisational Risks that needed to be mitigated as well as the gaps that needed to be closed. The existence of the clandestine

intelligence capability was one of the Organisational Risks I identified.

"I also briefed the minister about the JvL matter before it got to the media as I felt that he could not be kept in the dark."

Readers will recall the revelation in our last issue of the less-than-flattering picture of Van Loggerenberg and his unit that

**'We just allowed everyone and anyone to go to Sikhakhane and say whatever they wanted to as fact'**

Ravele also gave in his secret testimony to the Inspector-General of Intelligence just weeks before the above email exchange. Ravele told the IGI that when Van Loggerenberg joined SARS Ivan Pillay instructed that he should work with "covert structures" that would "cripple NIA [*National Intelligence Agency*] and the SASS [*Secret Service*]". Ravele added that Pillay was now protecting Van Loggerenberg, who had leaked information to the media, including allegations against the SSA [*State Security Agency*].

But Ravele's attempt to find favour with Moyane could not save him. An

internal charge sheet accused him of a host of wrongdoings: that he had sanctioned or approved the conducting of unlawful covert and or clandestine intelligence-gathering in SARS; negotiated the transfer and accepted delivery of "serious military surveillance equipment from the US Customs Border Protection"; and committed fraud and corruption in accepting an unauthorised R10,000 gift from a sequestered taxpayer of a weekend at Sun City under a false name.

Before the charges could be heard Ravele resigned in May 2015. And, after a two-year investigation by the Hawks, the National Prosecuting Authority declined to prosecute a criminal case. All charges against him were dropped for lack of evidence.

In view of Ravele's earlier testimonies, it is noteworthy that when he gave evidence before the Nugent Commission into governance at SARS last June, the would-be Commissioner made a remarkable u-turn. The HRIU was lawful and to suggest that the unit had conducted illegal surveillance using high-tech equipment was "hogwash", Ravele declared.

He praised the disbanded unit, saying it had been crucial to SARS operations as it helped bust a number of criminal activities.

● *And this man would be our new SARS Commissioner? Better he applied to the weather bureau for a post as a wind vane to show which way the wind is blowing.* – Ed. ■



*"Now we'll all close our eyes and cover our ears, and the person who took the four hundred and twenty-eight million dollars will put it back."*



# Pamensky moves from Eskom on to cannabis

**B**OPHELO BIOSCIENCE AND Wellness (Pty) Ltd, is a company registered in Lesotho. Its business is “(1) the growing of spices, aromatics, drug and pharmaceutical crops, and (2) manufacturing pharmaceuticals, medicinal, chemical and botanical products”.

It is headed by Louisa Mojela, founder, group CEO and chairperson of the more famous, widely celebrated Women Investment Holdings Ltd (Wiphold), long regarded as a reputable black-owned company aimed specifically at empowering women. She also serves on the boards of several JSE-listed companies, including Distell, Life Healthcare, Sun International and Sasol Mining. She is a patron of SA Tennis.

The main investor in Bophelo Bioscience is just as worthy: the Mophuti Matsoso Development Trust operates in Lesotho for the upliftment of women and children by building schools and initiating rural agricultural projects in the district of Mafeteng. Majola is one of the two trustees.

So it might come as something of a surprise to *Noseweek* readers to learn that Bophelo Bioscience and Wellness’s prime mission, according to its website, is the cultivation and marketing of dagga for a market that is expected to boom in South Africa when legal restrictions are lifted – a political move widely believed to be imminent.

Bophelo Bioscience’s “vision” is “to become the leading producer of medic-

inal cannabis products in Africa and the largest operator of medicinal cannabis-focussed clinics and dispensaries in South Africa.

Further research unearths even bigger surprises: on another website it is revealed that Bophelo Bioscience has a “sister” in the enterprise: a South African company called Medigram SA, whose sole director is... former Eskom director Mark Vivian Pamensky.

Last month civil-society organisation Corruption Watch said it had launched an application in the High Court, Pretoria to have former Eskom board members declared delinquent (unfit to be directors of any company).

Top of the list was Mark Pamensky. (Others include Anoj Singh, Brian Molefe, Venete Klein, and former minister of Public Enterprises Lynne Brown.) The application “focuses on the violation of fiduciary duties and gross negligence on the part of former board members”.

Another NGO, Outa announced it has laid criminal charges against Pamensky at the Randburg police station.

Mark Pamensky was a director of the state-owned Eskom Holdings while he was also a director of at least one company in the Gupta business empire, Oakbay.

He passed on information gained at Eskom to the Guptas which helped them in their R2.15-billion purchase of Optimum Coal Holdings, which has coal contracts with Eskom and

which received substantial help from Eskom.

Directors may not use their positions for personal advantage or have undeclared conflicts of interest which affect their directorships.

Pamensky’s latest ambitions appear to go beyond the production of medicinal cannabis. He notes in a promotional pamphlet addressed to potential foreign investors that “Sweeping changes in legislation allowing the use of cannabis for private recreational purposes are expected in 2019. The impact of these changes is likely to result in a significant surge in market demand for high-quality cannabis products. Significant returns for first movers are possible.

“Medigram SA is investigating several opportunities in the recreational space together with the homegrown market.

“Medigram SA (a sister company of Bophelo Bioscience) has entered into an exclusive joint venture agreement with SA Clinics to open a national chain of medicinal cannabis dispensaries.”

The investment proposal sheet goes on to claim that SA Clinics has “an extensive network of clinics throughout South Africa: 150 clinics and access to an affiliated network of over 500 physicians; 500,000 registered patients who are supplied with between 50,000 and 60,000 doses of medicines per month.

“A bulk import licence application for Medigram is in progress.”

Watch this space. ■

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# 'Outlier' plastic surgeon gets on hospital's tits

By **Jonathan Erasmus**

**A** DURBAN HOSPITAL HAS DECIDED TO cut the cord with a plastic surgeon whose past, it would seem, has finally caught up with him. But scratching below the surface has revealed that while Dr Leon Dumas may be cavalier at times, he has also done what few doctors do – turn against the hospital at which he practises, bringing medical negligence law suits against the medical institution.

The news that Dr Leon Dumas has been axed by Life Entabeni Hospital in Glenwood, Durban, after 22 years of residency, has rocked the local surgeon network – and been welcomed by his peers.

Dumas is said to have always had a credit-card machine close to hand and that he once accepted the ring of an elderly woman who had died – which was all her bereaved husband (now also deceased) owned that was of value at the time – in part payment for much-needed facial surgery after being disfigured by a cancer operation. The couple's



**Aprassa spokesman Dr Chris Snijman**

children confirmed the incident to *Noseweek*.

Dumas is known for his high fees – confirmed by the regulatory body the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). A source with direct knowledge said one client was billed R138,000 for a procedure that should have cost just R8,000.

Dumas has also fallen out with most of his colleagues, being one of just four surgeons ever to be expelled from the voluntary Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons of Southern Africa (Aprassa) in its 66-year history. Offering peer-review, support, lobbying and guidelines, it currently represents 169 members.

The association – from which he was expelled in 2004 – accused him of “tariffsmanship” which essentially means: “overcharging; the abuse and misuse of inappropriate procedure codes; doctoring of medical documentation; blatant lying; and dishonesty regarding procedures charged for and procedures not being performed,” said a statement from the association’s former president and spokesperson Dr Chris Snijman.

An example of tariffsmanship is when a surgeon books in a patient under a certain code to have, say, a hernia removed but will in fact do a tummy tuck in order to get the medical aid scheme to cover the cost.

Dumas also fell out with the association because he was the first to advertise his services online – a taboo in the old boys’ club at the time.

The December 2018 incident – rumoured to be the cause of his expulsion by the hospital – was that Dumas performed “corrective” surgery on a patient who had earlier undergone some form of plastic surgery under his care. Except that he did the procedure in his rooms. Although Dumas



underplayed the incident, it was not as inconsequential as he claims as he had an anaesthetist, a nursing sister and theatre equipment on hand.

A source, who described Dumas an “outlier” and “not one of us” said Dumas undertook a corrective abdominoplasty (tummy tuck) which Dumas denied and technically couldn’t admit to due to patient confidentiality.

Hospital management caught wind of it when it was noticed that pethidine had “gone missing” from its stores. On reviewing CCTV footage, they saw what they believed to be theatre equipment, being wheeled to Dumas’s rooms. Dumas said that he, the nursing sister and the anaesthetist were all cleared after an internal hearing.

The equipment he said, was his own and the pethidine had been removed correctly, but was “just not properly documented”. This story was confirmed by his anaesthetist Andrew Burford.

The hospital would not confirm the

details but it did confirm that this was not the reason they terminated Dumas's contract.

Hospital manager Greg Swale said in a letter vetted by the company attorneys: "Life Entabeni Hospital confirms that it notified Dr Dumas of the termination of his admission rights to the Hospital and his lease of the Hospital's consulting rooms on 31 January 2019. The reasons for the termination by Life Entabeni Hospital are confidential".

Swale also said Dumas was not involved in any legal matter involving the hospital.

So why, after 22 years, has he been booted out in such a crass manner?

Dumas could find no reasons, he said, calling the "pethidine incident" an attempt at "smoke and mirrors" to besmirch his name.

"I was just told my tenure at the hospital was being terminated," he said.

What has now transpired is that he is a witness against the hospital in a serious medical malpractice suit which includes a claim that the hospital's theatre equipment is malfunctioning.

Dumas sits on a panel of experts for the Durban Central law firm Berkowitz Cohen Wartski, which has an active medical negligence law unit led by Barry McCulloch. He confirmed that Dumas was a witness in more than one matter pending against the hospital, with a particularly large matter being prepared to be heard in court.

"The suit involves our client who received extensive diathermy burns on his elbow from the equipment held in the hospital. Diathermy is used for such procedures as cauterizing, usually used



**Life Entabeni Hospital**

to stop bleeding. This happened while our client was undergoing surgery with two doctors present," said McCulloch.

Diathermy is the use of localised heating of soft tissues as a form of physical therapy and in surgical procedures.

McCulloch said they had consulted Dumas – who sits on the law firms's expert panel – and who treated the patient afterwards. "His contention is that in the past there were problems with this same equipment."

He said his client, a mechanic, had not regained full use of his arm and needed to hire extra personnel. While refusing to reveal the size of the claim, one source said the quantum being sought was "significant".

