

NEWS YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO KNOW

# noseweek

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ISSUE 248 SEPTEMBER 2020

Cat among the  
**pigeon fanciers:**  
What's Cyril got  
to do with it?



Jo'burg CEO said to have spent  
**R18.5m living it up** on his  
company credit card,  
leaves 200 workers  
destitute and  
threatening to kill

*Greenies flogging  
a battery-driven  
dead horse...*  
*Say hallo to hydrogen!*

**Lennie the Liquidator**  
loses his cool –  
and gets sued  
for R500,000  
for defamation

*Artificial Intelligence:  
A scary contest,  
China vs USA*

Vodacom still  
creaming millions  
off **WASP frauds**  
– the proof



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ISSUE 248 • SEPTEMBER 2020

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# Letters

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

## Lithium make way for hydrogen

AS WE APPROACH OUR COVID-19 PEAK in the Western Cape (always ahead of the rest of SA), I am inspired by the potential for a radical shift in thinking about energy availability in many areas.

I could not believe the resurrection by government of Russian-funded and designed nuclear power as a potential major component of our future electricity base load – that while the Medupi and Kusile power stations and their bed partners in the ICU ward of so-called ‘Clean Coal’ generation are still wringing the dried-up tits of government for more, more, MORE cash!

Similarly, big, bad auto industry bucks are pushing the world towards big, bad battery-powered vehicles that generate terrible range and recharge anxiety.

I have unlimited admiration for Pretoria boy Elon Musk and his lithium dreams. In the hugely disparate fields of stationary and outer space energy; nobody in the world comes close to his vision and delivery. But, out on the street, his storage unit vehicles will be confined to the niche of DeLorean fantasy, suburban human transport and door-to-door delivery.

Why? Because competing hydrogen fuel generation and storage technology are on an exponential trajectory. The latest in Kubas Manganese Hydride

hydrogen fuel tank designs from Professor Antonelli at Lancaster University in the UK, promises a fuel cell system that costs five times less than lithium-ion batteries with a four or five times longer range, at pressures less than an underwater diver’s scuba air tank. And without the deadweight burden of batteries that would drown the enthusiasm of your average motorist.

The relentless retreading of out-of-sell-by-date technologies for Africa is a Stalingrad defence by entrenched capital. Enough!

Remember Einstein: repeating the same and expecting a different result is madness.

Nigel Fox  
Paarl

See his essay on page 34 – Ed.

## Extortion, theft, daylight robbery

I JUST HAD MY ACCOUNT DEBITED WITH AN enormous amount by the SA Revenue Service (SARS), despite the fact that a dispute matter is in progress and they had stated that nothing would be done whilst the matter was still being resolved. Extortion, theft, daylight robbery by agents of the State, that’s what it is.

I know this is occurring throughout the country as a result of the actions of rogue SARS elements that simply could

not give a toss when debiting taxpayers accounts illegally (as per the Pretoria high court ruling on 14 July 2020).

This is in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic when everyone is struggling, unemployment is at levels never seen before, and the economy is in the doldrums.

This is when these maven decide to screw everyone they can for as much as they can so as to ensure that any chance the economy may have to recover is compromised again.

Do you think this type of abhorrent stupidity is as a result of them having to meet commission targets?

Pissed Off  
Gauteng

## Thank you Bheki Mashile!

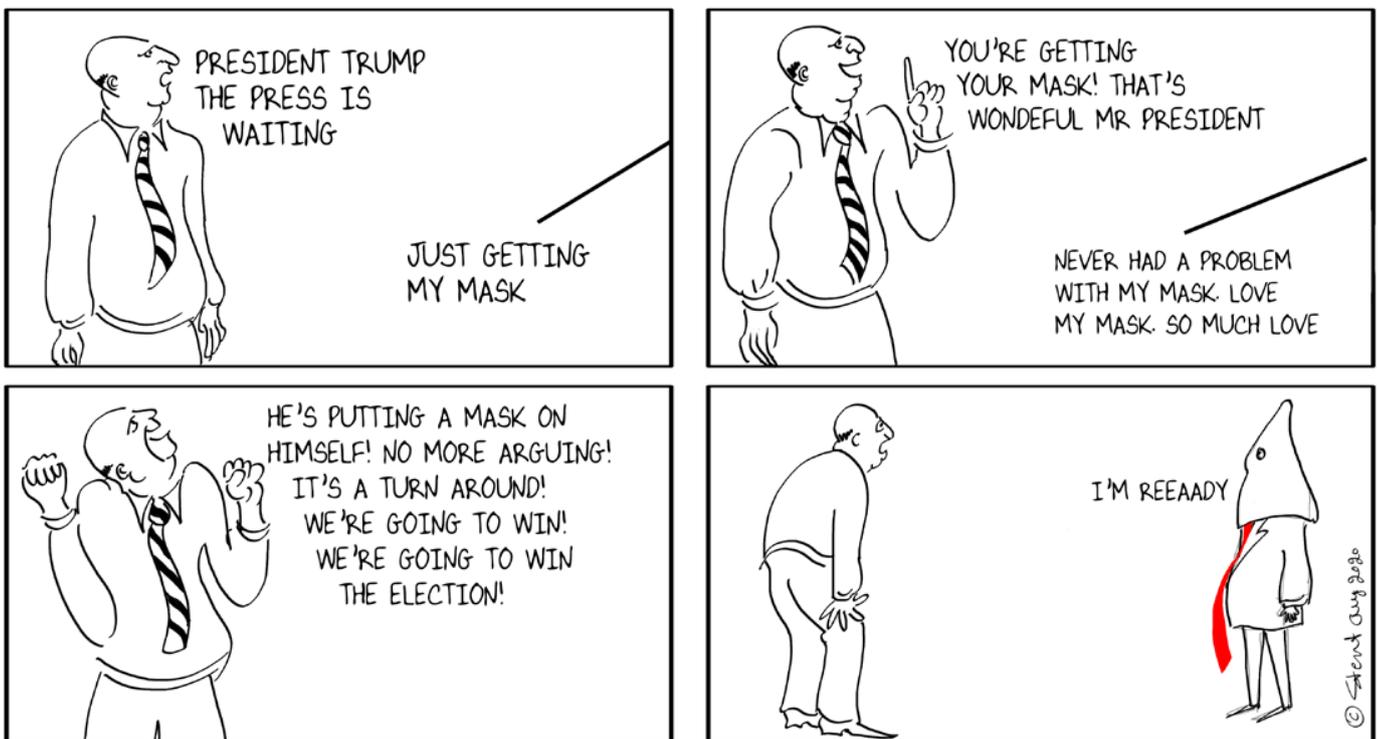
THANKS FOR THE LINK-UP WITH YOUR Barberton columnist Bheki Mashile. He kindly called us this week and called Keletso – the matriculant who wants to become a farmer – on the same day!

I’m really sorry that we are unable to contribute towards the *Noseweek* fund but we do believe in prayer and so will ask the Good Lord to bless you all with courage, strength and indomitable wisdom to do what is right.

Joani Reynders

House on the Rock  
Mabula Private Game Reserve  
Bela-Bela

Stent



## Guinea Fowl School

AS HIS CONTEMPORARY FOR SOME OF HIS TIME in Wellington House, Jack Lundin's memoir about his "bush school" days at Guinea Fowl School in then Rhodesia (*nose 247*) brought back many memories.

Jack's account of the pre- and post- history of the school was most interesting, although some of his stories of his time at the school are more dramatic than I remember – but then he was very much of the dramatic type, where he excelled. And his concluding comment, "although the last step before the borstal for city school rejects" is unfair. Many pupils did not live near enough to a high school, thus boarding school was the only option – witness the number who came from (the then) Nyasaland. For many of its past pupils, it provided the basis for further education at university in the RSA or UK.

That said, yes, a happy read that brought back happy memories for me too.

**Alistair "Jack" Frost**  
Pinelands

## Cyril's Limpopo deal with China

WITH HIS DEAL WITH CHINA ("LIMPOPO'S DIRTY great white elephant", *nose 247*) President Ramaphosa is giving back the land – only just giving it to the wrong people.

**Catherine Graham**  
On Twitter

■ I'm concerned and troubled by this. If one thinks apartheid was bad...wait until the Chinese take over!

**Zeerasha Juggernaut**  
Verulam, KZN

■ Tomorrow our dogs and cats disappear.

**Letitia Jansen van Vuuren**  
Carletonville

## Cyril's racing pigeons

WE, THE NATION, ARE WASTING RAMAPHOSA'S TIME. The president is a pure capitalist with no interest at heart for his people.

**Imprecious Mngoya Mahlangu**  
Rust De Winter  
Limpopo

See story on page 20. – Ed.

■ Pigeon racing and the culling of unwanted birds is cruel. You are showing more of your true colours, Cyril.

**Amanda Borrett**  
Cape Town

■ It is his money, and he will need a hobby soon, especially after being bossed around by you-know-who.

**Sarah Jones**  
On Twitter

■ He did not steal the money. I'm happy he has a hobby that he can afford, unlike politicians who steal from the poor.

**David Sibiya**  
Cape Town

See editorial on page 6. – Ed.

## A book of note

"A CHILDHOOD MADE UP" BY BRENT MEERSMAN (*nose 247*) is definitely a book to look forward to! It's always good to find a new South African author.

**Rita Mckay**  
Antwerp

## A RECENT LETTER (JULY 13) TO THE TIMES, LONDON:

# TOY STORY

SIR, FRANCES SMITH IS RIGHT TO GO FOR imperfect soft toys. Toys with defects are always the best and deserve appropriate names. As a child I had a teddy bear with a squint so he had to be called "Gladly". As in "Gladly my cross-eyed bear".

**Edward Staines**  
Durham



### Editor

Martin Welz  
editor@noseweek.co.za

### Special Correspondent

Jack Lundin

### Designer

Simon Wilson

### Contributors

Susan Puren, Jennifer Crocker,  
Sue Segar, Bruce McLeod,  
Justin Brown, Nigel Fox,  
Sibusiso Biyela, Viv Vermaak

### Researcher

Tom Welz

### Front Cover

Dr. Jack

### Cartoonists

Stacey Stent

### Accounts

Nicci van Doesburgh  
accounts@noseweek.co.za

### Advertising

021 686 0570  
ads@noseweek.co.za

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## Glad to be back!

**Y**es, we are glad to be back with this bumper issue. Thank you for your patience – and your many concerned calls that told us we were missed.

I do apologise for our three-month absence. The extended Covid lockdown, coming at a time when we were already having to deal with a failing Post Office, confusion at retail outlets and the fact that I have been in court defending a factually complex R1m defamation action, precipitated a management and financial crisis which we have barely overcome.

We are heavily reliant on your continued support. The fact that other news media have fared equally badly, if not worse, is no consolation. This country needs a variety of reliable, professionally researched and presented news media.

Social media, quick and entertaining as it is, has its function – but it is dangerous if not counter-balanced by serious, researched news media.

● Speaking of social media: Noseweek's social media editor Justin Brown reports that July 2020 was another record-breaking month for Noseweek on Facebook and for Bitly link clicks to Noseweek stories.

1. Facebook 28-day reach climbed to 578,592 on July 24.
2. There was a record for the reach of a single story on *Noseweek's* Facebook. The Ramaphosa/Limpopo story achieved a reach of 297 000. Thank you Sam Sole of amaBungane for a great story.
3. Bitly 30-day link clicks hit a record on July 28 of 27 410. That many Facebook followers clicked on a link to read a story on *Noseweek's* website in July!

Also popular was a breaking news story posted mid-month on our

website about President Ramaphosa's new – and immediately controversial – interest in racing pigeons, an addition to his equally controversial high-end game farming. Which is how that story earned its place in this issue on page 20.

● *Noseweek's* reputation reaches to the smallest corners of the land. As we went to press, we were informed that the "Ring" (the regional authority) of the United Reform Church has instructed its Herold parish to sell the property on which the local school is built and use the proceeds to pay its retiring pastor a pension.

Herold is a rural hamlet in the mountains above George. It has fewer than twenty inhabited cottages, but 330 learners – most bussed in from nearby farms – attend the Franken school that was established in 1933 on a portion of farmland donated to the church by a local farmer. The original title deed specified that the land may only be used for school, church and residential purposes.

On Page 17 you will learn that the school has given the community a sense of dignity and pride because they literally built it themselves, brick by brick over time.

Three years ago to their surprise their church pastor, Reverend David Elias, suddenly became obsessed with rulers and yardstick, finding fault with whatever the school was doing to improve its facilities and surroundings. Their electricity was cut off. A property developer is hovering in the background as the pastor's "advisor".

Can anyone out there help these decent poor people buy the land on which their school, of which they are so proud, is built? Please call me.

● Nigel Fox's argument for hydrogen as the most economically viable energy source for a greener future – see page 34 – prompted us to take a closer look when Creamer Media's Mining Weekly recently led

with what Anglo CEO Mark Curifani had told a media conference held on July 30.

Cutifani spoke about how Anglo American is positioned to cater for environmental-led new materials demand in a world planning to invest heavily in hydrogen as an alternative energy source.

"We've seen the early evolution of electric vehicles and some of the challenges of energy storage. Now we're seeing widespread plans for investment in hydrogen; in China and Japan in the automotive sector, in buses using hydrogen in Britain, and now in Europe, we're seeing a much broader application," Cutifani said.

"In platinum-group metals [*Anglo is a major producer*], we're seeing a broadening of applications, particularly in support of hydrogen.

"You'll be aware that we're looking at introducing a solar array ... to generate energy, but we'll over-size those units and generate hydrogen so that we can start converting the major truck fleets to hydrogen as well.

"We've committed to making the business carbon neutral by 2040. It will be a combination of solar, wind and other renewable sources, connected to hydrogen ...

"Further down the line, we're looking at reducing our water consumption by 50%, so creating a model for the industry [*for*] a much greener future, for the planet," Cutifani said.

Sounds good, except for those disturbing, giveaway qualifiers "by 2040", "further down the line", and "we're looking at". Another 20 years plus, it's going to take Anglo to "further down the line" look at going green, when we have just recorded the highest temperature on earth in the history of records? What about two to five years' time, Mr Cutifani?

Or was that simply PR spin to tell us that platinum shares are a great investment right now? – **The Editor.**

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# Notes & Updates

## Spar vs Spar: Round 3

**T**HERE WAS SEEMINGLY NO END TO the measures the Spar Group took to rid itself of its biggest retail trading-group, the more than 40 Spar and Tops stores owned by the Giannacopoulos family.

Spar, a public company, has been involved in a nasty war of words and – as the Pietermaritzburg high court has now found – unscrupulous legal actions for several years aimed at closing down the Giannacopoulos family businesses that have long traded very successfully under the Spar brand name. The feud came to a head in three cases that commenced in the Pietermaritzburg court in March.

At last count, the legal costs of both parties are said to be approaching R125 million. (*See The Judgment, on next page.*)

In the most recent round of cases the Giannacopoulos group wanted the court to rule that Spar's 2019 decision to terminate the family's trade agreements was invalid and should be set aside. Secondly the court was asked to determine whether Spar's unilateral changes to the family's credit terms were lawful, constitutional and valid.

The applicants in the main case were 13 companies in the Giannacopoulos group and, in their personal capacity, brothers Yianni, Chris and Harry and their father, Kleomenis Giannacopoulos. The family has built their retail dynasty in a short twenty years since leaving Zimbabwe for South Africa.

Heading the list of 25 respondents were the Spar top brass: CEO Graham O'Connor, directors Desmond Borrageiro and Brett Botten as well as Spar Group Ltd, the Spar Guild and Spar South Africa.

Spar Group issued the contested termination orders after allegations of questionable labour practices and inhumane working conditions at the Giannacopoulos stores had surfaced in the media. Spar said these reported transgressions of the Labour Law brought its brand name into disrepute.

A small yet militant band of seemingly professional labour activists and disgruntled former employees had claimed for some time that the Giannacopoulos brothers had unfair labour practices in place. As a result the family's labour lawyer, Mary Erlank, spent months in and out of the CCMA's offices and the Labour Court, to prove that these allegations had no merit.

*Noseweek* reported in previous issues that Spar itself was allegedly sponsoring Daniel Ademulegun, one of the organizers of the ongoing labour unrest at the Giannacopoulos stores, where unruly crowds had randomly harassed both clients and employees for more than a year.

Ademulegun and his supporters also ran a smear campaign on Facebook until the family obtained a restraining order against them and seized their cell phones. Messages found on the phones proved that Spar's senior legal advisor, Gordon Pentecost and Spar director, Desmond Borrageiro, had been in contact with Ademulegun and that money had most likely changed hands (*noses 246 & 247*)

Harry Giannacopoulos told *Noseweek* that, as members of the Spar Guild, the 13 companies that own the family's retail stores were entitled to defend themselves and deserved a fair hearing before Spar took a decision to terminate their trade agreements.



Giannacopoulos owners Harry (left), Kleomenis and Chris

# The Judgment

**S**PAR GROUP LTD AND ITS GUILD OF voluntary traders under the Spar banner have suffered a major blow in the Pietermaritzburg High Court when Judge AJ Barnard ruled in favour of the Giannacopoulos companies in three different cases which were argued together as the issues at stake were interrelated, and the same parties were involved. Spar Group, Spar Guild and Spar South Africa were ordered to pay the Giannacopoulos Companies and their own legal costs, estimated at more than R125 million. The bill will ultimately be footed by Spar shareholders.

The judge set aside both the restrictions that Spar had put on the quantities of certain products delivered to the Giannacopoulos brothers' retail outlets, as well as the unilateral changes Spar made to their credit terms by amending them from 18 and 30 days respectively, to seven. He found this unlawful and invalid and said he was not persuaded that they were done in good faith.

