



defence

Department:
Defence
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS
Republic of South Africa

MEDIA ADVISORY

DATE: 11 December 2017

EMBARGO: None

SUBJECT: FUNERAL DETAILS FOR DOUGLAS VAKELE MAPISA

On behalf of the Ministry of Defence and Military Veterans, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and the Department of Military Veterans, we would like to convey our deepest condolences to the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans for the passing of her father.

Douglas Vakele Mapisa was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2006 and finally succumbed to the disease on Sunday, 03 December 2017. He is survived by his four children, Sonwabo, Nosiviwe, Siviwe and Nositembele, as well as by 20 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

Requiem Mass will be held at the Anglican Church of The Holy Cross, NU 1, Mdantsane at 6pm on Wednesday, 13 December 2017.

He will make the final journey from his home to the Abbotsford Christian Centre at 9am on Thursday, 14 December 2017.

OBITUARY

A Life Worth Living

Ida Mapisa gave birth on 22 May 1922 to Douglas Vakele Mapisa, at the village of Zagwityi, in the Butterworth district. Douglas was her second son. The first was Sandi, who was three years older than Douglas.

Ida was a single parent. Douglas, therefore, assumed her clan name, Dlamini, and her surname, Mapisa. Ida worked in Cape Town as part of the kitchen staff at a clinic at Langa township. When she left for Cape Town, Ida left Douglas in the care of her mother, MaNkwali, who lived at the time at Khothane village, in Nqamakwe.

After a short while, Khova Mapisa, one of Ida's brothers, picked up Douglas and took him to his own home, at Zazulwana, near Butterworth. Douglas spent a few years in Zazulwana whereafter arrangements were made for him to join his mother in Cape Town.

He was fourteen years old when Douglas boarded a train from Butterworth to Cape Town. He had passed Standard 3 (Grade 5) when he left Zazulwana for Cape Town in 1936, having started school quite late in his life.

He started school as a Standard 4 pupil in Cape Town in 1937, at the Anglican Church school of St Cyprian's, at Langa township. He passed Standard 6 in 1939. Black education at the time was under the aegis of churches, which made their buildings available to accommodate black learners. Douglas's next class, Standard 7 was at a church building at the edge of Langa, where the school principal was I D Mkize. One of his assistants became a famous businessman later, Knowledge Guzana. Douglas also passed his Standard 8 but did not go back to school in 1942, to complete his Junior Certificate. His mother fell ill towards the end of 1941 and was confined to bed into 1942. His search for work in 1942 finally found him taking up employment at the naval dockyard at Simon's Town. His mother, though, insisted he should go back to school, which he did in 1943 when he found space at Welsh High School, in East London. He made friends at Welsh with some of the students, including Fikile Bengu and Stutterheim Nkanyuza.

In 1944 Douglas went to the Blythswood Missionary Institution to train as a teacher. After qualifying as a teacher in 1945, Douglas went back to Cape Town to start his teaching career at schools in Langa township and Retreat in Cape Town and then further afield to schools in Aliwal North, Fort Beaufort, St Matthews Missionary Institution and Langelitsha in Mdantsane.

In 1954, while teaching in Cape Town, Douglas courted Zoey Ida Mazwi, whom he married in 1955. They lived together for 51 years until Zoey passed on in 2006.

In his prime, Douglas approached every task at hand with extreme dedication and a great sense of passion, whether it related to his school work or extra-mural activities. At all the schools where he taught, he ensured that there were music choirs, sports teams of various categories and athletics.

He also established scout groups at all his schools. His scout's pseudonym was Wolf, a name he carried until his death. His Cape Town scouts troops included youngsters who made a name for themselves in their adult lives. They were Winston "Mankunku" Ngozi and Charles Mehana.

Douglas encouraged Mankunku to blow the bugle, thereby helping him to pursue his love for instrumental music. He became a great tenor saxophonist in his adult life. Mankunku dedicates one of his songs, "A Song for Bra Des Tutu", in his album Molo Africa, to DV Mapisa. The album was released in 2002.

Mehana became a leading theologian and popular priest in the Methodist Church of South Africa. He has discharged other civic functions within South Africa's broader society. Apart from choral music, Douglas was also a great lover of jazz and gospel. During his time as a teacher in Cape Town, he formed the DVMs, a jazz group that carried the initials from his names – Douglas Vakele Mapisa. The DVMs rendered music at various venues in Cape Town. The group also toured South Africa, playing at carefully chosen towns. Douglas was a vocalist and piano player. Now and again he would play the piano and tried to sing even when he was in the terminal stages of cancer.

He settled down in Mdantsane when he arrived there in 1968 to open, as principal, the newly established Langelitsha Primary School. In 1975, the Ciskeian government appointed him sports organiser in its department of education. He lost that position when he picked up difficulties with the authorities in that bantustan.

He subsequently retired but was appointed later as an inspector of schools in Cradock in 1987, then Kingwilliams Town in 1988. In 1989 he found work as dean of students at Cape College, the teacher training school just outside Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Cape. That stint ended in the early-90s.

He continued to be active, especially in the area of sports. He was elected the chairperson of the Eastern Cape Boxing Board, but retired after a while due to health problems. Douglas grew up in the Anglican Church, where he served in various categories. At the time of his death, he was a Lay Minister at the St Gregory's Anglican Church, at NU 2 in Mdantsane.

Throughout his life he interacted with different kinds of people at many levels. He was loved and highly respected by all those who rubbed shoulders with him, old and young. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2006 and finally succumbed to the disease on Sunday, 03 December 2017. He is survived by his four children, Sonwabo, Nosiviwe, Siviwe and Nositembele, as well as by 20 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. Lala ngoxolo, Dlamini, Zizi, Nyawuza, Matshobendlovu.

ENDS.

Issued by: Ministry of Defence and Military Veterans

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