McCulloch said the hospital had denied liability and had told him to

pursue "the doctors". However he said that with prescription in law looming after numerous delays by the hospital, the firm had instituted suits against both the doctors and the hospital, separately, in the hope of joining them at a later stage.

"I cannot comment or speculate on the reasons why the hospital is terminating Dumas's contract. I can say hospitals are not used to one of their own taking sides. We usually have to go outside the province to find expert reports. It is unusual to get a local doctor to give an opinion as they usually close ranks except when it's the state," said McCulloch.

Dumas believes there is a "huge cover-up" taking place with regards to the hospital's theatres.

"There are other theatres in this city that are absolutely superb. The issues we've been having are ongoing and the hospital is aware of them – we have documentation of the incidents and they have done absolutely nothing about them for a long time. And if they are not going to address the issues and pretend instead that nothing happened, there is nothing that is going to stop me from doing my surgery in any other theatre."

Dumas said that, for the hospital, the issues being challenged are "a little bit too hot".

"The one thing I want is for the truth to come out if this gets to court but I surmise they'll probably settle the matter and get a gag order on it and nobody will ever know what is going on," said Dumas. ■



**Greg Swale**



**Barry McCulloch**

# The last resort?

## Mossel Bay woman defends her Mauritian dream in face-off with suspicious investors. By **Susan Puren**

**I**N A THREATENING EMAIL SENT TO *Noseweek* after Miranda Hartzenberg Meyer became aware that we were investigating her businesses, she described herself as “a Mossel Bay girl building a dream resort in Mauritius against all odds”.

It appears, however, that this dream, known as the Sheraton Mauritius St Felix Resort and Residences, is still on the drawing board five years after Meyer first announced it on Facebook.

Meyer is CEO of the project’s managing company, Pelangi Resorts Holding (PRH) and MD of Clear Ocean Hotel and Resort Ltd (COHR), the developer who negotiated the leasehold with the Mauritian government.

In September 2016 Hartzenberg Meyer posted the following announcement on her Facebook page:

“Officially the moment of Truth and many answered prayers. Marriott/Starwood is now officially the Pelangi Resorts operator. We are honoured not just to be in partnership with the world’s largest hotel group but to be the first deal to be signed on the 1st

business day of the Marriott/Starwood Merger. God had always delivered more than I expected but in His timing and not mine. I am honoured to have been able to work with a very special man, Michael Devereux, who has kept me going and kept me focussed in times when I needed to hear a voice of comfort that all will be fine. Thank you Michael.”

With the announcement came a picture of the event. Michael Devereux signed as Marriott’s Senior Director Development.

On Christmas Eve, 2017, she posted another: The Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation had just reported that “we are building a 5-star Sheraton Resort and that the community of the South supports the project.”

But another year on, as *Noseweek* went to press, building had yet to begin – and the local community are up in arms opposing the project.

Back home in South Africa things are not much better; there is a growing number of extremely unhappy South Africans who bought share options in several subsidiary companies said to be connected to Meyer’s proposed world-class holiday destination in the south of the island. They prefer to stay anonymous but most of them borrowed the US\$10,000 (roughly R130,000) which gave them the exclusive option to eventually invest in the resort’s fitness centre, nursery, garden service, beauty parlours, hairdressing salons and marketing, once it opened its doors – supposedly in 2020.

At least two investors have discovered that they signed identical contracts for the same share options in the same subsidiary. A Mossel Bay family even moved to Mauritius, believing they could start work immediately. What they found on arrival was a deserted beach cordoned off with corrugated-iron sheets – and hundreds of angry

Mauritians fighting the proposed development tooth and nail.

The money for the share options was paid into the bank account of Phoenix Trust, held at FNB in George. Sources told *Noseweek* that the trust had not been audited for several years and that Meyer is the only beneficiary.

Last year Meyer offered to refund her clients even though their contracts stipulated that options were non-refundable. But she demanded that non-disclosure agreements be signed before the money was paid back and not everyone was willing to do that. Instead five people have opened criminal cases. The police in George and in Cape Town confirmed that they were investigating Miranda Hartzenberg Meyer for financial offences.

Hartzenberg Meyer allegedly also promised her clients residence and work permits in Mauritius and offered them salaries of as much as US\$10,000 per month, should they take up employment at the resort. One person was supposed to have started work in January 2018 but after many promises and messages from Meyer, nothing came of the job offer.

Meyer says there were many delays in her application for the necessary permits and that local politics on the island have also played a role. She claims to have received the last two clearance permits only in January this year.

It is not the first time that Mossel Bay residents have tried to get Meyer to honour contracts or pay for damages. About ten years ago Van Rensburg Brothers Electrical Ltd laid charges of fraud against Meyer and her interior decorating company, MMI Projects (Pty) Ltd, trading as Miranda Meyer Interiors. The allegation was that Meyer short-paid the electrical company by more than R1 million for an order that



**Miranda Hartzenberg Meyer**

was exported to a third party in Nigeria.

The circuit court ruled in Van Rensburg Electrical's favour but Meyer defended the action on technical grounds and avoided payment. She did however honour another judgment in the lower court and paid Van Rensburg Electrical close to R31,000 as a final settlement.

But that's nothing compared to the claims that the high-flying grandmother and former schoolteacher is now facing. Two Mossel Bay architects, Frik Wagenaar and Christo Botha, are to launch legal action against the directors of Clear Ocean Hotel and Resort Ltd as well as the Registrar of Companies and the Director of Liquidations in Mauritius, in which they are claiming damages of R32m. They say Meyer's companies are mostly empty shells that are fraudulently misrepresenting ownership of the resort's design when negotiating with potential funders.

A citizen's group on the island, Aret Kokin Nu Laplaz (AKNL) which is Mauritian Creole for "Stop Stealing Our Beaches," has also gone to court to stop construction at Pomponette Public Beach in the south of the island, the beach where Meyer plans to build her resort. The group says the Mauritian government development plan clearly states that no more hotels should be built along the island's shoreline and that the planned resort also falls within the South Coast Heritage Zone of the island.

"Hotels, resorts and golf courses already occupy 90km of sandy beaches on the island and 1.1 million tourists enjoy about twice as much beach access as what 1.2 million Mauritians have," says Carina Gounden, an active member of Aret Kokin Nu Laplaz. The group has



**Miranda Hartzenberg Meyer signing contracts with Marriott Hotels International**

filed a request for a judicial review at the Supreme Court two months after the Mauritian government granted leasehold to Clear Ocean Hotel and Resort Ltd in November 2016.

The court case is ongoing but despite the pending outcome a 60-year lease agreement between Meyer's company COHR and the Mauritian government was signed in August 2017. It stated that construction should be finished within 36 months but Meyer claims she received an extension from the Mauritian government in 2018.

AKNL's Yan Hookoomsing told *Noseweek* that the lease contract explicitly warned COHR that the outcome of the court case could negatively affect its project to the extent of having to pull down the hotel. He said: "The question is, which investor is going to put money into such a project?"

Another condition of the lease agreement is that all necessary permits be obtained prior to the start of construction. This includes an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and a Building and Land Use Permit.

In a letter to AKNL in January 2017 the Ministry of Environment in Mauritius confirmed that an EIA licence was transferred from a different developer, Midas Acropolis, to Clear Ocean Hotel and Resort. Midas Acropolis obtained the EIA in 2007 when it had plans for a development at Pomponette beach. The company returned the land to the state in 2015 when a criminal investigation was launched against it.

AKNL says the outcome was never made public but barely a few weeks later Meyer's company was granted a lease on the land.

Curiously Meyer had already announced on Facebook – in 2013 – that Pelangi Resorts Holding, of which she is the CEO, had obtained its EIA licence.

"This is false," says Hookoomsing. At that time, Midas Acropolis still had control of the site and there are no official Ministry of Environment records online of a hotel project getting an EIA licence between September and December 2013.

AKNL is now demanding that all the records be made public.

Transferring an EIA is acceptable under the Mauritian Environment Protection Act of 2002, except that the number of buildings, built-up areas and location of structures in Clear Ocean's



**Mauritians have accused the developers of bringing apartheid to the island**

plans differ substantially from the plans Midas Acropolis submitted years ago and for which it received an EIA licence. Midas Acropolis planned for 283 rooms while Clear Ocean's marketing brochure shows 152 luxury hotel suites; 164 luxury condominium villas; four two-bedroom villas; 11 super villas; 15 tree houses; and a 250-seat conference room.

In November 2017 Clear Ocean Hotel and Resort put up a fence to cordon off the proposed construction site but members of AKNL and the public removed it shortly afterwards. A second fence was again taken down in May 2018. The area then became a war zone, says AKNL's Gouden.

Video-material on AKNL's Facebook page shows Meyer's associates swearing at the AKNL group and shouting that the beach was now private property. Gouden says that at one point people armed with machetes were even guarding the beach (view footage on [www.noseweek.com](http://www.noseweek.com)).

AKNL alleges that COHR has never applied for a building permit. "And the minute they apply we will object," says Hookoomsing.

*Noseweek* sent Miranda Hartzenberg Meyer 13 questions about the allegations in this story but only received several threatening emails in reply. The following is Meyer's last response:

"We have an EIA but we asked to revise our EIA from 538 keys to 398 keys. This is what they required in order to apply for the revision, which Gibb [*the construction firm*] and Architects Studio has done already.

"This is not that simple [*a*] project or process and this is what some of these complaining individuals don't understand. I have been trying to explain but

if you [*are*] not on a certain level you will never understand. After five years I still get frustrated with 'this-is-Mauritius' arguments. I also got to learn the hard way [*how*] things work in Mauritius.

"I have asked Gibb Mauritius to provide you with a full report...

"I am just as tired and we have invested millions in this project and all I can do is work with the Government, Consultants, Pelangi PSP Team and our Funders and get this project off the Ground. We [*are*] all... pushing forward to get into the ground asap.

"We have instructed our legal team to once again request PSP individuals who want to cancel their options to do so. We have requested them to Sign the cancellation letters and sign NDA [*non disclosure agreements*] which they refused so we will be proceeding the legal way because they did sign agreements which are all still valid.

"You try and cancel your Virgin Active Membership. If you sign an agreement you [*are*] legally forced to obey this.

"It will be to your advantage to understand the process and status and not make serious mistakes in your article. This is an amazing green project that will provide 2,000 jobs in the South of the Island where people are very poor and have very few job opportunities.

