

# AFRICAN SCHOLARS' FUND

## 1970 to 2010

An Educational Trust registered with the Master of the High Court: NPO 002-838





# LOOKING BACK ON 40 YEARS OF ASF

**I**t is the early 1970s in South Africa; apartheid laws are tightening and the townships are unstable. Black education is in crisis. The rattle of gunfire, the banshee wailing of ambulance and fire engines, the smell of smoke are common occurrences in the land.

Dr Margaret Elsworth felt that something had to be done; she organised and succeeded in collecting secondhand school textbooks from white schools, where textbooks were free, and distributed them to black schools, where such books were not free, and where pupils could ill afford to buy them. However, it was soon realised that a bursary fund for poor learners in the Cape Province was urgently needed. Inspired by persons such as Francis Wilson, Mike Whisson, Grace Qunta, Mr Ngambu, Mr Oniwe, Hansie Pollak, Max Hales and members of the National Council of Women, the African Scholars' Fund (initially called the Bantu Scholars' Fund) was brought to birth. Suitable trustees, preferably with an educational background, were sought and the first meeting of the Fund took place on 26 February 1970 at the home of Drs Jack and Margaret Elsworth. The trustees on the board were: Dr M Elsworth, Mrs D Cleminshaw, Professor RE Lighton, Mr TB Lang, Mr WGA Mears, Mr T Plaatjie, Mr VE Taylor and Mrs D Winter.

A draft constitution was drawn up for the Bantu Scholars' Fund which would be a non-profit organisation, an educational trust, to be registered with the Master of the High Court.

Soon the Fund would have its first applicant, Pappie Vazana, an orphaned Worcester boy. In this first year there were 18 bursary holders, each receiving R20-R30 per annum. By 1976, before the Children's March of 16 June, we could no longer tolerate the word 'Bantu' and the name African Scholars' Fund (ASF) was agreed upon. Dissatisfaction with the Bantu education system came to a head in June and July 1976. Pupils stopped going to schools; in the homelands many schools were burned down; police made their presence felt and scholars were detained. There were detentions without trials and riots during which young people were killed. Pupils demanded parity with white education.

The trustees of the African Scholars' Fund tried to act as an intermediary between pupils and government. Riots continued sporadically into the 1980s. This was a bad time for black school children, many of whom tried to get into coloured schools – some succeeded in this. A few were admitted into white schools.

Dr Elsworth had an uneasy relationship with the Bantu Education Department (BED) and was labelled a thorn in the flesh by some because of her constant involvement in Bantu school affairs. However, after giving evidence to the Cillie Commission regarding the 1976 unrest, the credibility of the African Scholars' Fund seemed assured.

During that time, while travelling in the Eastern Cape, Dr Elsworth became aware of the deterioration in education, especially in the old mission schools. In George the only Technical College for black students was housed in a converted cowshed and when she enquired where the black schools and colleges were, she was firmly assured by the Town Clerk and the City Engineer of George that there were no Bantu people living in the area! Eventually she contacted Pretoria and was duly called to a meeting in George, presided over by a number of officials from the BED, where she advised them of the sad state of affairs.

The conscience of the Department of Education and Training was aroused and they started to give book bursaries to thousands of pupils. The ASF helped to administer this scheme in the Western and Eastern Cape.

Dr Elsworth has many dramatic and distressing stories to tell of this period when some ASF bursars were beaten up, imprisoned and tortured. ASF documents and advice were largely ignored by the educational authorities. Disappointment was great.

A large number of loyal trustees served the Fund from 1970 until today (refer to Addendum A). For 24 years the Fund operated from the Elsworth house, then moved in 1994 to an office in Rondebosch - this was home for the next 15 years. After less than a year in Waverley Park, Mowbray, in late 2010 the Fund moved back to Rondebosch and now occupy offices in Tannery Park. The number of bursars in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Northern Cape has grown steadily, reaching 1000 in the year 2000 and 2567 in 2010, when each bursar received at least R800 per year.

In 1996 Margaret Elsworth was the recipient of an MBE (Member of the British Empire), conferred on her by Queen Elizabeth II. After many years of untiring, inspirational leadership, Margaret stepped down as Director of the ASF at the end of January 2008; she was honoured by a Civic Reception on 23 May of the same year at which the Mayor, Helen Zille, paid her tribute.

The ASF had been honoured before by Civic Receptions – one such was on 3 June 1991, in the Cape Town Civic Centre. A Mayoress's Party was held to celebrate the Fund's 21st birthday. Mr Jack Kent, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and Mr Gordon Oliver (Mayor) each gave an address, while the Mayoress, Mrs Joanna Stern, presented the Mears Merit Award of that year. A number of past pupils, donors and mayors from neighbouring towns were included in the guest list. These receptions show clearly how the ASF is held in high esteem by the civic authorities of Cape Town.

After 25 years the ASF celebrated its Silver Jubilee on 11 January 1995. Donors and ex-bursars came together for the first time, partying on the lawns of Maynardville in Wynberg and then attending a CAPAB performance of "A Midsummer Night's Dream".

