8 Foreword by the Chief Director Equal Opportunities

10 Focussing on equity

14 SA women doing it for our continent

18 A General who believes in action

19 Only the best is good enough

20 Strategy - the art of the General

21 Determined to serve the Defence Force

22 Meet our only female civilian director

23 Living in better times

24 Director of Social Work no accident

25 Balancing the scales in the SANDF

26 Meet a very direct but passionate leader

27 Committed to the cause of women

28 Born at the right time

29 Not a token woman

30 The General who believes in giving with love

31 The first South African female Admiral

32 Talking of veterans

46 Our Olympic hopes
SA SOLDIER is published monthly - 12 issues per year. The views and opinions expressed by the authors of articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Department of Defence (DOD). Acceptance and publication of advertorial and advertising matter in SA SOLDIER does not constitute DOD endorsement or warranty in respect of goods or services therein described. The DOD does not assume any liability in respect of any claims made in advertisements.

COPYRIGHT: No article or picture in this magazine may be reproduced without the written consent of the Editor.

FRONT COVER: It is August and we are celebrating the 9th of August (National Women's Day) and a decade of freedom for women in the Defence; SA SOLDIER magazine is therefore dedicating this special edition to all our women. (Visual: DOD Visual Communications)


For the latest news on defence matters in South Africa, visit our website at: www.mil.za/magazines/sasoldier
It is August and we are celebrating National Women’s Day on the 9th of August and a decade of freedom for women in Defence; SA SOLDIER magazine is therefore dedicating this special edition to all our women.

This Special Edition was the brainchild of Mr Vuyo Zambodla, the Head of Communication. Maj Gen Dan Mofokeng, Chief Defence Corporate Communication, recommended the idea to the Daily Defence Staff Council, and it was approved to publish a special edition on women in the DOD/SANDF as part of the celebrations of a decade of defence in a democracy.

I want to thank each and every person who sent articles and photographs about women in their respective Services, who have excelled in one way or another in the DOD/SANDF. With your most appreciated support we did accomplish an extraordinary August edition!

Your response was overwhelming! There were so many, we could not publish every contribution in our August edition, but we will strive to publish them in our future editions.

Women played a vital role in the first decade of freedom and democracy in our new Defence Force. Over the past ten years quite a number of senior appointments and appointments to unique types of posts were done, in which women proved themselves to be on an equal footing with men and distinguished themselves as successful and exemplary leaders and commanders in their respective fields. Changes also led to female soldiers being employed in operational roles and theatres, which had previously been closed to them. The achievements of women in the DOD/SANDF were outstanding, and have been due to hard work, perseverance and commitment, but it is time for all women to be more assertive in bringing about more changes in the entire DOD structure.

The composition of today’s Defence Force includes just over 21.67% women, who can be employed in every branch and trade and in all operational theatres, at home and abroad, where their male counterparts had previously worked and still do.

Congratulations to all the women who are making a difference and having an impact on the DOD/SANDF, South Africa, Africa as a whole and internationally.

SA SOLDIER could not afford not to seize this phenomenal opportunity to publish an edition on women in the DOD/SANDF as part of the celebrations of a decade of defence in a democracy, because informing you is at the heart of our magazine. Please enjoy the August edition which is packed with most inspiring women.

Nelda Pienaar
Editor

SA SOLDIER • AUGUST 2004
WE KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Legal Soldier empowers you to stand up for your rights. We also support you in your quest for Professional Service...

Benefits

- Alleged criminal charges or internal charges can lead to huge costs for legal defense and to the loss of your employment.
- You pay your lawyer to prove your case.
- In an unstable labour market, you or your spouse may get caught in a dispute with your employer. We pay your costs for the action in labour court.
- You or your spouse may be sued in a civil action. Lawyers may be appointed to represent you and defend the action.
- A member of your family could get hurt when falling into an unsecured hole dug during public works. We pay lawyers to claim from the negligent contractor.
- You may sustain injuries in an accident. We provide legal advice for MVA and estate matters.
- You can be sure of your rights 24 hours. Our team of security legal advisors is on standby to provide advice and assistance.
- You may receive affordable funeral cover for yourself and family.
- As security law experts we know your rights and will go the extra-mile to protect your interests.

SCHEDULE OF BENEFITS

LEGAL COVER BENEFITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVER LIMIT</th>
<th>PER CASE</th>
<th>PER ANNUM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil Matters</td>
<td>R10 000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Matters</td>
<td>R10 000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Matters</td>
<td>R 1 000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Matters</td>
<td>R10 000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Matters</td>
<td>R10 000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVER LIMIT</th>
<th>PER CASE</th>
<th>PER ANNUM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil Matter</td>
<td></td>
<td>R30 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FUNERAL COVER BENEFITS

Cover | Age | Per Event |
-------|-----|-----------|
Member | Adults | R5 000    |
Spouse | Adults | R5 000    |
Children | 14 - 21 years | R3 000|
        | 05 - 13 years | R1 500|
        | 01 - 05 years | R1 500|
        | (from 26 weeks) | R 500|

PLUS: Bridging Finance of R 500,00 to the Spouse or Parent (or nominated beneficiary) of the Main member (Policyholder).
Monthly payments of R 1 000.00 for 5 months.
Parent and Extended Family Funeral Cover is available on request.

Join Now! Complete the application form or Call 0860 765 343

APPLICATION

Titled/Bank.................. Surname..................
First Names................... Id Number:..............
Force no. / Service no.:.... Bank Name:.............. Type of Account:
Account no.:.................. Branch:...................
Home Address:................. Postal Address:........
Tel (w)........................ Cell:.........................

LEGAL COVER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF COVER</th>
<th>PREMIUM</th>
<th>TICK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal Expense cover only</td>
<td>R35 per month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAG Legal Service only</td>
<td>R15 per month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Funeral cover only</td>
<td>R35 per month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single funeral cover only</td>
<td>R25 per month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Expense cover and Family Funeral cover only</td>
<td>R65 per month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Expense cover and Single Funeral cover only</td>
<td>R50 per month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Expense cover and JAG Legal Services</td>
<td>R45 per month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DECLARATION:
I hereby authorise Santam Legal Soldier to arrange with the DOD (SANDF)/SAPS/CCS to deduct from my salary and to pay to Legal Soldier an amount stipulated by me. Should it be for whatever reason, be impossible for Legal Soldier to obtain a stop-order facility from my employer, I authorise Legal Soldier to effect a debit-order deduction from my bank.

SIGNATURE.................. DATE.....................

PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED FORM TO:
Legal Soldier, PO Box 11224, Tram-Shed 0126, Pretoria
or Fax: (012) 323 8139
Foreword

By Maj Gen Jackie Sedibe, Chief Director Equal Opportunities

August the 9th is a day that was born of the struggle for the emancipation of women. It was on this day, 48 years ago, that 20 000 women from all racial groups and from all parts of South Africa marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to solemnly declare their disapproval of passes for black women. Women who were not affected by the pass system joined the march in solidarity to protest against the apartheid system in general.

Every year on 9 August - National Women’s Day - we celebrate together with women of all sectors of civil society the tremendous contribution to the achievement of peace and stability in South Africa today. South African women from all walks of life contributed actively to the achievements of a remarkable decade, with the South African National Defence Force women asserting their rights and illustrating their commitment to the SANDF and their willingness to make a meaningful contribution to both combat and supportive roles.

Not many people know about the very important role played by South African women of all races in World War II. Ironically it was World War II that changed the path of history irreversibly for women the world over by bringing them into the workplace in large numbers; something that had not happened before. In South Africa 21 000 women had been enlisted by the end of the war, including small groups of African, Coloured, Indian and Malay women. Many women won decorations and many served as far afield as Kenya, North Africa and Italy. While we keep alive the memories of their sacrifices we also celebrate their achievements. It is such achievements that sustain us in the struggle for equality and gender mainstreaming in the Department of Defence.

This changed in 1949 when it was decided that women should be phased out of the Permanent Force. Unfortunately women’s contribution to the military is often acknowledged during wartime, but in peacetime they are expected to revert back to their traditional roles.

As we commemorate National Women’s Day, we salute the stalwarts of 9 August 1956 and the many women who over the years have been true daughters of Africa - women who made immense personal sacrifices, some of whom lost their lives for the attainment of freedom and democracy in South Africa. We can also pride ourselves that we have and still are fighting so hard to be treated equally with our male counterparts. We have as women in the DOD taken up the challenge and showed by example that women have the right, capacity and strength to compete for any position at any level, even in combat units. We are concerned about the slow progress made towards gender equality.

On National Women’s Day this year let us take the time and opportunity to recognise and salute all those men with vision, who have already made the paradigm shift and actively support and encourage women in this endeavour to achieve social justice, development and equity in the working environment.

We must also understand that the voices of all women, regardless of rank, civilian or military status are crucial for success; we must know that we are all serving the DOD with dedication and pride. We should stand together and confront any prescripts in policies and practices that hinder the advancement of women; we should voice our concern at the lack of sufficient gender representivity at senior and middle management to influence policy decisions.

It is important for us in the DOD to recognise that 9 August represents an opportunity to promote and build solidarity between the women of South Africa, Africa and the world in their struggle for gender equality. We have much to share from our lessons learnt in our long struggle. It is therefore of the utmost importance for women to understand that they are the change agents, the enablers and the initiators.

We must strive towards sharing and networking not only within the DOD, but also within the region, Africa and the world. Only then can we advance in stature and in confidence to take with pride our place next to men.

We want to thank the DOD, in particular the women of the DOD, who contributed towards the peace process in both the DRC and Burundi: their spirit remains undaunted despite the challenges that prevail. Know that you are the role models for other women and that they are looking up to you as they are shining stars. Let us prepare and train to be efficient and ready to defend our sovereignty and safeguard peace for our country.

We must learn from one another, break the stereotypical beliefs and ensure that sexism in any form is not practised in the DOD. Let us reach out to one another and more than ever dedicate ourselves in both work and deed to service in the South African National Defence Force in the interests of all our people.
Committed to the cause of women

By Nomonde Vuthela
Photo: PO Eddie Kgomo

Although everybody knows the Chief Director Equal Opportunities as Maj Gen Jackie Sedibe, her real names are Refiloe, Phelile and Florence. “Jackie’ is a nom de guerre that is stuck on me. I have used this name in exile more than my real names. I have been more than thirty years in exile and only returned from exile ten years ago.” Never-the-less, Maj Gen Sedibe wears the name with grace.

“Never, not at all,” answered Maj Gen Sedibe when asked if she ever thought that she would become the first women general in the SANDF. “When we integrated into the SANDF it became very clear that we still had to battle and change the mindsets and stereotypes that did not believe in the potential of women to perform and exceed expectations. I thought that the question of gender mainstreaming lay far ahead along the path to gender equality. As a former MK soldier one was already accustomed to gender issues and its intrigues. We knew right then, that we had to correct the status quo and start another internal struggle for equity and equality in the DOD.”

How do you think the concept of gender mainstreaming was initiated in the DOD?

At the time of the Joint Military Co-ordinating Committee (JMCC) discussions, when the different forces were discussing issues of force preparation, force posture, size and structure of the new Defence Force, a work group of four women from four different forces came together to negotiate the role of women in the new DOD. This work group served as an icebreaker as these women worked together and produced a document indicating, for instance, that women should be afforded the opportunity to serve in all the musternings, including combat roles. This document created heated debates at some headquarters and some vehemently insisted that the document should not be accepted in the new SANDF. We had to present our paper to the JMCC - this group appointed me as the head of the work group and asked me to present the paper. We expected intense resistance to our document during presentation. To our amazement there was very little resistance. Maybe it is because we had braced ourselves for a very rough and negative debate. The document was adopted as the official guideline for the future utilisation of women in the DOD. In March 1997 we initiated a conference to discuss “The Role of Women in the DOD” which was aimed at formulating strategies for the empowerment of women. Top DOD generals/flag officers, women officers and leaders from the various sectors of our society attended the conference. That conference allowed us as women of the DOD to share and deal with perceptions prevalent at that time on gender equality and equity. That conference endorsed the new thinking as the most appropriate approach for gender mainstreaming in the DOD.

How did you introduce equal opportunities into the SANDF as this was a new field and very controversial for a defence force?

In keeping with the Constitutional aims that South Africa should evolve in a society free from any form of unfair discrimination, racism, sexism and harassment, the DOD identified its responsibility with regard to government imperatives and we were bound to comply. As we all know, seven different forces were integrated into one force and there had to be an agency to institute objectivity and fairness in the integration process within the DOD. The agency was the EOCD, which was conceptualised in 1997 and since then, played a major role to minimise intolerance and to ensure that each member is treated in a fair and dignified manner and provided with the opportunity to reach his/her potential in his/her career. Although much progress has been made in this field, there is still much to do as we are still confronted with issues of discrimination, intolerance and sexism. Targets and time frames have been set to expedite the achievement of representivity, as this will minimise the negative situation in the work environment created by our past history. From the period of integration racial representivity has improved greatly although there are still certain areas that have to learn how to handle race and gender diversity in their environments. We should all realise that with diversity we shall be enriched culturally.

(Continued on page 8)
How has the SANDF and especially your Chief Directorate, EOCD, influenced other defence forces in Africa?

The DOD is in the forefront of equity implementation in Africa. We have been requested to network and benchmark on gender mainstreaming by a number defence forces in the region. During sessions we highlight our national legal framework and internal policies that have enabled the process to go forward. We spearheaded peace process initiatives through the Peace Table Seminar and we are also involved in the Great Lakes region.

What challenges have you experienced regarding gender mainstreaming?

- The changing of stereotypes, attitudes and perceptions has been our most demanding task in the DOD;
- Commitment to and compliance with gender and disability regulations still needs greater attention particularly from the Services and Divisions; and
- The race representation at middle and lower levels is a course for concern.

What other interventions are your Chief Directorate involved in to facilitate gender mainstreaming in the DOD?

The Chief Directorate has taken a multidimensional approach with regard to this issue. Although we firmly believe that gender mainstreaming begins with the active involvement of all women in the first instance, we are charged with the responsibility to facilitate the process and give Departmental guidance. We do this by means of many interventions such as:

- The development and facilitation of appropriate EO policies through our Policy Section. Gender issues are pertinently addressed in the following policies; the DOD EO and AA Policy, the Policy on the Prevention and Eradication of all Forms of Gender Based Violence, the DOD Policy on Sexual Harassment, Policy on Mentorship and DOD Affirmative Action Policy, to name but a few.
- The ongoing research regarding gender issues through our Research Section.
- The incorporation of gender issues in all EO training done and facilitated by our Development Section, including various Road Shows at DOD units.
- The monitoring of gender issues through the DOD Gender Forum and Gender Forums at Services and divisional level.
- The evaluation of the efficacy of our interventions, mentioned above through continuous evaluations at various levels in the Department through our Evaluation Section.
- Radio talks, media releases, magazine articles and advice by almost all of the staff of our Chief Directorate supplement the above.
- The CDEO has also a gender mainstreaming strategy with different training programmes to empower women.