"If you place an article with wrong facts your company will be legally liable and the loss and claims for damages could be high as this is a \$360m project which has taken a lot of investment and effort with various partners to get to the point where we are ready to start construction.

"I really believe you need to also speak to a few local councillors and understand how hard we have been working.

"You are now focussing on the negative

of a handful of individuals who changed their minds for various personal reasons and then started a witch hunt.

"I have a board resolution from the Pelangi Board that we agree to cancel their options with a refund. They might now change their approach and claim damages and force the individuals to adhere to the Terms and Conditions of their agreements.

"I am happy to clarify any allegations as all is 100% not true.

"This project is for Real and we going to Build it and we are 100% within the law of Mauritius with full Cabinet support."

Yet another email was sent five minutes later:

"The EIA was in the name of Midas Acropolis and we were their JV Partner.

"The Government changed in 2014 and I had to re-apply with 100% ownership which I obtained with the non-citizen certificate I sent to you.

"We struggled to fit the units we have on our land, our Coverage should be less than 20% and the only way we could get to this number was to revise our EIA by applying to have fewer keys from 538 keys to 398 which will have a positive impact on the EIA...

"This has been an uphill battle and we have now reached the final stretch where we can go into the ground.

"As you can imagine you will always have a few individuals who change their mind, get jealous or get upset with somebody in a company.

"How do we cancel the agreements from our side that are valid? No time-lines as per the terms and conditions has even lapsed and we allowed for automatic extensions due to the unknown we were dealing with." ■

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# The people vs Eskom

By **Jonathan Erasmus**

**I**T'S UNANIMOUS: ESKOM IS THE MOST hated organisation in South Africa. If you have attended or have been watching the public hearings held by the National Energy Regulator (Nersa) on whether Eskom should be given a 45% tariff increase over three years, you will realise that Eskom does not even trust itself – despite asking South Africans to cough up another trillion rand.

Even the Rastafarians booked a hearing slot to tell Eskom to “fix what needs to be fixed”.

The problems at Eskom are common knowledge: from state capture to massive overspending on capital projects and paying high premiums on coal, gas and diesel to politically connected friends, and employing more than three times the needed staff – each earning on average R800,000 per annum – as well as failing infrastructure, poor sales, poor maintenance and a debt burden so

high it needs lines of credit just to pay the interest on the debt. Eskom, it is unanimously said “is not sustainable”.

The hearings have also unearthed an otherwise-muzzled voice in South Africa – largely due to its being linked to the embattled pro-Jacob Zuma nuclear lobby – with some business forums calling on the government to scrap or seriously rein in the Independent Power Producer Programme, calling it too costly.

Business and agriculture chambers lined up – from Middelburg, the Karoo, Virginia to Pietermaritzburg. They have called for a complete reorganisation of Eskom, an overhaul of how it works and, like in the case of Agri-Western Cape, the breaking up of Eskom and sale of portions to private enterprise to break the parastatal’s “monopolistic stronghold” because the national power company is literally too big to be allowed to fail.

Eskom’s request comes under two

headings: the Regulatory Clearing Account (RCA) and the Multi-Year Price Determination application (MYPD).

The RCA is what Eskom calls a “balancing mechanism between what was awarded by Nersa on the basis of a forecast (MYPD), and what actually materialised”. In other words it’s a tool that allows them to take from the consumer if they didn’t reach the sale targets anticipated when previous Nersa increases were requested. For this, Eskom wants a once-off R21.6bn.

This is over and above the already approved RCA of R32.7bn which comes into effect in April, raising tariffs by 4.4%.

For the MYPD4, as it is known, Eskom wants 15% per annum for three years or R788bn over the three-year period.

All the chambers, without exception, predict a catastrophic ending.

As Linda Grimbeek of the Kruger



Eskom Power station

Lowveld Chamber of Business and Tourism which incorporates Mbombela, said: “We are flat broke and left with zero tolerance for any more of this.”

The Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chamber said: “If approved, Eskom and South Africa’s economy will collapse,” adding that it will lead to “the utility death spiral” going into “full motion”.

It said the MYPD4 application provides “no leadership, no vision, no ideas, no solutions, no hope”.

Melanie Veness, CEO of the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Business was as unforgiving: “With a qualified audit and questions about its going-concern status and with several of Eskom’s top executives being asked to appear before the judicial commission of inquiry into state capture, energy experts are speculating that over R500bn has been lost to corruption in the last 10 years. [With] the current state of our electricity infrastructure and the load-shedding that has been imposed on citizens, it would be remiss of any of us not to question the efficiency of Eskom. No private-sector business’s shareholders would ever tolerate results like this – decreasing sales; bloated staffing; ballooning debt (over 1,000% in 10 years) and financial losses. Quite honestly, it’s shameful and it’s embarrassing for all South Africans.”

The Middelburg chamber pointed out that Eskom’s request for a claw-back in the Regulatory Clearing Account (RCA) was because lower sales had resulted in lower revenue.

“Eskom specifically asked customers to use less electricity and now, in the RCA, is asking for a claw-back because their customers listened to them,” said the chamber.

Eskom has admitted that the money it is seeking won’t plug its dire financial state, with a further R50bn required “from somewhere”.

In their attempt to sell Eskom’s increase to the public, their own submissions paint a dismal picture of an organisation in deep decline.

It admits that its sales of electricity are declining due to “increasing prices [leading to] energy efficiency improvements [by the consumer] and the shuttering of industry because the prices simply did not make the business competitive anymore. They also noted the deteriorating state of its equip-



**Ted Blom**

ment and therefore reliability was hurting its sales.

The enigmatic energy consultant Ted Blom has criss-crossed the country attending all but one of the eight hearings. His goal: get Eskom to admit to its crimes – which they have not done; get Nersa to acknowledge that the Eskom applications are defective – which they have; and force the regulator to refuse the increases until an independent forensic report is authorised, by Nersa, to comb through Eskom’s submissions.

In his various submissions Blom calls Eskom “de facto corrupt and inefficient, while the regulatory framework is historically ineffectual”.

“I thought we (Eskom) had a financial constraint and a financial issue, I thought we were over-populated and over-staffed. I never realised the generation plant was in such a disgusting state of repair. Eskom is playing with our lives. You asked what happened to the maintenance budgets and it seems Eskom has stolen so much money for themselves, they can’t even keep themselves going – they’ve got no money to do the maintenance,” said Blom when addressing Nersa in Port Elizabeth.

He said he was “shocked” to see that Medupi availability factor was at about 50%: “Good God, it is a brand new plant! What could you have done to have messed it up so badly? And then Kusile at 17%! It shouldn’t even be in commercial operation at that level. Really we are paying for stuff that doesn’t work.

“Eskom has a management and political-will problem. The assets are

there, they used to work and now they are all messed up,” said Blom.

Both the Pietermaritzburg and Nelson Mandela Bay metros called for the scrapping of the Independent Power Producers (IPP) programme stating that, in these dire times, it added 13% to Eskom’s electricity price, 17% of generation costs, while contributing just 6% to power generated.

The Helenvale House of Rastafarians chairperson Samuel Benson said he “can tell Eskom now”, electricity theft will increase, and called for more green energy.

Their view was shared by Desmond D’Sa from the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA): “No increase should be given at all. We need to take people off the grid through renewable energy to cut down on coal burn and agree to the Paris Accord.”

Even the Minerals Council of South Africa’s conclusion on the increase is dire. “It is the Minerals Council’s considered view that Eskom would lose a critical part of its mining (base-load) customers, and its income would suffer severely. The result will be the collapse of Eskom; an accelerated ‘death spiral’.”

It was only Agri Western Cape that acknowledged that consumers have little choice. “It does seem as if consumers will have to make some kind of additional direct contribution... because the unintended consequences of delaying the process may further along prove to be even more severe.”

Nersa is expected to make a decision in March. ■

# Company liquidation laws unfair

Public Protector orders liquidation law reforms – thanks to a dispute between some pretty shady characters. By **Jonathan Erasmus**

**O**N 19 DECEMBER 2018 PUBLIC Protector, advocate Busisiwe Mkhwebane released a report which requires changes to the regulations that determine how liquidators of insolvent companies are chosen and appointed, the time frames for this to happen and, importantly, the methods by which they can be removed from office.

Mkhwebane came to her ruling thanks to (1) a BEE junior coal miner, (2) a convicted child pornographer and a disbarred solicitor-turned-thieving banker-turned-unscrupulous-miner; and (3) a liquidator best known for saying “I looove money”.

Notably, she put an end to the “48-hour notice rule” as she found it “unfair, unjust to creditors and susceptible to abuse by (drum roll) ...unscrupulous lawyers and liquidators”.

The rule, as explained to *Noseweek* by CEO of the South African Restructuring and Insolvency Practitioners’ Association René Bekker, gives creditors just two days or 48 hours, to file their claims against a company being placed under provisional liquidation – that’s assuming the creditors all knew about the pending liquidation. If you are an ordinary run-of-the-mill creditor, it is most unlikely that you would have known in time to file your claim and attend that vital meeting of creditors where the provisional liquidators are nominated and elected.

The creditor with the biggest claim gets pro-rata the most votes. Unless you are in on a privately arranged prior deal between a group of creditors in the know, the creditor that swings it is almost invariably a bank – which is as likely the liquidating creditor in control of events. The fact is, in the majority of cases a bank gets to nominate and elect its favoured liquidator who is likely to prefer the bank’s

interests (and the bank’s lawyers’ interests), with little regard for those of lesser creditors.

“The notice period of 48 hours is too short, unreasonable, and improper and prejudicial and it was not documented in the policy or regulations determined by the Minister or the Chief Master’s directives”, said Mkhwebane.

Mkhwebane ruled that the 48-hour rule be abolished and the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services must within six months determine (fairer) policy regulating the appointment process of the provisional and final liquidators and also regulate the process for the removal of the provisional and final liquidator by a Master of a High Court.

The Public Protector’s ruling has serious ramifications for the liquidation industry which in the main, is governed by the ancient Insolvency Act of 1936 and pretty much operates as a law unto itself controlled by a select group of corporate law firms, liquidators and Masters who have either been “co-opted” by them or, by now, just couldn’t care less.

