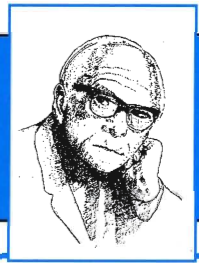


CONCORD

The Newsletter of the Alan Paton Centre for the study of the literature and politics of conflict and conciliation



Volume 2 No.1

February 2000

The Alan Paton Centre:

some reflections on the first decade

Joicelyn Leslie-Smith

It is not often that one has the opportunity to be in on the ground floor of the development of a new department, or in this case, 'centre', at the University of Natal. I was privileged to have that experience twice. Once with University Archives, arriving shortly after its inception, and then ten years later, in 1989, with the Alan Paton Centre (APC).

Looking back over the last ten years since the official opening of the APC, it has been a challenge, it has been exciting, and it has been immensely satisfying.

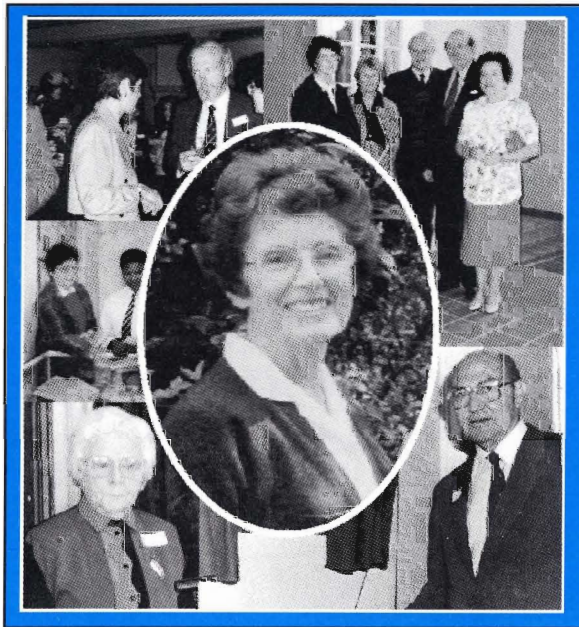
It is true to say that Alan Paton, both an educationist and author, humanitarian and politician was very proud of his 'Alma Mater'. Both his biography *Towards the Mountain*, and his years as President of Convocation of the University of Natal testify to that. After Paton's death on 12 April 1988 there was a desire on the part of the University and his friends to remember his unique contribution to our nation's history, and to further what he stood for.

It was the vision of Professor Colin Webb, Principal of the Pietermaritzburg Campus, that was to put this into effect. He was both encouraged and assisted by the generosity of Peter Brown, the Sunday Tribune, then under the editorship of Ian Wyllie, and Anne Paton, Paton's widow, who generously donated almost the entire contents of Alan Paton's study to the APC.

At the opening of the APC on 25 April 1989, Professor Colin Webb's memorable and succinct challenge to the assembled guests and friends of Alan Paton was, however, not simply 'to create a memorial to the dead, but a living instrument for carrying forward the struggle for improved human relations that filled so much of Alan Paton's essentially human life'.

'It was', as Webb said, 'the simultaneous commitment to principle and the attainment of the understanding on which conciliation depends that this Centre will labour to keep alive'. And so it has been.

The intention was, and is, to build up a study and research centre devoted to the literature and the politics of conflict and conciliation (initially intergroup conciliation), two of Paton's most passionate concerns. Its particular reference was to the KwaZulu-Natal region.



Further clearly expressed aims were to promote an interest in the life and work of Paton and those involved in the struggle for justice in South Africa, and to acquire, document and make available for study private and official document collections as well as published secondary material.

These concerns were to be promoted actively through the provision of facilities for scholarly research, through workshops and a variety of functions and events.

Both the Annual Reports of the APC, and since March 1997 the APC newsletter *Concord*, reflect the development of the Centre's collections, and lectures, seminars, book launches and guided tours which take place during the year.

Within the limitations of this brief article, however, I would like to reflect on some 'highlights' and trends of the first ten years.

The early years 1989-1993 saw the establishment of the core collections, the Alan Paton archives, a 'treasure house of documents', and the papers of the Liberal Party of South Africa which had been safely stored away since the closure of the party in 1968. The documentation of these collections was a priority to enable access to researchers, including Peter Alexander from Sydney, Australia who was to publish the first official biography *Alan Paton: a biography* in 1994. A further focus of this early period was the strengthening of the NGO collections. With political developments in South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal, and the withdrawal of overseas assistance, many NGOs either amalgamated or wound down. Such collections which came to the APC included the Detainees Aid Committee, the Natal Midlands Black Sash, and later their Advice Office, the End Conscription

Campaign, Five Freedoms Forum and Peace-In-Natal. From the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA) came their collection of Treason Trial papers and material relating to the much publicized Sarmcol Strike.