General how will you describe yourself?

“I am a mother of two girls, Boipuso (19) and Lesedi (17). We live in Centurion. At home I am an ordinary mother who relates to my family as a parent. My husband died two years ago. This is something that I am going to have to live with forever. I do not think I will ever forget him, he had been a part of my life for so many years.” Maj Gen Sedibe’s husband and father to her children was the late Mr Joe Modise, the first black Minister of Defence in a post-apartheid South Africa. “I remembered him for the respect he had for me and for who I was and in return I respected him for who he was and his ideas,” she said.

The love of a soldier

I find that the SANDF, its members and the public tend to forget about the families that soldiers leave behind when they are on course or deployed. So this short letter is for my wife, Yolande, and for all the other wives out there.

I respect, love and honour you for looking after and raising my children with good morals every time I am away from home. Whether it is on deployment to Lohatlha or another country or just simply on course in another city. Heartbroken when I leave, you don’t complain. The fear of leaving you alone in this dangerous world is overwhelming.

But yet through all the hurt, I know you will cope, as you have done so many times in the past.

The public, the SANDF, and its members, they all forget about you when I’m gone. When I return there are no medals or honourable functions held in your name, for all your troubles, perseverance and hard work maintaining a household all on your own.

So all I have to show is my appreciation - The Love of a Soldier.

Thus, to my wife and all the other soldiers’ wives - I salute you! - S Sgt D.J. Lombard, Bloemfontein.
Colonel excels
We would like to express our sincere gratitude to you (Colonel Marthie Visser, SSO Defence Corporate
ment departments, as well as executives from both parastatals and corporate South Africa.
You were indeed a most gracious host. One appreciates your effort to put everything together; it was great.
We value the relationship that we have established with the SANDF and hope that it grows from strength to strength - Rabby Bokaba, National Government Sales Manager Key Accounts, DaimlerChrysler South Africa.

Communication Strategy, Policy & Planning) for the work you did on the occasion of Ten Years of Freedom Celebrations and the Inauguration of the Third Democratic Government.
Your dedication, commitment and diligence before and during the celebrations are highly appreciated. Through your active participation, government has managed to communicate effectively on the significance this historic occasion.
We look forward to seeing you more involved in future government campaigns - Tony Trew, Deputy CEO: Strategy and Content Management, Government Communication and Information System, RSA.

* Also read a most informative article written by Colonel Marthie Visser on page 12 - Ed.

Decade of Defence in a democracy -
R300 for best letter
On 27 April 2004 South Africans celebrated ten years of freedom. The Department of Defence (DOD) has been prominent in many of the achievements of this country over the last decade. As we approach the second decade of freedom all of us representing the DOD need to ask ourselves how we can work in unity to help the Department continue to improve its performance. We need to aim to be even more committed soldiers, more efficient administrators, exemplary leaders, accountable officials and even better human beings to help the DOD and the SANDF to be a Force for Good.

In order to stimulate critical thinking in this regard, readers are invited to share their ideas and thoughts on this subject. The Government’s core message and dominant theme for the celebrations of the last decade is "People United for a Better South Africa and a Better World".

One should take into consideration the undermentioned burning issues, which affected the first decade of freedom and should affect the second as well.

The core messages for ten years of freedom are:

- Celebration of freedom attained and thanksgiving.
- Pride in the achievements of the DOD and the SANDF since 1994.
- Looking forward to further progress, democracy and stability.
- South Africa’s co-operation with national and international partners (inclusivity).
- Humility in acknowledging that the management of social change is a process of learning.
- Contributions to the "Four Big Ideas".

The ‘Four Big Ideas’ are major issues as we progress to the next (second) decade.
They are the following: social responsibility framework, improving performance of the state, addressing the consequences of the social transition and the improving of the regional environment and implementing Nepad. Issues related to ethical and disciplinary codes as defined in the Code of Conduct are, as always, vital to our daily lives at the workplace.

The best contributions will be published in SA SOLDIER. A monthly prize of R300 will be awarded to the best letter received.

Short letters are encouraged. All letters must include the writer’s full name, address and telephone number. The volume of letters we receive makes individual acknowledgement impossible.

Please send your letters to: The Editor, SA SOLDIER, Letters - A Decade of Defence, Private Bag X158, Pretoria, 0001. Letters may also be faxed to: (012) 355 6399 or sent via email to sasoldier@mil.za - Editor.
transformation

Focussing on equity

By PO Dennis Ndaba
Photo: Sgt David Nomthshwana

Col Dineo Monethi comes across as a person who is vibrant and passionate about issues that promote equity and equality in the Department of Defence (DOD). Her passion stems from her career as a Nursing Service Manager at 1 Military Hospital, which subsequently landed her a position in the Equal Opportunities Chief Directorate.

After leaving 1 Military Hospital, she was seconded to the Civic Education Centre of Excellence as a Cultural Diversity Facilitator.

For equity to be understood and accepted, reference should be made to the legal framework and documents, such as the Constitution, the Promotion of the Equality Act and the Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, the National Framework on Gender Equality and Empowerment and the National Integrated Strategy for People with Disabilities, which were later translated and promulgated into the DOD Equal Opportunities and Affirmative Action Policy, the Mentoring Guidelines, the Fast-tracking Policy and the DOD Affirmative Action Plans to achieve an equitable situation, for the transformation of all state departments, including the DOD, as prescribed by the national Government imperatives.

Col Monethi relates equity to a holistic and comprehensive approach to issues that include objectives for designated groups, namely: Blacks, women and people with disabilities and those who have suffered from attitudes and perceptions, racism and discrimination in the DOD. Empowerment and development programmes have to be institutionalised to uplift the designated groups. This also includes the monitoring of Services and Divisions on how they are managing equity implementation.

“As we are looking at people who were previously disadvantaged in the DOD, we want to empower them so that they can be capacitated and achieve their desired competencies to perform effectively and reach self-actualisation,” Col Monethi added.

The DOD has to remove barriers that continue to disadvantage the designated groups as we also have to emphasise that we are not talking about a situation where we create a sense of expectation, window dressing and entitlement, as these are very damaging to the careers of individuals. She further stressed that people must be prepared to be coached and mentored.

She added that the Fast-tracking Policy was promulgated in 2002 to focus on the accelerated advancement of people from designated groups. This policy has criteria and principles on how the Services and Divisions have to manage the implementation. The Chief Director Equal Opportunities, Maj Gen Jackie Sedibe, has established the DOD Fast-tracking Assessment Board and she is the process owner, who is responsible for critically assessing the objectivity and fairness of the process.

Col Monethi continued: “The challenges in my current post is the capacity to handle the current strength of the DOD, both uniformed members and Public Act Service Personnel (PSAP) as the accountability stretches beyond the Minister of Defence, the Secretary for Defence and the Chief of the SANDF to the DOD Equal Opportunities Monitoring and Advisory Board, the Department of Labour, the Public Service Commission and Parliament.”

“My objective is to ensure that the DOD complies with the transformational imperatives of the Government. My dream is that we have a fully representative DOD that is free from racism, intolerance and discrimination. I am elated that there is relative progress. The DOD has to be commended on the strides that it has taken to improve the position of women. However, if we look at the national targets, we still have a shortfall of women in areas of influence and decision-making and we have to understand that the DOD was previously a traditionally male dominated arena,” Col Monethi said. She also singles out Maj Gen Jackie Sedibe and the late Capt (SAN) Lindsay Evans as her mentors who inspired her in the DOD to grow and maximise her potential.

Her message to all women in the DOD is: “We cannot escape the waves of a democratic South Africa. The sky is the limit for all women in the DOD. We must be focused and should humble ourselves to face all available opportunities to improve our circumstances”. Success she said is synonymous with personal fulfilment, and trust relationships are essential for effective working teams. “We all have to engage in critical introspection and make major paradigm shifts or we will never be able to release sufficient creative energy to face the existing challenges in the DOD,” she concluded.
Women are a powerful force for achieving success. There is a well-known saying: "Behind every successful man stands a woman". The saying is true and should not be understood in a narrow-minded sense or taken lightly. At all times people should understand that all issues that we perceive to be only affecting women also affect men, our families, our work, our environment, as well as our societies - consciously or unconsciously and directly or indirectly. Therefore oppression, suppression or discrimination against some of our human beings based on certain classifications is not correct. People should learn from their history and not repeat the mistakes of the past.

The Department of Defence (DOD) is one of the big organisations in the country, which is also classified as a Public Service department. Among many other issues to be addressed, the gender issues are a Government imperative. There are a number of legal documents that in one way or the other speak of and protect the rights of women and everyone in the DOD. This organisation is aware that the rights of all the DOD members, both men and women, need to be protected as is the case at present. It is also aware that women have previously been disadvantaged and there is a need to be focused and sensitive when dealing with issues that relate to women. It is also a reality that in the DOD women receive no special treatment: the merit system is the way to go when we address issues of representivity.

When it comes to the empowerment of women, I really do not think that we are doing enough; the organisation still lacks a working system. However, I would point out that there are existing programmes, such as fast-tracking and mentoring for the management to implement where the potential exists. So in spite of the slow progress and the greater numbers of women in the DOD that are not aware of the existing programmes for empowering women in their organisation, they should at least be aware of the possibilities of fast-tracking and mentoring.

Some women said they only hear about seminars for women or meetings a month after they have passed, or not at all. This is a true reflection of the inadequate information channels in the Department. Do we, during meetings, check how many women from other regions attend the meetings other than the women in the specific region where the meeting is held? Do we have yearly statistics on what is happening in these meetings and conferences on women that are organised by the Department?

The statistics reflect 91% men as against 8% women and 94% men as against 5% women in the Senior Management System (SMS): Defence Act Personnel (DAP) and Public Service Act Personnel (PSAP) respectively. The members of the DOD are 74% men as against 26% women. The visibility and profiling of successful females in the DOD is at a minimum level. Surely the DOD has bright women it can show off. The fact is that the Department is doing something about the issue, but it is still not enough. As I have said, this is not the only issue we need to address, but let us find a way to do justice to all our efforts.

This article should be seen as positive feedback to those responsible for this issue. It must bring us together to focus on improving the existing system on how better to empower the women in the DOD. I can proudly say that the Department has empowered women by implementing the policies that protect the rights of women. It should be noted that the overall organisational system of the DOD is different from any other organisation.
Women have reached for the sky since air power first became an element of war, and by the end of World War I there were 18,000 women serving in the Royal Air Force (RAF), the oldest air force in the Commonwealth and a clear indication of the opportunity and popularity of change and emancipation in women's employment.

From the beginning women have served with distinction, rising to the challenges and playing their part. At the end of World War I it was recognised, once again, that women had an important part to play in the defence of the country, and that using them in the RAF would allow men to be released for combat roles. The women therefore found themselves in clerical jobs, but also serviced aircraft, worked as radio operators, plotters, armourers, mechanics, electricians, cooks, photographers and balloon operators.

In more recent times changes have occurred more gradually. The most important of these was the appointment of women in top positions, such as Maj Gen Jackie Sedibe as the Chief Director Equal Opportunities and the adjustments made in the monthly contribution to the Government Employers Pension Fund, which brought women's benefits in line with their male counterparts.

Over the past ten years quite a number of senior appointments and appointments to unique types of posts followed, in which women proved themselves to be on an equal footing with men and distinguish themselves as successful and exemplary leaders and commanders in their respective fields. Changes also led to female soldiers being employed in operational roles and theatres, which had previously been closed to them.

The composition of today’s Defence Force includes just over 21.67 per cent women, who can be employed in every branch and trade and in all operational theatres, at home and abroad, where their male counterparts had previously worked and still do.

The next major milestone came approximately a decade ago when the SA Air Force started to train women as pilots and navigators, initially in multi-engined aircraft, but now on all types of aircraft.

The progress and successes with regard to "first of" appointments, eg the first female helicopter pilot and the first female sheet metal worker on airframes pushed back the barriers and turned the wheels of history to arrive at the position today of a fully integrated service in which women play a major role.

The first female combat pilot is currently undergoing training and will be another milestone in female aircrew training once she successfully completes her training. This is but one example of many female soldiers paving the way for complete gender equality in the military sphere. Equal opportunities and equality emerged from the Constitution - women were no longer seen only in a supportive role, but were granted opportunities to accept any challenge in the military workplace.

In service of my country - a trip down memory lane! My thoughts about joining the military began in the SA Air Force on 21 January 1974 when I was 17 years of age. Currently only two of us remain in the SA Air Force from an original group of 33 female students who joined the Force in 1974 - the first group of women to be trained again in the SA Air Force since the end of World War II.

I was privileged to have been able to serve on the Integration Committee and Integration Work Group in 1998, where I developed a good understanding and an in-depth interest in challenges and successes during the integration process. I had my own personal experiences of change towards gender equality. During the birthday celebrations of the SANDF held in Bloemfontein on 27 April 2000 Brig Gen Petra Mari (then Colonel) and I were appointed as the first female aides-de-camp for President Thabo Mbeki and to perform the duties attaching thereto at such an event.

Col Sybil van der Bank and I were the first women to be appointed to the posts of Director Air Force Liaison and Director Foreign Relations respectively, at the Air Force Headquarters. These posts were always to be staffed with pilots (who used to be only males in the past and at the time).
What is the world without women? Nothing - no arguments - it is true. Who keeps the peace at home? Without a mother there will be no ironed shirts. But the problem started when one was made to believe that that is the only thing a mother can do. This was only the case until the women decided enough was enough. In 1956 they raised their voices and said "wathint’a bafazi wathint’i mboko-do..." (if you strike a woman you strike a rock). Although the situation has changed since then, there are still some mindsets which need to be changed.

Today women do not have to raise their voices as loudly as in the past, for their voices are recognised and heard. Col Belinda Martin, SSO Promotions at the Reserve Force Division, said in the past women had to prove themselves. Today we have a Government that recognises the strength and potential of women in a new dispensation.

For instance on 14 June 2004 at the SA Air Force Headquarters in Pretoria South African women, including the First Lady, Ms Zanele Mbeki, Chief Director Equal Opportunities, Maj Gen Jackie Sedibe, women from the Department of Defence, traditional leaders and healers, members of Parliament and the Burundi Ambassador attended a conference to brainstorm and discuss the strategy for assisting the Burundian women in preparation for the United Nations Great Lakes Peace Conference (UN GLPC), which will be held in November 2004, as well as to discuss the coming elections in Burundi. The Deputy President, Mr Jacob Zuma, officially opened the conference.

Maj Gen Sedibe emphasised the co-operation of civilian women and military women in working together in the peace process. South Africa is assisting with the workshop of the Burundi Women’s Initiative because she cannot stand by and watch other parts of our continent in distress and being torn apart, she said. South African and Burundian women should work hand in hand to foster a culture of peace, tolerance, reduction of prejudice and respect for diversity. Together we have the potential to overcome the crisis, she continued. We need to assist Burundians in confidence building measures and in the strengthening of the rule of law and economic order together with social development, she concluded.