The Protector’s call on minister Michael Masutha comes after the ministry’s attempt to change the policy governing the appointment of liquidators was struck down by the Constitutional Court in July 2018, after it was challenged by the Restructuring and Insolvency Practitioners’ Association among others, predominately over claims that the appointments were to be made using uncoordinated and race-based lists that would be open to manipulation.

Questions will likely be raised as to the timing of this report, with Mkhwebane’s history of meddling in affairs not her own. It is seven years since the complaint was lodged and

might be considered convenient by some, considering the ConCourt ruling.

But what were the circumstances surrounding the ruling?

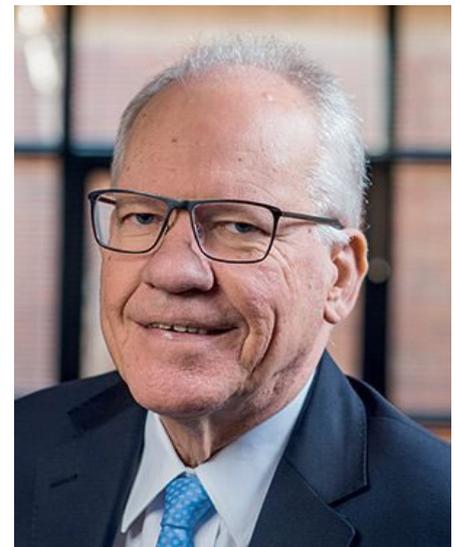
It all began in the heydays of New Order mining rights, the rise of BEE deals and a buoyant economy in the early 2000s led by “quiet diplomacy” president Thabo Mbeki.

Businessman Siphso Dube was the owner of Endulwini Resources (Pty) Ltd and riding the wave of BEE deals being sought by foreign mining capital all looking for an “in” to the lucrative South African coal mining industry.

He had the pick of partners to choose from, the support of the Department of Mineral Resources, and a penchant for claiming he had “political” clout.

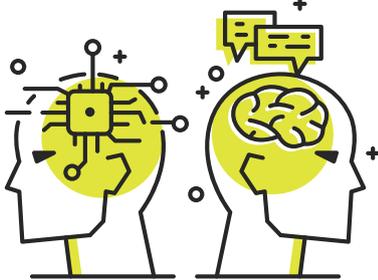
But, as reports reveal, he also had a nasty habit of extracting money from foreign investors and then falling out with them.

In about 2004/5 Endulwini had been brought in as a BEE partner with a 37.5% stake in the Black Wattle Colliery in Mpumalanga; London-



**Rob Lowe**

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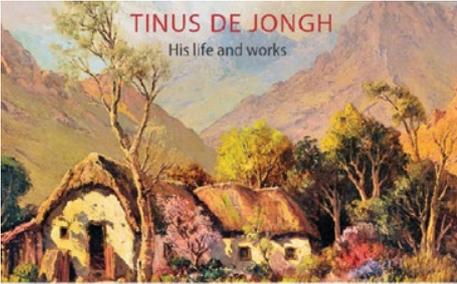
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based Bisichi Mining was the controlling shareholder.

In June 2005 Bisichi and Endulwini entered into another agreement – this time to buy the Pegasus Coal Reserve near Witbank from BHP Billiton's Ingwe Collieries. They formed a joint company called Ezimbokodweni Mining, 51% owned by Endulwini and 49% Bisichi.

Endulwini was also the beneficiary of a lucrative 250,000 tonnes-per-annum export quota from Richards Bay Coal Terminals allowing them access to the export market. This was part of the “Quattro programme” which mandated that space be given to black coal miners, with lower barriers of entry, to export coal.

Between 2005/2006 Dube got reacquainted with an old business contact – a former banker who he knew when he did business with Mercantile Bank called Rob Lowe who had “recently returned” to South Africa after a stint abroad.

As *Noseweek* readers will know, Lowe (*noses85*, 126&218) not only spent time in a UK jail for possession of child pornography in the early 1990s, was barred from working as a solicitor in the UK and defrauded a Mercantile Bank customer of his life savings to the sum of R20.9 million before skipping the country in 1998-99. He is also currently trying to help an Australian mining firm that is keen on mining coal in the water-scarce region of Waterberg, Limpopo.

“If I had read *Noseweek* at the

time he was around I would not have worked with him further,” Dube would tell *Noseweek*.

Through his vehicle Altius Investment Holdings (Pty) Ltd, Lowe bought a 15% stake in Endulwini Resources Ltd for R11 million. As Lowe would later say in papers filed for the liquidation: “The rationale for the investment was that the Endulwini Group, as a black-owned mining group, would be the beneficiary of mining opportunities in South Africa”.

Lowe then brought in Dr Anwah Nagia, chairman at Element Investment Managers (Pty) Ltd with whom he had worked in the past. Nagia is best known for being chairman of the District Six Beneficiary and Redevelopment Trust. Together they formed Africa Commodities Group Resources (Pty) Ltd which according to Nagia was to provide “management support, advice and funding”.

But in 2008 the relationship between Endulwini and Bisichi Mining unravelled. Bisichi's MD Andrew Heller was so eager to see the end of Dube he paid him R10m in “travel money”. Bisichi ended its BEE agreement at Black Wattle Colliery with Dube and signed up a new BEE partner in Vunani Mining shortly thereafter.

There was also ongoing strife at Pegasus. Bisichi wanted to buy the mine but Dube had told *Fin24* in 2008: “One thing is for sure. I will not allow them to continue mining



**Public Protector Busisiwe Mkhwebane**

there". He also wanted the mine.

Neither got it.

Bisichi Mining lost £1.8m (R31.7m), with little hope of recouping it.

But in 2009 Dube and Lowe wore rose-tinted glasses. A buck was to be made and Dube's BEE status was to be leveraged.

That year, according to CIPC records, Noble Resources Group Limited (*nose128*) which is listed on the Singapore Stock Exchange but domiciled in the mining mecca of Bermuda, took a 60% shareholding in Africa Commodities Group Resources (Pty) Ltd. The newly formed company was also keen on resurrecting the Pegasus mine deal, with or without Bisichi, as the mine was known to have high value coal deposits, valued in 2011 between the range of R593m to R946m.

Lowe, Nagia and the Noble Group, which has a subsidiary based in Stellenbosch, injected R20.4m into Endulwini and its coal subsidiary to develop coal assets. They entered into a coal supply agreement with the Bisichi-owned Black Wattle Colliery and, then using Endulwini's entitlement at Richards Bay Coal Terminal (RBCT), started exporting coal.

But by 2011 the deal had soured.

Lowe enlisted Chris van Zyl (*noses8, 141, 152, 157, 160, 164&166*) liquidator extraordinaire, known for results and making a quick buck while he is at it and once telling a hapless director being liquidated: "I love money. I luuurve money. I loooooove money."

Van Zyl would later tell creditors in February 2014 that Endulwini collapsed because of "complete mismanagement on the part of the directors of the company".

Dube told *Noseweek* that was rubbish, and that Lowe and Van Zyl engineered the crisis by seizing control of the company's cash flow.

Lowe accused Dube of making "unilateral decisions", ripping him off and failing to pay the logistics provider at RBCT, leading to reduced loads being delivered and some coal being seized "to rectify a shortfall in the common stockpile allegedly caused by Endulwini... selling the same consignment of coal twice, to different buyers".

During this period Dube, without the knowledge of Lowe and Noble, tried to offload his 51% stake in Pegasus Mine, as well as the debt, to the aptly named shelf company called

Hasty Shelf Trade and Invest 17 (Pty) Ltd – better known as HSTI 17 (Pty) Ltd which in turn was to be bought by Wescoal Holdings Ltd. HSTI 17 was owned by Muthanyi Ramaite – who was and still is Wescoal chairman – and Wiseman Khumalo who was at the time a non-executive director at Wescoal. An insider deal if there ever was one – except this deal also fell through.

At one point a senior official of the Department of Mineral and Resources tried to buy Endulwini's stake in Pegasus too.

On 16 November 2011 Endulwini was placed under provisional liquidation. A month later Van Zyl approached the court for further powers and took

**'When Van Zyl got appointed as a provisional liquidator I told him to go to hell – he will need to explain in an orange jacket what happened to all the money'**

control of Endulwini's subsidiaries and the bank accounts, which just happened to include the bank account Dube was using to pay legal fees to fight the liquidation.

Dube would later complain to the Public Protector: "They went on closing accounts, intimidating service providers and failing to make payments to service providers, including staff salaries, while hogging our monies as well as accounts frozen. I... request that the Master correct this abnormality by immediately removing this Provisional Liquidators" said Dube in a letter.

The company was wound-up in January 2012 with creditors eventually paid out in 2014.

Dube, who called Lowe a "professional conman" told *Noseweek* that the whole ordeal cost 700 people their jobs and even accused Lowe and Nagel's

company Altius as being an empowerment front, an accusation they deny.

"When Van Zyl got appointed as a provisional liquidator I told him to go to hell. Van Zyl will need to explain in an orange jacket what happened to all the money. I want him in jail," said Dube.

And Van Zyl said in reply: "I take it from whence it comes."

Lowe and Nagia, in a written response dismissed the "conman" slur as "defamatory" adding that when the going was good, Dube had declared of Lowe at a public gathering in September 2010: "He is a person of the highest integrity... [and] no one can take that integrity away from him."

They said that despite their directly paying Dube R9m for equity in Endulwini and a further R20.4m in loans, Dube was found to be selling preference shares on the side for R6m and raising a "US\$1m" loan for Endulwini. In fact he had pocketed the money himself.

"We got zero back in the final liquidation," they said in a written response.

Dube told *Noseweek* he now intends to use the findings in the Public Protector's report to overturn the liquidation of Endulwini.

Contacted by *Noseweek*, Van Zyl said that Dube told "deliberate lies" and accused him of hiding assets. He said the cost of the liquidation came to a total of R4.8m, including legal fees. Van Zyl said that Lowe, Nagia and Noble did get something back – a mere R122,229.14. [A *fair indication of who benefits most from liquidations as the system currently operates.* – Ed]

He said the 48-hour rule – which he claims was not used in this matter – is "faithfully followed by insolvency practitioners". He said he was busy with submitting a charge sheet in terms of the Companies Act against Dube and his co-directors and officers of the company, with the recommendation that they be prosecuted.