However, it was in 1993 with the approach of the first National Elections in 1994 that an education outreach programme, together with the Institute for Multiparty Democracy, was undertaken. A series of Political Leadership Workshops (PLP), five in all, were held on the Pietermaritzburg Campus. These workshops, held over weekends, aimed at building democracy, promoting political tolerance and electoral education. Participants were young leaders drawn from as far as possible, from across the political spectrum in the Greater Natal Midlands area. Enthusiastic participants, they were provided with materials and encouraged to workshop in their own work places and communities.

During these earlier years 1989-1993 the University Archivist had a dual role which included the day to day management of the APC. With the creation of a full-time APC Manuscript Librarian post and that of a part-time Senior Library Assistant from 1993, the Centre burgeoned.

If 1994 was a watershed year for South Africa, it was also one for the APC. The policy of seeking out material relating to the Multiparty Negotiating Forum, to political parties, the elections, local government fora as well as individuals and NGOs was actively pursued.

An indication that this was the right way to go was the almost immediate user demand for such collections and the interest shown by visitors, students, high school pupils and their teachers.

The PLP Workshops in this year had the added components of training in party organisation and an introduction to regional and local government. All delegates, as previously, visited the APC during the weekend workshop.

The first Alan Paton Lecture, entitled 'Namibian democracy: a liberal legacy?' took place in September 1994 with Randolph Vigne as speaker. Co-hosted since its inception with the Liberal Democratic Association, this lecture has become an annual campus feature. Speakers have included Bill Hoffenberg, Peter Brown, Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Helen Suzman and Justice Pius Langa. Topics may include political, literary, social or environmental issues which were also of concern or linked to concerns of Alan Paton.

Of interest too have been the Heritage Day Seminars initiated later in 1997. Co-hosted with the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, and community orientated, these seminars have featured talks by grassroots writers including 'Mpho Nthunya, author of *Singing away the hunger: stories of a life in Lesotho* (University of Natal Press, 1996) and the recounting of community histories, for example Sobantu, Northdale and Oribi Village in 'Pietermaritzburg: Some community perspectives'.

The increased publicity for the APC, after 1995 in particular, resulted in a growing number of researchers using the collections. Publications emanating from such research included *Songs of Africa: collected poems of Alan Paton*

edited by Peter Kohler which was launched at the APC in October 1995, and Randolph Vigne's *Liberals against Apartheid: the history of the Liberal Party of South Africa 1953-1968* which followed in October 1997. Anant Singh's film production of *Cry, the Beloved Country* premiered in Durban, also in October 1997, and an exhibition entitled 'Bessie Head - portraits of exile' was brought by the APC from the Khama III Memorial Museum in Serowe, for a showing in the Main Library foyer on campus in July 1996. The young curator, Rogoff Modise opened the exhibition.

A further step forward was the publication of the APC's annual newsletter *Concord*.

At the National Workshop on Contemporary Cultural Collecting in Johannesburg in May 1995 the APC Manuscript Librarian gave a paper on the oral history collection entitled 'Building up a peoples archive: recording the Anti-Apartheid struggle in KwaZulu-Natal'. Undoubtedly the oral history project has been one of the most significant undertakings by the APC. It was a response to a number of pressing needs at the APC which included 'to begin to build up the resources for a peoples history of the subregion... to record the struggle experience of older people in particular as a matter of urgency before this material was lost, to create archival material for academic research,; (and) to encourage more community involvement and use of the APC and its resources' (*Concord* (3) 1998).

From the beginning the APC was linked into the computerised cataloguing programme of the Main Library on campus, of which it is now a part. National links were established later through the various Registers of the National Archives of South Africa Services.

The APC website, opened in 1997, has successfully connected the Centre to the wider world as never before, not only for enquiries, but for the dissemination of information about the collections, the oral history project and functions. It was widely used during the course of 1997 and 1998 to publicize the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the publication of *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

Over the last ten year the challenges have been there and undoubtedly still will be. It is good to know that with the basics now established there are such capable and enthusiastic staff who can, funding permitting, not only consolidate what has been achieved so far, but under the guidance of the APC Advisory Committee and the Library, seek to expand the scope of the APC so as to become the living instrument 'in the struggle for improved human relations' that Webb envisaged in 1989.