"It is our duty to assist where we can, to make the dream of an African Renaissance a reality," said the Deputy President of South Africa. "We are involved in achieving the vision of an Africa that is free from conflict, wars and famine, and an Africa that can exploit its resources for the benefit of all, to achieve prosperity and a better life. The achievement of these objectives requires the participation of both men and women, and so far the involvement of women has been minimal."

No matter how hard the words were uttered - the women were not fighting - they were just discussing the issues intensely and passionately. As most men say, that is what most women do - the women did not forget the purpose of the conference, which was to help the women of Burundi. Mr Zuma said: "The women of Burundi cannot afford to be passive; this is their future and the future of their children. At this critical stage in the history of their country, they should really make their voices heard through a number of forums and opportunities."
Mr Zuma also said: “As you deliberate today, you may also look at the issue of post-election reconstruction and development, and the role women can play in this regard. This will also contribute to ensuring the sustainability of the democracy that will emerge after October.” The Deputy President also urged South African women to help the Burundian women to resolve the conflict and to ensure that this time the elections bring their country peace and reconstruction.

The purpose of the conference was to prepare the Burundi women for the Great Lakes Peace Conference (GLPC) which will be held in November 2004. The women of Burundi requested the First Lady to assist them in as far as the GLPC is concerned. Ms Mbeki requested the then Deputy Minister of Defence, Ms Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, to involve the women of Defence in this project. Ms Madlala-Routledge did not hesitate for a moment and instantly authorised Maj Gen Sedibe to co-ordinate the Burundian women’s project with the spousal office. A long chain? Yes, anything for the well-being of the continent. Do you still remember the time when South Africa got her freedom? Among the things that she wanted to achieve was to be involved in peacekeeping on her continent. This is exactly what she is doing now and with her involvement and especially with that of the DOD women, nothing can go wrong.

“Traditionally women are perceived as peacemakers, Col Snowy Moremi, SSO Equal Opportunities,” added. South African women should share the experiences they had with other African women from the continent, she said. South African women played a crucial role in resolving conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The second planned dialogue between South African and Burundian women was held in Johannesburg from 4 to 9 July 2004, where both sides interacted and discussed how to bring about unity among the Burundian women and how to prepare them for the psychological challenges that they will face in their daily lives.

Female soldier is back from the DRC

By Capt M.J. Dicks, Regional Joint Operational Tactical HQ KZN

S Sgt Sarita Scanlen from Regional Joint Operational Tactical HQ KZN realised that her fears of deployment to the DRC as a woman were unnecessary. She returned from the DRC on 12 May 2004 where she had been the first Geographic Information System (GIS) operator to be deployed in the DRC. Now she wants to return in November 2004!

S Sgt Scanlen joined the SANDF in December 1996, and in her eight years in the SANDF she experienced a positive change in the role of the women. As time went on, especially since 1994, women were allowed to do more and attend more military courses.

During her deployment in the DRC S Sgt Scanlen was the Vice-chairperson of the Women’s Forum, which had been established at their base in Kindu. One of its projects was to liaise with members of other forces, such as women soldiers of the Swedish Army, who were also part of the United Nations contingent. The South African women soldiers organised a tea party for them to strengthen the ties between them. Through hard work and dedication they used the Women’s Forum to promote the image of the women of the SANDF in the DRC.

S Sgt Scanlen sees herself as an RSM in the future - a possibility, which would not have existed were it not for the positive changes for women in the SANDF.
By Maj Maretha Roberts, CMIS Ops Formation

I, Maj Maretha Roberts, am appointed within the CMIS Ops Formation as the SO1 Deployable Command and Control Telecommunication. The main functions of my appointment are to ensure that an operationally deployable telecommunication network exists within the DOD, eg the support elements from the CMIS Support Formation.

Planning for a new integrated telecommunication system for MONUC III, Task Force 1 in Kindu in the DRC and the Battalion HQ in Goma was well under way when the project officer resigned and I was appointed as project officer for the finalisation and installation phase of the shelter.

On 15 March 2004 the installation team consisting of seven male colleagues and myself from 2 Signal Regiment left for the installation phase in the DRC.

I only realised the great challenges that would have to be faced when I arrived in Kindu. I realised that to plan on paper is much easier than planning in a real life situation. Paper results during simulation are very different from real life experience when you are expected to provide a successful installation of active, real life services!

Only then did I appreciate the planning, preparation and physical activities involved in the installation of telephone and LAN capabilities via satellite communication. This included the installation of underground and overhead cabling, sixteen distribution boxes, seven Hubs, 79 telephone points, and 43 LAN points - all had to be completed in three weeks!

The system that was in use in Kindu was redeployed to Goma where the Bn HQ is situated. It took us two days to finish the complete installation in Goma. This entailed the erection of

DRC - an eye-opening experience

By Lt Col D. Botha, SO1 Corp Comm, Tertiary MH Fmn

Lt Col (Dr) Khanyisile Ndaba is a medical officer at the Institute for Aviation Medicine where she is responsible for conducting flight medical examinations for the SANDF and other civil authorities. During the past four years she has been deployed several times in the DRC and Burundi.

Lt Col Ndaba started off her military career in 1998 as a senior medical officer at 1 Military Hospital where she worked mainly in the Departments of Gynaecology and Dermatology. Right from the start this woman made herself available not only to serve the military community as a medical officer, but also to participate in military deployments.

Shortly after her appointment in the SAMHS in 1998 she was involved with Exercise BOLEAS, which took place in Lesotho. During 2001 she was part of the first team of the SANDF to be involved with a UN Mission in Kinshasa, DRC. The following year she was deployed in Burundi, while in 2003 she was once again called to serve the military in the DRC. This year she has already been deployed to Burundi and will continue her role as a medical officer and soldier later again this year in Burundi.

She sees herself in the specialised field of aviation medicine in ten years time and would like to complete another B Sc. Degree.

Lt Col (Dr) Khanyisile Ndaba.

Medical officer and soldier deployed abroad several times

By Lt Col D. Botha, SO1 Corp Comm, Tertiary MH Fmn

Photo: Maj Marthie Potgieter

Maj Maretha Roberts helping Sgt Christo Pelser with the installation of underground cabling in Kindu.
A unique experience in the United Nations

Article and photo by Maj Marthie Potgieter, SAMHS Corp Comm
Nodal Point, SO2 Internal Comm

UNMEE is the abbreviation for the "United Nations Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia". Maj Bonnie Skweyiya had the privilege of spending a whole year there, although mainly in Eritrea. In 1999 she did a course in peacekeeping, the "Military Observers Course", and was placed on a name list for a UN mission. This meant, however, that she had to be ready to leave any moment when she was called up and had therefore to undergo medical and fitness tests every six months. Members must be G1K1 to be able to go on such a mission.

At last the Chief of Joint Operations Personnel Office informed her of her call-up letter to the UNMEE HQ. Maj Skweyiya left Pretoria on 10 January 2002 and arrived on 13 January 2002 in Eritrea, via Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. The following day she cleared in; she had only two days of in-post training and was on her own to assist her director in the day-to-day functioning of the office. As Personnel Officer and Administrator she was at the focal point of matters concerning personnel documentation of the UN Forces. It was quite an adjustment to get used to all the foreign languages spoken around her, as the UN had about 25 countries represented there. The official language was English. The members she mainly worked with were from the USA, England, Ireland, Bangladesh, India and Kenya. Maj Skweyiya managed to learn some Tigrinia, the language spoken in Eritrea.

During the following weeks she was nominated to do an HIV course and was one of the three best students in the class. The result was that she was nominated as the HIV Policy Officer. This responsibility often took her to other contingents on detached duty as there are continuous arrivals of new contingencies that fulfil four, six or twelve-month contracts.

Maj Skweyiya found that many of the foreign countries were ignorant about HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. She often experienced great resistance from some of these members, as it was against their culture even to talk about sex, and here was a woman lecturing them! They also had no knowledge of condoms. It was therefore a great challenge to her to win the confidence of the UN soldiers and to train them in this regard.

This single year in a foreign country, in a foreign Peacekeeping Force, was an enriching experience for our SAMHS member. Not only did she make friends with people from other countries, and gain insight into other cultures and forces, but she was also a proud ambassador for South Africa, the SANDF and the SAMHS.

Maj Skweyiya was a worthy receiver of the UN Certificate and UN Service Medal, as well as a Special Commendation Award from her Force Commander, Maj Gen Patrick Cammaert. UN members are in Eritrea to ensure that the peace process progresses well. After a ceasefire agreement was signed in September 2002, the political situation has been stable.
A General who believes in action

By Nomonde Vuthela
Photo: PO Eddie Kgomo

 Brig Gen Claire Bless is the first woman General Officer Commanding of the SANDF College of Educational Technology (Colet) in Pretoria. The SA SOLDIER team went to interview her there.

"I hate talking about myself," Brig Gen Bless indicated. Nevertheless, dragging information out of the General was a pure pleasure.

Before starting her career in the SANDF Brig Gen Bless was lecturing at a few African universities, such as in Togo and Zambia. Finally she became a Senior Lecturer at the then University of Natal.

"I was recruited into the MK in 1981 when I was in Zambia," she said. Brig Gen Bless then integrated into the SANDF in 1994.

Talking about her work the General said: "My work here is very challenging. It makes me very positive and optimistic because we are going forward". Her mandate is to ensure the best possible outcome-based training.

"I studied Social Psychology. I wrote a couple of books. I wrote many articles and have done quite a bit of research. That is why I think my job here is so challenging, also because it relates to my academic formation," said the General Officer Commanding of Colet.

"I place a lot of importance on the enthusiasm, dynamism and team spirit of the people working with me in Colet," continued Brig Gen Bless.

Brig Gen Bless said that to become a General was never one of her ambitions. She said: "I travelled and was invited by some other defence forces to visit them, and usually they were amazed that the SANDF had even a few women Generals."

"We do not have enough women Generals and we have to pursue the matter," stressed Brig Gen Bless.

She continued by saying that balancing motherhood and one’s profession is difficult for an officer, let alone a General - therefore the SANDF should be more flexible to accommodate such challenges too. "I have introduced flexi-time at Colet, which helps many women to be mothers and career women at the same time," she revealed, proving that change begins with each and every individual. 

Brig Gen Bless said that when she was in exile, 9 August was a very important day. In her own words: "We have to enhance that culture and say that the meaning of 9 August is still alive, but in another way."

"We have to continue with transformation and it should not be seen as a rare occurrence where we have twelve female Generals among over two-hundred male Generals," maintained Brig Gen Bless.

Although Brig Gen Bless’s family is not in South Africa she said: "I call Johannesburg home. I have many friends - friends from the past and friends from the present - very representative of the population of South Africa".

She likes visiting people and having people visiting her. Brig Gen Bless also has an appreciation for theatre, art and watching good movies. She is an author herself.

"I have a lot of plans, a lot of plans... Too many things and the day does not have enough hours," said Brig Gen Bless on future plans.

"There are not enough women Generals."
very young Brig Gen Christell Brand joined the Defence Force thirty years ago and after a productive and fulfilling journey in Defence industry, she retired as Director Personnel Maintenance at the Human Resources Support Centre on 30 April 2003.

"I joined the Defence Force in 1974 as a Captain and was appointed as a Sports Officer at the then Civil Defence College in George. Then I successfully completed all my military courses and was promoted to Major in the personnel environment," said Brig Gen Brand.

Brig Gen Brand had studied at the University of Stellenbosch and was a teacher afterwards for a while. "I must say that I really enjoyed my teaching career a lot, but I also like structure and discipline and this I could find in the Defence Force," she added. "I am a very ambitious person and I said to myself: you are starting with a new career and only the best is good enough."

"I was accepted as a woman soldier. I was promoted when I was due for promotion. I was nominated for my military courses and I did all of them together with my male counterparts. I did not experience any obstacles," said Brig Gen Brand.

Brig Gen Brand was the Senior Staff Officer Personnel at Western Province Command in Cape Town and became the Officer Commanding of the SA Army Women’s College in 1988. "I did my utmost to explore every opportunity," she said. "I am a very ambitious person and I said to myself: you are starting with a new career and only the best is good enough."

"I worked together with very creative young women, it was a challenge and I went for it with the team," Brig Gen Brand said. "I gave myself with my abilities to the Defence Force." "Communication is very important, as is commitment, dedication and to utilise your subordinates fully, thereby empowering them so that they too can be part of a team that contributes to achieving goals," Brig Gen Brand said.

Thinking back on the integration process and how it was an immense task for the Human Resources Directorate, Brig Gen Brand said: "Integration was very interesting. What I always do when I am faced with a challenge is to take what everyone has to offer," she continued, "And to take all this and mould it into one specific process that will meet your customers' needs because that is what service delivery is all about."

"What the SANDF has achieved over a period of ten years I would call unimaginable; if you look at where we started and you look at what we have achieved - it is wonderful!,” commented Brig Gen Brand.

"It was made possible because of our leadership and the fact that everyone had something good to give,” stressed Brig Gen Brand. "I think that the SANDF should never stop with the empowering of our people and we need more women in top posts, even though there has been a lot of progress made in relation to that,” she added.

What do you do now that you are retired I asked the General, and she replied: "I am a retired officer and I bought myself a flat in Melkbosstrand near Cape Town. At the time of the interview with SA SOLDIER Brig Gen Brand was in Pretoria and she explained: 'I was called up to be part of a Board of Inquiry for the Human Resources Support Centre. I joined the Reserve Force after my retirement. Every human being wants to belong and to contribute; here I belong and can still contribute," said Brig Gen Brand, expressing her obvious need to continue contributing.

And when she is not worrying about matters of state Brig Gen Brand gets involved in environmental conservation projects, plays badminton and contributes to cultural and community service projects. "I am busy and I have time for what I never before had time for,” she concluded.
Strategy - the art of the General

By Nomonde Vuthela
Photo: PO Eddie Kgomo

At the age of 46 Brig Gen Ansuyah Fakir can be respected for having successfully broken through the military glass ceiling by entering the military strategic planning environment, previously an exclusive male domain.

One can be forgiven for being confused by the General’s unassuming manner when compared with her rank and position as Director Joint Support Management in the Joint Support Division. But this confusion won’t last long. Within a few minutes into the SA SOLDIER’s in-depth interview with the General, I soon realised that our first female strategic planner possesses not only a vast and varied experience, but also a strong mind and thinking power, which certainly match her position.

This ordinary mother of three reveals insights and wisdom about security that point to a new and extraordinary role for the military in ensuring peace and security in Africa.

“For us in Defence our concern is for human security. This means that we must look at every aspect of protecting people: in terms of human rights, nurturing our basic humanity towards each other and in ensuring physical security,” she elaborated.