Growth has necessitated changes in the administrative structure of the ASF. Since January 2008 Eliza James has been Director. The post is now a salaried one and there are also five paid workers, high-tech computers and comfortable offices in Tannery Park

Funds come from private donors, with some corporate donations. The personal touch is still considered of vital importance, with donors being informed about the scholars they sponsor. Writing individual letters of praise or admonition is done by the office staff and volunteers. Visits to schools, plus workshops for Further Education and Training (FET) college students in the Eastern Cape, have been regular activities. Since 1997 there has been an ASF branch in the United Kingdom, managed by Sandy Elsworth, a loyal volunteer and son of Margaret.

The Mary Livingstone Award for creative writing in English is given every year. This award was founded in memory of a trustee, Mary Livingstone, who had been a teacher of English. The competition aims to engender a love of the English language in the pupils. Entrants from Grades 10 to 12 write on a given topic and prizes are awarded. Each prize consists of a sum of money, plus an

English dictionary. Whenever possible the prizes are presented at the winners' schools - this is greatly appreciated. Adjudicators, retired English teachers, judge the essays and decide on the prize winners.

The Mears Merit Award is presented to a bursary-holder of academic merit as selected annually by Trustees. This award was named after Mr WGA Mears, a founding Trustee and past Chairman.

The Discretionary Fund was established in memory of Noreen Saunders who had been a Trustee for eight years. Her work with sponsors and pupils had led to a special interest in individual needs. Relief for unexpected financial stress is provided from this fund.

The ASF began to give bursaries to a few Technical College students in 1986, but from 1998 bursaries for students at Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges in the Western Cape were managed by the Access Trust (formerly called TECSAT) which was established at the request of the College principals. The ASF has continued to give bursaries to students at FET Colleges in the Eastern and Northern Cape. These colleges offer vitally needed skills-training in areas such as business and financial management, electrical and civil engineering, and tourism - to name but a few. The size of the bursary depends on the fees charged for the course. FET courses are shorter than university courses and are very effective in leading to employment. South Africa needs people with practical skills!

The growth of the ASF is the result of detailed, individual follow-up by dedicated staff and volunteers. There have been attempts to share the load, especially by using Bursary Representatives in the schools. The individual care given to each scholar is still the hallmark of ASF work. This would not have been possible without the magnificent, compassionate and thorough care which the people of the ASF have always given. It continues to be a team effort.

## **ADDENDUM A CHAIRPERSONS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Many loyal supporters of the ASF have served on the Boards of Trustees. Much is owed them.

Below is a list of persons who have chaired the Board, in chronological order from 1970 to 2010.

Dr M Elsworth  
Mr W Mears  
Mr R Whiteford  
Mr H M Tucker  
Mr J P Kent  
Mr W Judge  
Mr J Gardener  
Mrs M Bull  
Prof J Webb (acting)  
Mr J Gardener  
Mr A J Elsworth (ASF in the UK)

## **ADDENDUM B OUTSTANDING BURSAR SUCCESSES**

Simphiwe Dyasi	Principal of Sonwabo Primary School (Western Cape)
Gilbert Hawker	BSc Hons (Maths) (UCT)
David Lali	BSc (UCT); Masters in Molecular Biology (USA)
Cordelia Mgoqi	B Soc Sc (Smith College, USA). Employed at Sanlam.
Patience Mbava	Smith College, USA
Thembile Mtwa	Computer Science (Stanford, USA)
Joseph Kilani	Advocate practising in Kwazulu-Natal
Ezra Ngcukana	South African jazz great; died 2010
Phindiswa Mnana	Doctor at Nompumelelo Hospital, Eastern Cape
Gordon Siboto	Studied Orthopaedic Surgery, Edinburgh; Senior Consultant at Groote Schuur Hospital; died 2008
Pazuna Stofile	Deputy Director of Human Resources, Western Cape Provincial Administration. Trustee of ACCESS Trust.

## **ADDENDUM C PAST BURSARS WHO DONATED IN 2010**

Ms N Bopi  
Ms A Dayimani  
Mr M Fani  
Ms N J Gogo  
Mr M Hermans  
Advocate J L Kilani  
Prince L D Ndhondho  
Ms N Ntsinde  
Mr B S J Ntwenka  
Mr L Solombela  
Mr L Taliwe  
Ms G J Yalezo

## **ADDENDUM D DONORS FROM THE 1970s WHO DONATED IN 2010**

Mr & Mrs R Ackerman (Pick n Pay)	Mr D E R Giles
Mrs J F Albert	Prof & Mrs J R Greene
Mr D Allison	Mrs C L Grimbeek
Miss E R Bannatyne	Dr & Mrs W Hoff
Mrs A Bevis	Mr & Mrs N B Jobson
Bradlow, the Frank & Edna Charitable Trust	Mrs R Jones
Miss E Burger	Miss P Kent
Champion Charitable Trust, the Hillary & Dorothy	Justice E L King
Dr & Mrs G M L Cragg	Mr & Mrs I Kurgan
Croudace Trust, The Lynette (managed 2007 by Community Chest)	Prof P M Leary
Dangwen Trust	Mrs C Malherbe
David Graaff Foundation	St Ola's Trust
Dr J J Degenaar	Dr G W Parr
D G Murray Trust	Miss C Roehm
Mrs E C Einhorn	Rustenberg High School for Girls
Miss C Errington	Dr R Smart
Dr R M Fisher	Prof A B Smith
Mr S Flesch	St Thomas's Church, Rondebosch
Prof & Mrs P Folb	Prof R M Watson
Mr M J Francis	Westerford High School
	Ms E Yeats