The termination notices that Spar had issued against thirteen companies in the Giannacopoulos stable in 2019 and again in 2020 were also set aside. A Spar tribunal decided in 2019 to end the companies' membership of the Spar Guild without the brothers being present at the hearing. Further termination orders were issued in 2020 after the case was already being argued in court, again without hearing the Giannacopoulos side of the matter.

The *ex parte* application (made without notice to the party being sued) by Spar to perfect (enforce) notarial bonds of security it held in respect of ten of the Giannacopoulos stores, was dismissed and a further interim order issued in this regard was set aside. The *ex parte* application had been brought on an urgent basis in the High Court in Pretoria in October last year. The reason given for its dismissal was the invalid termination notices on which it was founded.

Judge Barnard said Spar had acted "in flagrant breach of its disclosure duties to the court" and that he had no doubt whatsoever that "if all had been disclosed, as it ought to have been by Spar, the *ex parte* application would have failed."

In a surprising turn of events the judge said that having dealt with the termination orders he was of the view that it was unnecessary for the court to decide the many other issues raised in the cases.

In its reaction to the ruling the MD of Spar KwaZulu-Natal, Max Oliva, told Spar retailers in the province via email that the judge had "unfortunately found in favour of the Giannacopoulos family" and that the group will be seeking leave to appeal the decision – which they have since done

"Spar has reviewed the judgment in consultation with its team of senior counsel and believes that there is a strong chance of having the ruling against the termination of the Giannacopoulos membership of the Spar Guild overturned on appeal," Oliva said. ■

"This did not happen and, instead, our fate was decided upon at a secret meeting where Spar entertained the fabricated evidence of at least one former employee in the person of Ademulegun."

Towards the end of last year Spar went so far as to obtain an *ex parte* order [*without notice to the other side*] in the High Court in Pretoria, and then took over the family's stores. However this backfired when, two days later, the same court set aside the order and allowed the Giannacopoulos brothers to return to their stores and continue trading.

## THE PIETERMARITZBURG HIGH COURT CASE

FACED WITH THE REAL POSSIBILITY OF losing their businesses as a result of Spar's actions, the family sought the protection of the court. In response, the Spar legal team submitted thousands of pages of documents, affidavits and additional papers to try and justify its conduct.

In his replying affidavit Harry Giannacopoulos called Spar's version of the events "a stratagem of obfuscation and diversion" and a "deliberate mischaracterization", to hide what Spar really wanted to achieve by its ongoing legal actions. In short, he said, Spar's submission was made "with intent to deceive", "in bad faith" and was "based on hearsay".

In documents before court Spar suggested that the secret meeting where it was decided to end the brothers' membership of the Spar Guild was in fact a domestic tribunal and that the directors overseeing it were not in a position to deal with legal issues and representations made by the Giannacopoulos family.

Harry Giannacopoulos dismisses this account of the meeting as "utterly inexplicable". "A qualified attorney from a prominent law firm had been involved in the investigation and preparation for the hearing. The evidence leader was a person with a master's degree from Cambridge."

While the case in KZN was dragging on, Spar hit the brothers' more than forty stores with yet another set



of termination orders, similar to the ones that were disputed in the court case. Spar issued these latest orders utilizing the same doubtful procedure which they had previously used: the stores were not notified of its intentions, or afforded a hearing.

The latest stunt was introduced as a new matter to the original court case but Spar's lawyers told the court there was no need for a hearing, as they would execute the termination orders anyway, even if the applicants won the case before court. The picture that emerged is one of an ongoing saga driven by an aggressive agenda of extreme greed with little regard for consumers or Spar's shareholders.

For example, one of the allegations made by the applicants referred to Spar's CEO, Graham O'Connor, allegedly threatening that Spar would take the Giannacopoulos businesses "for free": they would liquidate the companies because some of them were competing with other Spar retail stores in which O'Connor and members of his family had financial interests.

The Giannacopoulos legal team argued that Spar directors are financially motivated to remove the family's companies from the Spar trading group because the Giannacopoulos stores have dared to source some products from other suppliers. This entitled them to get rebates from these suppliers, which in turn affects Spar's revenue and its directors' bonuses.

In his answering affidavit in the new matter Harry Giannacopoulos produced a bombshell accusation that the Spar Guild was not the non-profit company that Spar pretended it to be, and that the Guild was not lawfully conducting itself under the Companies Act. He said an analysis of the Spar Guild's financial statements, directors'

and auditors' reports for several financial years "demonstrated unequivocally that its activities were not cultural, social or communal activities of a genuine non-profit company but rather of a purely commercial nature".

He mentioned several examples but the most striking was that the Spar Guild has an inter-company liability of R61.9 million with Spar, which is interest free and unsecured and no date had been set for repayment.

"Spar is open about the fact that the Guild is a vehicle through which it operates its retail and distribution businesses with the aim to generate profit. This is contrary to the lawfully permitted aims of a non-profit company under the Companies Act," he stated.

A non-profit entity may not distribute profits to its members or directors, not even indirectly. But according to papers submitted to court, the Spar Guild receives membership fees and then pays Spar – a related entity – and its shareholders and directors' remuneration and bonuses, which is a gross abuse of the juristic personality of the Guild.

"Who pays the tax? And in which country?" asks Giannacopoulos when interviewed by *Noseweek*.

He argues that Spar Group Ltd, Spar South Africa and the Spar Guild operate in concert as a vast intertwined and inextricably linked group of companies for profit. "The Spar Group's conduct demonstrates a collusive ulterior motive to strangle our otherwise successful and profitable businesses and to drive them towards financial distress."

Spar CEO, Graham O'Connor, did not want to comment on the matter when approached by *Noseweek*.  
– Susan Puren ■

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**S**PAR INTERNATIONAL GRANTED THE SOUTH AFRICAN LICENSE TO SPAR IN 1963. It is a warehousing and distribution business listed on the JSE in the Food and Drug Retailers sector, and conducts a wholesaling operation throughout South Africa with an annual turnover at last count of R40.2 billion. According to the Spar Investors Hub, Spar South Africa serves 3,768 retail members every day through 14 store formats and ten distribution centres. ■

# PANEL BEATER DE LUXE



**DANMAR CEO HOWARD BLOOMBERG : Said to have lived it up on the company credit card to the tune of R18.5 million**

## Danmar Autobody and its erstwhile directors get a serious panel beating in court papers. Corruption and theft are said to have destroyed the firm chaired by Nelson Mandela's eldest daughter, leaving 200 workers destitute and threatening to kill.

**B**USINESS RESCUE PRACTITIONERS of well-known Gauteng panel beating company Danmar Autobody claim criminal mismanagement, fraud, theft and tax evasion by the CEO and majority shareholder have seen the company put into business rescue and headed for liquidation.

Former President Nelson Mandela's eldest daughter, Makaziwe Mandela-Amuah owns a 26% stake in the company. CEO Howard Bloomberg owns 54%, and Colin Yach, a chartered accountant who worked for Blue Label Telecoms before joining Danmar, owns the remaining 20%.

Bloomberg and Yach have been accused of having used Mandela as a "BEE front".

Danmar Autobody was for several decades recognised as the panel beating business on the Reef favoured by the likes of Mercedes Benz and various major vehicle insurers.

**From March 2019 to January 2020, Bloomberg drew R700,500 in cash from the Danmar bank account at ATMs at local casinos**

Danmar's downward spiral appeared to have started in 2017 when Bloomberg, Mandela-Amuah and Yach bought the business – and some branches gained from Imperial Holdings – for R20m, according to the business rescue practitioners who took control of the company in February this year.

Danmar's employees have been left without an income since December, and its many creditors are seriously out of pocket.

Soon after it went into business rescue (on 24 January), its major client Mercedes Benz and various insurers cut ties with the company. Founded in 1989, Danmar had four branches in Gauteng and one in Cape Town, and employed over 200 people.

The business rescue practitioners appointed in February are Harold Cesman and Kobus Coetzee.

When they got to look at the books, they discovered what they believe to be sham deductions from the salaries of the 228 employees.

They also discovered that Bloomberg "appeared to have engaged in theft" by his "apparent misappropriation" of R18.5 million of company money for his own use between May 2017 and January 2020. It was "reckless, grossly negligent and even fraudulent" for Bloomberg to have taken this money, Cesman has declared in an affidavit filed in the high court in Johannesburg on 1 May.

The court papers are replete with such damning accusations – and counter-accusations traded between the business rescue practitioners and Bloomberg, who, in his answering papers filed on 11 May, denies – amongst other things – that he misappropriated the R18.5 million.

He claims that he hadn't drawn a salary and that Danmar owed him R18 million.

If the withdrawals were indeed Bloomberg's salary, the company accounts would have reflected this – but did not, Cesman declared in response. The way Bloomberg apparently claimed his salary could "constitute tax evasion".

Cesman further alleged it appeared that Bloomberg had not only used company money to fund his lifestyle; he appeared also to have used it to capitalise another business, Closeprops 2001 CC.

In response, Bloomberg claimed that the payments to Closeprops were legitimate, as these were for the repayment of loans he had made to Danmar.

Next, Cesman alleges that Bloomberg secretly instructed Danmar employee Matwale Paile to deposit cash of between R50,000 and R150,000 into Bloomberg's Mercantile Bank account every month from 2017 to 2019. Paile confirms this in a supporting affidavit signed in February this year.

The business rescue practitioners also found that Danmar had failed to pay the statutory deductions from its employees' salaries to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), SARS and the Motor Industry Bargaining Council Provident Fund.

Cesman said in court documents that failing to hand over millions of rand worth of deductions due to the relevant authorities amounted to "criminal conduct". And that these revelations had triggered outrage among the Danmar staff, who were "justifiably angry" at what appeared to be Bloomberg's theft of company monies.



**Harold Cesman Business Rescue Practitioner reveals all in court papers**

Yogin Devan, spokesperson for the Pension Funds Adjudicator (PFA), said that the watchdog had received 13 complaints from Danmar employees against the company for failing to pay over their provident fund contributions.

After an exchange of court documents, Bloomberg and his attorney Stanley Rothbart on 1 July filed an application to court wanting to have numerous parts of the business rescue practitioners' affidavits – including Paile's affidavit – struck out, alleging that the "offending paragraphs" were defamatory.



**Colin Yach on the downward spiral**



**Chairlady Makaziwe Mandela-Amuah. Just a pretty face? Workers appeals for help fell on deaf ears.**

[Picture: House of Mandela]

The business rescue practitioners intend to argue that Bloomberg's strikeout application is "without merit". In their court documents, they allege in turn that Bloomberg's attacks on them are "defamatory and aimed at deflecting attention from himself".

A date had yet to be set for the hearing, at the time *Noseweek* went to press.

Morne de Goede, then head of security at Danmar, told *Noseweek* that in February after three months without pay "people got very rowdy".

"Word on the ground was that if Howard [Bloomberg] were to come there, they would kill him...Certain people were walking around with tyres and thinners and saying that if Bloomberg comes here, we will pour that over him and set him alight," De Goede alleged.

At about the same time, as recounted in Cesman's court papers, 40 employees protested outside the Teta Mari restaurant in Johannesburg, which is partly owned by Bloomberg's wife and his daughter. They were demanding that he pay them their salaries.

The employees threatened his wife and family during the protest, Bloomberg says in his court documents.

Danmar employees face destitution and starvation without their salaries. Some of them have lost their homes and cars. Their children have dropped out of school because of non-payment of fees. Debt collectors are hounding those who have defaulted on their loans.

"A terrible human tragedy," Hayley Morgan, the Danmar human resources manager, told *Noseweek*.

Morgan is one of the staff members leading the Danmar employees in their fight to ensure they get the money due to them and to make sure Bloomberg faces justice.

But leading the fight has proved scary. In a sworn statement made to the police, she says she is "in fear of my life" following an argument with Bloomberg on 12 March this year, when he allegedly threatened her.

Phakamile Hlubi, National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) spokesperson, said that conditions for its 65 members at Danmar were dire after over six months without pay.

Numsa, South Africa's largest trade union, was aware of the scathing allegations of corruption and fraud made against Bloomberg, she said. "It's a truly shocking state of affairs that the authorities must urgently investigate."

But it was not surprising though; corruption was synonymous with capitalism, she added.

Morgan said staff and their families were appealing for food aid. As from 20 May, the charity Angel Network started distributing food parcels and blankets to the Danmar staff.

**In March and April ... he bought R25,000 worth of goods from lingerie shop  
Kriss of Sandton on the company credit card**

Morgan told *Noseweek* that their appeals to Mandela-Amuah, the company's chairman, from late last year to remedy the alleged wrongs in the company have "thus far fallen on deaf ears".

When *Noseweek* called Mandela-Amuah on her cell phone in order to ask for her comment, her response was an abrupt "No, please don't call me. Thank you."

She is a director of many companies besides Danmar, according to a Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) search.

Her active directorships include companies like the House of Mandela, and rail company Wictra Holdings.

In the past, the 26 companies in which she held directorships included Rand Water, consumer goods company Nestlé South Africa and empowerment company Nozala Investments.

*Noseweek* understands that as Danmar chairperson Mandela-Amuah drew a monthly salary of tens of thousands of rand.

Cesman claims in his court affidavit that Mandela-Amuah was “absent from her duties” and had shown no interest in the business rescue process.

Apart from being CEO of Danmar, Bloomberg is also a director of another 20-odd companies.

Which raises the question: how do Mandela-Amuah and Bloomberg hold so many directorships and meet the fiduciary requirements for each one?

Morgan alleged that the directors of Danmar held no board meetings, another claim that Bloomberg has denied. But a source close to Danmar said that there was no evidence of board meeting minutes.

Turning back to allegations of financial impropriety, Morgan alleges in her sworn statement to the police that in July 2018 and June 2019 Bloomberg bought two generators for his personal use from EngineCo for just over half a million rand, using Danmar money. Bloomberg’s response: the generators got recorded in Danmar’s books as items for his personal use. “There was nothing untoward about the purchase,” he asserted.

The business rescue practitioners also discovered that Bloomberg appeared to have been gambling with company money: Cesman alleges that from March 2019 to January 2020, Bloomberg drew R700,500 in cash from the Danmar bank account at ATMs at local casinos. These casinos included Suncoast Casino in Durban, Gold Reef City Casino and Montecasino in Johannesburg, Sibaya Casino in Umhlanga Rocks and Sun City.

In support of this allegation, Cesman annexed copies of monthly statements of Bloomberg’s Danmar Standard Bank business credit card, which has a credit limit of R100,000. From this it emerges he made these withdrawals in December and January – when Danmar had stopped paying its staff salaries.

Bloomberg’s response: “The allegations relating to gambling are not only hearsay but purely speculative and defamatory.”

The credit card statements also show that he used the card mainly for personal purchases, including groceries, restaurant and bar bills, petrol, haircuts, etc.

And that, in March and April last year he bought almost R25,000 worth of goods from lingerie shop Kriss of Sandton on the company credit card.

In her evidence, Morgan reveals that Bloomberg and Danmar operations manager Angela Collins had a “close relationship” and that, when the relationship broke down, Bloomberg tried to force Collins out of the company by dismissing her on 14 June 2019. Collins confirms this in an email to *Noseweek*.

**“Morgan is simply attempting to defame me, as part of her vindictive campaign to destroy me”**

Collins took Danmar to the motor industry’s Dispute Resolution Centre (DRC), and on 30 April the DRC awarded her R696,000 for unfair dismissal.

Bloomberg alleges that by raising this matter, “Morgan is simply attempting

to defame me, as part of her vindictive campaign to destroy me.”

The confirmation by Collins came against the background of a disgruntled employee, who the company had dismissed, he said.

The allegations against Bloomberg have led Danmar employees to file criminal charges against him with the police.

Morgan opened a criminal case against him on 16 March. Belinda Passmore, a Danmar finance coordinator, filed a further criminal case against Bloomberg on 24 March.

Bloomberg confirmed that in March he, in turn, had filed criminal charges against Cesman, Coetzee, Morgan, Passmore and Yach. All five have denied the charges.

Bloomberg destroyed lives, health and credibility, Passmore alleged in an email, adding that the authorities must hold him accountable for his actions.

Bloomberg said that the police had advised him of the criminal complaints lodged by Morgan and Passmore against him, but the police had not charged him.

He blamed the company’s failures on fellow shareholder Yach’s alleged “incompetence and negligence”.

Yach denied Bloomberg’s allegations, adding that Bloomberg as CEO made all the decisions. ■

*To be continued ...*

## Some irrelevant history

**A** BIT OF FASCINATING BUT IRRELEVANT history: Danmar’s previous brush with controversy was back in 2006.

For reasons yet to be explained, the Mercedes Benz, which fraudster Brett Kebble was driving when he was shot and killed, was next day taken from the police compound to Danmar Autobody to be valet cleaned – which co-incidentally would have erased crucial forensic and ballistic evidence.

Danmar’s managing director at the time was Mark Groenewald, the brother-in-law of bouncer Mickey Schultz, who later admitted under oath in court proceedings to being one of the hitmen who had been

hired to shoot Kebble. A great deal of evidence suggested that Kebble had probably been in on the plan and that it had been an assisted suicide. Schultz and co-shooter Nigel McGurk were indemnified from prosecution for murder in return for giving satisfactory evidence as state witnesses in a related court case in which Glenn Agliotti was accused of conspiracy to murder Kebble. For an unbelievable bit of history, do go to *Noseweek’s* website and read “Kebble trouble” in *nose* 86

Agliotti’s co-accused, Stratton, failed to appear having departed for Australia, and Agliotti was found not guilty. ■

# Lennie the Liquidator faces R500,000 defamation suit

After losing his cool when his fees were questioned

**W**HEN VETERAN CAPE TOWN insolvency practitioner Eileen Fey ventured to suggest to attorney Leonard Katz of law firm ENS that his bill of R422,871.57 to defend a matter in the Wynberg Magistrates Court seemed “extremely high” and would he please draft a bill for taxation\*, Katz went ballistic.