It is worth noting that Dube once put in a bid for what would become the infamous Gupta-owned Optimum mine in August 2015. According to *Business Report* at the time, Dube had put in a "firm offer of US\$200m" (approximately R2.5bn at the time). It would later be revealed that Dube's offer was for only R1.5bn – and that the offer was conditional, unsecured and "not credible", with "no real prospect of implementation". The Gupta's bought the mine for R2.15bn. ■

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# The incredible Watsons

By **Wessel Ebersohn**

**I**N MANY WAYS 1994 WAS WONDERFUL. It was the moment in our history when we turned away from a racist dispensation to the possibility of a democratic future. It was the moment when the door opened to the chance of all being only South Africans with no qualification as to race or group. But it was also the moment when formerly honourable activists and freedom fighters morphed their struggle credentials into vast amounts of money.

Among these, none are more colourful than the incredible Watson brothers of Port Elizabeth. Good looking, gym-fit, charismatic, well-dressed, rugby playing, born-again Christians, they were everything that the average pale-faced, unshaven, 40kg activist that populated the white left back in apartheid days, was not.

For those of us who knew them then and had since lost contact, the evidence of Angelo Agrizzi, a man in every way different to the Watsons, was a cause for astonishment. Millions paid in bribes; billions invoiced; Gavin Watson's alleged control of Jacob Zuma; the management of the



**Daniel 'Cheeky' Watson**

notorious Lindela Repatriation Centre that was accused of treating people without dignity or compassion: none of this fitted the picture of the Watsons that resided in our minds.

In the years between 1965 and 1973 there was always at least one Watson in the Graeme College first rugby team, sometimes more than one. To say they were the stars of the school is to be guilty of the most complete understatement. Old boys of the school, former masters and coaches, if they remember no one else from those days, they cannot forget Gavin, Ronnie, Valence and Cheeky, most of all Cheeky. He was the one on his way to playing wing for the Springboks. Anyone who knew anything about rugby could tell you that.

The boys grew up on a farm near Somerset East. Their father was a lay preacher who taught them that all people should be treated equally and that they should give their hearts to the Lord. For many years they followed both injunctions to the letter. Their mother was a nice Eastern Cape lady who did not want her boys getting into trouble and she just knew, quite rightly, that they were on their way to big trouble.

All four spoke Xhosa fluently. For whatever reason, the Eastern Cape is the one part of South Africa – and the Xhosas, the one African people, to have really taken to rugby. Cheeky was on his way to the big time in rugby when he and Valence, also an outstanding rugby player, were invited to coach in the townships. They accepted. The facilities were poor, but the enthusiasm and talent of those they trained, made up for that.

Their coaching raised eyebrows. It was not the sort of thing that the rugby stars of those days took part in. But the real split arose when Cheeky and Valence turned out for the Kwaru club in a league that, till that time, had fielded only black players.



**Angelo Agrizzi**

Eastern Province was not a part of the country that produced many international rugby stars, and the local authorities appealed to them to avoid this course of action that was sure to end in disaster.

But by now this was a matter of principle. The Watsons had made friends in the townships and hated the thought that they were expected to live according to the racist rules that governed the country. Ronnie and Valence had gone further and were acting as underground intelligence gatherers for the ANC.

Port Elizabeth is a small city. It was smaller then. Local celebrities were known by everyone. The Watsons could not walk down a street without being spotted. When they went out together, four rugged, striking-looking young men in a formidable quartet, even someone who knew nothing about them was bound to take notice.

But now the attention they received was not always desirable. They were roundly despised by the traditional rugby establishment, they were on the security police watch list and most of white Port Elizabeth viewed them with some suspicion.

An attempt was made on Cheeky's life. On a visit to Gaborone, a certain Stephen Barnett entered his room,

carrying a gun. Cheeky disarmed him, in the process doing damage to Barnett's nose. His assailant told Cheeky he was a member of Britain's Special Air Services, but in court he changed his story, saying that he was a member of South Africa's security services. The Botswana court sentenced him to five years in prison.

The family home in which all four brothers lived was bombed. According to people interviewed by the newspapers, the sight was spectacular. Curtains billowed across the road while the building was shattered beyond any hope of repair. Their enemies asserted that they had done it themselves to collect the insurance money, but all who knew them thought it far more likely that the security police were responsible. These were the days when many activists died at the hands of the security police, a fact attested to by their later testimony before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Valence, Ronnie and Cheeky were charged with arson, fraud and attempted murder. Valence alone was found guilty, but the next year his sentence was set aside.

By the time this observer went to visit them in the late 1980s their position in the community was set in stone. They were outcasts, but of the most unlikely kind. Outcasts do not usually come across as confident and self-assured, they do not usually disarm would-be assassins, they are not usually seen working out in a local gym and they are not usually the kind that bullies are afraid to pick on. They had a shop of which the clientele was almost entirely black. It started out as a men's outfitter, but turned into something close to a general dealer during the retail boycotts of those days. The boycotting of white-owned shops did not apply to them.

Our meeting was over lunch, something they insisted on. I got the impression they wanted to show that, no matter what their enemies did, they were not suffering. Then, as now, Gavin did most of the talking. I learnt that they had lived together in their family home before its destruction. Now, they shared a big flat, all four brothers, their wives and children. Apart from the cost saving they, and their womenfolk, must have felt more secure living together.

At lunch wine was offered. I



**Gavin Watson and Jacob Zuma**

accepted, a bottle was opened, but to my surprise and confusion I was the only one with a glass. I was going to be drinking alone. It was my only contact with the born-again Christian side of their personalities. The bottle went back, with only one glass less from its contents. Since then, if offered wine, I always ask, are you drinking?

They were sure of everything in those days. Cheeky was the best wing in the country, Valence was as good as any flank playing the game, the security police had destroyed their home, their business was on the way to great success, Nelson Mandela was soon going to be freed and the country was going to have a democratic dispensation. Most of their convictions have since turned out to be true, or at least partly true.

Gavin picked up the tab in the restaurant. As we got up to leave the proprietor came hopefully forward, but blanched as Gavin suggested under his breath that he put it on their tab. I got the clear impression this had happened before. But the restaurateur did as he was told.

In 1994 the entire landscape changed. Sanlam had already set the stage by donating Metropolitan Life to black shareholders. Black Economic Empowerment first became a fashion, then a necessary device if a business intended to survive. Although they are

white, the Watsons, because of their history, fit perfectly into the tortuous caverns of BEE.

Cheeky was the one who stayed close to rugby, becoming head of the Eastern Province Rugby Union, an organisation that at one time would have nothing to do with him. Sadly, things did not go well. He was accused of running the union on a patronage basis and with a lack of accountability. In 2014 and 2015 the union was not audited, and was eventually liquidated by the players themselves for not receiving their salaries. When he finally was forced out, the union had just R31 in its bank account. Cheeky was never able to secure the necessary level of sponsorship from Port Elizabeth businesses. It seemed that old enmities had survived. In 2017 he was arrested on a fraud charge relating to municipal money. At the time of writing he is about to appear in court, with three co-accused. According to allegations, money intended for the Integrated Public Transport System was used fraudulently.

His son, Luke, playing rugby in the democratic era, was seen by some as the best young player in the country. But he too was dogged by the family curse. Forced into the national side by political friends against the will of the team management, he cut a lonely and isolated figure, something that

does not work in a team sport. John Smit, the national captain, referred to him as “a cancer in the team”. Eventually, he left the country to play overseas. Rugby journalist Gavin Rich expressed “sorrow that we may never get to see the real Luke Watson, only the one that has been created in his father’s image”.

But the one who has seized the media’s attention in recent days is Gavin, who back in 2000 became the CEO of Bosasa. The company is now called African Global Operations and on its website it is described as “a multi-faceted group that has developed many of its own specialised techniques for business services”.

For years their management of the Lindela Repatriation Centre, an entity owned by the Department of Home Affairs and in which the ANC Women’s League has shares, drew angry criticism. According to Agrizzi’s testimony before the Zondo Commission, the company was paid R93.6 million a year by the Department of Correctional Services for their management of the centre. Of that, according to Agrizzi, R4.6m was paid out in bribes. Between 2004 and 2006 they invoiced that department to the tune of almost R1 billion. Apart from corruption, the centre has repeatedly been criticised for overcrowding, abuse of detainees, feeding them inadequately, and bad management. In the 2012 protest at the centre, rubber bullets and truncheons were used on the refugees.

While deportation is supposed

to take 48 hours, some have been detained there for far longer. Rumours abound of people being held in custody at Lindela for as much as a year. A Malawian gardener working in Johannesburg told me his passport was taken from him and never returned.

The Watsons’ most recent venture, a prawn farm in the Coega Industrial Development Zone, like so many of their enterprises, seems to have been assisted by political friends. Environmental oversight seems to have been ignored almost completely. Megan Taplin of SANParks said the farm was a threat to the marine area next to Coega: “The proposed species is not indigenous to the Indian Ocean and presents a risk of invasion.”

Sea Ark Holdings, the company that holds their interests in the farm, is a senior member of an organisation called the Conservation of National Resources. Other members include the National Trappers Association, the Japan Whaling Association, the International Fur Trade Association and Monsanto, the notorious seed producer. All of them are under continual attack by national and international environmental groups.

According to testimony heard at the Zondo Commission, apart from their business at Lindela, Bosasa has won tenders worth billions of Rands to provide food and transport to the Department of Correctional Services, security to the Airports Company of South Africa and services to the

Department of Justice. According to a report in *Beeld* in 2006, Sondolo, a Bosasa affiliate, wrote a large part of a Department of Correctional Services tender themselves, after which it was awarded to them.

It is unlikely that anyone knows exactly how much money has been paid to Bosasa and its affiliates by government departments, but according to an analysis by the *Mail & Guardian*, between 2003 and 2019 Bosasa invoiced government departments to the tune of R12,282,374,003 (over R12 billion). Judging by the amounts distributed to those who could help to keep the contractual wheels turning, this seems plausible. The testimony before Judge Zondo went on and on, as former Watson people unburdened themselves. Agrizzi alone spent a week on the stand.

In 2014 Gavin was being investigated by the Hawks for allegedly trying to bribe Correctional Services officials for a R1.7bn tender. Bosasa paid almost R1.2bn to settle the legal bill of Hlaudi Motsoeneng, former SABC chief. At one point they were paying R300,000 in cash monthly to both Jacob Zuma and Dudu Myeni, an associate of his. A R500,000 donation was made to Cyril Ramaphosa’s election campaign. A total of R3m was paid to finance events of the Jacob Zuma Foundation. A fence worth R300,000 was paid to enclose Gwede Mantashe’s home. Many other leading government people have received very large cash gifts from Bosasa. Some have had their houses fitted with state-of-the-art burglar alarm systems. Among the beneficiaries, Thabang Makwetla repeatedly asked for the bill, Gavin simply refused to provide it.