CONCORD

Out of the study of conflict and conciliation there comes, hopefully, **concord** - that is agreement, harmony, and a 'being of the same heart or mind', so that justice and peace may take root in the new South Africa.

Donations, in the form of money or documents for deposit, will be welcomed by the Alan Paton Centre. Cheques should be made out to: The Alan Paton Centre.

THE SIXTH ALAN PATON LECTURE:

"STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY?"

The Sixth Alan Paton Lecture was given by the Hon. Mr Justice Pius Langa on 7 October 1999, in the Hexagon Theatre. Justice Langa is the Chancellor of the University of Natal and Deputy President of the Constitutional Court. He is a remarkable man in that he has pulled himself up from an impoverished childhood through the ranks of factory worker, court interpreter, public prosecutor and magistrate. He was admitted to the Bar as an advocate in 1977, awarded Senior Counsel Status in 1994, and appointed judge of the Constitutional Court in 1997. In 1998, he became Chancellor of the University of Natal.

Pius Langa's introduction to the works of Alan Paton was as a schoolchild, when he was awarded a book prize on speech day - that prize being a copy of *Cry the Beloved Country*. He was to meet Alan Paton some years later at a function at the Gandhi Settlement in Phoenix. He followed with interest the political progress, during the Apartheid era, of the Liberal and Progressive Parties.

Judge Langa went on to discuss South Africa as a democracy, and pointed out that it could not have been a

democracy before 1994, unless one could wish away four-fifths of the population, who were excluded from elections. "Democracy South African style was an exclusive heritage for the few, unshared by the majority." In the anti-apartheid camp there was debate about the means to overthrow the

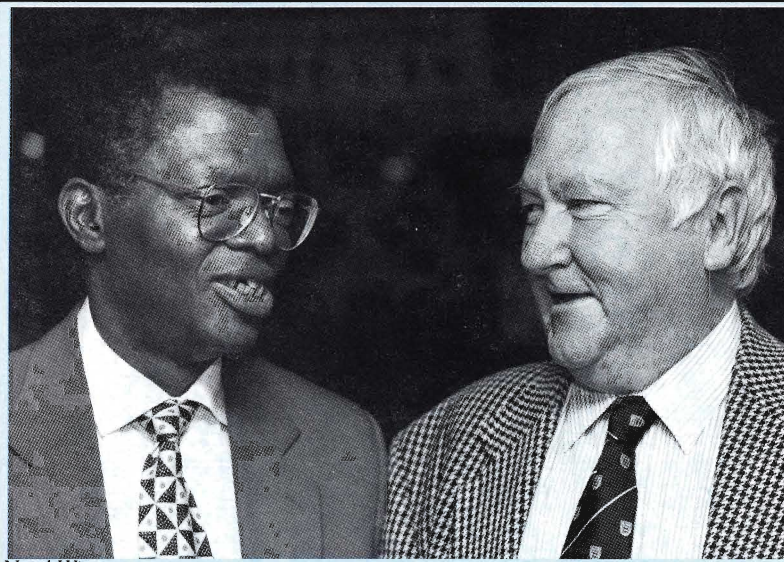
system - whether to use violence or economic sanctions and disinvestment. The battle against apartheid, he said, "could be characterised as essentially Black/White, but it was really a fight for democracy."

He concluded that the democracy which we now have, with its faults and flaws, is worth promoting, protecting and strengthening. He finished with the following words: "As Justice Sandra Day O'Connor would say, courts and legislatures are of much assistance.

But democracy lies in the hearts of the men and women of our country. It is them we need to galvanise. Then the courts and legislatures will endorse and give the seal of legality to our ideals."

Copies of the Lecture on cassette and transcript may be obtained from the APC at the following prices:

Audio cassette	R20 incl. postage	(Overseas \$20)
Transcript	R12 incl. postage	(Overseas \$12)