“August is a special month for all of us in South Africa because our Constitution celebrates women. In August we acknowledge that no democracy will go forward without women playing an equal, if not, leadership role,” said Brig Gen Fakir as she made coffee for the photographer and myself at her home in Constantia Park in Pretoria East.

“As much as I found the General to be many people, she argued that she is, most of all, a social worker. “I ask myself: As a social worker, I wear a uniform - what am I doing?, and I then think to myself, I am here to hear and address all sides regarding security,” she said.

“I believe in diplomacy and the critical role of the military to ensure peace. This mix is what our Government has enabled, whether wittingly or unwittingly. They have merged the best of everything, people with different views so that we are balanced and can go forward together and build a strong nation,” stated Brig Gen Fakir.

“Policy-making is political and policies affect people, families and children and security,” explained the Strategic Planner.

Brig Gen Fakir integrated into the SANDF in 1994 as part of Umkhonto we Sizwe, one of the former Non-Statutory Forces. She then spent seven years in KwaZulu-Natal at the Natal Medical Command where she was the Head of Social Work. “I cannot not tell you what a learning curve that was,” reflected Brig Gen Fakir on her staff visit experiences at the Natal Medical Command.

“That takes a very special tenacity, so I really salute those soldiers out there, the Riflemen, Corporals and Sergeants who do this for us, for our country, outside and on the borders, patrolling night and day,” said the former social worker.

The General is married to Mahesh Fakir, a civil engineer by profession who works at the National Treasury. “So you see we are public servants both of us and we come from a back-ground of always working for the community,” said the Director Joint Support Management, as she talked about her family life.

“That is what I believe in, the warmth of family life to keep you stable. I cannot cope with a career (and a career such as Defence) without my family’s support,” maintained Brig Gen Fakir.

Studying never stops for Brig Gen Fakir, who is currently doing a doctorate - a PHD in Public Affairs. In the midst of this she is conducting research into the African Union (AU) and peacekeeping. “It is an exciting area because there is little research material, so I am almost breaking new ground,” she said, all geared up for yet another achievement.

“There are always new goals to reach, new mountains to climb and new lessons to learn,” said the General in conclusion, and, she should have added, "And new roles to play".

Brig Gen Ansuyah Fakir, Director Joint Support Management in the Joint Support Division.
Determined to serve the Defence Force

By Nomonde Vuthela
Photo: PO Eddie Kgomo

In the Directorate we manage supplies and support. Today they call it 'supply chain management', explained Brig Gen Tersia Jacobs during her interview with SA SOLDIER. She added: "I am responsible for the maintenance of base support systems, including runways, runway lighting, operational infrastructure, such as hangars and power supplies and managing the fire and rescue services in the SA Air Force". Brig Gen Jacobs is the Director Base Support Systems in the SA Air Force.

All the General ever wanted was to join the Armour School. "While I was still in Grabouw High School in the Cape, I attended an Open Day of the SA Army and I thought this was what I would like to do," she said, "But I was informed that women were not allowed to work in the Armour Corps," recounted Brig Gen Jacobs.

Meanwhile, on the home front both her parents were against her joining the Defence Force. "My father said that no lady can join the Defence Force and although we were not wealthy he then asked if I did not want to study at the university instead," related Brig Gen Jacobs. While the other children in her class were talking about going to the university, she was intent on joining the Defence Force.

"I decided I was going to join the Defence Force and would at least become a Major," she said. (I was totally ignorant with regard to the rank structure of the Defence Force.) Well, she became a Brigadier General instead - one of twelve in the entire SANDF.

"I have seen over the last ten years so many positive changes, so many differences in the women’s world, especially in the SA Air Force - women who became pilots and very good pilots. Women are also actively involved in the technical environment, which was previously only a place for men. This symbolises visible changes that I enjoy taking stock of," said Brig Gen Jacobs.

Brig Gen Jacobs is also the first woman to become a Logistics Co-ordinator in the SA Air Force at the Test Flight and Development Centre. She said: "It is a highly technological environment. With my appointment the SA Air Force took a risk placing me in such a male dominant milieu, but they did it because I had previous exposure and experience." She was also appointed as the Logistics Co-ordinator of Waterkloof AFB during 1999-2001.

Brig Gen Jacobs took me back to when she worked as a Major as the Chief Supply Officer with the Mobile Radar Group in the then Pietersburg (now Polokwane). "My team at the Mobile Radar Group won the trophy one year for the best supply and support section in the SA Air Force," she proudly remembered.

"All women must accept full responsibility for each and every post they fill. Do not say because I am a woman men must do this and that. You must live up to the standard expected of your post and rank," Brig Gen Jacobs advised.

Success is so much sweeter when you really deserve what you have achieved.

"I have so much experience on various levels and I would like to give back what I have learnt. My mission is to try and make a difference for our future generation," she said. Who knows, perhaps Brig Gen Jacobs is yet another Chief of Logistics in the making.

"I am enjoying my job and I am giving it my best shot. I would like to see much more representivity in our senior female ranks working towards an even more competent SA Air Force," said Brig Gen Jacobs.

Brig Gen Jacobs is married to Col Tony Jacobs, who is the Senior Staff Officer Air Traffic Control Management, in the SA Air Force. She has a thirteen year old son, who is an aspiring golfer. 

Making a difference for our future generation.
Meet our only female civilian Director

Ms Thuli Manzini, Director Human Resources Policy Management in the Policy and Planning Division, is currently the only female civilian member in the Division, who is a Director - the equivalent of a Brigadier General - in the DOD.

“I am expected to ensure that collective disputes in labour relations for both civilians (PSAP) and uniformed members are solved with the application of relevant prescripts. My work also includes the adherence, monitoring and evaluation of Human Resource Policies for the whole of the DOD. Among other things it is expected from my Directorate to ensure that the Department is involved in youth and transverse issues,” said the newly appointed Director, touching on her job description.

Ms Manzini was born in Boulders in the Mpumalanga Province and studied at Technikon Pretoria, University of Witwatersrand and Cranfield University, UK, and the University of Zululand in KwaZulu-Natal, where she majored in English and Pedagogics. Her previous employment includes working for the Department of Home Affairs, and later in the Department of Defence in the Directorate Integrated Management Systems (DIMS). “I worked at DIMS as a Deputy Director responsible for job analysis and design for the whole of the DOD,” stated Ms Manzini confidently.

One could not help but pick up Ms Manzini’s excitement about her new post. “I am very excited - I had set goals for myself and I knew that I wanted to be a Director by the year 2004,” confirmed Ms Manzini.

“As a woman this is very challenging because you have to prove yourself twice as much as your male counterparts. Respect is earned and to be respected means I must work very hard to make my mark,” Ms Manzini continued. “I must prove that I was not just appointed because I am a black woman,” she added.

“Women need to celebrate who they are everyday,” said Ms Manzini. She also pointed out that 9 August, National Women’s Day, is symbolic and important; women should also strive to earn respect on a day-to-day basis. “Women should not expect things to come automatically their way; they should prove that they are capable and competent,” continued Ms Manzini.

“Not everybody will support you. I have experienced it first-hand. It does get very difficult and challenging. I have no sympathy for non-performers; what motivates me most is challenging tasks and to see other people achieving their goals,” said a very forthright Ms Manzini.

“The affirmative action policies, equal opportunities and the Employment Equity Act helped us a lot,” stated Ms Manzini. “We now have a voice because in the past you would not see a young woman like me in my post,” she added.

Ms Manzini is married to Victor Manzini and has a daughter, Mbali. “When I am at home I assume a different role. There I am a mother and wife - I do my own cooking and laundry. There I take off my Director’s hat and become a mother and a wife because my husband is married to his wife and not to a Director,” she said in conclusion.
Living in better times

By Nomonde Vuthela
Photo: PO Eddie Kgomo

Brig Gen Petra Mari, Director Military Health Human Resources for the SAMHS, reminds me of many driven and determined, yet wonderful women who are so easily misunderstood because they come across as too strong.

As I listened to her at the interview the one thought that came to mind was that society needed people like her, because they get up and get things done. As she talked to SA SOLDIER I also found that her past experiences had taught her to stand up for herself from a very early age.

"I am a very strong woman," admitted Brig Gen Mari. She comes from a strong political background; the security forces killed her father during the apartheid era. He was taken in for questioning and was never to be heard of again. Brig Gen Mari's family was able to piece the puzzle together only after witnesses testifying at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission revealed his fate.

In 1976, following the student uprising at Makabelane High School (where she was studying) in Qwa-Qwa, Brig Gen Mari and a group of school friends who had taken part in the demonstration were flogged and forced to hide out and survive for four days in the mountains. She eventually left for exile at the age of eighteen.

Brig Gen Mari has one brother and six sisters - five of her sisters also left the country and went into exile, one of whom died in Angola. Having shared a bit of her history with me the General served to confirm even further my belief that people do become their experiences.

"Exile made me grow up," affirmed the General. "To a large extent I owe my political maturity, my wisdom and what really created who I am today to my years in exile", she continued.

Her first contact with the South African Defence Force was in the early 1990s when the integration process began and she was working in the APLA Office responsible for integrating PAC members.

"I represented APLA in various bodies dealing with integration and that improved my understanding of policies and policy-making," stated Brig Gen Mari. It is a trait that she says now works to her advantage as Director Military Health Human Resources.

"Everybody knows that when you talk to Brig Gen Mari you talk policy. You must know exactly what you are talking about because she will tell you of policies that were formulated even before integration," she warned.

"It has been ten years, we have worked a lot and I have been so committed to transformation," stated Brig Gen Mari. She added that her mandate is very clear because her understanding is that the strategic intent of the Chief of the SANDF, which among other objectives is to transform the Defence Force.

Brig Gen Mari believes that it was all very clear after integration that members of the new SANDF were going to "shape up or ship out".

9 August (National Women's Day) for Brig Gen Mari is also about the many women who took up arms to fight for what they believed in. "We now live in better times, due to their commitment and selflessness. It is no longer surprising for women to have a say at decision-making levels, luckily we are now covered by the Constitution," she said.

"I know I was going to be a General, I always knew what I am destined to be," said Brig Gen Mari confidently. She said that if women stay focused and work hard, the sky is the limit.

"For women to have taken that stride in those times it means the situation was completely unbearable," Brig Gen Mari added. Remembering her personal sacrifices for change Brig Gen Mari continued: "My life has been dedicated to one thing, and one thing only, the love of my country".

Brig Gen Mari has five children. She is married to Col Mike Mari who works in the Joint Training Division.
Director of Social Work

Brig Gen Ntsiki Motumi grew up in Diepkloof, Soweto, and integrated into the SANDF as a Lieutenant Colonel of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) in 1994. She was deployed in the Directorate Social Work, and like most ex Non-statutory Force members at the time, she did not have a job description. This did not discourage her for she soon found her niche by pursuing and tabling the needs of Non-statutory Force veterans and gender issues on the agenda of the Joint Integration Committee. This culminated in the organisation of the first gender conference, which was held in 1997 to look at how the status of women was going to be advanced in the new SANDF.

The 1976 Soweto student uprising influenced her political thinking and involvement in the struggle to liberate South Africa. She was recruited into the ANC underground structures by her twin sister, Totsi Memela, in 1979, and worked as an underground operative shuttling between Swaziland and South Africa. She studied Social Work at the University of Fort Hare in the early eighties and was involved in student politics as a member of the Azanian Student Organization (AZASO) and also served in the SRC.

On completion of her studies she worked for the Johannesburg Child Welfare Society in its special programme, which sought to address the needs of children detainees exposed to urban war in the townships. Brig Gen Motumi was instructed by the ANC to leave the country in 1987 when her MK Commander, Ignatius Mthebula, went missing on the East Rand. (It was subsequently learned during the TRC hearing that members of the Security Branch had killed him). On arrival in Lusaka she worked closely with Mme Gertrude Shope, Cde Baleka Kgosietsile - Mbetha and Nosiviwe Maphisa - Nqgakula in the ANC Women’s section. In 1988 she worked with Comrade Max Sisulu to establish the Department of Social Work in exile in order to address problems experienced by the swelling ranks of ANC members.

She was among the first exiles to return to South Africa in 1990, where she worked with Comrade Jackie Selebi and Ms Zanele Mbeki on the Repatriation Committee, to lay the groundwork for the reception of exiles. During this period she also helped trace the families of veteran comrades who had left the country in the 1960s and also psychologically prepared the families of comrades who would be coming back physically and mentally challenged.

In this regard she worked closely with Comrade Winnie Madikizela Mandela at the ANC HQ in Shell House. In 1993 she was appointed to the Joint Military Co-ordination Committee’s Health Work Group to look into the psychosocial issues to be addressed by the new SANDF during the integration process.

Ntsiki Motumi was appointed as a Brigadier General on 1 April 2000 and became one of the two senior African women in the SANDF. She attributes her success and achievement to determination and hard work. “Black women have always had to endure triple oppression in a male dominated society simply because of their gender, skin colour, and low status in society,” says Brig Gen Motumi.

As one of the senior officers in the SANDF she sees her role as bringing pertinent issues to the attention of the DOD leadership, issues which affect the organisation’s mission readiness.

Furthermore, she regards the setting up of mechanisms which will enable soldiers’ spouses engage in economic empowerment projects as important in enabling them find their niche in society so that they are not preoccupied with the demands placed on their spouses by the military system. She also believes that support mechanisms should be created for women soldiers so that they can fulfil their dual role of mother and soldier.

Brig Gen Motumi believes that women have a critical role to play in the larger society because they are the ones who bear the brunt as mothers of the nation. “We are the ones who are raped, whose husbands and sons are killed and whose children are ravaged in times of male created wars. We deserve to take our rightful place to help find solutions to all problems.”

Brig Gen Motumi enrolled for a Masters degree at the University of Pretoria and her thesis was on the Implementation of the Affirmative Action Policy in the SAMHS during the period 1995 to 2000. She is married to Tsepe and derives joy and fulfilment from her children, Thando (15) and Phethagatso (11). (Article courtesy Brig Gen N. Motumi)
Balancing the scales in the SANDF

By Nomonde Vuthela
Photo: Sgt David Nontshongwana

Brig Gen Anna-Marie Myburgh, Director Military Judges, is in charge of the Directorate Military Judges, which means that she must ensure that the SANDF has at its disposal professional and legitimate military judges inside and outside the country whenever required.

Brig Gen Myburgh is functionally in charge of the (said) Military Judges in the SANDF. She advises and guides (Senior) Military Judges on functional matters, ensures that their conduct is professional and that they are abreast with new caselaw.

She joined the Defence Force in 1985 as a Military Legal Practitioner at the Quartermaster General. She was later placed with the Directorate Military Legal Services where she was Officer in Charge of the Military Law Training Section, she was responsible for the training of Military Legal Practitioners and Line Officers in military law. "I had quite a bit of exposure, I enjoyed that and it is one of the things I am still involved in," said the General. "With the integration of the forces I was also tasked with providing bridging training, presenting military law to the senior cadre and that was a excellent experience."