“This request is outrageous. You have a full narrative. I am not taxing my bill,” was the furious and immediate response of South Africa’s most controversial insolvency lawyer, widely known as Lennie the Liquidator. Katz declared that Fey’s request for his bill to be taxed was “dishonest” and his firm would do no more work on the matter. “Furthermore, I will do whatever is necessary to ensure that

you are removed as a trustee in this estate,” ran the attorney’s email. “You are dishonest and a disgrace to the profession.”

In his fury, Katz copied his “you are dishonest” email to eight prominent members of the insolvency world, including the Deputy Master of the Western Cape high court Irma Dick. And in a separate email to Cata Silile, the court’s Assistant Master, Katz wrote: “I am going to be lodging a formal complaint against Ms Fey. In my view, she is dishonest, does not act in the interests of creditors and should be removed forthwith.” Katz copied this second email to the recipients of his first one, adding in an insolvency practitioner at KPMG.

While this flurry of emails took place on 5 April 2017. It is only now that they have come to light, after Eileen Fey launched a belated and unreported R500,000 defamation action against Leonard Katz this March – just in time to beat the three-year prescription deadline. She claims that his statements about her were defamatory and false.

Taxation documents attached to Fey’s replying affidavit support claim of excessive fee-charging by Katz.

They reveal that when Leonard Katz finally drafted and presented two ENS bills for the taxing master, and a further bill for non-litigious work to the Cape Law Society, a total of R290,520.59, or 41% of fees charged by ENS, was struck off.

Bills dealt with by the taxing master totalled R581,745.66, of which fees comprised R578,677. The taxing master “taxed off” or struck off R241,363.79 of those fees.

The bill to be adjudicated by the Cape Law Society [as it then was] totalled R131,646.50, of which R120,042 comprised fees. The Law Society struck R49,156.80 off those fees.

Which left Eileen Fey feeling justified in asking Katz to submit his bills for taxation.

The irony is that in his accusatory 5 April 2017 email to her, Katz’s final sentence was a plaintive: “I charged less than 50 per cent of my rate.”

Back then, Fey and another liquidator named Abie Moollajie were appointed joint provisional trustees of the insolvent estate of Mohamed Ismail Patel, a colourful Cape Town lawyer and liquidator who had been sequestered. Patel had been accused of misappropriating R9.3m from the insolvent estate of the Coe Family Trust, of which he had been the trustee, and for stealing R8.7m from the estate’s bank account. He was struck off by the Cape Law Society for lying about a BProc qualification.

Eileen Fey, an insolvency practitioner for some 27 years, has been a director of Coopers and Lybrand Trust and Price Waterhouse Coopers Business Recovery and Insolvency.

She has been trustee/liquidator in hundreds of insolvent estates, and has been appointed curator bonus for the Asset Forfeiture Unit. “I have in the process over many years built up a reputation as an insolvency practitioner of integrity,” she states in her founding affidavit.



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As provisional trustees of Patel's insolvent estate, the task of Fey and Moollajie was to track down and recover assets of Patel's insolvent estate. To assist them, they retained the services of ENS's Leonard Katz.

Leonard Katz is director, insolvency, business rescue and debt recovery at Edward Nathan Sonnenbergs (ENSafrica), self-proclaimed as "Africa's largest law firm". Acting for Absa, the only secured creditor of the Coe Family Trust, Katz had already had Patel removed as trustee of that trust. In his answering affidavit to Fey's defamation claim, Katz states it had been established that Patel had stolen all the proceeds of realisation and there was nothing left in the Coe trust's bank account. Absa, his client, required as much as possible to be recovered from Patel's insolvent estate.

So, when Abie Moollajie asked him in December 2016 if he would act for the provisional trustees of Patel's estate, he somewhat reluctantly accepted the mandate. "I was initially not keen to do so as many years previously I had had an unhappy experience with the applicant (Eileen Fey) which caused me to withdraw as her attorney," he states in his affidavit.

Katz then explains how he overcame his initial reservations. At the time he was already acting for several creditors of Patel's estate, including Absa, Standard Bank and Safie Insurance. "After discussions with several interested parties [...] I decided that it would be advisable for me to act for the provisional trustees as this would enable me to try and moderate [Fey's] approach to the interests of my clients."

(Fey notes in her replying affidavit: "If true, it would evidence inherent duplicity in Mr Katz's conduct towards me as a client and an abject [obvious?] conflict of interest, and would raise ethical questions regarding his conduct.")

Back in January 2017, Katz was on holiday in Israel when Fey called to seek his professional assistance – for which he agreed to charge "a substantially reduced rate of R2,500/hour". In a subsequent letter he stated that his associates would be charged at the same R2,500/hour rate and candidate attorneys at R1,300/hour.

The insolvent, Patel owned the property where he lived in Cape Town's Rylands, but subsequent to his

sequestration [and hurried departure for Dubai] it was occupied by one of his sons, Yusuf and his family. In his affidavit Katz alleges that the provisional trustees (Fey and Moollajie) had "unlawfully gained access [to Patel's house], forcing open a locked door without the consent of the occupiers and removed moveable assets and placed them in storage."

Fey, he adds, had not obtained a search warrant from a magistrate, which was "standard practice in insolvency matters". As a result Patel's son Yusuf then rushed to court and obtained a spoliation order against the provisional trustees allowing him to take back all the assets they had seized.

## **Fey had not obtained a search warrant from a magistrate, which was "standard practice in insolvency matters"**

Katz had had to cut short his holiday in Israel to deal with this in Wynberg Magistrates Court, where he got the spoliation order discharged on the basis of falsehoods and non-disclosures in Yusuf's founding affidavit. He had also attended to matters regarding Patel's yacht and appeared in Wynberg Magistrates Court to have Yusuf's application for a harassment interdict struck from the roll.

Katz claims that if Fey and Moollajie had obtained a search warrant the spoliation proceedings would have been avoided. Creditors of Patel's insolvent estate were prejudiced due to legal costs opposing the action, due to "the reckless and unlawful conduct of the provisional trustees".

"The bulk of the free residue which would have been paid to creditors has been frittered away by the provisional trustees," says Katz. "Had they merely realised Patel's immovable properties, there would have been sufficient free residue to pay a significant dividend of approximately 20 cents in the rand to concurrent creditors."

Fey and Moollajie, says Katz, also recovered vehicles that did not vest in Patel's insolvent estate, but which belonged to other estates or entities where Patel had been the trustee or liquidator before being removed. Fey and Moollajie had no *locus standi* to seize these vehicles.

Of Eileen Fey's 5 April 2017 email about his "extremely high" charge to defend the spoliation matter in Wynberg Magistrates Court, Katz says he was distressed at its tone and content. "In essence, the applicant (Fey) was accusing me of overreaching, which upset me."

He maintains that his response to her email was "factually correct and justified. I remain of this view."

Replying on 6 April 2017 to a letter from Fey, Katz wrote: "If you were bona fide and not vindictive you would have called me to discuss the 'few items' on this invoice. This is how normal professionals operate. Your letter illustrates your lack of knowledge of insolvency procedure and your vindictive and malicious nature.

"I do not think I could have treated you more decently. My team has been at your beck and call dealing with all your issues as a matter of urgency. We have funded disbursements on your behalf and worked at reduced rates. In return, you treat us disgracefully."

Responding to Katz's claim that her access to Patel's Rylands property was unlawful, Fey states that the Chief Master of the high court ordered the sheriff to attach Patel's moveable assets. "The Chief Master felt it imperative that I and Mr Moollajie immediately take all moveable assets into our possession [as directed by the court in the sequestration order]."

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He was concerned that Patel would dissipate his moveable assets, records and computers, before the return date of the provisional order.

“This is what Mr Moollajie and I did on 23 December 2016 and we acted responsibly and lawfully in doing so.”

The sheriff, says Fey, engaged a locksmith to open the property’s security gate. Patel’s son Yusuf, who had falsely told them he was at Langebaan, appeared at the house’s front door and refused to open the security gate to let them in. The sheriff contacted SAPS for assistance and the locksmith opened the front door and attached and made an inventory of the moveable assets. Fey and Moollajie then loaded some of these assets onto trucks and removed them to storage.

“These facts are what actually happened,” says Fey. “He (Katz) knew then, as he knows now, that there was no basis to contend that our actions were reckless or unlawful. It is astounding that, knowing the true facts, Mr Katz now contends that I ‘broke into/forced open a locked door at Rylands without the consent of the occupants.”

On the search warrant issue, Fey says: “A warrant is only required if trustees have reason to believe that assets are being ‘concealed’ or ‘otherwise unlawfully withheld’ from them. Neither was the case on 23 December 2016.

“It was only after Yusuf clandestinely obtained the interim order and had removed the moveable assets from storage on 31 December 2016 that any necessity to obtain a warrant arose, because Yusuf (aided by his brothers and Patel’s wife) had taken the moveable assets to various undisclosed locations to prevent us from finding them. At such point such moveable asserts were being concealed and withheld from us.”

Fey says that as investigations advanced it appeared that some of the vehicles may have been appropriated by Patel from other insolvent estates in which he had been the liquidator. “We deemed it in the interests of the creditors of the Patel estate that we also took such misappropriated vehicles into our possession so as to enable us to deliver them to new liquidators of the respective estates. This is what we did.

“Mr Katz’s criticism of our actions is misguided and without justification.

Mr Katz has sought to create disputes of facts, but his averments are either entirely irrelevant to the issues herein or to the extent that they are relevant they do no bear scrutiny and fly in the face of objective facts.”

In his answering affidavit, which he signed on June 4 this year, Katz contends that Eileen Fey’s launching of her defamation action this March “coincides with other proceedings before the court in which I am claiming substantial damages from Mr Martin Welz and the publishers of the magazine *Noseweek*.”

**“These facts are what actually happened,” says Fey. “He (Katz) knew then, as he knows now, that there was no basis to contend that our actions were reckless or unlawful”**

Katz is suing Welz and *Noseweek* over an article and editorial in the July 2014 issue of *Noseweek*, which claimed, *inter alia*, that Katz stood out above the rest of the ENS directors and senior partners “in his aggressive fee charging and disregard for his victims and the law”. Katz is claiming R1m for defamation and the still-running trial began in the Cape high court on February 24. After the latest postponement, it is due to resume on August 31.

Katz describes *Noseweek* as “a somewhat sensationalist magazine” which had untruthfully alleged that he had conducted himself “improperly and dishonestly and impugning my professional reputation and integrity.”

Katz says that Martin Welz called Eileen Fey as a witness as part of his case and she began testifying on February 25. “In her evidence in chief she sought to testify about the invoices presented by me in 2007,” he says. “Following an objection by my counsel

(Brendan Manca SC,) the court ruled that the evidence she was seeking to present was irrelevant and refused to admit such evidence.

“Applicant (Fey) was visibly upset by this ruling.”

It seemed, claimed Katz, that Fey “was intending to use her evidence at the Welz defamation trial to vindictively attempt to besmirch my reputation and integrity. Within a month of the court ruling that she could not give this evidence and that it was irrelevant to the [*Noseweek*] defamation proceedings, she launched the motion proceedings (her defamation action) now before the court.

“Her actions are vindictive and, it seems, actuated by the fact that she was upset that the court refused to allow her to use the Welz defamation claim as a platform to vindictively assail my reputation.”

In her replying affidavit Eileen Fey says: “The ground for Mr Katz’s objection was that anything that took place after the date on which *Noseweek* published the allegedly defamatory statements about him was not relevant [*to their defence*] and was not admissible.

“The court upheld Mr Katz’s objection. His averment that I was ‘visibly upset’ at the ruling is simply untrue.”

Leonard Katz takes umbrage at Eileen Fey’s temerity in launching her defamation action against him. A client is simply not permitted, it seems, to sue ENSafrica or any of its directors.

In support of this contention, Katz in his defence to Fey’s defamation action quotes Clause 16.2 from the firm’s 13 pages of terms and conditions that she was required to accept when appointing him as the provisional trustees’ attorney. The referenced clause states: “You waive any claim of whatsoever nature howsoever arising whether in contract or delict...which you may have against any of the directors...by reason of any negligent act or omission on the part of any director.”

Lennie the Liquidator gives notice that “argument will be addressed to this Honourable Court that the provisions of this clause preclude the Applicant [*Fey*] from instituting legal proceedings against me.”

\*“Taxation” means reassessment and determination of a legal practitioner’s fee bill by an official of the high court known as the taxing master. ■



# A Picture of Peace?

Beware: appearances can be deceptive

**H**EROLD, A RURAL HAMLET NESTLING in a valley at the top of the historical Montagu pass in the mountains above George is a picture of peace and tranquility.

But, as the saying goes, the devil is in the detail.

A simple brick gate pillar at the entrance of the Franken Primary School has become the focus of a bitter contest between parents, teachers and the Herold community on the one side, and the local church minister and a property developer on the other.

The offending pillar stands half a brick over the boundary of a servitude, a non-descript 5-metre wide gravel path that runs uphill from the main road, ironically allowing access to both the school and the hall of the United Reformed Church (URC).

Herold has fewer than twenty inhabited cottages, but 330 learners – most bussed in from nearby farms – attend the Franken school that teaches up to Grade 9. Thereafter the children go to boarding school in George.

The school was established in 1933 on a portion of farmland donated to the church by a local farmer. The original title deed for the 1670-hectare property specified that the land may only be used for school, church and residential purposes. Endorsements were added in 1936 and 1937, each granting certain water rights to the owner.

According to members of the community, the school has given them a sense of dignity and pride because they literally built it themselves, brick by brick over time. Three years ago they added yet another feature,

an imposing entrance gate, which they proudly funded themselves. But to their surprise their church pastor, Reverend David Elias, suddenly became obsessed with rulers and yardstick, finding fault with whatever the school was doing to improve its facilities and surroundings.

The reverend has allegedly used the building infringement on the servitude as a bargaining tool in rental negotiations with the Western Cape Education Department, making the deal he has with the department conditional on the removal of the pillar. While Elias denies this in a statement sent to *Noseweek* by his lawyer, he is at pains to point out that the Franken school did not submit building plans to the George municipality. “The buildings are therefore illegal,” he insists.



Reverend David Elias



Herold Meander's director, Theo Adams

Documents show, however, that not that long ago Elias was happily trying to sell the school and gave first option to the Western Cape provincial education department. The department could not afford to pay the price he was asking and instead offered to continue paying rent, which in fact makes up most of the pastor's salary.

Approached for comment, the municipal authorities point out that it is not the tenant's, but the landlord's duty to submit building plans – and that plans can still be submitted for approval after construction.

“Please understand our concern,” begs a member of the community in a handwritten letter that *Noseweek* obtained. “It will be a big disappointment and financial burden for us if our children have to go to George or Oudtshoorn.”

The pillar recently even got a mention in questions raised in the Western Cape legislature.

MEC for education, Debbie Schäfer's official answer was that her department was still negotiating with the church. Members of the ANC also visited Herold and told the local media afterwards that Franken should merge with Laerskool Herold, some 600 metres away because in Herold, learners are still attending different schools based on their race.

Laerskool Herold has only 70 mostly white learners while children from the coloured community attend Franken.

It did not go unnoticed that the ANC position just happened to favour the rumoured plans of a property developer to take over the school land.

A community member insist the problem is not race but pastor Elias who they believe is conniving with the property developer, who wishes to close the school and buy the land from the church. Apparently the 67-year old pastor is due to retire but does not have a pension fund and has nowhere to live after vacating the parsonage.

The developer, a 100% black owned company called Herold Meander (Pty) Ltd, acquired four neighbouring

portions of the farm Doorn Rivier 98 between 2015 and 2018. This includes a 75-hectare portion where the company grows thousands of Honeybush and Protea bushes. This portion of the farm literally surrounds the church and school, with the servitude separating the two properties on one side.

Herold Meander's sole director, Theo Adams informs *Noseweek* – through his lawyers – that his company has “no interest” in buying the Franken school, although he does act as professional consultant to the church “as per a church council resolution”.

Adams has plans in place to change Herold into a historical tourist attraction and the environmental impact assessment (EIA) states that he has started the process to rezone the

farm into residential land in order to build housing units. If local rumour is to be believed, the school and church may eventually have to make way for the housing project's wastewater works.

However, there is no mention of this in the EIA and the only chance of that happening is if the church sells its land – and the school site - to Herold Meander.

“Over my dead body, we will not allow this school to be taken away from our children,” says a person who prefers to stay anonymous, although that person is closely involved with the crisis committee that has been set up by the community. “Good management, planning and hard work by the principal, the governing body and the parents have made this school possible. It has given our children a better future.”

In spite of the developer's denial, the pastor's actions and interaction with the community, of whom the majority are members of his congregation, remains contentious if not downright hostile.

He has allegedly stopped delivering a sermon on Sundays, changed the door locks of the church hall to prevent learners from using it for indoor sport, and questioned whether the school

**“Over my dead body,  
we will not allow  
this school to be  
taken away from our  
children”**

had obtained permission from the church to sink a borehole. The borehole had come about after Herold Meander reportedly blocked off the school's water supply that came from the company's adjacent farm.