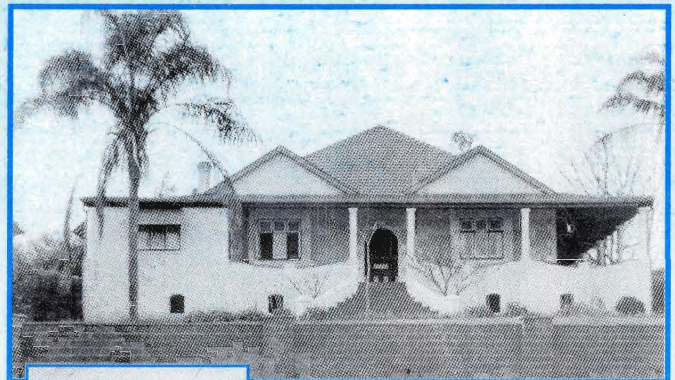
Natal Witness

Justice Pius Langa with Jonathan Paton

THE GOLDEN OLDIES TOUR

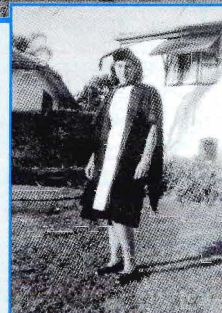
The Golden Oldies had their 50 Year Reunion Luncheon on the Pietermaritzburg Campus on 25 August 1999. "Golden Oldies" are Alumni who graduated fifty years or more ago. Before lunch, they were invited to an optional tour of the Alan Paton Centre. Twenty-five people opted for the tour, and enjoyed looking through the Centre, and at the display on "Alan Paton's Student Days, 1919-1924". One participant was interested to see the video of the original film of *Cry, the Beloved Country*, as she had been living in Ixopo in 1951, and had watched the film being made.

Another participant was thrilled to find that the Alan Paton Centre is situated in her old home. Mrs Joan Graham lived at 165 King Edward Avenue from 1940-1946. When her parents bought the house, it was surrounded by a verandah, and her father was the first to start converting the verandah into rooms, adding on a bedroom and bathroom. She writes: "When the Varsity was short of accommodation for the men students we had up to 7 boarding with us (hence the need for the extra rooms). Prior to this the wives and the children of army officers working at the Oribi hospital, were 'billeted' with us."



The house as it was in 1946. Unusually, the roof was tiled at that stage, although it is now made of corrugated iron.

Joan is pictured standing outside the house in 1945 when she graduated.



CIVIC HONOURS AWARDS

On 17 February 2000, the City of Pietermaritzburg-Msunduzi bestowed Civic Honours on five great sons of Pietermaritzburg :

Bishop Colenso (1814-1883), Alan Paton (1903-1988), Selby Msimang (1886-1982), Richard Msimang (1884 - 1933), R.R.R. Dhlomo (1901-1971)

What do these five great men have in common?

They all fought for human rights, justice and truth.

These five men undoubtedly deserve to be recognised for their contribution to the history and social development of Pietermaritzburg and of South Africa.



Bishop Colenso

Bishop Colenso stood up for the just treatment of the Hlubi and of the Zulus, whom he felt were being unjustly dealt with by the colonial authorities. He stood up for what he perceived as the theological truth, instead of staidly teaching accepted dogma, in spite of the wrath of the traditional church.



Alan Paton

Alan Paton stood up for the rights of all inhabitants of South Africa through his stand as Leader of the Liberal Party. He defended the human rights of juvenile offenders at Diepkloof Reformatory, making vast improvements in his time there as principal. He revealed to the world the tragedy of the South African political situation in his world renowned masterpiece, *Cry, the Beloved Country*.



Selby and Richard Msimang

Selby and Richard Msimang were founder members of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), which became the African National Congress (ANC). Selby was also a founder member of the Liberal Party. Both brothers worked for human rights and the just treatment of blacks in the racial milieu of the time. Selby was instrumental in the formation of the Edendale Benevolent Society.



R.R.R. Dhlomo

Rolfes Robert Reginald Dhlomo worked to make *iLanga laseNatal*, the newspaper of which he was editor, the authentic voice of the Zulu people.

He wrote many articles and short stories in opposition to what he felt was wrong socially and politically in South Africa in general, and of the need for Zulus to preserve their history, language, respectability and religion. He wrote the biographies of the Zulu kings, giving the Zulu people a feeling of pride in their history and background.

During this ceremony, **Certificates of Commendation** were also awarded to individuals and organisations who have made significant contributions to the development of Pietermaritzburg. The organisations which were recognised are the Khaya lethu Children's Home and the Natalse Christelike Vrouevereeniging (NCVV). The individuals were Dr Nqaba Ngcobo, born in Edendale, and now a nuclear physicist, Dr Peter Brown and Mrs Durga Bundhoo.



Peter Brown

Peter Brown was a founding member of the Liberal Party in 1953, and a stalwart to its cause in spite of a ten year banning order, from 1964- 1974. As chairman of the Natal Division from 1958, he advocated the implementation of universal suffrage; cooperation with the ANC; and foreign pressure rather than violent resistance as a means of challenging apartheid. In 1979, he became a founding member of the Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA), and was Chairperson of the AFRA Committee for eleven years. Without his dedication and support, AFRA could not have developed into the vibrant organisation that it is today.