In 1999 when the Military Legal System changed Brig Gen Myburgh became the Director Military Judges. "In my Directorate, I have a few women Military Judges and I am very proud of them," Brig Gen Myburgh emphasised. Several (Senior) Military Judges have been assigned by the Minister of Defence on full-time, part-time and Reserve Force basis of whom eight are women. "I am very proud of the commitment and drive of all (Senior) Military Judges in my Directorate."

Brig Gen Myburgh is not office bound. She regularly visits military courts in order to keeping abreast with what is happening on the ground and in military courts. She also presided as Senior Military Judge in several cases and intends to do the same in future.

She studied law at Pretoria University, prior to which she spent 1979 doing Voluntary National Service at the SA Army Women’s College (SAAWCOL) in George - a move that greatly influenced her decision to pursue law. "It was while I was there that I decided to study law, and when I finished my first degree I decided to join the Defence Force," said Brig Gen Myburgh.

She enjoys her job tremendously and is not of the intention to leave the SANDF within the near future. "I have an open door policy. I give the necessary credit when it is deserved and they know they will have to deal with me when required standards are not complied with."

Brig Gen Myburgh is committed to her job and always takes the interest of the SANDF at heart. She believes that if you show your commitment you will obtain your set goals of which one of her goals is the appointment as the Chief of Military Legal Services. That will be the end of a wonderful career, and I believe that way I will continue to contribute a lot to the system."

She is a family woman. The General is married to Pierre Myburgh and she is the mother of two beautiful kids, Mignon and Albert. "I am first of all a mom," she stressed. Secondly, I am Anna-Marie - I am not title bound. I am a people's person, but I have terribly high standards in my work environment and I also enjoy my game of golf," Brig Gen Myburgh added.

"So, I am wife, mother and Director Military Judges," she said in a jovial mood, as she counted her different roles on her fingers.
Meet a very direct but passionate leader

By Nomonde Vuthela
Photo: PO Eddie Kgomo

I had to buckle up for this interview with Brig Gen Buks Potgieter, who runs the Military Health Support Formation in Centurion. As I made my way to her office prior to the interview a couple of people warned me about her, but nothing could have prepared me for a pint-sized General who would attempt to throttle me playfully in front of witnesses.

The first revelation she made to SA SOLDIER was how much she dislikes the Servamus Building and how she preferred the Military Health Base Depot where she was once Officer Commanding. This is because she prefers open spaces and gardens, an environment the Servamus Building unfortunately cannot boast of. In order to remedy the situation Brig Gen Potgieter spends as little time as possible in her office and communicates with her subordinates in their offices. “I cannot sit still in one place, I would rather go and stir something up in the passage,” she explained.

Second on the agenda was her nickname, Buks, meaning “the short one”. Brig Gen Potgieter then stressed that there is no other Buks and she is the best Buks.

Talking about herself she said: “I was brought up in a home where there was no distinction made between girls and boys. Everybody was treated equally, therefore I believe in who the person is and not which gender the person is. I am a General because of who I am and not because I am a woman,” Brig Gen Potgieter said.

“I do not have my head in the clouds; I know there is a difference between male and female. We can make as many laws as we want, but if we cannot change the way a mother raises her children, nothing will change. This means that boys and girls need to be raised as equals and with the understanding that both sexes can achieve the same goals if they put their mind to it,” continued Brig Gen Potgieter.

“I know I had to work much harder than my male counterparts, but I think at the end it made me a better person. I hope I got my position not because I am a woman, but because I have shown I can do it,” emphasised Brig Gen Potgieter.

Admittedly Brig Gen Potgieter is like a ball of fire on the move. I suggested to her that perhaps all this overflowing energy make up for her height, or rather lack of it. She then jokingly replied that if her parents had had to put her on medication as a child to try and slow her down, she would have most definitely have needed an overdose. When asked why she joined the SANDF the General said: “I actually came to the Defence Force because of sport. I studied pharmacy in Potchefstroom and did my internship at the H.F. Verwoerd Hospital in Pretoria. Then I decided that I did not like adult life because there was no time to do sport”, Brig Gen Potgieter said jokingly.

“Then somebody told me that the members of the Defence Force can participate in sports on Wednesdays,” she said. And that is how she landed in the military milieu. “Now I am a General - I am built for this post,” reaffirmed Brig Gen Potgieter.

On future plans Brig Gen Potgieter said: “Sometimes I dream about a small house on the beach where my little 'Scotties' can run freely. If I can be alone with my dogs around me, I am happy. I am satisfied with what I have achieved up till now,” said Brig Gen Potgieter. Describing her likes and dislikes Brig Gen Potgieter said: “I like honest people and people who speak their minds. I believe one must do unto others what one wants them to do unto you. I despise people who moan behind your back when they are not prepared to open their mouths in front of you. I am very direct when I speak my mind. I say when I disagree or dislike what one is doing or saying,” Brig Gen Potgieter assured me.

One major thing that the General cannot stomach is destructive criticism. She hates being told she is not good enough or that she is second best. “If I am very passionate about something, for instance like my formation, and somebody criticises my formation falsely, I get like a tiger and I lose my head and want to kill,” Brig Gen Potgieter strongly pointed out.

Brig Gen Potgieter is the youngest of six children and feels her parents waited for the best to come last. She has four brothers and one sister. One of her four brothers is a padre. “I do believe in God - I believe there is Somebody higher than me,” Brig Gen Potgieter stressed. Her mother, who is eighty years old, is always in trouble with the General for “sharing” her medication with her pets.

Brig Gen Potgieter has been in the Defence Force for almost 23 years and says this is the only life she has ever known, and added: “I want to see that the SANDF becomes the best defence force in Africa”. 

S A S O L D I E R  •  A U G U S T  2 0 0 4
Page 27
OLD MUTUAL Ad
(New Material)
A lot of literature written on zodiac signs suggests that a person born under the Pisces symbol can only be one of two types of fish. The symbol for the Pisces star sign is two fishes swimming in opposite directions. The one fish swims upstream and if you are this type, success is yours for the taking. The second kind of fish swims against the current and therefore is headed for disaster.

Brig Gen Portia Sibiya was recently appointed Director Corporate Staff Services, a role that is more or less concerned with image building in the SA Air Force. Brig Gen Sibiya is a Pisces and a Brigadier General at the age 37: surely this is indicative of the type of fish she is and the direction she is swimming.

"We must celebrate the role and contribution that women are making in this country and the role they made in the past," stated Brig Gen Sibiya. "We are here because our women were active and passionate about our emancipation," she continued.

We then spoke about her age and how young she really is: certainly many 37 year-olds are still trying to find their way around. To this Brig Gen Sibiya said, "You tend to sit at forums and when you look at some people, the year they joined the SA Air Force is the year I was born". According to Brig Gen Sibiya she finds comfort in knowing that the SANDF needs this kind of combination in order to go forward.

"I think because I spent the best part of my teenage years and the best part of my youth in exile, I missed the boat; I had my priorities shifted," she explained.

"Here I am now, the higher your position the smaller your pool of friends gets because you are now higher than them," said Brig Gen Sibiya. "If I go to a party or any private social function, once there is a junior member from the Air Force or the SANDF who knows me, even if the person was my friend before, a tension develops and everybody freezes because you are now a General.

"So automatically you are cut out," she continued. Brig Gen Sibiya elaborates on how she must select her company very carefully. In her own words: "The people in my league tend to be very old and I become a misfit because they talk ‘old staff’ - people my age are my junior and either see me as their authority or an agent".

Brig Gen Sibiya is a Sowetan who was enrolled as a medical student at the University of Transkei where she was counted among the troublemakers because, as she said, "anything that went wrong was done by people who were non-Transkeians (foreigners in the language of those days) and I was one of those".

Forced to leave the country, she was a teenager in exile, homesick and angry that she had to leave everything behind, including her studies. "I found another way of dealing with my anger and frustrations. Hope, self-discipline and loyalty to my organisation were pillars of strength. When the repatriation of exiles began I remained behind and took the opportunity to go back to school," Brig Gen Sibiya said.

Brig Gen Sibiya maintains that life is full of challenges, but how you handle those challenges determines your strength as a person. "In exile I would sit and meditate to find my inner self, spend an hour or the whole day just locked in myself." She said that things always looked much better after that.

In the late 1980s she was one of the young South Africans in exile who went to study in Nigeria at the invitation of the Nigerian Government. She was placed at the Federal University of Technology in Minna, in Niger State.
By Nomonde Vuthela
Photo: PO Eddie Kgomo

Brig Gen Alta Smit, Director Departmental Security at Defence Intelligence, was generous enough to be interviewed at her home in Valhalla. She walked towards us with her three dogs protectively following close by. We were about to be given access to her private life, but she seemed totally unperturbed. One could easily spot that the General was comfortable with being herself.

I would ask her a question and she would begin to answer and then go on to speak of somebody else. “I am the eldest of three children. If you look at the psychology of children and where they fit into the family, the oldest one is almost always self-sufficient, very responsible and a little bit withdrawn because you have got to survive on your own after the others are born. I am a typical eldest child and not a person to draw attention to myself,” continued Brig Gen Smit. Well, as one of only twelve female Generals in the whole of the SANDF, the spotlight is now definitely on her.

“Defence Intelligence and the military being my life, one tends to become more inward than outward because you cannot talk about your work because it is such a unique organisation,” continued the General, as she considered how her discreet personality works in her favour professionally.

“I would like to think that I have a very good relationship with my personnel and colleagues. We may not necessarily always agree on all matters, but as a disciplined and loyal soldier, the outcome must be to the advantage of the DOD and the safeguarding of the RSA,” said Brig Gen Smit.

Brig Gen Smit did her initial military service in 1973, then she joined the Permanent Force as a non-commissioned officer in the Medical Service at 1 Military Hospital. She continued with part-time studies and obtained a degree and then an honours degree. Brig Gen Smit was the first of the students to do her initial training at George with a view to becoming a General. Since entering the Defence Intelligence milieu in 1977, many things started to change very slowly. “This was due to individuals in the South African Defence Force who were open to change and were prepared to take a risk and give opportunities to women, including myself. In various directorates I was the first woman serving in the directorate and in certain fields,” said Brig Gen Smit. She thoroughly enjoyed the various postings, including that of instructor and personal staff officer. She was also the first woman to be given the opportunity to do the complete Command and Staff Course in 1989. Before that time women could not do the whole course.

Brig Gen Smit is also the only female General among all the male Generals within Defence Intelligence. “I, as a woman, never thought of being a General. It was not part of my planning, but then Chief of Defence Intelligence gave me the opportunity in 1999 to become a General. Lt Gen Motau, the late Lt Gen Masuku, Maj Gen Mgwebi and two RSMs (WO1 “Killer” Coetzee and WO1 Lionel Slade) played major roles in my development as a soldier and an officer in the new SANDF,” said Brig Gen Smit.

Brig Gen Smit was never married and has no children. “Things have changed. Women can now have a career and a family,” she said. She stated that living alone does not mean that she is lonely. “I have a very strong sense of family and I am always there for my family and friends,” said Brig Gen Smit. She said women in the SANDF must be cautious not to sit back and wait for opportunities to come to them; also they must not think that they are advantaged just because they are women. “As women we also have the responsibility to empower ourselves to prove that we are the best candidate for a post or a task,” said Brig Gen Smit.

“One should never sit back and reflect on what was and get stuck with what could have been, but should always have one’s eye on the future and what can be. I am a very religious person and believe that even though some hardships may be hard to fathom, nothing happens without God’s will,” said Brig Gen Smit.

“I am a seasoned and enthusiastic traveller with my sister as a travelling companion. We specialise in exploring special bargain travel deals,” she said. In a small corner in the lounge of the General’s house one can find memorabilia from all her many visits, including various musical instruments.

Her plans include learning to speak Zulu, Spanish and sign language. Brig Gen Smit would also like to see herself representing South Africa in far-off lands as a Defence Attaché. In the meantime she enjoys her work and the many challenges that each new day brings along...
The General who believes in giving with love

By Nomonde Vuthela
Photo: PO Eddie Kgomo

Brig Gen Marietjie Swanepoel, Director of Nursing for the SAMHS, was the eighth General to be interviewed by the SA SOLDIER team since we began with this project to give exposure to all female Generals in the SANDF.

Brig Gen Swanepoel works from the SAMHS HQ, which is located at the Centurion Lake next to the ever-popular Centurion Mall, an area where it is almost impossible to find parking. This whole experience of chasing after our multi-talented women Generals means the SA SOLDIER team never knows what lies ahead.

But on the day of this interview, the photographer, PO Eddie Kgomo, and I, found parking at the Centurion Mall without even making an effort. Surely this had to be a good omen; a sign perhaps of how well things would go for the day.

I walked into Brig Gen Swanepoel’s office silently, hoping that the interview would go as easily as the little time spent finding accommodation for our military vehicle. I was not disappointed as Brig Gen Swanepoel was easy to talk to; the interview went smoothly and we were done in no time.

Brig Gen Swanepoel originally came from Louis Trichardt where her mother still lives. She then studied in Potchefstroom for about four years and then in Bloemfontein for two years. Eventually she joined the Defence Force, where she felt she was needed.

Brig Gen Swanepoel has a B Art et Sc. (Nursing) from the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, an M Soc. Sc. (Psychiatric Nursing) from the then University of the Orange Free State and an Advanced Diploma in Nursing from the University of South Africa.

“I started working for the Defence Force in 1976 at 1 Military Hospital in the Psychiatric Ward and that I enjoyed tremendously,” Brig Gen Swanepoel said. She then moved on to nurses’ training and became the first Principal of the SAMHS Nursing College in 1985.

She has been Director of Nursing since 1988. She did not expect to ever become a General. “My whole focus was on becoming a nurse; I wanted to be a nurse for as long as I can remember and I have never seen myself in any other role than working with patients,” Brig Gen Swanepoel said.

“I look after the nursing staff of the SANDF and I too get to do my bit for patient care, because if the nurses are well-trained and well cared for they can give their best,” said Brig Gen Swanepoel, who is still a registered nurse.

In reference to 9 August, National Women’s Day, Brig Gen Swanepoel had this to say: “I am very glad for all women that there is recognition of what they are doing. I think there is still a lot of very good work done in the communities and in other places that is still not recognised”. In the Defence Force women are sometimes misjudged, but we are stronger. Maybe we are not as aggressive as our male colleagues, but we have other styles and ways of doing things just as effectively,” continued the Director of Nursing.

Brig Gen Swanepoel also added that she thinks it is wonderful that President Thabo Mbeki has appointed so many women in political posts.

President Thabo Mbeki has appointed so many women in political posts.

The General related how she had to do her Air Force Senior Command and Staff Course in a “very strange situation”, as she put it. In 1993 she remembered feeling “old” at 42 in a class filled mostly with young SA Air Force members. “I worked very hard and I felt extremely gratified when I passed that course very well,” Brig Gen Swanepoel said proudly.