The church, which collects rent from the education department, did not provide water either and the school had to buy 12 storage tanks to collect rainwater, an almost impossible task as the region suffers from drought.

"Teachers and learners all had to come to school with jugs filled with water for toilet use until the department of public works came to the rescue and sank a borehole," explains one of the parents. "But our pastor even tried to stop that."

He apparently also stopped paying the property's Eskom account, leaving the school without power. At the same time Herold Meander ripped out a power cable – running underground across their land – that supplied the local clinic and a few cottages where retired farm workers had been living for many years. The electricity was supplied and paid for by the church

but was allegedly not installed by a qualified electrician.

"But the worst was that our pastor refused to hold a funeral service for a long-standing member of the church who happened to be the spouse of one of his fiercest critics," says a friend of the family. They had to find another minister and a church for the ceremony.

Herold's older residents say their lives have become a living hell, quite the opposite of how the future of Herold has been described in official documents. Herold Meander's historical assessment (HA) refers to its proposed development as an agriculture and ecotourism initiative that will "promote social cohesion, create sustainable jobs and ensure social and economic development". In court documents Adams states that he plans to "create employment and better lives for the very poor local community at large" but that he needs to accommodate his 25 employees in the existing residential units and therefore needs to evict the current residents. Some have lived there for at least 23 years.

In his founding affidavit, made to court in support of the evictions, Adams details how he meticulously followed the letter of the law for three years to find alternative accommodation for 21 families living on his farm although employed elsewhere.

In a statement sent to *Noseweek* he claims it is the constitutional responsibility of the George municipality to provide them with alternative housing.

Almost all the allegations reported here have been repeated in lawyers' letters between the different parties.

● Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) have offered to assist Franken and the community of Herhold in whatever legal action may be necessary to stop the school from being evicted or sold.

The NGO successfully represented the broader Grootkraal Community near Oudtshoorn when there was a looming threat to evict Grootkraal Primary School to make way for a game farm on the land where the school has been situated for the past 90 years. – **By Susan Puren** ■



The pillar in contention

# Cat among the pigeons

They call it The Exterminator – South Africa’s Million Dollar Pigeon Race. Pigeon racing is a barbaric blood sport and a gambler’s dream, say British anti-cruelty activists in a damning media report critical of the sport’s long-standing royal patron, Queen Elizabeth.

*Noseweek* correspondent Jack Lundin discovers President Ramaphosa, a new recruit to the lofty game, is their next target.

So then, what else might the President be up to at his Limpopo game farm?

**P**RESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA HAS been quietly setting himself up as a breeder of racing pigeons and plans to hold an annual one-loft race on Phala Phala, his 4,500 hectare Limpopo game farm that will rival the famous if controversial South African Million Dollar Pigeon Race (SAM DPR).

Pigeon racing is controversial, seen by some as a blood sport, and an investigation by animal activists PETA – People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals – has revealed that of 5,000 birds from 36 countries sent to South Africa for this year’s Million Dollar races which finished in February, a quarter died while being transported or quarantined.

Among this year’s casualties were eight pigeons entered by Britain’s Queen Elizabeth, none of which survived the 30-day crated quarantine period in South Africa. PETA claims that of the 42 pigeons sent by the 94-year-old Queen to SA in races over the last six years, only five survived.

The Queen is patron of the Royal Pigeon Racing Association and her eight entrants this year came from the monarch’s flock of 200 racing pigeons bred in the royal loft at Sandringham. There’s been a pigeon loft there for almost 150 years.

The Million Dollar race is a series of one-loft races attracting entrants from around the world. There are five “Hot Spot Races” of between 165km and 340km and a Main Race of more than 600km, hosted this year at the Emerald

Resort and Casino in Gauteng’s Vanderbijlpark. The winner, taking \$300,000, was Marjana S, owned by Barbara and Miha Sovic from Slavonia.

PETA released a report of its pigeon probe on June 15, under the headline “Investigation reveals mass deaths... Queen Elizabeth II and President Ramaphosa urged to cut ties with cruel sport.” An exclusive in *The Times*

Crises, all work no play makes Cyril a dull president” and “I’m not interested in his pigeons. Fix SA first!”

*The Times* quotes the concern of South Africa’s NSPCA about “consistently alarming statistics” about the Million Dollar race. Arno De Klerk, manager of the society’s special projects unit is quoted saying: “During the 2020 season, 80 per cent of the pigeons disappeared. This race takes place

in one of the hottest months of the year. One can only imagine the suffering that these birds endure.” [But see box story for race organiser’s response.- Ed.]

Now President Cyril Ramaphosa wants to join in the carnage. PETA’s report states that he’s bought 15 pigeons from the Soetdoring Partnership for R130,000, and 13 more “from a friend for an undisclosed amount”. And the animal activists say Ramaphosa is building a loft at Phala Phala, his game farm outside Bela Bela where he “plans to breed the pigeons, racing the offspring in the SAM DPR and other major races.”

The Presidential pigeon operation is shrouded in secrecy. In its report,

PETA describes its meeting with Ramaphosa’s “farm manager” at Phala Phala. “Lots of things I do on the phone are under the radar, because we don’t want to be in the newspaper,” the un-named manager allegedly told the PETA investigator. The manager went on to give an example of how he imagined the public sees things:

We had the incredible privilege and honour of welcoming President Cyril Ramaphosa to our lofts today. The president is starting to race pigeons in the near future and came to find out more about our wonderful sport. Indeed a red-letter day for pigeon racing in South Africa!



Facebook reveals all

two days earlier made no mention of Ramaphosa, but PETA’s full report is on Facebook, where it has provoked a deluge of comments in South Africa. These range from “Nero fiddles while Rome burns” and “Whilst he is playing with the pigeons his people sleep under bridges with a plastic to cover themselves”, to “Let the man have a hobby.

“He [*the President*] doesn’t feed the poor and now he buys a [*pigeon*] dove for a million rand!”. “Yah,” added the manager, “none of the things he buys can go under his name.”

On the invoice for the President Ramaphosa’s purchase of the 15 racing pigeons, the buyer’s name is recorded as Ntaba Nyoni Estates CC. Ntaba Nyoni is the name of the President’s stud cattle breeding farm near Badplaas in Mpumalanga. Company records give Cyril Ramaphosa as the CC’s sole director.

The timing of the release of PETA’s report in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic isn’t really fair to Ramaphosa. And certainly COVID-19 and lockdown have put his grand pigeon plan on the back burner. The above conversation with the farm manager, PETA now admits to *Noseweek*, took place back in mid-February, more than five weeks before SA’s lockdown began on March 27. And the purchase of the 15 racing pigeons from the Soetdoring Partnership was invoiced on 20 October 2019, more than two months before China reported the first Wuhan cluster to the WHO on December 31.

PETA tells *Noseweek* that the “farm manager” they quizzed was Hendrik von Wielligh, who manages the wildlife breeding operation for the President at Phala Phala. From London, PETA’s Jennifer White tells us that when

their investigator visited the game farm they managed to film early construction of the pigeon loft. Also, how Von Wielligh spoke to the investigator about Ramaphosa’s enthusiasm to host a major one-loft race at Phala Phala.

It all depended on finding the right people for the job, explained Von Wielligh, speaking of the hunt for someone to handle the logistics to put on a race of this prominence. “To pull a whole thing the size of the Million Dollar together, and be even more professional than the Million Dollar, I need the right persons,” Von Wielligh told PETA’s investigator. “You’ve got to get the right trainer and a vet on board, and guys for the administration side. So it’s a matter of getting the right people together and then we go with it.”

Until the loft was completed, Von Wielligh said the newly acquired birds were being kept by other fanciers. Once installed at Phala Phala, the breeding pigeons would spend their lives in the loft and never be allowed to fly. “You can’t let them out to fly, some of them won’t come back,” he said.

PETA’s report claims it has discovered irregularities including unlicensed gambling, tax evasion, avoidance of exchange control laws and money laundering in South African pigeon racing. The activists have



**Winning pigeon “Marjana S” with owner Miha Sovic from Slovenia (right), and Million Dollar Race MD Sara Blackshaw**



**Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret with royal pigeon, 1943**



**President Ramaphosa on a game drive**

requested the SA Revenue Service, Reserve Bank, Financial Intelligence Centre and the National Gambling Board to investigate (see box).

The activists say that when they visited Phala Phala, Hendrik von Wielligh assured them that Ramaphosa would not become involved in the nominations (gambling) side of pigeon racing. The farm manager allegedly told them: "The President always tries to keep his hands clean, so he never gets involved with something where there can be bad publicity. He tries to avoid bad publicity at all costs."

Now that PETA has put the cat among the pigeons, as it were, *Noseweek* decided to take a look at all the President's animal activities at Phala Phala, where there's a breeding programme producing top quality East African and Madikwe Buffalo, White, Black and Saddle Back Impala, Golden Wildebeest, Livingstone Eland, you name it.

Ah, the buffalo! Remember the rumpus about Ramaphosa's R18m auction bid for a buffalo cow and her

calf back in 2012? So now, after what we're about to recount, it's surprising to find the President a member of Stud Game Breeders, a body of well-heeled game breeders in Limpopo famed for their annual game auction at the Zebula Country Club in Bela Bela (previously Warmbaths). Last year this lavish affair was preceded by a separate auction to be a guest at a bushveld dinner for 20 around a bonfire at Phala Phala, hosted by the President himself (luxury accommodation and breakfast included).

Ramaphosa had two buffalo in that 2019 SGB auction – a six-year-old certified pregnant lass named Dembe, sired by the famous Bayeto, and a five-year-old bull of East African bloodline named Popo. [*Anyone know how much they fetched?* Ed.] In the previous year's auction the President got R4.1m for Nduvo, a four-year-old. His half sisters Makiki, Tondi and Lindi went for R5.9m and in all Ramaphosa's 2018 sales totted up to R19.7m.

The 67-year-old President joined Stud Game Breeders back in 2010

and has ever since trumpeted the group's role in conservation and supporting transformation in the wildlife industry (bursaries totalling R700,000 in 2019 to 39 students at Tshwane University of Technology studying Game Ranch Management and Nature Conservation; R945,000 in 2018 etc).

A rather less savoury, and certainly less trumpeted activity of Stud Game Breeders is to supply exotic specimens of African game to the guns of trophy hunters from around the world. It's something they are at pains to downplay as much as possible. Their website explains: "Members of our group do not breed exclusively for the trophy hunting market, but focus on game breeders who genuinely seek to breed outstanding animals for future generations."

Apart from Ramaphosa, the five other members of Stud Game Breeders and their respective spreads are Johan and Nadien Bosch (8,000 hectares at Dinaka), Jacques and Carolien Malan (7,000 hectares

## The case against the fanciers

**T**HE ANNUAL SOUTH AFRICAN MILLION Dollar Pigeon Race is run by Air Sport Internationale SA, a Swiss private company. Its managing director is Sara Blackshaw and the Race Director is Michael Holt.

PETA claims that its undercover investigation reveals evidence that professional pigeon fanciers (racers) gamble extensively on the results of the Million Dollar race, that they do not include winnings on their tax returns and are not paying capital gains tax on the sale or auction of their pigeons.

In a 15-page report to the SA Revenue Service, the Financial Intelligence Centre and the Reserve Bank, the animal activists group, PETA says: "They appear to be using pigeons to hide income from tax and exchange control authorities, and potentially to launder money.

"This conduct, if as widespread as it appears, deprives the Republic of substantial revenue. Pigeons are

often sold for hundreds of thousands of Rand, including a South African record of R5 million. The total winnings at the most recent SAMDPR amounted to more than R29 million.

Calling for an investigation, PETA says: "Select audio, video and documentary evidence demonstrating these violations is available upon request."

In a separate 16-page report to SA gaming authorities, PETA claims it holds evidence that SAMDPR "runs an apparently unlicensed gambling enterprise via the acceptance of entry fees and pooled bets, paid out in amounts contingent on the performance of birds entered by participants and the amount of money paid in by the participants.

"The gambling activities span three provinces: Gauteng, the Free State and the Western Cape, each of which is losing revenue on gambling taxes that should be levied on SAMDPR's gambling activities," reads their

complaint calling for an investigation.

PETA claims that pigeon owners gamble on the results of training flights, Hot Spot Races and the Main race. They say that prizes in this year's races included a Mercedes SLK and capital payments, and that ten gold pendants were given to owners of birds placed in the top ten in the Main Race. "Pay-outs for the 2019-2020 SAMDPR totalled \$2,079,672 not including the value of the Mercedes and gold pendants.

"The payment of entry fees in return for prize money, and pool-betting, called 'totalisator betting' in the legislation, both appear to constitute illegal gambling under the relevant national and provincial legislation."

Michael Holt, race director of the Million Dollar Race, comments: "The allegations of illegal gambling, tax evasion and money laundering, and contravention of environmental laws by the SAMDPR are totally false and

at Lumarie), Norman Adami (4,000 hectares at Nyumbu), Edwin and Heleen Claasen (at Shelanti), and Tony and Richard Morton (3,200 hectares at Tembani).

This merry band is not exactly happy to talk about the heads they are said to offer to adorn rich hunters' walls in Manhattan and Beijing, although in their brochure, Johan and Nadien Bosch give a hint of their own hunting operation at Dinaka. After dealing with the reserve, they refer to the "hunting outfit". "We have a team of professional hunters and rangers, a skinning and butchery team. Mechanics and maintenance guys, as well as the girls who take such good care of the guests at the lodge."

At Nyumbu, we ask one JP Smith if any of their animals have been sold for trophy hunting. He replies: "I'm not at liberty to comment for that. Please phone Mr Adami, the owner." No reply.

There's downright denial from Edwin Claasen at Shelanti. "We breed for breeding," he declares. Do other members of the group sell for trophy

hunting? "I can't talk for them."

Finally, confirmation from the Pretoria auction house of Wildswinkel, the listed auctioneers for Stud Game Breeders. Wildswinkel hosts Trophy & Hunt Times Auctions on their app and website "for those interested in presenting your hunting packages and/or trophy animals", so if anyone knows who's providing the lambs for slaughter, they do. Our exchange with Wildswinkel's Hansie Coetzee went as follows:

*Noseweek:* "Do any members of the Stud Game Breeders sell for the trophy hunting market?"

*Coetzee:* "Yes, all of them. All of them sell to the trophy hunting, or the hunter's outfit that sells trophy hunting animals."

*Noseweek:* "All six members?"

*Coetzee:* "All six members, yes."

*Noseweek:* "Including Phala Phala?"

*Coetzee:* "Including Phala Phala."

More proof from Stud Game Breeders' own literature to would-be customers. "The value of the true

adventure which South Africa has to offer both the foreign and local hunter should never be compromised. While animals are adaptable they should only be hunted in a natural environment where they have fended for themselves.

"We therefore make quality hunting stock available to you to translocate to a suitable area... We cannot dictate terms to ensure fair chase, but leave it to your good judgment.

Stud Game Breeders believe that the respect we have for our clients in providing them with exceptional breeding and hunting stock will always be matched by your respect to provide your clients with an African Adventure to take pride in."

Phala Phala game farm manager Hendrik von Wielligh did not respond to our telephone calls or written questions. We asked Presidential spokesperson Khusela Diko for comment on Cyril Ramaphosa's reported entry to pigeon racing, and if any of his game animals have been put up for auction or sold at direct sales for trophy hunting. No response. — **By Jack Lundin** ■

board on being libelous. The SAMDPR does not practice or support any of these activities."

"Pigeon racing is a recognised sport by the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture.

"The SAMDPR prides itself on its open and honest reporting via its web site, however this also opens us up to abuse of the figures. I do not have exact figures at hand now as I am currently in lockdown at home some 157km away from the lofts and office. I do know however that the figures quoted in the past have been inaccurate, some taking import documents which by standard issue state 600 pigeons per shipment, even if only 50 pigeons are shipped to us. In other cases only day figures have been used; I remember one damning report quoting we had lost 2500 pigeons in a single training flight where, in fact, only returns at the time of the article going to press were quoted and by the following day 90% of the pigeons had returned." ■

(A link to his full, detailed response can be found on the Noseweek website.)



# Meet covid diarist Ronald Wohlman

“Once upon a time in New York City, in the year 2020 to be precise, there lived a kind, medically-managed depressive: a neurotic hypochondriac by day, a neurotic insomniac by night.

(Who’m I kidding? He was a hypochondriac at night too, often mostly at night.)”



**R**ONALD WOHLMAN – EX SOUTH AFRICAN copywriter, author and actor – never dreamt that his lockdown diaries, written on Facebook and followed by people all over the world – would become his “life’s work”.

“What am I writing here? Jesus, I didn’t go into this thinking this will become my opus. But I’m never going to be able to stop writing this diary, am I? It’s now my curse,” wrote Wohlman on Day 61 of his much read and much-loved lockdown journey.

*“Addicted to his phone and for the most part going about his simple life not hurting anyone, our antihero was told by everyone he knew that he should write. ‘Oh My God you have to write!!’, they’d all say whenever they saw him. The man chose not to write but instead whined about not writing to a team of expensive shrinks for years.*

*And then one day, when he was least expecting it – at the time he was getting a massage at All Asians Body Spa on 79th street – an evil virus arrived in his shtetl called the Upper West Side. So on that fateful winter’s day, the man befalls the wicked curse of the virus. He will be trapped in his tower in the middle of Gotham City, and will have to write a daily diary entry for the rest of his life. Or until Brad Pitt in a Dr Fauci costume arrives to kiss him on the lips and inject him with a vaccine that’s proven and effective. And maybe kiss him on the lips again, and also on his neck... But only then will the spell be broken.*

*But hear ye, hear ye, word is that this might take years and years. Like 2 years minimum. Can you imagine for just a second me sitting here in 2022 with the resting face of my grandfather*

*Kalman, typing: ‘Day 790. Please Brad, please come today.’ OMG. Lockdown is never ending is it?”*

Wohlman’s musings on living in his lockdown “pod” in New York – normally the world’s busiest city and these days chillingly quiet as the epicenter of the pandemic – were brought to the attention of *Noseweek* soon after South Africa’s own lockdown started.