Durga Bundhoo

Mrs Durga Bundhoo, the wife of a former President of the S.A. Federation of Leather Trade Unions, Mr Dasrath Bundhoo, has been a leading light of the Pietermaritzburg Indian Women's Association, for almost 57 years, as Treasurer, Secretary and President. She has been an inspiration to others in her lifelong involvement in many organisations promoting the social, religious, educational and political life of the Indian community. She was Vice-President for two years of the National Council of Women (NCW), Pietermaritzburg branch, making history as the first woman of another race to hold this position. She served the NCW as the National Advisor for Asian Affairs for six years.

The Paton Country

Colin Gardner

Tourism is by far the world's biggest industry, and South Africa has realised that, if it is to grow economically, it will have to get itself firmly on to the world's tourist map. (Cape Town has been there for some time.) Quite as important as international tourism, however, is internal tourism - people from one part of a country visiting another.

In the past tourism has often had a bad name. One tended to regard a mere "tourist" as a person who cruised around, taking a swift and superficial look at a great variety of things. But more and more people are recognising that, as many ordinary citizens acquire a little more leisure and money than they have had in the past, moving about and learning and absorbing can be a creative and liberating activity. Especially important, of course, are cultural tourism and eco-tourism.

Pietermaritzburg Tourism, working in conjunction with the Transitional Local Council, has begun to market Maritzburg as a place which has been caught up in a remarkable number of ways in the long slow movement, stretching over 130 years or so, from colonial oppression to the liberation represented by the 1994 election and the 1996 constitution. Maritzburg was the home of the great Bishop John Colenso, who not only introduced new ways of thinking about biblical scholarship but who took up daringly progressive views on political and racial relationships. It was on the Maritzburg station, in 1893, that Gandhi, having been ejected from a train, made his resolution to devote his life to the cause of social justice. Much later, it was in Maritzburg that Mandela

made his last public address, and it was nearby that he was arrested in 1962. In the 1960s, until it was rendered illegal in 1968, the Liberal party of SA was based in Pietermaritzburg. The city has also been the home of such varied anti-apartheid warriors as Selby Msimang, Harry Gwala, Chota Motala, Peter Brown and Moses Mabhida.

We can now see how appropriately Alan Paton - born and educated in Maritzburg and for some years a teacher at Maritzburg College - fits into this picture. He is an important part of the scene: an Anglican concerned about racial justice, like Colenso; an admirer of Gandhi; the person who pleaded in mitigation at the Rivonia Trial in 1964; national president of the Liberal Party; a doughty activist, like many others; and author of South Africa's best known book, as well as other works, about injustice and the possibilities of social reconciliation. He also had a special affection for Maritzburg, which in *Cry, the Beloved Country* he called "the lovely city".

The Paton Country extends beyond Pietermaritzburg, of course - as the newly formed AP Tours, run by his son Jonathan, will show. It includes Ixopo, and Diepkloof, and the KZN South Coast, and Kloof and Botha's Hill. But the location of the Alan Paton Centre on the campus of the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg is certainly what Alan would have liked and considered fitting, and one can be sure that his shade will chuckle appreciatively at the idea that he and his life's work will be making a contribution to the all-important tourist industry.

TRIBUTE TO JOICELYN LESLIE-SMITH

The main article in this issue of *Concord*, written by Joicelyn Leslie-Smith, provides an excellent account of the first decade of the life of the Alan Paton Centre in all but one respect. The crucial component of that history which it leaves out is the part played by Joicelyn Leslie-Smith herself in the development of the Alan Paton Centre.

The objective of the Centre is not, as Joicelyn's article, quoting Colin Webb, makes clear, to "create a memorial to the dead", but to provide a "living instrument for carrying forward the struggle for improved human relations that filled so much of Alan Paton's essentially human life." The contents of Alan Paton's study and the outstanding collection of manuscripts and other documents could, in and of themselves, only form the substance of a memorial. What was needed to make the Alan Paton Centre a "living instrument" was the lively commitment and enthusiasm of a champion.