There is no doubting the reality of the role the Watson brothers played in the liberation struggle. It is possible the country owes them a debt for their courage and the example they set in those days. It is a tragedy that the events that followed allowed them to reduce themselves to their current level. It is a characteristic of our times that people who were once willing to risk their lives for what they believed to be right have allowed themselves to be sucked into the same vortex of greed and power. When the history of the Watson brothers is finally written one hopes the full picture will be revealed, not just the catastrophe of more recent years. ■



Luke Watson

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# The meal-kit mogul

UCook's David Torr shares his recipe for success. By **Sue Segar**

**H**E MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPELLED from several posh schools, been a marijuana dealer at 17, cut off from his trust fund in his twenties – and voted by his classmates at the Red and Yellow School as the person most likely to go to jail, but David Torr, CEO and co-founder of South Africa's largest meal-kit provider, UCook, was grinning from ear to exhausted ear when we met.

By the time you read this the company, founded by Torr and his friend Chris Verster Cohen in 2015 after they had met in Thailand, will be well on their way to opening their first unique flagship retail store at Cape Town's V&A Waterfront – “in a prime location near Woolworths”. They will be selling an assortment of dinner kits and other ready-made meal products. Besides getting into the retail sector, UCook will, in June, also launch a range of ready-made meals online.

The company, which delivers convenient, healthy dinner kits with easy-to-follow recipe cards, started off with Torr and friends packing meal ingredients into boxes from a garage in Cape Town. (They once sent off the kits without the recipes, he recalls.) The business had reached a turnover of close to R100 million by the end of last year.

At the time of going to press, UCook had just emerged from a series of “long and laborious negotiations” with three of the country's top retailers with a view to providing a range of products to one of them – a deal that would have seen UCook's ready made meals and other ethically produced goods expanded to about 150 stores over the next few years. But in a phonecall just before deadline, Torr told *Noseweek* that all potential deals were off. “They all want exclusivity... which means that the meals we trade in the stores must be different to the frozen meals

we have on site, so we're not going to go with any of the retailers, it's too prohibitive for us, we want to keep the trade to our own site. We'll just open our own bricks and mortar stores,” he said. “I'm feeling great about this. It allows us to own the stores and to market and brand and engage with users in the way we want to.”

*Noseweek* has noticed that at least two big grocery retailers have copied UCook by introducing their own versions of meal kits.

Interviewed at his head office in Maitland, Cape Town, Torr spoke about his unconventional upbringing as the child of a secret affair between a wealthy Italian, UK-based businessman and his “esoteric”, unmaterialistic mother; about his remarkable business trajectory; and his personal struggles with being a millennial and “extreme entrepreneur” in a complicated world.

To get to his office, in a drab business park, this reporter walked up an ugly industrial staircase and stepped over a young woman in jeans with a nose ring, sprawled on the steps, smoking, while chatting to a young tousle-haired blond man. Turned out those are Torr's business partners, Verster Cohen and Katie Barry, who, with her maths Master's degree has been described by Torr as the person who's been key to the business's reaching its impressive revenues in three-and-a-half years.

A whistle-stop tour of the premises suggested that UCook is slowly colonising the business park: besides the admin/operations office, they have a big warehouse from which local distribution takes place as well as housing their marketing and tech offices. They also have warehouses and offices in Midrand. UCook delivers about 120,000 meals (20,000 meal kits) a month.

The parcels contain only what is needed to make a meal and include recipes from top chefs. Among that week's options were “The famous panzanella with fior di latte and basil;



David Torr

Moroccoli with pearl couscous and long-stem broccoli; or Lamb adana kebabi with roti and fresh Lebanese salad". No food is wasted in the kits and the company supports small farmers and keeps their menus seasonal and organic.

Recipes are divided into three categories – Health Nut, Vegetarian and Easy Peasy – and nine new recipe options are given every week. Orders are packed in boxes with ice-packs and delivered right to your door on specified days.

When we met, Torr had big plans for the year ahead: the retail store – expected to launch in August – was foremost in his mind.

Torr described himself as “very much a millennial in the technical definition, but anti-millennial in my value construct”. He referred repeatedly to his conviction that wealthy people have a duty to give back to society. “There’s a real entitlement that’s been born in this generation – as if you deserve reward without having to do the work. I don’t fit into that category at all.”

Torr also spoke of the relentlessness of being at the helm of such a big enterprise. “There’s a misconception around the kind of liberation that comes with being an entrepreneur and running your own business. I feel very shackled in many ways to the set of obligations I have to my greater employee base, the board and the investors.

“My commitment definitely supercedes that of a traditional employer... and there’s lots of pressure within the e-commerce and tech environment. We run a business with week-to-week pressure. We’re as good as our last order week. Right now I am tired.”

Describing himself as an “extreme entrepreneur”, he said: “In many ways the success has cost me the great lifestyle I would love. My work involves extreme, obsessive commitment. I’m at work at six in the morning, home at ten and I’m up till midnight. I lose track of time. My twenties, are supposed to be the most vital years of my life. These are the years people go on amazing journeys and explore who they are.

“The by-product of all this business stuff for me has been a general degeneration in my personal development. I’m starting to see a therapist quite frequently. It’s been fundamentally tough running three or four businesses simultaneously. I’m not available socially as much as I’d like to be... I don’t really see anyone during the week so I overcompensate when I do go out. I

get very drunk. Being an extreme entrepreneur has been challenging.”

His father died when Torr was in his teens, leaving strict instructions for Torr to receive his inheritance via a trust fund. He spent his early twenties, travelling, teaching in Thailand and working as a waiter and as a chef on a boat (he was fired after two weeks). While travelling, he heard that he’d been completely cut off from his trust because he had passed his tertiary education period and the trust could no longer motivate supporting him. “Those were my father’s wishes.”

He returned to South Africa in 2013 with a new attitude and a few ideas.

“When I arrived back in Cape Town, the house my mother was living in in Noordhoek was in squalor and my

## **‘I was a legit marijuana dealer for a year-and-a-half, making over R100,000 a month’**

mother had 12 vagrants living in our house, paying her a pittance in rental. Everything just came into focus then. That was the year when I started everything.

Before UCook, Torr started a couple of other businesses which are still growing. In 2014, he came up with the idea of launching a festival. With no money to kickstart the venture, he and a friend launched the Eden Experience, using the money from tickets they sold to pay for the venue. Today, Eden hosts three festivals a year. By the end of 2015 Torr had earned a respectable R120,000 which he invested in UCook.

In 2014, noticing a gap in the student accommodation market, Torr borrowed money and launched a property development company, Solace, which he built up steadily, starting with a development in Woodstock, Urban Artisans.

While travelling in the UK, Torr had come across a concept of meal kits called HelloFresh and thought meal kits were a fascinating concept which could work in South Africa – with better meals and more transparency about the supply

chain of the products.

When he and his girlfriend were in Thailand Torr met Chris Verster Cohen – who had just completed his BSocSci at UCT – and told him about his idea for meal kits. Verster Cohen was interested and the duo decided to work together.

When UCook started in 2015, it was from a garage at the home of Verster Cohen’s parents. They each borrowed R25,000 which paid for a vacuum-sealer, and some weighing and kitchen equipment.

They launched on Facebook and their first 21 orders came from family and friends, most of whom stopped their orders when the pair forgot to include recipe cards with the ingredients.

Not long after this, the company’s third partner Katherine Barry, joined UCook.

While working as waitrons to cover their costs, the team was soon sending out 50 boxes of food every week. They worked hard on marketing and promoting their new business and got good publicity. but they needed more funding – and after making use of an investment from Torr’s Eden earnings, the company realised it needed even more money.

In mid 2015, following some hard talking, the Cape Town-based investment firm Silvertree Internet Holdings bought 50% of the business. The investment enabled UCook to take on bigger premises and invest in more equipment such as industrial fridges. Since then they’ve grown their database to more than half-a-million people who want to cook like top chefs.

The business is now holding on to more than 10% of the country’s online grocery market.

Next to invest was retail business, Smollen, bringing the value of the business to R200 million.

On top of the UCook developments, the year ahead will see Torr working on another student accommodation development of 55 units in the Urban Artisan development in Woodstock under the Solace umbrella.

Torr has always had an entrepreneurial streak – at 12, he sold firecrackers to kids at school and at 17 he set up two friends in rental apartments to grow marijuana, which he sold in a sophisticated distribution network. “I was a legit marijuana dealer for a year-and-a-half, making R100,000 a month.”

But things have not always been this rosy for Torr. Born in 1990, he started



**UCook package**

life in Johannesburg. A child who was “technically the son of an affair,” he battled with serious rejection issues, even though his biological father visited him regularly and clearly loved him.

“My mother, Anthea Torr, had a relationship with my biological father, Guy Zammit, and then married my stepdad, Andrew Torr, when I was three years old. Andrew Torr is, to this day, still my surrogate dad and the most active parent in my life.” Anthea and Andrew later divorced but David remains close to his stepfather.

“My (biological) dad’s affair with my mom took place unbeknown to his family, who lived in the UK. I was kept secret from his family and they only found out about me when he died. I am, only recently, getting to know those members of the family. I am the physical manifestation of my father’s betrayal,” Torr said.

“Although I was kept a secret from my father’s family, I used to see him every two to three weeks. He’d either fly me to the UK or visit me in South Africa. He never abandoned me. He just didn’t tell his family about me.

“My biological father was a wealthy deal-making hustler constantly doing different stuff and he travelled a lot. He had many different businesses. When in South Africa, he was based in Sandton.

“He was a lovely guy who was hugely charismatic, mysterious with lots and

lots of layers. He was Italian by origin and spoke seven languages. He had a real magnetism and told fascinating stories. He had a running classic comic character in his stories, called Contrarino, who never got anything right. He was very spontaneous and in the moment.

“He did ridiculous things and would always bring a situation to life. He always had these magical ideas. Once he wanted to develop a suit that could be filled with helium, which people could get into and then float around in parks. Another time he decided that what we needed to do as a hobby was ride dirt bikes, so he arrived having purchased a whole bunch of dirt bikes and took us – me and my step siblings – on these ridiculous excursions.