With him in the pod are his wife, Judith Dubin, his son, Max, who is studying film in California, their daughter Zoe (16) and their dog Ziggy. Zoe – a budding photographer and videographer – spent part of the lockdown with friends but returned home around week 7.

In the pre-Corona era, Wohlman used to write a column on Facebook called *Waiting for a Parking*.

“I would write musings and rants in the car while waiting for a parking and this series became very popular.

So I knew I had a loving audience on Facebook waiting to hear from me. They hadn’t in a while because I’d given up my car,” he told *Noseweek*.

“When this lockdown came, it seemed like the perfect ‘waiting for ...’ scenario, in this case, ‘waiting for the lockdown to end’. I also thought it would be a good way to create a community so that we could go through this together.”

His readers range from age 17 to 70-something and span across Australia, South Africa, Israel, India, England, France, Argentina, Brazil, Portugal, USA, Canada and New Zealand. “I have a rabbi, a Buddha, many yogis, Jews, Muslims, Christians, Mormons, atheists, gay people, straight people, people of every colour. So this global diversity and expansive demographic is fascinating to me.

Really incredible that such a diverse group of people feel they can relate to my experiences locked down in New York City. I love that,” Wohlman explains.

His fans include former Cape Town-based author, Rahla Xenopolous (now living in New York with her husband Jason Xenopolous and their teenage triplets) and well-known theatre director Janice Honeyman. He has featured Baroness Gail Behr as a guest columnist on his lockdown diary, describing her as “one of my most hilarious, brilliant and beloved friends”. Behr recently opened a boutique hotel called Dorp in Cape Town – only to have it closed the very next day by President Ramaphosa’s lockdown declaration.

Wohlman’s Facebook updates are hilariously self-absorbed, imbued with kindness, often poignant, sometimes profound and always relatable. He regularly curses the Trump government and pays tribute to the “soldiers in the war” – the nurses, doctors and others working on the frontline in the fight against the virus.

The comments from his followers are often as entertaining. He clearly has many funny friends ...

On Day 0, the day before the lockdown, he described how he went shopping. “I’m late to the apocalypse” – and found all the shops packed with last-minute shoppers.

*“I rush around throwing things in. Occasionally I think fuck it, it’s the apocalypse, buy the Lindt slabs with caramel crisps ... should I go buy Jew food? During the apocalypse it might be nice to have some gefilte fish or a matzah ball soup ...”*

On Day 1, he worried that he’d already eaten three days of apocalypse supplies.

NYC reports its first death from Coronavirus ...an 82 year old woman who had a pre-existing respiratory disease. He describes himself as “still sane-ish”.

On Day 2: *“I suspect my wife is hiding the nespresso pods. I wonder how long it will be before we turn on one another ... already she’s asking why I never bought disinfectant wipes. There are cracks showing in our team. My daughter chose another family to lock down with. Christ what does that say about us? She may come back. Let’s see .... This isn’t going to be easy. The mayor says*



*NYC has 269 cases right now but he expects thousands next week.”*

On Day 4, after a sleepless night where he spent “about 10 solid hours reading everything I could on the current state of the virus ... and the more I read the more hysterical I became until I found myself in an all out panic,” he described how he had to slap himself repeatedly across the face “like that scene in Airplane.”

On Day 5, he was bored with coronavirus ...

*“Yeah, you’ll all be pleased to know my panic has calmed. That’ll teach me for eating a 5mg edible during a corona outbreak... I’m now ok with all of this.”*

On Day 6, he learnt that “underpants all day isn’t a great quarantine look.

*“That one took me a few days to learn and it only sunk in when my pod members held an intervention ...”*

On Day 10: *“Swamped... It’s crazy how busy I am. Jesus. I have to watch so many piano recitals by friends’ kids, nieces and cousins. I have dozens of covid articles to read. They just don’t stop pouring in. Also so many voice memos from women in Ireland and men from Africa and people who know people who know something... you know I am running out of original emoji response ideas ... I have two yoga classes to get to today and I have to*

meditate and there's an awoken your inner light journey waiting for me to join. And my Yale classes on the Science of Happiness to attend. Then there's the governor's press conference I have to be at later ... I have all my direct messages to respond to and the bloody dog still wants to go out ..."

His day 38 account of his visit to the supermarket when "some bastard obviously unable to see my silent scream because the mask covers my mouth" approached too close in the vegetable aisle to ask "is this a white cabbage?" had "this Jew" so hysterical that he was driven to invoking Jesus, had many readers of *nose247* out of breath with laughter.

On Day 44, he realized he still had "so much to do and we only have about 25 days left of lockdown. I feel like *Quarantine's* biggest under-achiever. I'm under a whole new kind of pressure now. I mean, I'm going to get to the end of this and look back and ask myself – what books did you read? Erh ... I didn't even open a recipe book ... What classic cinema did you watch .... Did you take a course through Yale or meditate every day?... Did you learn a new language? No ...."

On Day 59, he wrote: "Is it just me or is it getting crazier out there?"

In a virtual interview, Wohlman, who worked as a copywriter with various advertising agencies for 25 years and still consults for them, said he'd been living in New York City for 24 years.

Born in Springs – "a dusty little town on the East Rand" – in 1967 and raised in Benoni and Boksburg, he travelled the world looking for "a place to call home. And that place turned out to be New York City."

Wohlman has been married to Judith Dubin (former *Radio 702* journalist during the turbulent late 1980s until 1994) for 26 years. Dubin is a content producer for Global Citizen, a non-profit advocacy organisation that marries policy and pop culture to build a movement of engaged citizens who apply pressure on governments to eradicate poverty and social injustice.

He emigrated from Johannesburg to Toronto in 1994 where the "cold and the dullness" sent him into a deep depression, but after winning a green card lottery, he escaped Toronto and moved to New York in 1996.

Max was born in 1997 and Zoe in 2003.

Growing up, he loved reading, listening to and writing stories and working as a puppeteer and actor.

As the Global Executive Creative Director for an agency called Lowe Worldwide, working primarily on the Unilever account, Wohlman lived and worked in London, Paris and New York, prompting him to say he spent the last ten years of his career in advertising in planes.

He returned to New York in 2012 and ended his agency run in 2016 "pretty burned out".

"And then I faced that crisis/dilemma every ad guy faces at a certain age – what to do next? Of course there's the required freelance consulting to pay the rent, which I stumbled through as best I could. I am a terrible hustler."

He wrote a children's book called *The Kingdom of Nothing*, which has been published and translated into French, Spanish and Simplified Chinese.

Having studied the Meisner technique in acting, he landed some small

roles in a few pilot episodes of shows "that haven't been picked up".

"I also appeared on stage in a Megan Furniss play called *Clouds Like Waves* which was directed by Jaci de Villiers, right here in New York. I hadn't performed on a stage in over 40 years.

"I wrote a play called *Twenty Five Years*, which I was actually in rehearsals for... It's the story of a Jewish neurotic couple who have been married for 25 years and are now struggling with being empty nesters, career changes, aging, love, life and all that funny stuff ... And then came the GREAT LOCKDOWN of 2020."

Asked about life in NYC before the lockdown, Wohlman said:

"New York City constantly offers you things you didn't even know you needed. So it's always stimulating here. I love people. I love theatre. I love museums. I love taking creative chances. I love taking leaps of faith. Challenging myself. Testing myself to see how far out of my comfort zone I can go. And there really isn't a better place to do all of that than in NYC. It's a city that encourages constant re-invention. Fresh branding. You can be whoever you want to be in New York. It's a very accepting city."

Wohlman, who loves talented actors, writers and artists ... as well as good cooking, chefs and "an effective medication" ... reads *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The New Yorker*.

"In the days when I did read books, I loved memoirs of artists, musicians and actors. I love writers like Nora Ephron, Joan Didion, Truman Capote, Patti Smith, Charles Bukowski, David Sedaris, Jonathan Safran Foer, David Rakoff. There are so many I'm forget-



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ting. I also love classic poets too like Dorothy Parker and Auden and Oscar Wilde. Humour, truth and wit are my favourite things in writing.”

He still loves South Africa. “I may have lived abroad for 26 years but my heart and soul is still in South Africa and when I’m there I still feel most myself. I have a brother in Johannesburg, a Mother-in-Law in Durban and my best friends in Cape Town, so I’m still very connected to the country. And I’ve been very fortunate to be able to return at least once a year since I immigrated.

“I’m also actively involved with a South African charity called Lalela which provides an art education to at-risk youth.

“What I love most about South Africans is their straightforwardness. Their honesty. And their commitment to each other and the country. To me it’s a country of doers. *’n Boer maak ’n plan* should be included in their anthem. I love that can-do attitude. I think South Africans are tremendous problem solvers. And I love the creativity in South Africa, from art to music to fashion to design, I feel South African artists and creatives put their heart and soul into their work, and that’s incredibly unique and still very much speaks to me.

“I think in America creativity is too often led by commerce, and you can feel it in the output. Having said all of that, I accept that dipping in and out of South Africa once a year on the dollar, doesn’t exactly give me a very accurate perspective on what life there is really like. So forgive my romantic rose-tinted view.”

What disturbs him the most about the world right now is “discrimination based on the colour of your skin, your sexuality, your religion, your gender, your nationality, your age. This disturbs me most in the world right now. And sadly every country in the world still struggles with all of these issues. And I’m also deeply disturbed by the disparity between the haves and the have-nots in this world. The extremes are horrifying to me. Poverty is horrifying to me. Corrupt governments and evil politicians keep me awake at night too. Of which there are sadly so many.”

What disturbs him most about the USA right now? “Trump and the Republican Party. They are very

narrow minded individuals, with an astounding lack of morals, driven by power and greed, and who lead by promoting lies, fear and hate.”

He has loved doing the *Corona Diaries*: “It’s been good for me to write every day. That’s a great discipline for a writer to master. Writing is like going to the gym. And the more you do it the fitter you get. And I think writers tend to be lazy and undisciplined, I know I am, so this has been a very good mental fitness program for me. It’s also been very nice to have a community from all over the world to check in with everyday and talk with and laugh with. And many people have told me that my diary gives them comfort and helps them deal with it all, so that’s very gratifying for me.”

Wohlman wound down his lockdown diary on Day 78, at the height of the protests in the USA following the killing of George Floyd on May 25 at the hands of police officer Derek Chauvin. Clearly distressed at the fallout of the murder, as well as general Trump politics, he wrote:

Day 78. Endings and Farewells.

*“America is burning. My Pod is splitting up. Max is going back to LA tomorrow. Zoe stayed out at the beach. I’m back in the city. Tomorrow is the last day of this dear Corona diary. Oh man, I’m really going to miss it. I feel I should now be writing the grand finale. The piece on all I’ve learned about myself; my pod mates, my community, my city, my country. I may have to re-read it all to really understand my story arc. But I think the big lesson for me is: overcoming fear gives a person all the strength they need. And it’s not an easy thing to do. It takes time.*

*And it’s different for everyone. But I hate pretending I know anything or have learned anything profound. I’m still muddling through all of it. For now, I definitely feel more sensitive than I ever was. More emotional. More appreciative for life, for sure. And grateful for the people I have in my life. Also much more angry about our government and all the governments around the world who have let their people down. I only hope that the world comes out of this in say the next five years, renewed somehow. That people are enlightened about inequality and racism and prejudice and healthcare, human rights and the planet. ‘Some may say I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one.’ Oh yes - I’m leaving Facebook. I’ll take all my writings off of here soon and I’ll set up a SQUARESPACE blog. But I can’t continue to support Mark Zuckerberg. I have no respect for his shady, greedy policies regarding the spreading of political misinformation. I respect Jack Dorsey tho and will take my business there. Before I get too boring, I’ll close out. I know there were many people who read these diaries in secret, that is you never made yourselves known because you didn’t want anyone to know you were on Facebook. I totally get that, but I would love to hear from you, so please dm or even email me at globaladman@gmail.com to say hi and I guess bye. And to my most ardent readers, I thank you all so much for being here everyday for me. So often there were days when even my Lexapro didn’t show up for work, but you were here and it was an immense help. God bless you all. One love.”* – By Sue Segar ■

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# From another country

## Artificial Intelligence 1

# The Panopticon is Already Here

This is an extract from a much longer article by Ross Andersen that appeared online in *The Atlantic* in July, about the international political implications of recent advances in the development of artificial intelligence (AI) by the world's competing superpowers.

**Y**I ZENG IS THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF the Research Center for Brain-Inspired Intelligence at Beijing's Institute of Automation. He and I talked through a global scenario that has begun to worry Artificial Intelligence (AI) ethicists and China-watchers alike. Most AI researchers around the world have come to recognize the technology's risks to humanity, and develop strong norms around its use. All except for one country, which makes the right noises about AI ethics, but only as a cover. Meanwhile, this country builds turnkey national surveillance systems, and sells them to places where democracy is fragile or non-existent. The world's autocrats are usually felled by coups or mass protests, both of which require a baseline of political organisation. But large-scale political organisation could prove impossible in societies watched by pervasive automated surveillance.

Yi expressed worry about this scenario, but he did not name China specifically. He didn't have to: The country is now the world's leading seller of AI-powered surveillance equipment. In Malaysia, the government is working with Yitu, a Chinese AI start-up, to bring facial-recognition technology to Kuala Lumpur's police as a complement to Alibaba's City Brain platform. Chinese companies also bid to outfit every one of Singapore's 110,000 lamp-posts with facial-recognition cameras.

In South Asia, the Chinese government has supplied surveillance equipment to Sri Lanka. On the old Silk Road, the Chinese company Dahua is lining the streets of Mongolia's capital with AI-assisted surveillance cameras. Farther west, in Serbia, Huawei is helping set up a "safe-city system," complete with facial-recognition cameras and joint patrols conducted by Serbian and Chinese police aimed at helping Chinese tourists to feel safe.

Today, Kenya, Uganda, and Mauritius are outfitting major cities with Chinese-made surveillance networks.

In Egypt, Chinese developers are looking to finance the construction of a new capital. It's slated to run on a "smart city" platform similar to City Brain, although a vendor has not yet been named. In southern Africa, Zambia has agreed to buy more than \$1 billion in telecom equipment from China, including internet-monitoring technology. China's Hikvision, the world's largest manufacturer of AI-enabled surveillance cameras, has an office in Johannesburg.

**Harare sent images of its inhabitants back to CloudWalk's Chinese offices ... to fine-tune its software to recognize dark-skinned faces**

China uses "predatory lending to sell telecommunications equipment at a significant discount to developing countries, which then puts China in a position to control those networks and their data," Michael Kratsios, America's CTO, told me. When countries need to refinance the terms of their loans, China can make network access part of the deal, in the same way that its military secures base rights at foreign ports it finances. "If you give [China] unfettered access to data networks around the world, that could be a serious problem," Kratsios said.

In 2018, CloudWalk Technology, a Guangzhou-based start-up spun out of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, inked a deal with the Zimbabwean government to set up a surveillance network. Its terms require Harare to send images of its inhabitants – a rich data set, given that Zimbabwe has absorbed migration flows from all across sub-Saharan Africa – back to CloudWalk's Chinese offices, allowing the company to fine-tune its software's ability to recognize dark-skinned faces, which have previously proved tricky for its algorithms.

Having set up beachheads in Asia, Europe, and Africa, China's AI companies are now pushing into Latin America, a region described as a "core economic interest." China financed Ecuador's \$240 million purchase of a surveillance-camera system. Bolivia, too, has bought surveillance equipment with help from a loan from Beijing. Venezuela recently debuted a new national ID-card system that logs citizens' political affiliations in a database built by ZTE.

If China is able to surpass America in AI, it will become a more potent geopolitical force, especially as the standard-bearer of a new authoritarian alliance.

**O**n my way out of the Institute of Automation, Yi took me on a tour of his robotics lab. In the high-ceilinged room, grad students fiddled with a giant disembodied metallic arm and a small humanoid robot wrapped in a grey exoskeleton while Yi told me about his work modeling the brain. He said that understanding the brain's structure was the surest way to understand the nature of intelligence.

He could imagine software modeled on the brain acquiring a series of abilities, one by one. It could achieve some semblance of self-recognition, and then slowly become aware of the past and the future. It could develop motiva-

tions and values. The final stage of its assisted evolution would come when it understood other agents as worthy of empathy.

I asked him how long this process would take.

"I think such a machine could be built by 2030," Yi said.

Before bidding Yi farewell, I asked him to imagine things unfolding another way. "Suppose you finish your digital, high-resolution model of the brain," I said. "And suppose it attains some rudimentary form of consciousness. And suppose, over time, you're able to improve it, until it outperforms humans in every cognitive task, with the exception of empathy. You keep it locked down in safe mode until you achieve that last step. But then one day, the government's security services break down your office door. They know you have this AI on your computer. They want to use it as the software for

a new hardware platform, an artificial humanoid soldier. They've already manufactured a billion of them, and they don't give a damn if they're wired with empathy. They demand your password. Do you give it to them?"

"I would destroy my computer and leave," Yi said.

"Really?" I replied.

"Yes, really," he said. "At that point, it would be time to quit my job and go focus on robots that create art."