The Alan Paton Centre could not have had a better champion for the first crucial decade of its existence than Joicelyn. When it comes to that, the life and work of Alan Paton himself could not have had a better champion. Joicelyn's enthusiasm was contagious and her commitment

total. Whether showing visitors around the Centre with evident pride in what it contains, organising and hosting functions and lectures to promote the Centre and the cause of conciliation, or administering the business of the Centre with her quietly self-effacing efficiency, Joicelyn excelled as ambassador, administrator, fundraiser and PRO. Indeed Joicelyn made of her role something which extended way beyond any expectations anyone could possibly have of a "Manuscript Librarian", her official designation.

Joicelyn Leslie-Smith can retire in the certain knowledge of a job well done. Under her able guidance the Centre has over its first ten years established itself on a foundation which will ensure its continued and growing success. A success which owes more than can easily be measured to its first Manuscript Librarian. We wish her a productive and enjoyable retirement.

D A MAUGHAN BROWN
Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and
Chairman, Alan Paton Centre Advisory Committee

Heritage Day Seminar 1999

"Pietermaritzburg : Some community perspectives" was the theme of the Heritage Day Seminar which was held on 22 September 1999 in the Colin Webb Hall on the campus of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. The Seminar was co-hosted by the Alan Paton Centre and the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository.

The purpose of the Seminar was to bring to light historical and community information on Pietermaritzburg, most especially of areas which have been ignored in the past, such as Oribi Village, Sobantu, Georgetown and Mountain Rise.

Prof Colin Gardner opened the proceedings with a welcoming address. This was followed by an introductory talk by Prof Bill Guest, who was Chairperson. Prof Paul Thompson, of Historical Studies, UNP, read the first paper, on Oribi Village. He divided his topic into three successive communities: the Military Camp and Hospital, Emergency Housing, and the Government Village. This was followed by a paper on Sobantu, entitled "Sobantu Village, 1920s -1950s : a historical perspective" by Sibongiseni Mkhize of Natal Museum. Jabulani Sithole, of Historical Studies, UNP, followed on with his current research

topic, which is the 1980s conflict situation in Sobantu.

After tea, Mr Yunus Bayat, a quantity surveyor, spoke about his family history, and the detrimental effect that their forced removal from their premises in Church Street to Mountain Rise had on his family. He brought some interesting exhibits,

such as his grandfather's scroll, turban and presentation gold watch. His grandfather, Amod Bayat, in 1908 travelled with Gandhi and a delegation of four others to England to bring the plight of the South African Indian Community to the British Government. The scroll thanks him for this act, amongst others. The watch bears the inscription : "Presented to Amod Bayat by the Natal Indian Congress, October 3, 1926." Bayat senior was president of the Natal Indian Congress in 1921.



Heritage Day speakers (L to R):
Mr. Sibongiseni Mkhize, Prof. Paul Thompson, Mr. Jabulani Sithole,
Mr. Yunus Bayat, Mr. Leonard Nkosi

This was followed by a slide-show presentation by Mr Ismail Cassimjee, a local architect, on the planning process in the future development of Pietermaritzburg. Mr Leonard Nkosi, a retired school principal, then spoke about the history of Georgetown.

The Seminar was attended by about 55 people, who contributed a variety of interesting questions between papers.

A NEW ERA

Jewel Koopman joined the Alan Paton Centre as Manuscript Librarian on 1 July 1999. Not new to the campus, Jewel worked in Main Library as Acquisitions Librarian from 1982-1987. Her move from the hustle and bustle of the city where she worked at the Natal Society Library for seven years as Reference Librarian, to the tranquil surroundings of the Pietermaritzburg campus, has indeed been a fortunate one for the Alan Paton Centre. The retirement of Joicelyn Leslie-Smith left a great sense of loss. But Jewel, although coming in halfway through the year, familiarised herself with the Centre in record time, dealt with difficult issues, organised very successful functions and showed incredible commitment and dedication. Her time here will no doubt be a fruitful one for the Centre.



Staff member wins award



Debora Matthews, Senior Library Assistant, completed her postgraduate Higher National Diploma in Archival Studies at Technikon SA at the end of 1998.

She was awarded the Combox Award for attaining the highest marks in Archival Studies. Here Debora receives her monetary award from Mr. Zehnder, Director of Compact Box Distributors. The award, sponsored by Compact Box Distributors, also includes archival storage boxes, files and stationery.

A personal account of the Oral History Project

Ruth Lundie

The oral history project, "Recording the Anti-Apartheid Struggle in KwaZulu-Natal" was undertaken by the Alan Paton Centre in 1995.