Speaking on the past ten years of the new SANDF she said: “We have gone through a bit of turmoil and a lot of change”. Brig Gen Swanepoel noted that in terms of representivity in nursing all is going well. She also mentioned the great work being done by nurses who are deployed in Burundi and the DRC.

“I would like to see a young, vibrant and healthy Defence Force, very well-disciplined and very well-trained,” commented the General on how she would like the SANDF to look ten years from now.

The General’s message to all members is: “If we could just try and care more for each other we will go a long way”. She believes that if you give something with love, it truly has quality.
Focus on the first South African female Admiral

In a proud history of 82 years, one of the proudest moments the SA Navy has enjoyed has had to be when R Adm (JG) Khanysile Litchfield-Tshabalala assumed her post as Director Fleet Human Resources in Simon’s Town in January 2004. Why? Because she is the first-ever South African female Admiral!

It has been an arduous journey, but as she herself is fond of saying: "There are only dead heroes. I say that because I believe it is only by living your beliefs right to the end - consistently living the struggle, that you are a hero. I regard Bob Marley and Che Guevara as heroes, because they did just that". This prime role model for young women everywhere was born and raised in Soweto. She spent ten years in the military arm of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe, where she was trained in Guerrilla warfare and was forced into exile in Angola in the 1980s.

She returned in 1993 and completed her Bachelors and Honours degrees in politics and drama at the University of Cape Town and is continuing with her Masters degree in Criminology through Unisa this year. After much deliberation, she joined the SA Navy in 1997. Why the SA Navy? "What impressed me and convinced me to join the SA Navy and not another department, was the fact that they wanted one to have a tertiary education. To me that is very important," said R Adm (JG) Litchfield-Tshabalala. Her career took off quickly and she rose through the ranks, but not without a lot of hard work.

She is quick to point out that it was her female colleagues (from seaman to the most senior rank) who made it possible for her by paving the way in a male dominated environment, encouraging and supporting her through course after course.

"It was not just my effort alone that got me to where I am today. The SA Navy opened the doors for me and colleagues supported me," R Adm (JG) Litchfield-Tshabalala said of her new position, "I am happiest as a personnel officer. I enjoy the challenge of problem solving and see my role as contributing to building bridges between black and white. There is still so much that we do not understand about each other that can be critical to the success of the transformation of our SA Navy."

Her goals as Fleet Director Human Resources (FDHR) include improving Human Resources service delivery and establishing a "culture of Human Resources professionalism... where staff see Human Resources as a career and develop accordingly, much like it is viewed in the US." She is also anxious to address the failure rate and plans to put the Education Training and Development (ETD) Centre to good use. "We must be proactive and develop a strategy to improve on this. Next year I want to focus on career plans for the SA Navy personnel," she says.

On a more personal note, she enjoys running and exercising, watching television (especially soccer) and the theatre. She adds with emphasis: "I always make time to work on my spiritual side. She is full of praise and appreciation for her family. As wife and mother of a twelve-year-old son and a three-year-old daughter, R Adm (JG) Litchfield-Tshabalala acknowledges the support of her husband and children. "During the past few years, Mbongiseni alone raised our daughter."

"My daughter's first word was 'Baba' - I was always busy with yet another course!" She also acknowledges the tremendous support of her beloved mother, Nomhlangano Dlamini, her three sisters and three brothers who all live in Gauteng, as well as members of her church, the Baptist Church in Meadowlands, Soweto, who prayed for her regularly.

R Adm (JG) Litchfield-Tshabalala has a daunting task ahead of her as she breaks new ground for women in our Navy.
Talking of veterans

By Nomonde Vuthela
Photo: PO Eddie Kgomo

“...you reap what you sow...” is a statement that came to life for me when I met Maj Gen Joan van der Poel (Ret). SA SOLDIER interviewed her at her very modern and warm home, which projected a lot of her personality. Outside her garage was parked her trailer, ready to be whisked off to another adventure at a moment’s call.

“I joined the Defence Force in 1974 when there was a need for officer instructors at the then SA Army Women’s College (SAAWCOL) in George. At that stage I was a teacher and I applied for a vacancy and was appointed,” said Maj Gen Van der Poel. She served there for four years and was then transferred to the then “Administrative Service Corps”. She specialised in Human Resources where she remained until her retirement.

“At that time coming into the Defence Force was a grand adventure. It was a time when women were starting to make their mark in South African society, not so much women of colour, but white women,” the General reminisced. “They realised that by involving women in the Defence Force they could make a difference. We had a wonderful start at the SAAWCOL because we were something of a novelty.”

“Girls received one year of training at the SAAWCOL. That one year gave them confidence and the ability to work well in various occupations when they left the SAAWCOL. It was like a year out and it gave girls the opportunity to say to the guys: “We have been there and we have done it!”,” said Maj Gen Van der Poel with obvious pleasure even after all these years.

“Why did you join the Defence Force,” I asked. “I joined the Defence Force because I love the outdoors. I was hoping to work outside all day. I did it for the adventure of it. I am at my best when I camp and travel, but like most things your plans do not always work out the way you planned.” After four lovely years in the Defence Force as an officer instructor at SAAWCOL in George she was transferred to Pretoria and from there on she was office bound.

The retired General then conceded that subsequently the Defence Force treated her very well. “In some lucky way I was in the right place at the right time,” she said.

“Then you started to climb your professional ladder,” I suggested. “In many cases it depended on whom you impressed. I had the privilege of doing Parliamentary duty for twelve years; there I had contact with many of the most senior officers,” she explained.

“If you had done your bit and had given somebody the right information at the right time, they realised that you were credible, reliable and trustworthy. Confident men would then recommend that you be given a chance,” continued Maj Gen Van der Poel.

“I was one of the first women to do the then Blue Staff Course in 1981. I was also the first woman to complete the Joint Senior Command and Staff Course (now the ENSP) in 1988,” she revealed.

Maj Gen Van der Poel was promoted to Brigadier General in 1993. “That was quite a difficult time, because we had already started with the negotiations for the integration process. I was part of the first negotiations regarding the planning, followed in 1994 by the whole integration phase at Wallmannsthal.”

“One could not have done it were it not for an absolute endeavour by everyone to make it work,” she emphasised. “Yes, it was hard and we had to learn by making mistakes, but I believe in the end it is one of the great success stories of the world,” Maj Gen Van der Poel added.

In 1994 Maj Gen Van der Poel and Maj Gen Jackie Sedibe, Chief Director Equal Opportunities, became the first two women to be appointed as Major Generals. “Jackie and I showed women in uniform that it was possible, that they need not to be afraid, it could be done,” Maj Gen Van der Poel said.

Now Maj Gen Van der Poel is writing television scripts about travel in South Africa and living the outdoor life to the full.
A female doctor who leads

By Nomonde Vuthela

I have two people I want to thank for who I am today - my mother and father. They are the ones who used to push me, although they died at an early age. They used to encourage me by saying that I must ensure that I go as far as I can,” said Dr Mary Ledwaba, Chief Director of Human Resources Policy and Planning.

“In the Defence Secretariat I am the only Chief Director,” stated Dr Ledwaba proudly. “When you are an individual you have to have some plans and you have to focus on the direction you want to follow in life. Because of my qualifications I knew that I could fit in any level,” added Dr Ledwaba confidently. She has a Doctorate in Sociology.

“The position of Chief Director is not even the position that I can say this is where I am. I can still aspire to go far,” noted Dr Ledwaba.

Explaining her post Dr Ledwaba said: “I am responsible for the Human Resource Strategy for the Department, as well as the planning of the Department where Human Resources are concerned. I have to give the direction for Human Resource processes and the direction for strategy”.

“I have four directors under me - Director Human Resource Policy Management, Director Service Systems, Director Human Resource Plans and Director Reserves and Veterans Policy,” elaborated Dr Ledwaba.

Dr Ledwaba studied in the United States of America where she spent fourteen years. “America being very far from home, especially not by choice was not very nice, but I was privileged enough to study and acquire five degrees,” revealed Dr Ledwaba.

She came to the military environment in 1999. Prior to that she worked for the Department of Public Service and Administration. “My responsibilities there were to monitor, evaluate and draft all the new legislation,” said Dr Ledwaba.

“I wish to see the Department of Defence having the best Human Resource practices. This will be the case if I am able to drive a paradigm shift in all managers to ensure that they practise best practices,” stated Dr Ledwaba.

“The past ten years of democracy have been difficult, but we have good policies in place and we have progressed to a point where you can see us working hand in hand - side by side,” Dr Ledwaba said.

Dr Ledwaba is also a mother and a spouse and about this she said, “I see myself as a professional woman who is juggling two professions, that of motherhood and being a partner, as well as my profession”.

“South Africa has really achieved a milestone in that it is one of the countries that has recognised the importance of women. We see it in our Parliament. We see women in various positions, as well as in leadership positions,” said Dr Ledwaba.

“If it were not for women, men would not be here. It is women who play the role of being a mother, a provider and a comforter,” added Dr Ledwaba.

“As a woman I have also endured a lot of discrimination,” added Dr Ledwaba. “We are not recognised, we are not given a voice as women. One has to prove oneself three or four times more than one’s male counterparts,” she continued.

“As women we must always assert ourselves. We must disregard all negativity because there will always be some stereotypes. One must ignore them, and excel in one’s profession,” advised Dr Ledwaba.

“Regardless of all the discrimination and disadvantages I have always asserted myself to ensure that I am recognised,” emphasised Dr Ledwaba.

“Every woman who has been given an opportunity to be in a leadership position should not forget where she came from. We should ensure that we motivate other women by empowering them so that they too can reach their aspirations,” said Dr Ledwaba.
She preferred to walk off the paper into action

By Nomonde Vuthela

The Former Deputy Minister of Defence, Ms Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, speaking at the DOD’s National Women’s Day celebrations on 7 August 2002 suggested that a name register listing the many women who have struggled for the emancipation of women be kept.

Ms Madlala-Routledge spoke of building an archive not only rich with information but one that would also give a “true” reflection of women leaders and the journeys embarked upon in this ongoing quest for change.

Although Ms Madlala-Routledge’s term as Deputy Minister of Defence came to an end early this year, it is through that very sentiment that she too is remembered as the DOD yet again celebrates its women and their achievements in the past ten years of democracy.

Ms Madlala-Routledge was the first woman Deputy Minister of Defence the country had ever seen, which gave women in the DOD even more reason to celebrate South Africa’s Constitution that has placed women in the forefront.

When the former Deputy Minister of Defence addressed the women of the DOD on National Women’s Day in 2003 she acknowledged that the struggle to end gender inequality in the SANDF had not been realised. “The challenges are different, yet just as daunting,” she said and called upon all women in the DOD to unite in order to rise above all barriers.

Speaking to SA SOLDIER, Mr Buddy Ntsong, Head of Office for the Deputy Minister of Defence, Mr Mululeki George, helped recollect some of Ms Madlala-Routledge’s activities while she was still in office.

“Ms Madlala-Routledge was involved with the promotion of gender issues,” stated Mr Ntsong. “She was instrumental in the establishment of the Women’s Peace Table where women in Southern Africa would come together and discuss the contribution women can make in bringing about peace in the region.”

Sponsored by the SANDF’s Equal Opportunities Directorate the Peace Table was held for the first time in 2001. Addressing participants at the Third Annual Women’s Peace Table in 2003 Ms Madlala-Routledge said the challenge to all participants was to map out a way forward for women in the furthersance of the AU/NEPAD peace and security agenda.

At this particular conference Ms Madlala-Routledge emphasised on walking off the paper and into action. “Clearly women have a definite point of view in relation to peace, security and safety,” she said, calling on institutions and instruments for peace in Africa to be gender sensitive.

“Ms Madlala-Routledge was also involved with the Military Veterans Project, which was one of her pet projects given to her by the Minister of Defence”, stated Mr Ntsong as he listed Ms Madlala-Routledge’s past contributions. The former Deputy Minister for Defence was also involved in a number of veteran projects mainly run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

According to Mr Ntsong the aim of the Military Veterans Project was to provide employment opportunities for destitute military veterans. “A year ago she launched, together with the then Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Mr Ronnie Kasrils, a Project called OPERATION VUSELELA aimed at eradicating alien vegetation on Defence controlled land,” said Mr Ntsong. This project helped to provide employment for some veterans.

“Ms Madlala-Routledge also played a role on an advisory basis to the Freedom Park Project whose CEO is Dr Wally Serote,” said Mr Ntsong. The Freedom Park Project is a national project that was unveiled late last year in Pretoria in recognition of all the people who fought for freedom throughout the history of South Africa.

“Another one of her responsibilities was the Masibambisane HIV/AIDS Awareness Project launched in 2001 in Pretoria. She was also instrumental in championing the launch of the project in the various provinces,” added Mr Ntsong. Another of Ms Madlala-Routledge’s duties was liaising with the Americans who are major sponsors of the project.

In December 2003 Ms Madlala-Routledge played a leading role in the launch of Project Phidisa, which is run by the SANDF in an attempt to provide HIV/AIDS treatment for members and their dependants,” said Mr Ntsong. 1 Military Hospital is one of six sites that been selected to conduct research on the administration of antiviral drugs in the Defence Force. “She was very passionate about Project Phidisa,” concluded Mr Ntsong.

Ms Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, former Deputy Minister of Defence.
First female military attaché in an African country

By Lt Col Adelle Naudé, Directorate of Foreign Relations

In mid-1998 I received confirmation from the Directorate of Foreign Relations that I had been earmarked to become a military attaché. This was the beginning of a period of excitement and uncertainty as to what lay ahead. Although it was clear to me personally that the climate necessitated the appointment of a female attaché abroad, and that I would be somewhat of a token appointment, I realised that it would be an honour for me as an individual and that I could play a pioneering role.

After assessing my personal circumstances I decided to accept a posting to Namibia, as my spouse who is a manager in a private telecommunications company could be transferred to an open regional office. This decision to me was the first consideration that any earmarked attaché should consider. A posting is most definitely a partnership, and to make a decision unilaterally without taking cognisance of your spouse’s career or needs would most certainly make a successful posting impossible.

In December 1998 my husband, Adriaan, my son, Adriaan Jr, aged 2, and I arrived in Namibia to take up my three-year posting. After presenting three Military Attaché Courses prior to my deployment I had a clear understanding of what was expected of me as a military advisor.

Working from my office at the SA High Commission in Windhoek the one thing that was clear was that running a one-person military office abroad required extensive hours of hard work with many responsibilities. Many people perceive an attaché posting abroad to be that of glamour and overpaid officers who do the diplomatic party circuit for a living. From first-hand experience My colleagues and I who have had the privilege of serving the SANDF abroad can assure any aspiring attaché that if these preconceptions are a motivating factor when applying for a posting, the reality is going to be a huge disappointment.