If you were looking for a philosopher-king to chart an ethical developmental trajectory for AI, you could do worse than Yi. But the development path of AI will be shaped by overlapping systems of local, national, and global politics, not by a wise and benevolent philosopher-king. That's why China's ascent to AI supremacy is such a menacing prospect: The country's political structure encourages, rather than restrains, this technology's worst uses.

## China's Hikvision, the largest manufacturer of AI-enabled surveillance cameras, has an office in Johannesburg

Even in the U.S., a democracy with constitutionally enshrined human rights, Americans are struggling mightily to prevent the emergence of a public-private surveillance state. But at least America has political structures that stand some chance of resistance. In China, AI will be restrained only according to the party's needs. — **By Ross Andersen** ■

For the full article go to [www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com)

## Artificial Intelligence 2

# Listening to Nature

As the technology advances and becomes less costly, bioacoustics is poised to become an important remote-sensing tool for conservation.

**M**ITCH AIDE, AN ECOLOGIST BASED IN Puerto Rico, thinks we should listen to the earth a lot more than we do now — and record and store its sounds on a massive scale.

His aims are not spiritual, but scientific: he and other experts are developing and deploying audio recorders, data transmission systems, and new artificial intelligence (AI) software that together are rapidly expanding scientists' ability to understand ecosystems by listening to them.

Today, Aide can nail a cheap digital audio recorder to a tree in Puerto Rico's Luquillo Forest and transmit its recordings to a computer running prototype software, which indicates almost in real time whether any of 25 species of frogs and birds are vocalizing in the forest.

He dreams that one day soon, audio recordings of natural soundscapes will be like rainfall and temperature data, collected from a worldwide network of permanent stations. Scientists will

be able to determine how species are moving or changing in response to global warming, habitat destruction, or human disturbance, and chart population shifts over large areas.

A steep drop in the price of recording equipment and the rapidly expanding capabilities of user-friendly artificial intelligence algorithms are heralding an era of big natural audio data.

One key use of biological acoustic monitoring is tracking what is known as "defaunation," the hard-to-detect decline of animals like birds and monkeys from habitat that appears intact — for example, animals shot and trapped by poachers in an intact forest.

Aide co-founded a company, Sieve Analytics, in 2014. At the company's small apartment office in San Juan, he recently told me that audio technology promises to push ecological science forward just as satellite imagery has dramatically increased scientists' ability to track change in tropical forests.



Red Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)

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But the problem with satellite images, he says, is that “we can’t see the fauna.”

Because of this, biologists must generally fall back on expensive and time-consuming field surveys by highly trained specialists – to confirm animal species in an area. But the mere presence of fieldworkers can scare animals, and surveys don’t always produce primary records of species’ presence.

Cameras can only photograph what’s directly in front of them and don’t effectively detect small animals or those high up in trees. So animal declines within apparently intact habitats can go unnoticed for long periods. Disease or poaching could be wiping species out without researchers being aware of it and climate change could be forcing species out of one area and into another.

Biologists have long recognized the value of recording sound to identify animals and learn about their behavior. The first recordings of marine mammals – of beluga whales in Canada in 1949 – led to an ongoing explosion of whale research. The transition to digital recording has helped to establish the research fields of bioacoustics and ecoacoustics. Scientists are learning enormous amounts about how species interact with each other and the environment through sound, such as how urban birds are evolving to sing louder and at a higher pitch than their rural counterparts.

Until recently the use of autonomous environmental audio recorders has been constrained because of cost. Manually identifying bird, frog, or insect species’ songs on a recording from an area that may host hundreds of species is also skilled, time-consuming work.

Now technical breakthroughs are changing that. Aide showed me a small recorder about the size of a credit card and the thickness of a pack of cigarettes, an AudioMoth. Developed by a British research group called Open Acoustic Devices and first made available in late 2017, it’s cheap, power-efficient, and open source.

The AudioMoth can record everything from extremely low-frequency gunshots to extremely high-frequency bat vocalizations that are far beyond the range of human hearing. About 9,000 AudioMoths have already been sold, sales divided about equally between researchers, conservation organisations, and private individuals.

A miniaturized version, the mMoth, has just been announced; it weighs a mere 5 grams and could be mounted on a living bird.

AudioMoths have been used to map the foraging habitat of the Cuban greater funnel-eared bat, an endemic species that roosts only in a single cave, and are being used to search for the new Forest cicada, an insect that’s thought to be extinct in Britain. (The cicada has not been heard there since 2000.) It’s also been used to detect poachers’ gunshots in jungles in Belize.

Recorders could ideally be like modern weather stations, transmitting data in near-real time for immediate analysis, using cellphone data networks.

Aide said the technology is now sufficiently affordable and mature to roll out a large, global acoustic monitoring program.

## Artificial Intelligence algorithms can rapidly analyse thousands of hours of audio recordings to identify specific species’ calls

The second big challenge standing in the way of large-scale bioacoustics monitoring, that of analysis, is also being solved. In recent years, Aide and his colleagues have developed two user-friendly algorithms (available via an online portal called *ARBIMON*) that can rapidly analyse thousands of hours of audio recordings to identify specific species’ calls. However, these algorithms can’t do the “holy grail” work of simultaneously identifying all the species in a recording.

To this end Aide’s company has begun a collaboration with Microsoft’s AI [*Artificial Intelligence*] for Earth initiative, and they’ve built a prototype convolutional neural network (*CNN*) – a type of deep learning algorithm – that can already identify 25 species of

Puerto Rican frogs and birds simultaneously to a very high degree of accuracy. The *CNN* needs to be trained to identify additional species by supplying it with numerous examples of each species’ songs. Crucially, the *CNN* is very user-friendly, said Aide.

Tracking multiple species’ range expansions or contractions via a grid of listening stations could help scientists understand how environmental change disrupts the ecological connections among species and better plan nature preserves in a warmer future. By monitoring a decline in frog calls, listening stations could track the spread of diseases like the deadly amphibian ailment chytridiomycosis. Poaching could be tracked by listening for gunshots, animal alarm calls, and human voices.

Scientists could also learn how human-generated sound and natural sounds interact to shape the ecosystem – for example, do certain birds or animals quit calling and move away as human noise increases? If certain frequencies are silent, perhaps the animals that use those frequencies – like flying insects or bats – are in trouble.

There are still significant challenges to fully automating bird song recognition, according to Tom Stephenson, one of the architects of a cellphone app called Bird Genie that works like a “Shazam for birds” – a reference to the smartphone app that listens to songs and identifies them. Numerous species have many more than one song each, there are local dialects of those songs, and individual birds often sing them in their own individual ways. Picking species out of a noisy dawn chorus is challenging for in-situ human experts, and often impossible for current computer algorithms.

But the rate of progress of AI is mind-blowing.

Sieve Analytics’ Aide emphasized that archived soundscape recordings could be used for purposes we haven’t yet thought of. Watson agrees: “The beauty is [*that*] a kid who hasn’t been born yet will be writing algorithms that’ll be used to analyse historic data that we’re collecting and storing right now.” – **By Adam Welz** ■

[*This is a much shortened version of a story that first appeared on Yale Environment 360.*]

## Secret report

# Vodacom still profiting from wasp fraud

WHEN MYBROADBAND.CO.ZA APPEARED on 26 July with a lead reporting that rogue WASPs have been allowed to steal (mostly FROM Vodacom subscribers) airtime unhindered for over a decade, the first thought that crossed our minds was that MyBroadband was plagiarising, wholesale, a story published in *Noseweek* 11 years ago!

“What infuriates mobile subscribers and many mobile industry players is that it is easy to resolve this problem – block all WASP billing by default,” they said

“Vodacom, however, stands to lose a lot of money if they implement this solution, and to date, this has not happened.”

“They are continually implementing [ineffective] new measures to limit fraudulent billing, but 12 years later, airtime theft continues – mostly from their poorer subscribers.”

What’s new pussycat?

Well, reading further, it transpires there is something new: MyBroadband has the results of a recent confidential industry investigation, provided “on condition that the source remains anonymous because of the organisation’s relationship with Vodacom”.

The investigation revealed airtime theft on a mass scale from prepaid customers, with fraudsters using a gateway developed by the mobile operator to bill victims.

The investigators accessed hundreds of thousands of SIM cards across all networks, providing hard data for what we had previously only surmised: it showed fraudulent WASP billing on a large number of Vodacom prepaid SIMs. (WASP = *Wireless Application Service Provider*, not *White Anglo-Saxon Protestant*. – Ed.)

This was conclusive proof that airtime theft is occurring on Vodacom SIMs, bypassing the subscription and double opt-in requirements for WASP services.

It also shows the promised strict enforcement of a fraud-proof “double-opt-in” system never materialised. [As *Noseweek readers long suspected*.]

“Literally any random Vodacom SIM can still be subscribed to WASP services,” the industry player said.

Most of the airtime theft this year occurred using Vodacom’s own “Charge To Bill” gateway that allows for Vodacom customers to purchase premium content using their Vodacom account.

According to the information provided to MyBroadband, there are so many fraudulent transactions that the Vodacom team handling this issue is “swamped”.

Rogue WASPs typically target prepaid SIMs, as WASP charges are not easily detected as they don’t get a bill.

MyBroadband learned that many Vodacom executives are unhappy about the continued airtime theft, but other executives are defending this revenue stream as their bonuses depend on it.

MyBroadband asked Vodacom why it allows companies to fraudulently bill their subscribers and steal their airtime. The operator said it rejects the allegation “in the strongest possible terms”.

Asked why it does not block WASP billing by default and give users the choice to enable it if they want, Vodacom said it is “not the industry standard”.

“Similar services around the world, such as Apple iStore and Google Play, are active by default and provide customers with the convenience of paying for content services and subscriptions without having to continually re-enter credit card/payment details,” Vodacom said.”

Back in 2012 Vodacom was the first network operator to adopt double opt-in business rules to make customers fully aware of pricing and related information when using wireless application service provider

(“WASP”) services. “But, in the absence of a suitable technical solution, enforcing this standard has been difficult as the onus was on the WASP to comply,” was Vodacom’s cop-out line.

The reality is that fraudulent billing and airtime theft by rogue WASPs continued, and Vodacom subscribers collectively lost millions in airtime each month.

The fact that Vodacom said “fraudulent WASP activity had decreased substantially” in 2018 means that it was significantly worse before that. This is 10 years after it said it was fighting unfair practices.

In the 2017/2018 financial year, digital services revenue was around R2.29 billion, which declined to approximately R2.11 billion in the 2018/2019 financial year – a R181-million decline in digital services revenue, mainly caused by limiting fraudulent content subscription services.

MyBroadband comments: “This figure gives a rough estimate of the scale of the problem and shows that Vodacom knows just how much money was stolen from their subscribers each year.”

Mobile operators take a large chunk of their money from premium-SMS and content subscription services.

“If a subscriber is billed R1 for a premium-rated SMS, for example, the WASP gets anywhere between 3c and 15c of the price. The rest goes to the mobile operator.

“Refunds are nearly negligible when compared to total WASP billing. In 2018, for example, refunds related to fraudulent WASP activity on Vodacom’s network only amounted to R6 million.”

The sad reality, MyBroadband concludes, as did *Noseweek* all those years ago, is that the poorest South Africans, living in townships and rural areas, are the worst affected.

“I hope they realise how devastating it is for someone who only has R10 per month to buy airtime,” one industry player told MyBroadband. ■

[*Noseweek has plagiarised MyBroadband’s story wholesale – with their kind permission.*]



# The lost and found of the covid pandemic

**I**N A RECENT BBC WORLD NEWS interview, former senior British judge, Lord Sumption, described the general response to the coronavirus pandemic as ‘collective hysteria.’ He went on to say that we appear to be ‘...working ourselves up into a lather in which we exaggerate the threat and stop asking ourselves whether the cure may be worse than the disease.’

Statistics relating to worldwide deaths attributed to COVID-19, taken together with statistics relating to total deaths and births (without which there can be no proper context) add weight to his position. They also identify a greater threat as studiously ignored as the coronavirus pandemic is fixated upon:

Human numbers worldwide have increased from roughly 2.5 billion in 1950 to just shy of 8 billion in 2020. That is in the course of my lifetime. As at 20 July 2020, since the beginning of the year there have been some 77 million births, 32 million deaths and the human population has swelled by

a further 45 million. And if you don’t see in all of this the seeds of a catastrophe too ghastly to contemplate then, as lawyers are inclined to say, I rest my case.

These figures translate into roughly 360,000 babies being born, while around 150,000 people die every day. According to WHO data, worldwide deaths attributed to COVID-19 for the month of April (the worst month on record since the pandemic began) amounted to 181,374. This translates to 6,045 deaths per day or 4% of the average worldwide daily death rate. Figures for May, June and July show little variation with daily deaths averaging out at around 5,000.

Being a 69 year-old man places me in the group at highest risk of death from COVID-19. Despite which, I’m statistically far more likely to die from a wide range of other dread diseases, and no amount of fretting on my part will alter this circumstance. Furthermore, if I had any say in the matter, I would without hesitation choose a relatively quick demise from

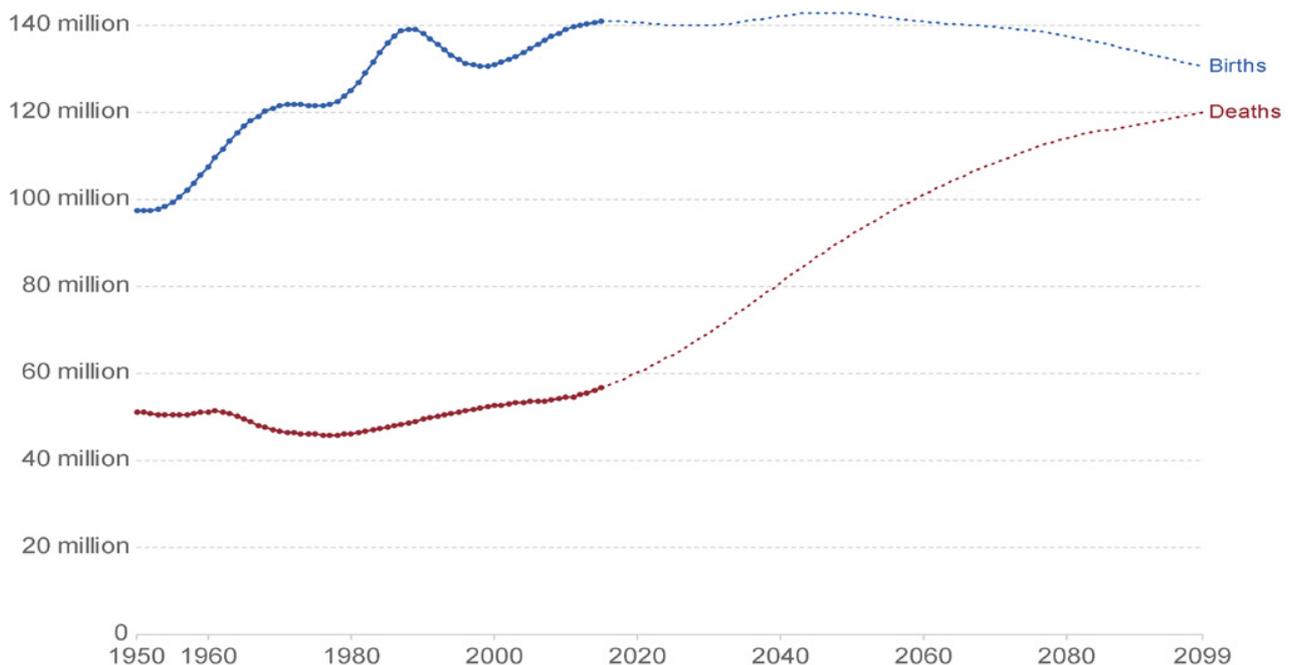
COVID-19 over a lingering, less dignified slide into dementia or death from a stroke, heart attack or cancer.

At the time of writing (20 July 2020) the total number of deaths since the outbreak of the pandemic in early February (6 months) stands at 607,000. Of these deaths, the overwhelming majority relate to people over 70 years of age with underlying health issues. Viewed from a more objective perspective than that which derives from collective overreaction and panic, the sum total of deaths attributed to COVID-19 is significantly less than the unremitting flood of human babies delivered into the world – every 48 hours!

With all due sympathy and respect for those who’ve lost loved ones as a result of the pandemic, and regardless of whether the general response to the pandemic is rational or irrational, the key issues surrounding the sustainability of human life today are not relatively insignificant shifts in death statistics resulting from COVID-19, but an out of control birth rate and

## Number of births and deaths per year, World, 1950 to 2099

From 2015 onwards this chart shows the UN Population Division projections.



Source: UN Population Division (2017 Revision)

OurWorldInData.org/future-population-growth/ • CC BY

a debilitating sense of entitlement and greed, which engenders collective denial and confounds any meaningful diagnosis or understanding of the prevailing and unquestionably diseased human condition.

Scientists have been warning of the dangers of a virus, global warming and the consequences of nuclear war for decades and surely, at some level, there must be recognition that the wholesale plundering and abuse of the Earth by a seething mass of 8 billion people simply isn't sustainable. It had to happen sooner or later and now that it is here, in the shape of the coronavirus, it would seem to come down to an almost impossibly slim chance of turning the brute machine we've created around, and the far more likely prospect of extinction.