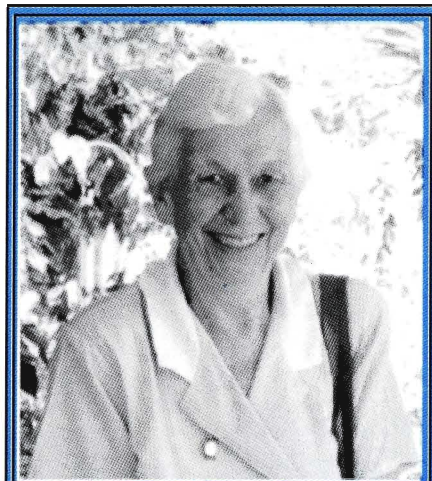
What I shall write about this is my own experience. I can't say what it was like for other interviewers, though these included two friends - **Marie Dyer** and **Pat Merrett** - and the situation was companionable. I should like to salute Marie and Pat not only for their companionship in the documentation of oral history, but for their companionship in "the struggle".

I am a Maritzburg person who has gained great richness in learning so much more of the place where I live through interviews. What a brave, lively and enterprising cast of characters are captured on the tapes of the Alan Paton Centre! Let me give you a few examples. I plan to circle the town making links where I see them, choosing my activists geographically, not chronologically.

Let's take **Archie Gumede**, a perfect gentleman, if ever there was one. His father toured Europe with a Zulu choir in 1892. His father was a founder member of the South African Native National Congress (which became the ANC), in 1912. Archie went to various primary schools in Maritzburg, matriculated at Lovedale, and did the first two years of his tertiary education at what is now called Fort Hare. In this he was following the tradition of 80% of Africa's leaders. When he returned to Natal in 1936 he worked as a clerk in various legal offices in central Maritzburg. By the 1950s he was in contact with the Natal Indian Congress. He also knew Harry Gwala. In 1955 Archie led the Natal delegation to the Congress of the People in Kliptown. He joined the Liberal Party. He was arrested in the 1956 Treason Trial and so on and so on. In 1983 he was one of the presidents of the UDF. Detained in 1984 he took refuge in the British Consulate in Durban. He was again restricted in 1988, and his restriction orders were lifted only on the 2nd February 1990. A distinguished career.

Of course Archie in the 1940s could hardly fail to know the group of political thinkers who met in lower Boom Street where much progressive thinking was expressed and argued. During the Congress of the People's campaign, the ANC branch in Maritzburg was led by Archie, and the leader of the Natal Indian Congress was **Dr. Motala**, who was particularly well-known and respected. **A.S. Chetty**, born in Maritzburg and educated at Woodlands High (where he belonged to the Thinkers' Club) played a huge role in preparing for the campaign, not only in house-to-house visits in town, but in trudging round the rural areas. He was one of a band of dedicated activists who went to Willowfontain, Edendale, Plessislaer, Cato Ridge, Elandskop, Richmond, using the forms sent from Johannesburg to record the demands of ordinary people.

Traditions persist, if the yeast is there. **Yunus Carrim**, twenty years later, was also educated at Woodlands High, but he lived in the much bigger Indian area to the north of the town the apartheid government had established. At Woodlands he was taught how to read the newspapers, and was already forming his political ideas. He joined his first student demonstration when he was in standard nine. In 1976, in demonstration against government activities in Soweto, he was detained at the age of 19. Like A.S. Chetty, but thirty years later, he trudged, not in the rural areas, but round all the shops in lower Church Street asking the owners to close them in protest at the Sarmcol dismissal, thus ensuring the biggest and best stayaway Maritzburg has ever seen.



Ruth Lundie

Across the way in from the Indian areas, in Sobantu Village - a so-called "model village" - there was in the 1950s already political awareness of the de-colonisation of Africa. Even then, Sobantu children were drawing pictures of Nkrumah in their exercise books. By 1959 Sobantu youth were shouting "Mayibuye iAfrika",

and showing allegiance to the ANC. A young man I interviewed, called **Vera Cebekhulu**, whose family moved to Sobantu when he was six, found there a strongly supportive community. High school children who are black are into real politics while they are still at school, not student politics as is the case with whites. For instance, the Sobantu hall had, much to the ire of the Sobantu students, been booked for a meeting of the Inkatha Freedom Party. Well, the municipal rubbish collectors were open to persuasion and the night before the proposed meeting all the week's rubbish was emptied onto the floor in the hall. It was too late to get the hall cleared and cleaned for the meeting.

This is the village where **John Mabhida** had worked, where the invaluable and devoted **John Makhathini** had established himself in the unions. Makhathini worked together with Gwala in these and other projects in the early days of the 1970s. On tape we have a delicious account of him "making bombs" with Gwala at Ockerts' Kraal, but whether they went off or not is another matter.