I credit the Namibian Defence Force with making my posting a successful one. My posting was also a first for them in their having to receive a female advisor and they accepted me in my professional capacity and never had any gender prejudices towards me. This acceptance allowed me to represent the SANDF as a professional officer and in the spirit in which attachés and advisors are mutually accredited. After three years of liaising with the Namibian Defence Force on a daily basis I not only built good working relations, but made many friends.

In my three years my day-to-day work required me to represent the SANDF by hosting and attending functions, liaising between the SANDF and the Namibian Defence Force, co-ordinating training between the SANDF and the Namibian Defence Force, arranging high-level visits and exercises between the two forces, overt collection as required, promoting local defence industries and advising the SA High Commissioner on military matters.

To point out only a few highlights, my involvement in the following events has definitely left me with lasting impressions:

- Co-ordinating the participation of the Namibian Defence Force in the regional Exercise BLUE CRANE.
- The SA High Commission’s involvement in the hosting of the SADC Heads of State Summit in Windhoek.
- The hosting of the Namibia/RSA Joint Commission on Defence in Windhoek.
- The co-ordination of the visit by two SA Navy strike craft, the SAS RENé SETHREN and the SAS GALESHEWE to Walvis Bay and Lüderitz.
- The visit by the Chief of the SANDF to Namibia and the reciprocal visit by the Chief of the Namibian Defence Force to the RSA.
- The presenting of a Military Attaché Course to the Namibian Defence Force.
Ms Lizzy Kubushi, Legal Advisor to Mr Mosiuoa Lekota, the Minister of Defence.

A Legal Advisor who achieved many firsts

By Nomonde Vuthela

Ms Lizzy Kubushi is a Legal Advisor to the Minister of Defence, Mr Mosiuoa Lekota. Ms Kubushi is a special advisor to the Minister of Defence; it is imperative to note that both Minister Lekota’s special advisors are women.

“It is a very onerous assignment for me because the advice that I give to the Minister impacts on the whole country,” revealed Ms Kubushi in an interview with SA SOLDIER. “In giving the advice I must have done a lot of research, I must have thought and thought about it; it is not something that I can just give out.” Ms Kubushi has been a Legal Advisor to Minister Lekota since 2002.

Part of Ms Kubushi’s job description is to provide general and legal advice to Minister Lekota and Deputy Minister Mululeki George on defence and security matters within South Africa and in terms of South Africa’s peacekeeping role in the region. This includes advising the Minister and his Deputy on the transformation of the SANDF.

“Some people are afraid to say they have been affirmed, but I always say I am an affirmative appointment because if it was not for democracy I would not be sitting where I am advising a minister,” said Ms Kubushi with conviction. “Because of the ten years of democracy I feel affirmed and empowered.”

Success for Ms Kubushi started at an early age. She was a straight “A” student at a time when it was difficult for young black girls to make it through high school. She went to school in Soweto and Soekmekaan and obtained first class passes for Standard Six, Standard Eight and for the National Certificate.

Ms Kubushi graduated with a B Proc degree from the University of the North in 1983, Ms Kubushi was admitted as an attorney by the Supreme Court of SA Orange Free State Division, now Free State Division, in 1987. “It was really a great feat because I was the first black woman to qualify in the Free State,” said Ms Kubushi.

This achievement was followed by a series of graduations at local and international universities. Ms Kubushi further obtained a Master of Business Administration (MBA), a Postgraduate Certificate in Management and a Diploma in Management Studies from the Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College.

She also has a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) from the University of the Free State. In 1993 Ms Kubushi attended a course in Israel for the Role of People’s Organisation in the Community and in Nation Building. She was also admitted to appear as an attorney in the High Court of South Africa in 1996.

“My achievements made me proud, but not just for me, but also for other women who looked up to me and were inspired by what was happening,” Ms Kubushi said. “In the period between 1984 and 2003 she has taken up no less than 21 leadership roles. "I was involved in business organisations and women’s organisations," she said. "You cannot achieve in isolation: as you achieve you need to be taking other people along."

An advisor to the Minister of Defence, an intellectual, a business and community leader and a homemaker - all this Ms Kubushi said would not be possible to balance if she did not have a support base. “My husband is very supportive and very understanding,” she said. Ms Kubushi, who uses her maiden name, is married to Pitso Sekhoto and is mother to four.

She was the first black woman to be admitted as a practicing attorney in the Free State, the first black woman to be admitted as a conveyancer and notary and the first black woman attorney to be allowed to appear in the High Court in the Free State.

She is also the first black woman to have become the Chairperson of the Black Lawyers Association in the Free State Region, and the first black woman to serve on the Council of the Law Society of South Africa (in the new dispensation). She was also the first woman to be appointed State Attorney and the Head of the State Attorney Offices in the Free State and Northern Cape Provinces.

“The girl child as she is growing up now has possibilities that are endless. They look up and see that there are women who occupy very powerful positions and they too aspire to those positions,” Ms Kubushi said. “Democracy has brought in a lot of space to move in, so there is a wide space in front of me and there is enough space to go anywhere,” she concluded.
Ms Sue Rabkin, Special Advisor to Minister Mosiuoa Lekota.
Female Deputy Director heads Documentation Centre

By Capt Leon Steyn,
SO3 Military Historian

Documentation Centre is managed by a unique team consisting of women only. Ms Louise Jooste heads the office as the appointed Deputy Director of Documentation Centre with four appointed Assistant Directors of the various sections. They are Ms Annelies Schoeman of the Record Management Section, Ms Annette van Jaarsveldt of the Archives Section, Ms Erica Pienaar of Library Services and Ms Esté van Jaarsveldt of the Personnel Records Section.

Ms Louise Jooste was appointed as Deputy Director Documentation Centre on 1 November 2001. Ms Jooste’s appointment heralded a new era in the history of the Documentation Centre. Not only was she the first appointed as a historian in the post SO3 Military Historical Service in January 1978.

Ms Jooste obtained a BA degree, majoring in History, from the University of South Africa in 1982, a BA Honours degree in History from Unisa in 1985 and a Masters degree in History with distinction from Unisa in 1996.


On 1 April 1988 Ms Jooste was promoted to the rank of Assistant Director (SO1 Research and Historical Writing). She has subsequently received two Chief of the SANDF Commendations (1980 and 1996) endorsing her purposeful approach and truly professional attitude in the overall management of military history and its cause within the SANDF, which earned her the highest respect from academic peers, superiors, colleagues and subordinates alike.

In January 2001 Ms Jooste was appointed Acting Deputy Director Documentation Centre, and on 1 November 2001 she became the new Deputy Director Documentation Centre. Ms Jooste has seen thirty-one years of service in the DOD, all of which have been with the Documentation Centre and exclusively as a professional military historian.

Group photo of the personnel of the Documentation Centre. The Centre is managed by a unique team consisting of women only - front, third to seventh person, fltr: Ms Erica Pienaar, Annelies Schoeman, Ms Louise Jooste, Ms Annette van Jaarsveldt and Ms Esté van Jaarsveldt.
First female officer commanding of Naval College

At the beginning of 2004 the SA Navy celebrated yet another first - Capt (SAN) Lilla du Preez assumed command of the prestigious SA Naval College in Gordon’s Bay as the first female officer commanding of this officers’ training base in the history of the SA Navy.

Capt (SAN) Du Preez’s career in the Defence Force began in the SA Military Health Service as a Social Work Officer in Cape Town, when she obtained the degree of BA Honours in Social Work at Stellenbosch University in 1985. From there she joined the Bureau for Information (now the Government Communication and Information System) as Liaison Officer for foreign government guests.

She joined the SA Navy in 1989, working as a Public Relations Officer, first in Cape Town and then (from 1990 to 1993) in Durban at the Strike Craft Flotilla. In 1993 she was re-appointed to SA Naval Headquarters, Pretoria, where she served as Staff Officer Internal Communication and then as a Media Liaison Officer. Capt (SAN) Du Preez continued with her studies and obtained BA Honours in Communication at Unisa in 1995. This was followed by accreditation as a Public Relations Practitioner (APR) in 1997 at the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA). At this stage the Defence Force was transforming and her career as a woman in a male dominated environment started to look more promising. True to her determination to excel, and her ambition, Capt (SAN) Du Preez then completed the Senior Naval Command and Staff Course in 1999, after which she became Staff Officer Communication Planning at Defence Corporate Communication.

In 2001 she served for a short while as a project officer on Project PROFUSION (responsible for the design of the new Joint Senior Command and Staff Programme for the SANDF. In June 2001 she was promoted to Captain (SA Navy) and appointed as the Personal Staff Officer to the then Chief of Corporate Staff, V Adm Martyn Trainor (now retired) until July 2003. Meanwhile, during 2002 Capt (SAN) Du Preez continued her pursuit of academic excellence and received her MA Communication Management cum laude, also being adjudged best student for 2003 at Pretoria University. Just prior to her appointment in Gordon’s Bay, she was a programme member of the Executive National Security Programme (ENSP) 08/03 at the SA National Defence College in Thaba Tshwane, Pretoria. (Article and photo courtesy Navy News)

First Indian woman Warrant Officer in our Navy

By AB Zelda (Lizzy) Lebelo (Courtesy Navy News)

Not only is WO2 Cheryl Essop a female warrant officer, but also the first and only Indian woman in the history of the SA Navy to become one. “It is a wonderful feeling and I am proud to have made it so far,” she told Navy News.

She joined the SA Navy in 1989 and did her Basic Training at SAS JALSENA in Durban. Her career in the SA Navy started at SAS SCORPION where she worked as a junior communication operator.

WO2 Cheryl Essop also worked at Naval Base Simon’s Town, Naval Base Durban and Group 10 (an Army HQ) as both junior and senior communication operator for a number of years. She was awarded good conduct badges in 1991 and 1995, attained first position in three different courses she attended and again was voted first as the most supportive student during her MTR3 course.

When asked what it was like working at an Army unit as a naval member, her response was that we are all serving the same Defence Force, and the only difference is the uniform.

WO2 Essop as made history, and considering we are all celebrating the tenth year of freedom and democracy this year, this is an apt milestone. She is definitely an ideal role model for young women in the SA Navy and the Defence Force at large would be well served in looking up to her. At present WO2 Essop is working at the Army Intelligence Formation HQ in Pretoria, where she has been since 2003.
Col Engela Brink, Officer Commanding of 2 Military Hospital is an excellent example of a role model for women in the military.

Her career in the SAMHS started in 1980 when she was a student nurse at 1 Military Hospital.

She re-mustered to "Operations" and took up the post of an operational clerk in the operational room at the Surgeon General HQ. She was promoted to an operational officer at 7 Medical Battalion Group in 1985. In 1988 the Surgeon General appointed her as his personal assistant (PA) where admin and liaison tasks formed the biggest part of her daily duties. This post meant a lot for her career and provided good exposure and a whole new framework of friends, colleagues and contacts.

Col Brink returned to 7 Medical Battalion Group in 1990 as Operational and Foreign Projects Officer, and liaised with Special Forces HQ and the Parachute Battalion.

She became the Officer Commanding of the Medical Section at 4 Reconnaissance Regiment and also acted as SO2 Operations at Western Province Medical Command. She exchanged the Western Cape for Hoedspruit and was transferred there with her family to become the Officer Commanding MBH Hoedspruit.

Never a woman to perceive any task too daunting, she accepted her greatest career challenge, viz to take up the post of Officer Commanding at 2 Military Hospital in Wynberg, Cape Town, in 2000. With this appointment Col Brink made history, as she became the first female Officer Commanding to manage such a post.

What made this post even more challenging was the fact that, prior to her appointment, only medical officers were considered for this post. Times were rough, as she had to battle with staffing problems and a diminishing budget. Col Brink stood her ground to manage the unit in an admirable manner, always ready to support her personnel and to acknowledge their achievements.

A definite highlight in her career was the fact that an American delegation from Wilford Hall Medical Centre, Lackland AFB, presented her with the 59th Medical Wing "Commander’s Coin of Excellence". This was a tribute to her fine management of her post and to the fact that she is a female Officer Commanding of such a big unit.

Besides being very busy in her various posts Col Brink fortunately had the love and the support of her husband, Helgard, and their two children, Rico and Lara. If you asked her, she might have added that they made the ultimate difference. As you can see, behind every successful woman there is a loving family!
Janie boasts about her natural blindfold

By Miempie Louw, Directorate Language Services
Photo: Sgt David Nomtshongwana

M any of the men and women in uniform, trained and ready to fight for the safety of the people of South Africa, know her, call her their friend, ask for her advice and derive inspiration from her fighting spirit. Maybe it is because they talk the same language - one of courage, determination and survival.

Meeting her face to face makes it immediately clear that although Janie Fourie is not a uniformed member of the DOD, she is every inch one of the most remarkable women of the DOD. It is also not surprising to find her in an environment where sophisticated weapons and clever tactics are not effective; she empowers people with something mightier than the sword - the gift of language.

Despite a visual impairment Janie works as a Principal Language Practitioner (PSAP) at the Directorate Language Services in Pretoria where she presents English and Afrikaans language training to DOD officials and foreign military attachés and does language editing and translation. Armed with a voice activated computer programme called Jaws, her black guide dog - Audrey, and an unflinching will to succeed, Janie is ready to confront any challenge that crosses her line of fire.

What other people might take for granted, however, did not happen automatically for Janie. She had to leave home at the tender age of seven and a half years to attend the School for the Blind in Worcester, miles from her place of birth on a farm near Vryheid in KwaZulu-Natal. So, by the time she finished Matric, Janie had already trod the battlefields of life, wept for her loved ones, grown tough by endurance. She started her first job as a switchboard operator in Durban, but although thankful for such an opportunity, Janie could not bear the bleak prospect of coping with doing that for the rest of her life and started studying part-time for a BA degree at the University of South Africa.

The resident master of the youth centre where she stayed at that stage noticed how diligently Janie studied in the evenings and assisted her in securing a study loan to study full-time. Consequently, to her utmost delight, Janie started in 1979 as a full-time student at the University of Pretoria where she finished her BA degree, as well as a BA Honours in Afrikaans.

Much more in line with what she had in mind for herself as a career, Janie, on 1 June 1983 took up a post as a language practitioner at the then South African Defence Force. Since then, true to her brave spirit, she has conquered many battles with honour. For example, she completed her Higher Education Diploma at Unisa with honours, as well as the ETDP Level 4 course at Colet and is currently busy with the ETDP Level 5 course. In 1998 she was the runner-up to the Curamus Person with Disabilities of the Year Award which singles out a person with disabilities who has an exceptional personality and achievements to his or her credit.

Throughout her career Janie was approached out to deliver speeches, make presentations and read passages at church services and disability forums. She was even interviewed on Radio Kansel in March this year on her innovative idea of making it possible for blind persons to also “watch” the movie, The Passion of the Christ. She would arrange for somebody to whisper the text of the film for them while experiencing the movie.