The primary reason we're unlikely to make the necessary changes, relates to our instinctively acquisitive natures as primates, and resultant inability to let go of a perceived prize. It amounts to greed overcoming reason, and it arises in virtually every instance where desire for possession is counterposed by danger. A monkey trap is a simple device and consists of a wire cage tethered to a stake. The trap is baited with nuts or the like and has an opening just big enough to allow the passage of the animals hand – but too small to allow extraction of the hand with the nut in its grasp. Despite its terror at the sight of the approaching hunter, and knowing full well that its life is in jeopardy, the monkey is simply incapable letting go. Peanut or Porsche, to the primate mind the object of desire is quite literally something that's to-die-for.

Carl Jung proposed division from nature as the primary cause of neurosis and psychosis, and with large swathes of the global population on anti-depressant medication, it seems fair to suggest that collective neurosis if not insanity is a ubiquitous reality. Perhaps no word in the English language describes the knock-on effects of division from nature better than the word 'dominion.' It's the ultimate expression of acquisitiveness, amounts to totalitarianism, and it is through the repugnant and morally indefensible concept of dominion (taken as divine license) that the origins of environmental terrorism

and the systematic trashing of nature are vested.

*Homo sapiens sapiens.* Doubly wise as the arrogant title suggests – or the single most stupid animal on the planet? We pollute, desecrate and mindlessly destroy the natural environment (God's creation if you prefer). Everything is up for grabs. Nothing is sacred and, rather than being responsible custodians of the natural environment and protectors of our animal companions, we've become their worst and most feared enemy – as exemplified by the cruel cages in the market places of Wuhan, and the endless patchworks of private property we euphemistically refer to as 'progress and development' but which amount to an unremitting and merciless war against nature, and the establishment of a social hierarchy in which a minority prosper at the expense of a landless and poverty stricken majority. That's how we roll.

And while humans ponder the deep and perplexing philosophical issues surrounding the meaning and purpose of life, it is no mystery to any other species – all of which possess a collective unconscious or ancestral memory function in the form of instinct that, taken together with their experiential faculties of reason, provides a holistic form of intelligence that delivers the optimal balance of acquired knowledge and hereditary wisdom – to the purpose of survival.

Divided from nature, the fine balance of reason and instinct in the human psyche is lost. Much revered IQ is determined by testing of cognitive brain function alone, with no account taken of instinctive or phyletic memory function whatsoever. We are accordingly creatures of great knowledge, with little or no corresponding levels of understanding, empathy, or the benefit of ancestral wisdom stemming from the dawn of life on Earth, to moderate our behaviour or guide us on the pathway of life.

When I was at school I was taught the usual three R's in preparation for life in a dominion-oriented society. In hindsight, had some of my lessons been held outdoors, in a more natural environment than a classroom, and if my lessons had included responsibility (for my own actions) and respect (for all life forms), I might have had a

more holistic education and a better chance of achieving my full potential as a man and as a human being. As it happens I consider my life to have been shallow, materialistic and largely meaningless. I fear for the future of my children and grandchildren and, short of a significant decline in human numbers and a revolutionary change of attitude in towards the natural order, I see little reason for hope.

The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in many deaths. This is regrettable and sad. Lockdowns have caused job losses and financial ruin for huge numbers of people.

But whether the cure is worse than the disease or not, and all other considerations aside, the pandemic has put a dramatic stop to the machinery of exploitative, if not mindless human economic activities and lifestyles. It's also done more to raise awareness of the need for fundamental change in our relationship with the natural environment, than any form of human intervention could ever have achieved.

The coronavirus pandemic is a shot across the bow from Mother Nature, and perhaps the last opportunity we'll ever have to engage our allegedly prodigious powers of reason, figure out how to free ourselves from obsessive materialism, address the issues of overpopulation and resume our rightful custodial duties and proper place in the circle of life. It amounts to creating a gentler and more caring society. Native American's call it 'mending the sacred hoop' and that just about says it all. – **By Bruce McLeod** ■



**Bruce McLeod**



One of Anglo-Platinum's Hydrogen Fuel Cell Dumper Trucks

## Flogging a (battery-driven) dead horse

Why plug-in vehicles are not all they're cracked up to be – and, likely, never will be – by Nigel Fox

**A** SCANDINAVIAN ELECTRIC VEHICLE company is expected to showcase a prototype electric truck later this year. This “state-of-the-art” design will have a range of 160km and a top speed of 80km/h. Wow! That’s a similar performance to a battery-powered milk delivery truck of the 1960s.

Not much progress after more than 50 years. And it doesn’t address the charge barrier that all battery-powered vehicles face – that is the time taken to fully charge the battery and for how long and how far it will power the vehicle.

The Tesla Model S has a top speed of around 250km/h, a range of 600km and acceleration of 3.7 seconds to 100km/h. Impressive. But there’s still the battery charge barrier. It’s a genuine Catch 22.

There won’t be enough public fast charging stations until more people buy electric cars, which they’re not going to do because there aren’t enough public fast charging stations.

We won’t mention the other problem of potential electricity grid interruptions that used to be unthinkable until the advent of load-shedding.

All those decades of furious research by huge corporations and

still no massively significant success. The technology pot for batteries has long been emptied but researchers and engineers are still licking it out looking for marginal performance increases. Are there really no ground-breaking alternatives?

Prolific inventor and vacuum cleaner mogul, Sir James Dyson, launched a R50 billion electric car plant in Singapore for vehicles based on solid-state batteries which reputedly offer faster recharge, higher voltage and longer cycle life.

That project was shut down in October 2019 because it was “not commercially viable”.

Another innovation was the universal plug-in modular battery pack that could be replaced in a few minutes from underneath the car parked over an inspection pit. Of course, there would be the “Beta/VHS” battle of whose modular design should become the universal norm, until, inevitably, someone invents the “CD” version.

The infrastructure development cost and need for a nationwide stock of replacement batteries made that option a non-starter.

In Purdue University, Indiana, USA, a Professor of Science and Mathematics, John Cushman, has pioneered a revolutionary way to instantly recharge vehicle batteries. It's an immiscible fluid electrolyte that doesn't allow the positive- and negative-charged liquids in the battery to mix and discharge even when they are in one container.

Usually, they would be separated by a membrane but, in this application, they are like oil and water. A motorist would only have to pull into a recharge station where the exhausted electrolyte in his battery would be sucked out and replaced with fully charged electrolyte in about the same time as filling up a fuel tank.

Unfortunately, that would require a complete rethink of self-contained battery architecture and vehicle chassis specifications, plus massive infrastructure construction again.

Then there is the question of the weight penalty of batteries. A Tesla Model S weighs in at about 2,200kg while a roughly specification and performance equivalent Audi would be around 450kg less. That means there is a roughly 20 to 25% additional burden on the chassis and engine/s with batteries.

You can juggle and fiddle with these numbers, but it's still a significant extra amount to carry. Is there really no other way to solve this equation?

Let's consider another, totally different high-performance electric vehicle. Mining giant Anglo American has announced that they will work with energy services company ENGIE to build the world's largest hydrogen fuel cell-powered mine haulage truck.

The first of these 1,000kW/h, 350-ton monsters should be completed early next year and become operational in Amplats' Mogalakwena platinum mine. Anglo American is one of the world's largest platinum producers and sees fuel cell vehicles (FCVs) as the sustainable future of freight with lower maintenance costs, reduced noise levels and zero harmful exhaust emissions. (Add oxygen to hydrogen and what do you get? Water!)

Transporting and storing the pressurised hydrogen to produce electricity is no more difficult than doing the same thing with liquified petroleum gas (LPG). And the vehicle doesn't have to tote around all the extra tons of battery burden while it works.

Fuel cell vehicles solve most of the problems that have stalemated widespread battery vehicle adoption around the world and they do it cost-effectively. The infrastructure requirements are modest in comparison and the safety concerns are already familiar to filling stations for LPG sales.

The design and re-engineering

demands for automotive manufacturers are closer to the internal combustion engine vehicle architecture than any other electricity-powered alternative.

South Korea is planning to build three hydrogen-powered cities by 2022. In Germany, a hydrogen fuel cell passenger train has entered scheduled operations. The USA has 800 hydrogen-powered trucks delivering Budweiser beer across the country.

Looking at the needs and resources of our continent, it just seems very counter-intuitive to continue sinking enormous amounts of money, infrastructure building and scientific development into a technology that cannot deliver the returns that simpler, more environmentally friendly technology can offer, along with a far greater scope for future expansion and adoption throughout Africa.

But I'm sure that the embedded interests of the international motor industry and oil producing nations will continue to flog the dead horse of plug-in battery powered vehicles at all costs, both financial and environmental. ■

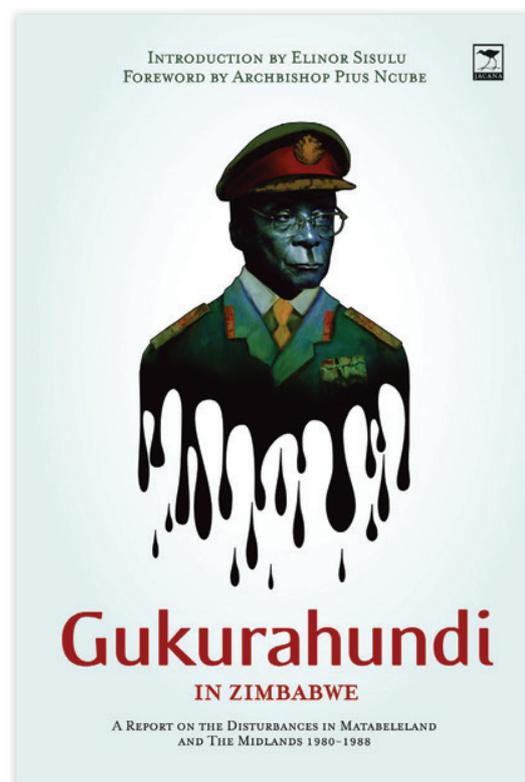
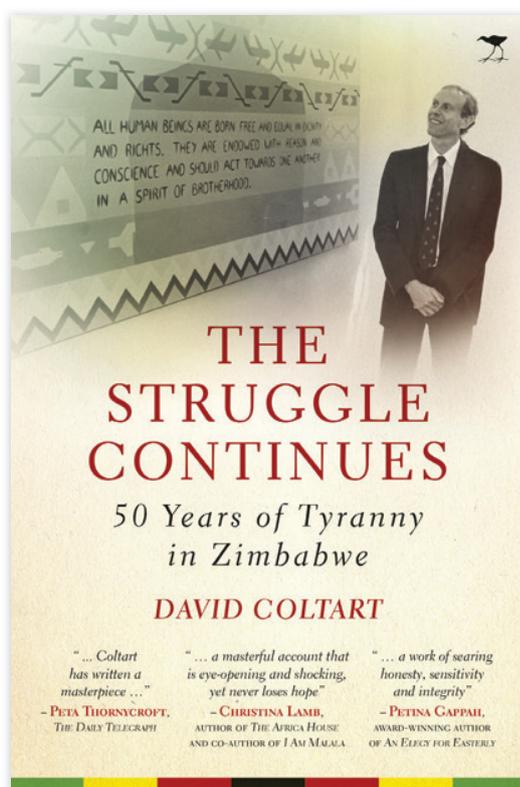


# Jacana Media

Perrance Shiri, Zimbabwe's Minister of Agriculture, Air Chief Marshall and Mugabe's man behind the massacres in Matabeleland in the early 1980s has died. With the help of North Korea, he led the murderous Fifth Brigade in a campaign that was known as Gukurahundi, where at least 20 000 people were killed. With his death ends any hope for justice for his victims and their families.

Read this report into the massacres and find out more about the man of whom President Emmerson Mnangagwa said: "Cde Shiri was a true patriot, who devoted his life to the liberation, independence and service of his country. MHRIP"

David Coltart, a Zimbabwean lawyer and politician, was central to the investigation into Gukurahundi. Read his inspirational life story in his autobiography, *The Struggle Continues*.



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## Last Stop Auschwitz – Eddy de Wind

**E**DDY DE WIND WAS A YOUNG DOCTOR in the Netherlands, in fact the last Jewish doctor to graduate from Leiden during the war. His story is thought to be the only authentic story about life in Auschwitz written in the notorious camp.

It's also unusual in that it was first published in 1946, and only translated into English in late 2019. To tell his story De Wind has chosen the use the name Hans as his narrator, but it is his story and the story of his wife Friedel, who was a nurse.

It should be said here that I approached the book with a degree of scepticism following the row that ensued after *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*, written by New Zealand novelist Heather Morris, was denounced by the Auschwitz Memorial Research Centre as containing gross inaccuracies. Of course, that led to a multitude of discussions about how reliable memory is, what latitude historical novelists have, and cultural appropriation. It was an abysmally badly written book, and so I was relieved to find that this book appears to have all its credentials lined up.

De Wind and Friedel were part of the round up of Jewish people in the Netherlands to Westerbork labour camp. There he worked as a doctor, frequently taking chances by declaring people unfit to travel to protect them from being sent away on the transport trains that took them to concentration camps outside of the Netherlands.

But eventually the couple too found themselves on a transport train to Auschwitz.

The rawness of the text was intended. De Wind turned down the first publisher who wanted it rewritten and smoothed over.

The horrors contained in this memoir are not gratuitous; as a doctor De Wind was saved from most of the worst detail in the camps, although he spent time in Birkenau, and this book gives a terrifying view of what Birkenau was. If you visit it now, it is hard to imagine the scale of it, but the stench of death still hangs in the air.

So, a qualified doctor becomes a porter, sometimes attending to minor injuries, and watches some of the finest minds in Europe (known in the camp as the prominents) destroyed. *Last Stop Auschwitz* offers a view not only of the terrible human loss of life, but also of the loss of culture and learning.

For most of the time they were in Auschwitz De Wind and Friedel were in bunkers next to each other. So, at risk of discovery and almost certain death, they were able to send notes and occasionally speak to each other. Friedel's story tells of the experiments that were done on women to render them infertile, and the experiments on twins. The detail of what was done to these women is beyond appalling, and yet Friedel and De Wind find time to smuggle food to each other, to talk, to even imagine a future. De Wind was terrified that she would be used in one of the experiments and rendered sterile. The human spirit is a strong thing, if you can be in hell and still imagine a future that may have your children in it.

Rather like a series of photographs found a few years ago, showing prisoners – most looking close to death – playing cards and mugging it up for the camera. De Wind's story reminds us that prisoners in the camps were real people – like us – not some homogenous group of misery.

There are also nuances in an almost unaltered first draft account that tell of the vicissitudes of what happened in the bunkers when different leaders took over control of the bunkers.

There are moments of some happiness, when the women are sent to pick herbs in the forests, and Friedel tells De Wind that she was so happy to be outside, but so exhausted by a trip that sapped her strength, given that inmates were living on a litre of soup and a piece of bread as their meal.

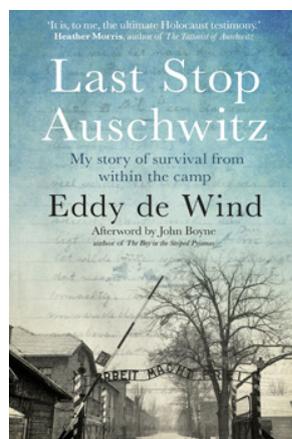
The couple remained in the camp as the Russians approached and the war was over. The flurry of killing the weak, burning papers by the SS, and sending inmates on the infamous death marches in the snowy winter are written from a perspective of chaotic thinking. The author and Friedel can't agree whether it is better to stay or leave, and so they are in a limbo in a camp that the SS have largely fled, having to make decisions of their own.

It is not a spoiler to say that both De Wind and Friedel survived their ordeal. But it left deep scars, which are revealed in an excellent précis of what happened to them after their return to the Netherlands.

A remarkable addition to the canon of Holocaust literature.

More than ever now, we need to read and remember that although we said it would never happen again, it has over and over again and still continues to this day.

Having visited Auschwitz and being literally speechless for days afterwards, one thing was particularly poignant for this reader. De Wind noted that there was almost no bird song around Auschwitz and Birkenau. He put it down to the forests being so thick. When I visited in 1990 shortly after the Berlin Wall came down the one thing that was noticed by the group of journalists I travelled with was that we heard not a single bird as we got closer and closer to the infamous gate bearing the words: *Arbeit Macht Frei*. – By Jennifer Crocker ■



**LAST STOP AUSCHWITZ**  
BY EDDY DE WIND  
(Penguin)

## The Missing American – Kwei Quartey

**G**ORDON TILSON IS A MIDDLE-CLASS widowed American, in his youth he has spent time in Ghana with the Peace Force where he met Regina, a Ghanaian woman with whom he fell passionately in love. They marry and she returns with him to America, pregnant with their only son Derek.

Regina has subsequently died, and he finds himself vulnerable and grieving on a Facebook site for widowers. He is soon persuaded that he deserves a chance at companionship and so he begins an online relationship with Helena, also a woman from Ghana who captures his heart. They have communication problems, not in what they want to say to each other, but in dropped Skype connections, where he fleetingly sees Helena, and then has to continue the conversation via emails. Slowly Gordon feels himself coming alive again.

Then something terrible happens, Helena contacts him in a panic to say that her sister has been badly injured in a car accident and that the family can't raise the \$4,000 to treat her.

No alarm bells go off in Gordon's

head, because he has seen the woman of his future happiness, he believes, and everyone knows that Africa's internet is not up to scratch, well at least one American is more than happy to believe that to be true.

So, he sends off the money and then decides to go to Ghana, Helena is thrilled and promises to meet him at the airport. Of course when he arrives Helena is not there, and her number has gone dead. Gordon waits for a few days before telling his old journalist friend Cas, that he thinks he has been duped and is on his way home. He also tells his son Derek where he is and why.