All this, of course, moves us across to Edendale and to the "Ibhubesi" (Lion) of Maritzburg, **Harry Gwala**.

Gwala's family came from the Wartburg district. He went to boarding school in Edendale, also to Adam's College which was then under Dr. Brookes. He taught at Slangspruit Government School in 1942. He joined the South African Communist Party; he had been to classes in Longmarket Street and gained leftist ideas. There were other sources - the Corrigan family, and an Indian comrade called Shunny Pillay.

(May I interpolate an interviewer's remembrance which will amuse some. I went to see Baba Gwala on a day when he

was hotly reported in the press. "Well, Baba Gwala", I said cheerfully, "In trouble again?" "Ruth", he replied, "like Bulldog Drummond, I'm never so happy as when I'm in a tight fix.")

After working for the unions, Gwala was detained in 1975 because he was found guilty of recruiting for Mkhonto we Sizwe. He was given a life sentence and sent to Robben Island. He improved the shining hour as principal of the school of political education on the island. Gwala was released on medical grounds in 1988. Back home in Dambuza Road, though unable to use his arms due to lead poisoning, he was ebullient enough to direct the juvenile ANC forces in the Seven Days' war against Inkatha in 1990. This dramatic and desperate situation was observed by **Radley Keys**, who had the foresight and enterprise to obtain a light aircraft to see what was going on. His story is also on tape.

This brief war, with its devastating consequences, is one of Maritzburg's two claims to - not fame, but international notice. The other being the discreditable ejection of Gandhi from a train at Maritzburg railway station. Which brings us back to the centre of the town.

Publications linked to research at the THE ALAN PATON CENTRE

AFRA : 20 years in the land rights struggle, 1979-1999.

Anne Harley and Romy Fotheringham.

Association for Rural Advancement, 1999. 200p.
ISBN 0-620-24257-4 Paperback R50.00

Available from AFRA, P.O. Box 2517, Pietermaritzburg, 3200

AFRA's mission statement explains that they are an independent land rights NGO which aims to redress past injustices and to secure tenure for all. AFRA works for a peaceful, secure, productive and prosperous society through the fair and equitable redistribution of land and services. AFRA is committed to a non-racial society in which there is gender equality and participatory democracy. AFRA works with black rural people in KwaZulu-Natal who have been dispossessed of land, subject to insecure tenure or who do not have the resources to access land, particularly the marginalised.

This book covers not only AFRA's work over the past twenty years, but goes back into the history of land issues from 1913, and over the apartheid years. It is written in an easy to read style, and is enlivened by many extracts from newspapers, photographs, cartoons and maps.

Romy Fotheringham used the John Aitchison Papers (PC14) and the Peter Brown Papers (PC16) at the Alan Paton Centre for part of her research. These papers and a reference copy of the book are available for the use of researchers at the APC. The book may be purchased direct from AFRA at the above address.

THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT



Prof. Fatima Meer after her interview
with Ruth Lundie and Jabulani Sithole.

In 1995, the Oral History Project, '**Recording the Anti-Apartheid Struggle in KwaZulu-Natal**', was started by the Alan Paton Centre (APC). Over the following four years 112 interviews were conducted with Anti-Apartheid activists, building up a substantial data base of information, much of which is unavailable in written format.

In 1999, the Oral History Project (OHP) was handed over from the Alan Paton Centre to Historical Studies at UNP, under Prof Tim Nuttall and Mr Jabulani Sithole. This was done in accordance with the restructuring of the Manuscript Librarian's post to half-day, which precludes her full involvement in the OHP. She and Ruth Lundie helped Jabulani Sithole to get the Project up and running again in the latter part of 1999, and three interviews were conducted at the express request of Prof. A. Bawa. These three interviews, of Mr A.K. Docrat, Judge Hassan Mall and Professor Fatima Meer, took place at their homes in Durban.

Other interviews which took place in 1999 were two conducted by Christopher Merrett, the University Librarian, of Roy Bunwarie and Mike Hickson of the Aurora Cricket Club. These are accompanied by the photocopied archives of the Aurora Cricket Club, which can be read at the APC (PC 124). Paddy Kearney, of Diakonia, continued his series of interviews with Archbishop Hurley. There are now 14 interviews in this series, which has been transcribed in its entirety. It is the intention of the APC to have all the OHP tapes transcribed eventually, as funds become available.

The OHP tapes will still be housed at the APC, and can be listened to in the APC Reading Room.

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