“We would often cook together. I remember cooking pasta with him for the first time – and being about ten years old, sitting in his bed, watching weird PG 18 art nouveau movies and eating whole chickens from Nandos.

“He phoned every week. I’d see him every two to three weeks. He was present in my life, big on family, just very cowardly. He didn’t want to destroy his other family.”

“I loved him. He was my hero. We’d sit for hours just talking.”

After Zammit died of a heart attack on his game farm in Thabazimbi in 2002, young David was not mentioned at the

funeral. “That was a big one for me. They had funerals in Johannesburg, Italy and the UK and I wasn’t mentioned in any of them. I was hugely devastated. When he died I lost my best friend.

“I’d always wanted to meet the family of my father but only got to meet them when he died – and then they didn’t accept me for 13 years, from when I was 13 until I was 26.

“There was always this element of rejection in my life. I was always on the periphery of my core family.”

The young Torr was not physically active, because of a broken arm which remained in a cast for about four years due to a bone graft that didn’t heal. “I couldn’t do the traditional things like play on a jungle gym. I became introspective, a daydreamer.”

Torr described his mother, Anthea as an esoteric person, who, in direct contrast to his father, is not interested in “worldly stuff”. “Interestingly, she is such a happy person, while my father, with all his money, was very unhappy. My mother is devoted to a higher purpose in her life and follows the teachings of the ascendant masters. She is hugely spiritual.

“As a kid, my mother was extreme and way ahead of the curve. She was doing organic and free-range way before anyone knew what it was; she already avoided chemicals and knew that parabens cause cancer. She did the research, made sure we were eating properly, hated sugar and was a great mother.

“Our house was off the grid by the time I was 13. We had solar, all our gas was methane and we had a two-acre vegetable garden we were eating off. We were vegan. She is the most loving person I know.”

His mother currently lives in a mobile home. “She travels around and recently went up into Africa for two years by herself to meet up with our former Malawian caretaker, Watson. She is a wanderer and a woman of few luxuries. I support her financially.”

Torr was at Reddam school in Johannesburg and aged 13 when his father died. “That was when I went off the rails. It was definitely a trigger event. I started doing a whole bunch of stuff. I was very obnoxious and got into lots of fights.

He was expelled from Reddam “for strapping a whole lot of widowmakers (fire-crackers) together and blowing up a toilet; also for throwing a soccer ball at the biology teacher’s head”.

He then went to Somerset College in Somerset West from grades seven to nine when he moved to the Waldorf School. He was expelled from there, too, for his general behaviour and because of reports that he was dealing in marijuana, which he was.

“One of the funnier moments at Waldorf was when I was asked to give a speech about the land surveying camp. I didn’t think it was hugely useful so another guy and I created a 15-minute dialogue about how useless it was. The skit didn’t go down well. I also locked a lot of teachers out of the classroom.”

After a year-or-so of home schooling, he eventually finished school at Abbotts before going travelling in Thailand and the US for a year.

“I was a trust fund kid for most of my life. There was always a safety net. I knew that when I was 30 I’d receive a large sum of money so I never really had an urge to make a success of myself commercially. Well, I’m not yet 30 and I haven’t received that money yet!”

Torr spent two years at the Red and Yellow School in Cape Town, where he “enjoyed the lateral thinking bit” but realised he was hopeless at copywriting, and went travelling again, returning in 2013 “with a renewed vigour and the serious desire to prove myself”. That was when he started the Eden Experience, followed by Solace and then UCook. The rest is history – and Torr believes he will grow from strength to strength in his range of businesses.

Asked who he admires in business, he retorted: “One person I do not admire is (the late Apple founder) Steve Jobs. “Despite his achievements, there is a lack of humanity there. Elon Musk is interesting. I find what he’s doing super riveting. Yvon Chouinard, the founder of Patagonia (the US-based outdoor apparel firm) and author of the book *Let My People Go Surfing*, is someone I really admire. He’s managed to turn his business culture into the company’s growth engine.”

Torr is “greatly concerned about the corruption in big business in South Africa” but believes the country could be “one of the most incredible... powerhouses in the world”.

“We have all the right chemistry but I think in order for that to occur, at some point of time there is going to have to be racial unionism.

“Many of my friends are Jewish. The Jews are an amazing collective... united, based on belief and past suffering.

South Africa has been through a lot as a country. We need to throw our lot in together and make this thing happen.”

When he’s not working, Torr loves playing “nerdy magic” card games. “I am into weird fantasy stuff. My collection of magic cards is worth R1 million. I’ve been playing since I was ten. Playing cards takes me back to a better time.”

Besides getting UCook into the retail sector, the company will launch a range of ready-made meals online in June.

On top of that, Torr is in the process of starting a new business with former Miss South Africa Adè van Heerden, who is a medical doctor and nutritionist. “We are developing a four-week holistic health and longevity programme for women. We’ve been studying all the blue zones around the world, like Okinawa, where people live on average for 100 years and have analysed their

**‘I was a trust fund kid  
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dietary habits. We are building a four-week programme in which we deliver four meals a day and which includes exercises to kickstart the metabolism and immune system so that people can feel good and healthy again.”

Also on the agenda this year, said Torr, is an investigation into an honest foods micro grocer which speaks to the UCook narrative. “We would like to bring a range of independent producers together into an honest grocery concept that serves the full spectrum of grocery needs, but which abides by a set of ethical principles so that people don’t even think about what they are buying, they just know that the products buy into a collective philosophy. It would also create an environment for small community projects to trade wares.”

Another big thing Torr is aiming to do this year is to become more of an activist in business. “We are looking at developing UCook’s touch points and our ability to communicate with users

iteratively,” he said.

“Think about this: we are a subscription model, people receive a box of food every week, from us so we are getting right into their households. It is the perfect place to start putting interesting messaging and communication. I want UCook to start taking an activist position in relation to demanding an honest food culture. There is a huge need for this. Our communications must filter down to government bread level. We will even interrogate what nutrients are actually going into our bread.

“We want to be big whistleblowers in that space. Food is the biggest killer in the world. It creates obesity, diabetes, cancer and heart disease. We want to ensure that businesses are fundamentally honest in what they say they are and what they are... if they claim to be a health product, they must be healthy; if they are not healthy, then that’s ok, but then they must admit it. Let’s not pretend Kelloggs has all the nutrients and vitamins needed for a child to grow. It’s bullshit and it’s wrong.”

Torr also wants to build a business blog that will showcase what UCook is actually doing as a business.

“We will promote ethical business practices and share how we do it. We’ll answer questions like, how do we treat our staff, what do our employment upliftment programmes look like, what are we doing within the cultural environment and agricultural space?”

On top of all this, Torr intends writing a book to tell his story and share anecdotes of successful business practices. But he’s really looking forward to taking a sabbatical at the end of the year to touch base with himself. “I’ve been so immersed in all these projects, there’s a part of me that feels a bit lost. I have no spiritual life whatsoever. I’d like to take two months’ sabbatical to maybe do the Camino or a ten-day meditation or maybe go to Kashmir.”

Foremost in his mind is the need to give back: “While UCook is an ethical business in terms of its construct, it hasn’t really done enough... to positively impact the greater community. We have the potential to do so much more. I believe that being of service is what brings real happiness. Look at my father, who was this hugely rich wealthy industrialist businessman. He was hugely unhappy. My mother, who has no money, has spent her life serving others and she is one of the happiest people I know.” ■



## Ten rules for writing your own cheque

**I**MAGINE MOST AUTHORS, EVEN THE most high-minded, secretly harbour the fantasy of producing the bestseller that will convert all that high-minded labour into hard cash.

Being no exception to this pathetic trend, and finding on my desk a novel by John Sandford, who by my count has to date produced 50 highly successful novels, I've opted to use this review to analyse, for myself and other aspirant millionaires, the requirements for a Lucrative Career in Crime Writing. Based, then, on my reading of *Holy Ghost* (I have not read the other 49), I have devised the following Ten Rules of Crime Writing:

1. Establish a brand. *Holy Ghost* is announced as 'a Virgil Flowers novel', calculated to set the pulses racing of the readers of the ten previous Virgil Flowers novels. Virgil Flowers is the Sherlock Holmes, the Hercule Poirot, the Miss Marple, the Miss Smylla, the Bennie Griessel of crime-writing, and his name is instantly recognisable to a lucrative number of the faithful. It's like Marmite. (Virgil's superior, Lucas Davenport, has spawned 29 novels.)

2. Shout! Get someone better known than yourself to tell the world that you're almost as good as he is. The Shout in this case comes from Stephen King, who calls Sandford "One of the great novelists of all time", which puts him right up there with Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, and perhaps even with Stephen King.

3. Invent a protagonist that your readers will want to spend time with, an ordinary kind of guy with ordinary kind of problems. (Compare Bennie Griessel's alcoholism.) Virgil Flowers, for instance, has been divorced three times, but loves his dog and his

current girlfriend, Frankie Nobles, who is pregnant and suffers from morning sickness. They all, dog included, have Cream of Wheat for breakfast, stirred not shaken. They are Ordinary People.

4. Must Love Dogs. Dogs are the new kids, cute without turning into drug addicts or Trump supporters. Flower's dog is called Honus and is yellow. Later in the story there is a dog called Pat, who has been locked in a basement for a fortnight, his owner having been shot upstairs. Flowers and the other cops are more concerned about the dog than the dead man: "Well, I can understand shooting somebody," says one cop, "but why would you do that to a dog?" (Spoiler: Pat is revived and found a good home.) It's never a good idea to kill a dog in a novel; I did it in my first novel and lost an untold number of readers. (On the other hand, there was *Disgrace*...)

5. Have sex. Well, as an ingredient. But beware, the kiss-kiss bang-bang of yore is no longer fashionable. They still kiss and bang, but the women are not there mainly because they look good emerging from the ocean in a bikini: they are sensible, hard-headed women with agency. Here, the Lothario is not Virgil Flowers himself (I'm guessing that

after ten novels there's not much more we can find out about him in that department), but the gangly 17-year-old redhead, Skinner, who has "screwed half the women and girls in town", and is eyeing the other half. But here's the thing: according to an associate of his, "Skinner really likes women. Not just sex, he likes women. Young women, old women. I've seen him bullshitting 90-year-olds... I didn't say he was screwing them. He likes them and they know it. That's

his whole secret." Like all good crime novels, then, this one has Handy Hints. And the cops, foul-mouthed though they be, are basically regular guys.