Cas, ever the journalist, persuades Gordon to stay on and see what he can find out about what the real story is. Within a few days he too falls off the map.

Kwei Quartey is a medical doctor who studied in the US and is the author a series of Inspector Darko Dawson mysteries. With this novel he launches a new series of Emma Djan mysteries.

Emma has always wanted to be a homicide detective, but her chances

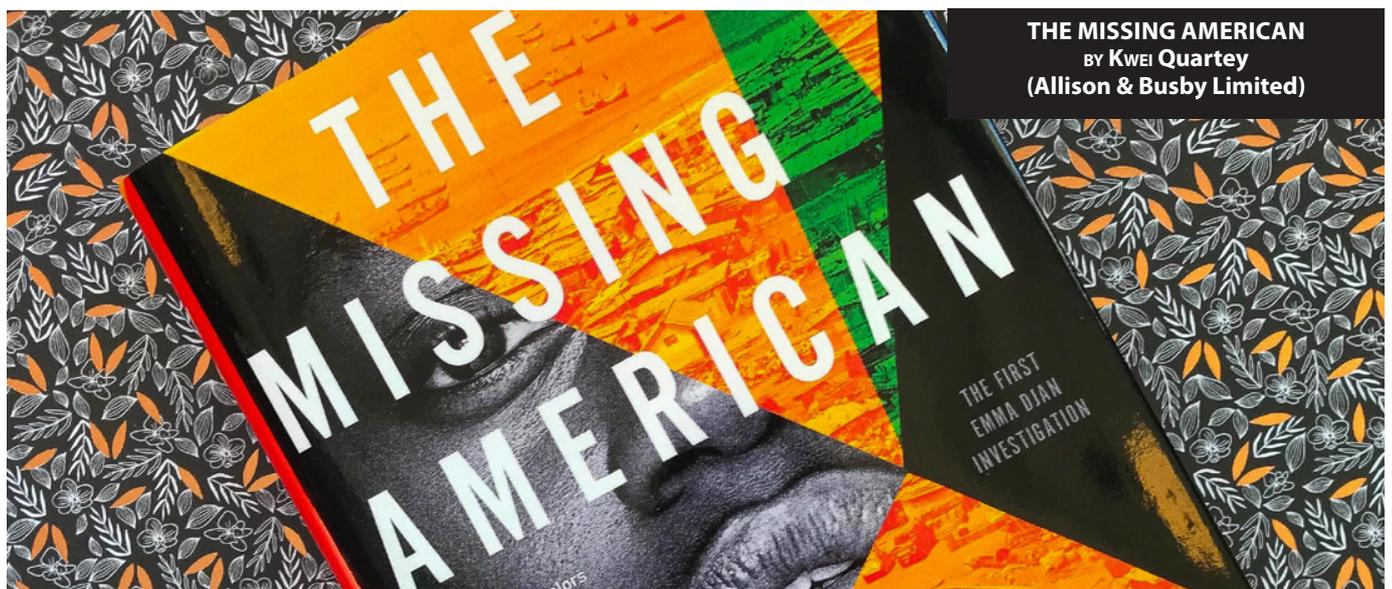
of that have been nixed by her boss trying to sexually harass her. So she applies to the Sowah Detective agency instead and gets the job.

Just then elections are about to take place, and the incumbent president's opposition, standing on a no corruption ticket has been assassinated. At the same time Derek who has now found where his father is and why, has arrived in Accra to help find him.

This magnificent and complex story lays bare the lives of the sakawa boys who use highly significant ways to swindle their prey – forget 917 scams, these guys are next level. But with any good story there is a great reporter, Sana Sana who lives in hiding and is about to reveal the sakawa story and damage a lot of very powerful people, if he lives long enough.

The author takes the reader to the heart of modern Ghana. This is no picture postcard Alexander McCall-Smith story. There is violence and complexity, and the start of a wonderful new series. I can't wait for Emma and the Sowah Detective Agency's next adventure.

– By Jennifer Crocker ■



## The ANC spy bible – Moe Shaik

ON TELEVISION HE IS THE SHAVEN-headed guy often referred to as the brother of Schabir, Yunis and Chippy. But Moe Shaik's life story will leave few readers unmoved; his book, *The ANC Spy Bible*, has been released and it is a gripping read of 247 pages.

The story is devoid of bravado and reproach but sweeps the reader along on an incredible journey where there was no turning back. It's the tale of a sensitive man who by chance became a master spy; not the James Bond-type but one who spent years active in the ANC underground.

At times the life he led almost destroyed him. It pulverized his nerves and left a dark shadow over his personal life.

The book starts as the young Moe waits to be arrested. He knows it has all been planned in order to divert attention away from a high profile wanted cadre who is being smuggled out of the country.

Moe expects to be tortured by the notorious Apartheid Security Police but has been assured this will only last three days. But under apartheid Section 29 legislation – detention without trial – the three days turn into months.

He endured cruel physical and psychological torture on a daily basis as they unsuccessfully tried to force the truth out of him. After a session of particularly extreme humiliation and punishment, a young policeman reached out to him, offering a word or two of support. That gesture was the beginning of their symbiotic relationship that continued beyond the day that Shaik was finally released.

While history will only know Shaik's prison friend as the Nightingale, he and Shaik played a compelling game of both fear and courage, which cemented the career of the master spy.

Enter Sydney May, the representative of General Optical, a Johannesburg company listed on the stock exchange. In March 1987 May traveled from Jan Smuts Airport to London Heathrow with a suitcase full of sample spectacle frames, a pack of printed business cards and

Shaik was due to meet with the ANC's new head of intelligence, Jacob Zuma, the day after his arrival in London. Zuma, who was then a rising star in the liberation movement, had especially come from Lusaka for the meeting and Shaik was nervous.

"He had served ten years on Robben Island and was known to be a crafty and skilful underground operator," writes Shaik. "Easy-going, charming, disarming, people found him endearing. And this was how he built his networks; this was the source of his power.

He laughed a lot, mainly at himself, which made it easy for others to join in.

He treated his rural upbringing lightly, as he did the hardships of exile, prison and the underground. He found abundant humour in the small and funny things of life. I fell immediately under his spell."

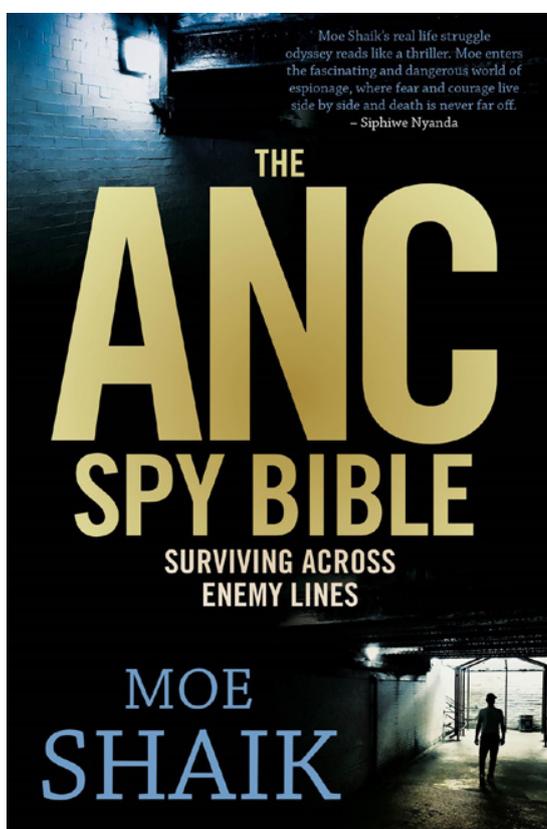
25 years later in 2012, Shaik walked out of the "world of secrets and intrigue".

He admits that he naively believed the government would uphold the principles of human security as the principle that informs the work of intelligence.

He was quickly disillusioned: "The intelligence services under the Zuma government were converted into agencies that served the narrow power of the state and the insecurities of its president."

But then he concludes philosophically: "Scars, like memories, are not good or bad."

The book's back cover blurb sums it up perfectly: It is a thrilling first person account that brings into sharp focus the role of Jacob Zuma and other players and sheds new light on some of the country's most turbulent years. – By Susan Puren ■



THE ANC SPY BIBLE  
BY MOE SHAIK  
(Tafelberg)

copies of the company's brochures. Beneath that lay the Nightingale's reports.

May was none other than Shaik who wore a navy suit, ugly conspicuous bifocal spectacles and a copious amount of gel on his hair, which was brushed backwards in keeping with his Sydney May disguise.



## Wear a mask. Cover Your Mouth.

**I**N 2020, WE FIND OURSELVES IN UN-familiar territory; a time when information is available instantaneously in the palm of our hands, but we face great uncertainty as the novel coronavirus, SARS-COV-2 perplexes even the experts most qualified to understand it.

While scientists are used to this kind of uncertainty, the rest of us are not so comfortable with it, and some among us display that discomfort with unparalleled ignorance of their own ignorance on the topic of COVID-19.

The benefit of hindsight over the last few months has shown Twitter gods such as Elon Musk, Helen Zille, and Donald Trump to be breathtakingly wrong on some of their claims regarding the pandemic. This got me thinking about what gives otherwise brilliant people in their respective fields the conviction to speak on matters with the same confidence as the experts.

Don't get me wrong, it's not so much that they were wrong that got to me, it is the sheer audacity to think they know what's going on at a time when the people most qualified are still looking for answers themselves. I think we face another pandemic caused by a germ that seems impossible to cure; the ignorance of one's own ignorance.

In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 2011, David Dunning describes what's now called the *Dunning-Kruger Effect* as a cognitive bias in which "the boundary where people's knowledge ends and their ignorance begins frequently arrives far sooner than one would expect."

In other words, people are greatly unaware of how deficient they are in certain expertise and they tend to overestimate their knowledge and interpretation of the data on certain topics.

A few months ago I claimed on Twitter that food retail corporations would let people die of hunger instead of giving them food that would otherwise be thrown away. I was wrong, of course; the world is not that simple.

A friend pointed out that my ideology may have blinded me to the truth. You see, not only was I incredibly wrong, but I was so confident in my knowledge on the topic of socio-economics and the supposed evil of capitalism that it never dawned on me how out of the loop I actually was.

having the most knowledge and yet least confidence in making sweeping claims.

We live at a time when it is difficult to decide who to trust when our media landscape thrives on catering to echo chambers, and when someone we trust confidently spouts ideas about which they are not qualified, or promotes a quack who supports their agenda. What can be done to stop this disease of the ignorance of ignorance?

My advice would be to be wary of anyone who is certain without any doubt about complex matters such as a brand new virus, or non-experts who have conveniently found data that supports their, and by extension your own, worldview.

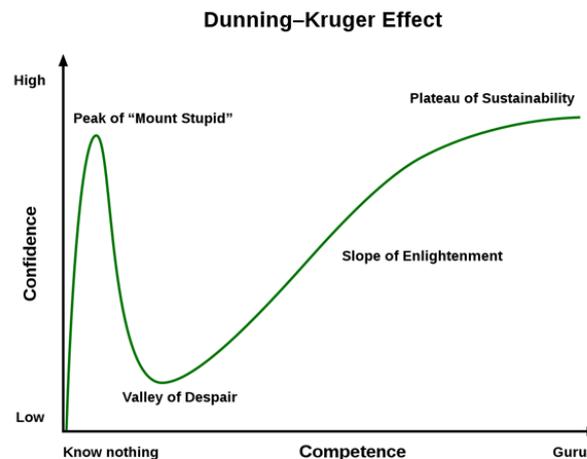
Nothing is as clear-cut as we think it is, but the rule of thumb is that the more you know about a topic, the less likely you are to have iron-clad convictions about it.

Maliciously spreading false information is like a symptomatic person purposely infecting others with the novel coronavirus by coughing in their faces. But perhaps even more dangerous is the person with undiagnosed ignorance, spreading false information without malice the same way a

person might unknowingly put others in danger by refusing to wear a mask in public.

So, what is the equivalent of a test for COVID-19, but for ignorance? According to Dunning, "there is no iPhone app for that." He mentions many factors, such as central worldviews that prevent people from changing their minds on topics when presented with contradictory evidence.

In my opinion, I can only vouch for the same advice that applies for COVID-19 prevention right now: assume you have the virus to prevent spreading it to others. In other words, cover your mouth and your nose! ■



The COVID-19 pandemic exposes daily examples of the Dunning-Kruger Effect as more and more people who do not seem to be disease experts or scientists make ever bolder claims. It amazes me that non-experts constantly make proclamations with far-reaching consequences on a novel disease that experts don't even understand yet.

Science is such a long and arduous endeavor that it is tempting to internalise the quick information we get from confident-sounding thought-leaders more than the advice we get from cautious experts who live on the far-end of the Dunning-Kruger curve;



## I have a dream...

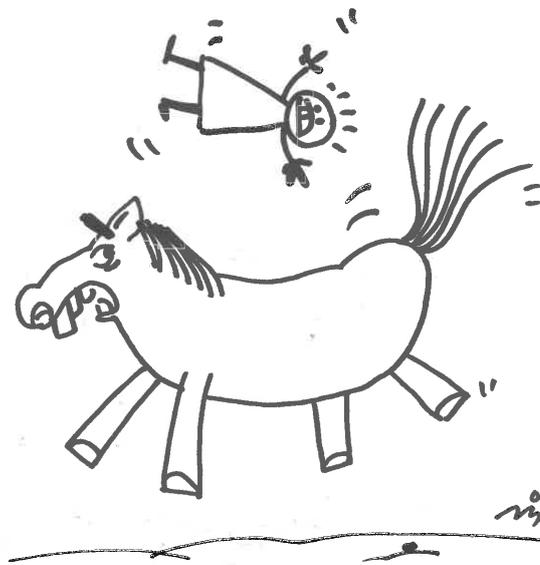
**B**EFORE I GO TO SLEEP, I LOOK AT a picture of the Spanish Pyrenees. I imagine I am walking there, on the cobbled medieval paths in the footsteps of the Romans and the Templars. I do this because I want to doze off to snapshots of adventure and nature's splendour. Below me lies an ancient beech forest, verdant; I hear the twitter of pilgrims gathering in the quaint granite taverns dotted along the route. On the horizon, a sunset reveals itself in layers of colours as the mist rolls in. I scramble down the mountain hastily, my knees grateful for the day's exercise to be over. Perhaps tonight I shall sup at The Café Iruña on the Plaza del Castillo? I will join characters from Ernest Hemingway's books for a glass of wine from the vineyards of Nájera. We'll sup on plates of pinxtos and discuss the finer details of Don Quixote and his horse. This is my dream.

It could have been my reality. I'd already booked the tickets. I was going to hike 120km along the famous Camino de Santiago in April. Ah, but then, 'lockdown.' My trip was cancelled. It felt like life had betrayed me. I tried to mitigate my sense of loss by planning the itinerary of my nightly reveries in minute detail, perchance to experience my voyage as a dream. I dreamt this instead ...

It was still misty. Or was it hazy? Difficult to say, I couldn't see clearly. Hang on, it's air pollution. I was not in Spain anymore. Please God no, I was in Margate! No more *paella* and *gazpacho*, it was *slaptjeeps y polony* from now on. A half-price hotel lurked on the hill as if it wasn't in the mood

to be discovered. There was nothing to do. Even the beach was closed due to a viral outbreak. So far, it was suspiciously close to the vacation destination of my childhood, but then the dream took a turn for the worse.

There was only one activity still on offer: Horse-riding. Bloody hell, I don't even like horses; not awake, not in my dreams and not as a child on holiday here when one threw me off. Brutish creatures, horses. Noisy.



Non-compliant. Didn't help either that this fantasy horse was out of focus. I decided to overcome a childhood fear and scrambled up the beast using the fence and saddle as support. No reins, mind you. Maybe that was the part that was 50% off. I reached over and took the animal by its mane, telling it to walk forwards very slowly. It made a snorting sound and took two steps back. I solidified my grip on its tresses

and gave it a solid yank. "Vamos" I said: "Go!" The animal gave a mighty roar and bolted – backwards. "Whoa!" I shouted. I slammed on brakes, pulling the mane towards me as hard as I could like I've seen them do in cowboy movies, but the more I heaved, the more the horse galloped and bowled maniacally across the veld – all in reverse! I leaned forwards to grab the horse around its neck in a desperate attempt to cling on but then noticed, to my horror, that the horse did not have a head. It was a nightmare! I started crying. My tears were like the river Ebro in flood, threatening to wash my contact lenses away. It was then I realised I was not wearing any contact lenses (you always forget something at home when you travel, don't you?). I'd mounted the horse the wrong way round. "*Hijo de puta!*" I exclaimed and let go of the 'mane,' releasing my hands from its cheeky 'jowls.' The horse reared up suddenly and neighed victoriously through its backside. I vamoosed right off into the distance, landing in the dirt. I awoke with a jolt, a chuckle and a profound sense that the dream was teaching me an important lesson:

Maybe life does not always go the way we planned it. Sometimes, we get the half-price version, and that's okay. So what if it's not as exotic as the Running of the Bulls in Pamplona? It is still an animal, and it can definitely run. Keep your eyes open for any new or engaging experiences, whatever form they may take and enjoy the ride.

Not convinced? Think of it this way: It could have been worse – you could have been the horse.

Keep your dreams alive, dear readers. *Olé!* ■

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**FONDLY REMEMBERED**

**Long-time Noseweek** subscriber Carl Winter, until his retirement an architect-builder in Cape Town, died at Hermanus on July 20, aged 88 – by his own account “ a good age”.

He is survived by his wife Olga, daughter Sonia and son Paul.



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