It is little wonder that her friends and colleagues say of her: “Janie is a friend worth having. She knows the art of listening. With her sense of humour and undeniable presence she projects warmth and humanity towards everyone that crosses her path.” No wonder the people working and associating with her use words of her, such as "jolly", "achiever", "neat" and "integrity".

From her busy and active programme, it is apparent that Janie is a "whole" and happy person who does not intend wasting valuable time while experiencing life and interacting with other people. She devotes a lot of her time to church activities - visiting members of the congregation, doing street work, and encouraging people who experience difficult times. She is also involved in the activities of the Guide Dog Association and even on one occasion in 2003 attempted to drive a car during a Guide Dog Association’s fund-raising event at the Waverley Plaza where a person who could see was blindfolded and navigated by another “seeing” person - she boasted about her “natural blindfold”!

She loves social gatherings, communicating with others on the internet, visiting coffee shops and craft markets, attending music concerts and "shops till she drops"!

Photo: Sgt David Nomtshongwana
Women play a very important role in the new dispensation, not only of transformation in the DOD, but also in gender and equity related matters. In the last decade.

In the SAAF women have advanced in careers which were previously mostly male dominated: pilots, flying instructors, navigators, load masters, flight engineers, aircraft technicians, flight line administrators, apprentices, physical training instructors, to mention but a few. After the integration of all forces, women were given the opportunity to qualify in the fields mentioned.

At Central Flying School (CFS) Langebaanweg there are at present two qualified female pilots, who are also qualified flying instructors, Capt I. Bedford and Lt Annabel Macauley. This has brought about a change in the composition of the flying instructors at CFS Langebaanweg.

Lt Macauley, who is the first black female flying instructor, was the Ground Liaison Officer for the internationally recognised aerobatics team, the Silver Falcons. Both women have taken part in flying formation for parades, the Opening of Parliament this year, the Ten Years of Freedom Celebrations, air shows and other air displays in the SAAF. They are at present utilised in giving instruction at CFS Langebaanweg.

They have lived up to the motto of CFS Langebaanweg, which is to qualify world-class military pilots and flying instructors.

At present three female pupil pilots are undergoing training, namely Capt M. du Toit, 2Lt M.S.M. Manaka and 2Lt T. Thomas.

Air traffic controllers complete their basic training at the Airspace School, which is based at Hoedspruit AFB, and then undergo continuation training at any other operational base. At the CFS Langebaanweg there are three qualified female air traffic controllers, while three are still under training.

Flight line administration and operation was one of the fields that was mainly male dominated. WO2 C. Spenceley and Cpl C. Human are utilised as material support clerks (technical) MSC Tech, while Cpl M. Motaung qualified as an MSC Tech for the Astra PC7 MKII simulator. Cpl A. Ggxangane, who is qualified as an apprentice on an Astra PC7 Avionics and Electrical, is completing continuation training on Avionics.

F Sgt Mandy Lee Dilley is a qualified aircraft instrument fitter at 6 Air Supply Unit, Avionic Training Section, who finished her apprenticeship in 1996. With a wide variety of responsibilities, including presenting apprentice training on Oryx helicopters, she has adapted very well in a male dominant environment. This was a direct result of her belief to accept people as they are and never being too proud to ask for help.

Her interest for aircraft's was aroused when her brother joined the SA Air Force when she was still in Grade 4. The SA Air Force offered her the unique opportunity to work on aircraft, which was her great interest. This proved to be a much better alternative than to sit behind a desk in an office. F Sgt Dilley aspires to be one of the fortunate members to be considered to form part of the Agusta Helicopter (Strategic Defence Package) Technical Team. F Sgt Dilley is particularly happy to form part of the women who serve in the Technical

**Aircraft instrument fitter**

F Sgt Mandy Lee Dilley.

Mustering in the SA Air Force. However, she cautioned that "If you join up as a artisan, do it because you love a practical career and not just to prove that you can do it!" She also confessed that up to this point she has had a very rewarding career with possibilities that are always changing within this dynamic Defence Force."
Maj Estelle Pretorius was born in Johannesburg, grew up on the East Rand, and matriculated at Kempton Park High School. She completed her MBChB degree at the University of Pretoria and served as a Medical Official at the Tembisa Hospital for a period of four years. During this period she realised her special aptitude and interest in the field of anaesthesia and qualified herself as an anaesthetist at the Medical College of South Africa in 1991. After becoming a specialist she left the service of the public sector and until recently pursued a full-time career as a general practitioner/anaesthetist.

She is married to Bertus and they have two sons. Owing to her marital responsibilities, and the effort it requires, she is currently pursuing a part-time career as general practitioner/anaesthetist. Maj Pretorius is also an appreciated Reserve Force member of 6 Medical Battalion Group and she belongs to a core group of medical executives who have specialist medical responsibilities within the unit.

Her balanced lifestyle and her ability to participate fully and with the necessary commitment makes her a great asset to her family, the community and the military unit.

Her approach to life is informed by the saying: "A mind stretched by a new idea will not return to its old shape". She believes in continual improvement and optimal performance in the respective roles she has to play as a wife and mother, and in the importance of persevering. She approaches problems as valuable opportunities to improve and enjoy life.

Maj Pretorius is involved with school and church projects. Her participation in community driven projects is aimed at uplifting and empowering the less privileged members of the community, and she has already made valuable contributions in this regard. As a member of the SA Mountain Club she is also involved with mountain rescue projects. Her community involvement and orientation towards others confirms her caring nature and the ability to serve others with compassion.

Maj Pretorius has many interests. She is a keen reader and has a special affinity for needlecraft. Typical projects include quilt making, embroidery and knitting. She is also an outdoor person, who is fond of gardening and caring for pets, such as dogs, cats, poultry and fish. Her special interest in photography presents her with exceptional opportunities to see life and enjoy it to the fullest.

She and her husband do tandem cycling and have on several occasions competed in the annual Argus cycling event. Most weekends are spent cycling. She prefers mountain biking, which is a sport and pastime in South Africa. Mountain biking has given her the opportunity to meet people, see the world and enjoy life.

Her state of mind and happiness is promoted by participating in life to the fullest. She is a balanced person with a continuous urge for self-improvement and her lifestyle reflects appreciation and sincere respect for others.

Maj Pretorius is involved with the Unit’s Clinical Wing responsible for rendering specialist medical support to members of the Department of Defence when required.

As part of her career development plan, Maj Pretorius completed the Battles and Barts Course presented by the Medical Training School at Thaba Tshwane in March 2004. Owing to her exceptional qualities and personal make-up, she has also been approached to become a qualified Instructor for the Mobile Military Health Services.

She is an informed, participative and reliable member and her involvement and conduct within the Unit are driven by sound principles. Her approach is professional and her contributions add value to her activities. There is no doubt that this member of the Reserve Force with her special abilities and willingness will play an increasingly important role within SAMHS.

Her concerned and inquisitive nature empowers her to assess and evaluate key issues and she has, therefore, the ability to make valuable strategic inputs regarding the future functioning and performance of the Unit. As a woman she has made her mark and has proved that being a woman has no influence on performance in the military environment. She is a dependable person and a real pleasure to work with.
Dynamite comes in small packages

By Nomonde Vuthela
Photo: PO Eddie Kgomo

Ms Fikile Khumalo is the Personal Assistant (PA) to the Secretary for Defence, Mr January Masilela. The office Ms Khumalo runs is typical of an office on the front line. The constant interruptions as SA SOLDIER attempted to interview her gave me a real feel of what Ms Khumalo goes through on a daily basis. She is no less than the very lifeline that links Mr Masilela to the rest of the world.

"It has been a great challenge for me," said Ms Khumalo. "You have to manage your stress levels because sometimes things can get very hectic and the plan changes from plan 'A' to plan 'C' and you must adjust," she added.

Ms Khumalo was of the opinion that her ability to cope with every situation stemmed from her belief in the Batho Pele concept. "Everybody who wants to see Mr Masilela is important in my eyes, no issue is too small, and that to me is what the President talks about when he speaks of service delivery," Ms Khumalo continued.

Ms Khumalo studied in Zimbabwe where she attained both her "O" and "A" Levels through the Cambridge University Examination System. She was a teacher for a while, but felt that she did not belong there. She then did a Specialised Business Course at Birnam Business College in Johannesburg. She is currently working towards a B-Admin Degree.

Before joining the South African Defence Force Ms Khumalo worked as an Administrator at Birnam Business College. Next she worked for the then DOD's Chief of Policy and Planning, Mr Abu Baker Ishmael, until he left the Department. Ms Khumalo has also assisted in the office of the former Deputy Secretary for Defence, Mr M.P. Ntsiandia, as well as on the SETAI Commission of Inquiry.

She joined the Office of the Secretary for Defence in the year 2000. "I do not really have normal working hours. When I have pressing issues in the office I give them priority and I make the necessary adjustments to my private life, vice versa applies when pressing issues are at home," she said.

"The past years have been a learning curve for me; it is time now for one to implement the lessons learnt from the past," said Ms Khumalo. "I wish to see myself as a manager - with the experience that I have gained I would like to see myself working more with women," she emphasised.

Referring to her small physical build, Ms Khumalo said: "Dynamite comes in small packages. I may be petite, but my mind is not".

"Because I started off as a secretary, I want to let other secretaries know that their world does not begin and end with their sitting in front of a computer and answering the phone. What secretaries actually do is managing their manager's office," noted Ms Khumalo. According to her a secretary that masters the art of management can definitely go places.

"I am willing to have discussions with other secretaries, especially those who are new in the field, to tell them how I have managed to grow," she offered. "I took every step as a challenge. When you view the circumstances and the environment as a challenge and you say to yourself, I am going to learn - you will make it! More importantly, for one to be successful one must move forward with a dedicated focus," continued Ms Khumalo.

"As a South African woman I feel proud that we are celebrating ten years of democracy and freedom. Our President has empowered women, thereby showing that he has confidence in women. The fact that the new Cabinet is composed of 27 men and 22 women bears this out. Women should no longer take the back seat," she stated. "I hope that in the next decade we will see an increase in the number of women occupying senior and middle management positions in the DOD."

Ms Khumalo has one son, Themba. "I am proud to be a mother - Themba keeps me going," concluded Ms Khumalo.
Communicate through creative brushstrokes

By Chappy Holtzhausen,
Acting Visual Comm Manager
Photo: Sgt David Nomtshongwana

When the artist is alive in any person, he or she becomes an inventive, searching, daring, self-expressing creature. They become interesting to other people, they disturb, upset, enlighten and open ways for a better understanding” - Robert Henri, The Art Spirit.

Creating this understanding with brushstrokes, colour and line on the farm at Visual Communication in Hermanstad (Pretoria) is a fine artist and creative woman, Angelique Grop. She was born in Pretoria and studied at the University of Pretoria, obtaining a BA (Ed) Art Degree. She joined the Department of Defence in August 1997 and brought with her a personal philosophy and style that became her trademark in the creating, design and execution of artwork (paintings and drawings), graphics and decor.

Angelique created oil and acrylic paintings for the Secretary for Defence, Equal Opportunities, the Surgeon General’s Conference Room, the foyer of the SAMHS Training Formation and decor paintings for use at functions, shows and exhibitions. Drawings in pencil, charcoal, pastel and markers were done for the Chief of the SA Army, the foyer of the Defence Corporate Communication, the foyer of the SAMHS, the conference room of Foreign Relations, the foyer of the Environmental Services and the SA Army Training Formation, to name but a few.

Angelique is also involved with the designs of invitations, menus, programmes and certificates for various functions, and helps with the conceptualisation of themes and decor for use at functions, shows and exhibitions.

True art for her is not only a personal expression of herself and her ideas, but it is also the visual communication of information through problem solving and a technically superior execution of the artwork. She believes that art must have meaning for the spectator, as well as the artist. She enjoys the process of creative thinking, research and problem solving in regard to the size, format, medium and the execution of an artwork.

She also believes that art must enhance the space that it occupies and that creativity in the Department of Defence is a tool to help communicate messages and solve problems visually in a simple and powerful manner.

To her art is a form of self-expression, and by growing up on a farm and extensive travelling throughout Southern Africa, she was surrounded by the warm, bright colours of Africa. The crisp blue sky, the rich red of an Afrikaner bull, golden yellow sunflowers and the fresh green of new leaves all played a role in the creation of her artistic soul and influenced the way she looks at and executes her art. Other influences are the South African artist, Judith Mason, in the translucent and symbolical way she expresses her most personal emotions without literally detailed information.

As a portrait painter herself, the artist that inspired her most is Gustav Klimt. He captured the personality of his subjects through a creative awareness that moved the spectator between reality and illusion. His use of patterns, rich colours, stark realistic figures and decorative style gives inspiration and happiness to her as a creative person.

Because of the specific themes and character of the Department of Defence and the SANDF, Angelique adopted a way to please the client and get the message across without sacrificing her own style and creative vision. She finds her work at the Visual Communication Art Section stimulating and challenging.

She captures colours, images and moods on paper and canvas to tell visual stories of the past, present and future. Angelique creates atmosphere, beauty and history that support the message of freedom, peace and stability. She is a talented visual communicator and a great artist.

"Let imagination rise to power and creativity rules."
Our Olympic hopes

Compiled by Nelda Pienaar

Lt Cdr Henriëtte Moller, the Sports Officer at Naval Base in Simon’s Town, and Lt Col Liezl Diffenthal, the first SO1 Business Plans of the Area Military Health Formation Headquarters, are two female athletes who will be competing in the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece, in August this year. We wish them all the best - go for gold!

Lt Cdr Moller is the first member of the SA Navy to be selected for the South African Olympic Team since 1992 when South Africa was welcomed back to the international sporting arena.

She boasts twenty-eight years of experience as a judoka and received her national colours for the first time in 1989. She has also been the captain of the national team since 1994.

“Self-discipline is vital when one wants to excel in judo. A judoka needs to think quickly on his feet if he wants to outsmart his opponent,” said Lt Cdr Moller.

To win is to focus on the end result. Spending a minimum of two hours per day, six days a week practising softball is only a small part of the sacrifice to which Lt Col Liezl Diffenthal, the first SO1 Business Plans of the Area Military Health Formation Headquarters, has committed herself.

Lt Col Diffenthal knows what it feels like to ache because of exercise, exhaustion and disappointment, but she also knows the sweet taste of winning - the taste of being awarded SA colours for softball for the first time in 1997. She was selected as the Gauteng Sportswoman of the Year (1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001), as well as the SAMHS Sportswoman of the Year in 2000 and 2002, and was the runner-up in 2001. The taste of success was even sweeter when she was selected as the SANDF Sportswoman of the Year (Team Sport) in 2001 and 2002, and sweetest of all was to be selected as one of the squad members to participate in the World Cup in Canada in 2002!

She is a member of the Road to Athens Olympic Squad for the 2004 Olympics in Greece!
Page 47
AAD Ad
(Repeat Advert,
July 04, page 47)
Armscor Advert
(Repeat page 48
July 2004)
page 48