## **ADDENDUM E VOLUNTEERS**

C Allen	M Elsworth	WGA Mears	M Solomon
B Alsen	S Elsworth	T Mgijima	R Sloman
R Allsopp	T Emayan	B Mitchley	P Spargo
J Anderson	W Farringer	S Mngqolo	N Stern
F Barb	S Flesch	S Mngxunyeni	P Stofile
H Barry	S Folb	D Motolwana	E Targett
P Barry	M Gale	W Moult	VE Taylor
D Bernstein	J Grant	H Mtoba	ME Thomson
C Birch	M Grant	N Murray	J Thum
K Brodrick	B Greene	E Musapitso	HM Tucker
M Bull	J Grogan	N Mxoli	E van der Riet
L Burger	PM Harker	P Myburgh	J Vorster
M Chalton	Y Heiberg	E Ndandani	O Waldron
B Clapham	A Holleman	S Oniwe	TV Webb
M Clarke	B Hughes	C Orpen	J Webb
D Cleminshaw	R Irlam	M Osler	RM Whiteford
M Corden-Lloyd	E Jakobsen	T Plaatjie	D Winter
H Corder	A Jones	A Platt	S York
M Cox	W Kerby	L Qaba	R Young
M Crisp	J Keet,	G Quma	
P de Vos	JP Kent	M Reeler	
M I Dick	R Maharaj	E Robinson	
M Dwight	N Makaluza	E Rollo	
S Dyasi	D Makhoba	W Rollo	
B Elsworth	S Makhosana	N Saunders	
J Elsworth	T Mama	G Siboto	

## **ADDENDUM F INTERESTING EXTRACTS FROM THE MINUTE BOOKS**

- 1970 - Eighteen bursaries awarded at a cost of R740. E Ngcukana, the famous jazz musician, was one of these bursars.
- 1971 - Cost of schooling - tuition R6, books R25-30, uniform R30.
- 1972 - R10 was voted for the cost of the Annual Report and other petty cash.
- 1976 - Beryl Morris employed as part-time secretary at R120 per month.
- 1978 - Mears Merit Award - 1st recipient, Denis Ngoma - George Mqalo Secondary School, Alice.
- 1984 - Mrs Bernstein and Dr Elsworth investigated the cost and availability of computers to lighten the work in the office; by July a Texas instrument with Lotus 123 had been installed.

- 1989 - The Yvonne Parfitt Trust awarded six bursaries to our Matric bursars of 1988, Simphiwe Ntwenka was a recipient. He later went on to win a British Council Scholarship for two years' study at Fulton College, Bristol, and became a donor.
- 1990 - The ASF received a Premier Award (Western Cape): Education Africa. This was the second time in three years that the ASF had won the Premier Award (it had shared this award in 1977).
- 1991 - Letters of appreciation were written to both the Auditors and the Standard Bank for their continuing services, without charge, to the ASF (those were the days!).
- 1994 - Dr M Elsworth was appointed Director.
- 1997 - Mary Livingstone Essay Award instituted.
- 2002 - A Grade 11 learner at Shaw Park Combined School blamed his weak results on the loss of his bicycle (he lived a long way from the school). Mrs Targett offered to send money and to liaise with the Principal to help this learner purchase a second-hand bike. A letter of thanks from the learner was tabled.
- 2002 - Tabled at Trustees' meeting – a letter from a shack dweller describing the circumstances in which he lived – 1 family per bed, 3 beds in a room, 3 rooms in the shack- a total of 9 families in one small dwelling.
- 2003 - On 8 November an Art Exhibition was held at the home of Gavin and Janine Calf. There was a finger supper and the Rustenburg Girls' High School string quartet played. The paintings were sold by secret auction. Enough money was raised to support seven scholars.
- 2006 - Twenty learners from Amazizi High Schools were transported to the Grahamstown Festival, courtesy of the late Mrs Lynette Croudace. Each learner was given R70 to spend and the outing was declared a good learning experience.
- 2007 - Schools were requested to appoint a bursary representative with whom the ASF could liaise directly.
- 2007 - Dr Robert Boyd raised £1057 for the ASF by running the London Marathon.
- 2008 - The Brooke-Davidge wedding. Donations in lieu of gifts were given to the ASF (Alex Brooke started donating from her early student years). Three ASF representatives attended the wedding.
- 2010 - Thanks to a generous donation received from the DG Murray Trust, we were able to replace the makeshift desks – some of which were held up by boxes of envelopes – with good quality second-hand workstations. The DG Murray Trust also came to our rescue in making funds available that enabled us to replace our outdated computers and software.