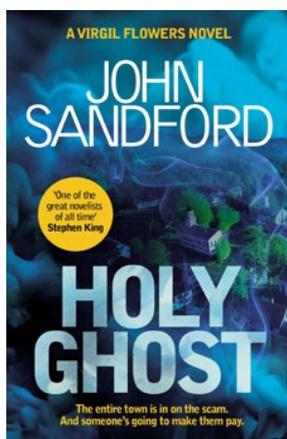
6. Respect the convention that hard-bitten cops are actually softies at heart, and most Police Procedurals are sublimated bromances. The cops hide their tender feelings, also from themselves, by ceaselessly abusing each other verbally, and denigrating each other's sexual prowess or organs. Virgil is routinely referred to by his fellow cops as "Fuckin' Flowers". Their preferred term of abuse is Asshole. Go figure, Dr Freud.

7. Have a High Concept, that is, an idea that will sustain interest for the duration of a novel. In this novel, the high concept is the apparition of the Virgin, floating into view during services in the moribund Catholic Church in the moribund town of Pinion, Minnesota (pop. 700), and turning the town into a thriving centre of pilgrimage. Okay, Carl Hiaasen used that concept a while ago, but Sandford puts his own spin on it by having the talented young Skinner bang the Virgin. Also by having somebody apparently pissed off enough about the apparitions to start shooting people, ostensibly at random. Enter Virgil Flowers. The High Concept always triggers action. (Spoiler: in this novel the High Concept is also a Red Herring, another essential ingredient.)

8. Have a plot, preferably one without holes in it. A crime novel without a resolution is a cop-out and a cheat. Spoiler: this novel has a resolution, complete with a distribution of babies (Virgil's girlfriend is discovered to expect twins). Everybody is accounted for, and even the dogs get a mention. Not quite a bang, but not a whimper either. The novel's last words are actually "I love you". That is so old-fashioned, it's almost post-modern.

9. Take a post-graduate course in ballistics. Guns are the new porn, only more erotic.

10. It helps if you can write. Sandford can. ■



**HOLY GHOST**  
by John Sandford  
(Simon & Schuster)

# Letter from Umjindi

BHEKI MASHILE



## Proudly raise and wave your Mzansi flag

**U**NLIKE TOO MANY OF OUR FELLOW Mzansi citizenry I like to think of myself as one of the most positive people when mulling over our current status of national affairs – political, economic and social.

We defy the “African basket case” norms and I believe we will continue to defy those norms as we go to the polls this year in another general election. I am confident that we will pull it off without the violence that has characterised elections in so many of the nations of our brothers-and-sisters-from-the-other-mothers on the continent. (I hope I am not proven wrong in saying this.)

Now in the unlikely event that some disgruntled losing party decides to mobilise their followers – perhaps via “antisocial media” to wreak havoc in the name of vote-rigging or some other excuse, what party would it be? I most certainly do not think it would be the DA. After all, I believe the Alliance accepts it has hit a glass ceiling in its attempts to lure support from the ANC-loving masses – judging by comments from active, office-holding DA members who this here nosey scribe knows.

And, hey let’s face it, the billboard listing Esidimani names did not help matters. Or, no, that is being way too kind. Let’s say that was one of the dumbest campaigns this writer has ever seen.

I mean the DA is trying to unseat a party that not only enjoys the support of the masses but is providing what the masses really care about: bread and butter (which of course includes the much-appreciated RDP houses despite some hiccups and backlogs).

The Democratic Alliance should take a page from the Trump book. That man won the vote by promising to bring back the bread and butter. Why do you think they call America’s heartland the bread basket?

Sorry DA, you have to get with the programme, although I will say you are doing a good job as the opposition. Keep up the good fight in Parliament. However I must ask: why are you failing to deal with the Gupta issue? I cannot believe that these guys just buggered off and we are not chasing them. For crying out loud, ask for help from the FBI, Mossad (hey remember when these guys tracked down the Munich Olympic games culprits – don’t mess with Tel Aviv).

Okay, enough about the DA, lets talk about the EFF. Sorry Juju, but your 15 minutes of Andy Warhol fame is done. My highly reliable sources tell me the party would be lucky to get 6% again. Yes Juju, I saw you in the news the other day and you said you would win the elections. Have you ever heard of an American band called Aerosmith? Well one of their biggest hits was Dream On. You might want to listen to that song.

So, nosey ones, I opened this piece with the question, what party would cause havoc on “antisocial media” if they were to lose. Well I dare say we should keep a close eye on Hlaudi Motsoeneng, our former COO of the SABC who liked to reward himself with a hefty pay check.

I suggest that the good man Hlaudi and his new party join forces with Patricia de Lille. They can call their coalition the Good Content (oh yeah content that is the silly name of Hlaudi’s party).

Anyway nosey ones, like I said, we should rejoice, wave the flag because indeed we have become a true democracy. Yes, we have our challenges but all in all we are good. We have racial tolerance and deal harshly with

people who try to undermine that; we have the toyi toyi, which I am practising so I can to try to get my hip back into place; we got rid of Zuma; and no idiot called black people “monkeys” on the beach this Xmas. What more do you want?

Best of all I, Bheki Mashile, live on a farm – what more could I wish for? ■





## Grammaticabobble rammed down our throats

**I** SUFFERED SORE DISMAY AT THE AGE of ten-or-so upon learning that language was not for pleasure, it was for discipline. Discipline such as would make one an example in Natal, British Empire. A dreadful teacher appeared with underclothing such as would make one believe she had but one large central buttock and no place for a poephhol as expected on a low-class person. She was now going to teach us not to speak like low-class persons, like colonials, but to disassemble everything we were about to say and quickly reassemble it as a proper grammaticabobble sentence. But you had to do this fast otherwise people would perhaps think you were a low-class person.

You should analyse each sentence into main and subordinate clauses and figures of speech and avoid all foreign words like Okay and Footsack. There were adjectival clauses and adverbial clauses, every clause had to have a verb, and you should never end a sentence with a preposition like What are you thinking of? You should say Of what are you thinking?

I tried it on my ma for homework. Bloody hell what are you talking about? said she, placing the preposition at the end of her sentence, I've got to cook the supper. My sister took to picking fleas off the cat after five minutes and eventually I just chugged to a standstill like an old car with bad spark plugs (there's a simile for you, now). Later in life it struck me that this education must have happened to Henry James too, Master of the Subordinate Clause, who could ramble through an entire page before coming to the main clause.

Well I supposed analysis was okay if you wanted to be anything in the Empire, though you could betcha life on it Victoria Regina spoke English more like Bismarck than James. But what was just not at all okay was that this posh thing was happening to Afrikaans too. Back in my earlier

days in Pretoria you could speak to anybody in Afrikaans, it was spoken a dozen different ways, I mean was it surely a living language, hey? My ouma spoke it with a Dutch vocabulary and a Klein Drakenstein Kaapie accent and her manservant with everything Venda, even in the family kitchen you could see a new language was growing.



But in official places it had been declared an Official Language, and bejusus official people saw to it that it was going to become one: posh, fixed, dignified like Miss Buttock's English. Back of folks' minds was the realisation that this had been the language of slaves, it was the Creole spoken between slave and master way back in the Dutch colonies in South East Asia, and they'd brought it to the Cape. It had the guts of history and movement in it. But all that was now going to change by declaration; they got hold of

a lot of fairly mediocre literature and declared it to be great, and behold! a brand new White European Man's Language! Afrikaners were now very dignified, so all we had to do was fix the grammar, nail it to the floor so nobody could move it, nobody's going to get away with being low-class in this our nice new culture.

I remember some years ago in Namaqualand where I espied an old bruin mens sitting on his stoep with his bicycle leaned against a pole, and engaged him in quiet conversation. Oom, said I after a bit, what does Oom think of his language these days? Nee, seg hy, ek hou nie van daardie Oxford Afrikaans van Pretoria nie. How's that for a metaphor, man? It pleases me these days that so many genuine Afrikaners show genuine relief that their language is back in the mouths of common Bruin Mense and it's starting to go Creole again.

English, dignified? Come on, man, English derives from the Creole language of Chaucer, remains a bit Creole to this day, that's its strength. Common Anglo-Saxon subjects had no access to the posh French of the Norman court after the 1066 invasion, see, just handy bits from the world of master/servant, but soon enough the rulers found the new language of the ruled more expressive than their own and voila! Give it a couple of hundred years and what do we have? A whole new language, English, and Chaucer, that's what. Give it a couple of hundred years more and what do we have? That's correct: Shakespeare. Then a further few hundred? Why, Us.... oops! I mean We. And where are We going? Hell, I don't know, and one shouldn't want to know, language has its own momentum, unbridled. And if it's not for pleasure, forget it!

P.S. So you thought the two main languages of South Africa were isiXhosa and English, didja? Well they're isiZulu and Afrikaans. Look that up yourself. ■

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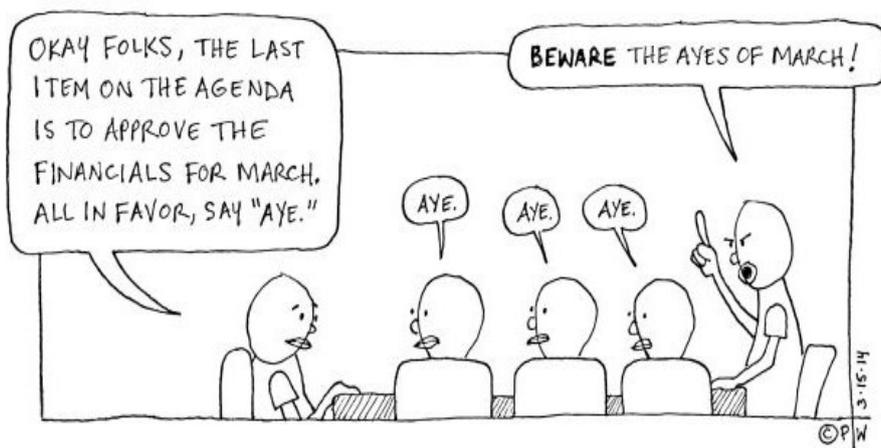
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