Special Edition
Women in Defence - 2006
Letters: feedback from our readers

Women of our country still marching on

Status update on Gender Mainstreaming

Heading for the top

A soldier ploughing back into society

First females trained in the Air Force since WW II

She proudly wears her camouflage uniform and naval ranks

An angel in the Comoros

Two of the first women to join a commando

One of our best legal eagles

Chaplain addressed NATO chaplains on peace operations

Focus on self-development

The first mechanical engineering woman in our Navy

An intellectual bridge builder and rugby fan

A doctor training future doctors

Infantry women show their steel in the Malutis

Our youth making the most of opportunities

Ready for combat and armed with knowledge

A human link to deployment

Government Communicators’ Awards 2006

Technical women keeping our aircraft serviceable

One is never too old to learn

A wise woman is worth more than gold

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FRONT COVER: This Special Edition is devoted to our women in defence as we nationally celebrate the power of women in South Africa. Let all these success stories encourage and motivate each and every woman to fulfil her dreams. (Design Courtesy Visual Communications)

For the latest news on defence matters in South Africa, visit our website at: www.sasoldier.mil.za
From the Editor’s desk

This year, fifty years after the famous Women’s March to the Union Buildings in Pretoria in 1956, we commemorate and celebrate the 50th anniversary of our Women’s Day! Fifty years later, the women of our country are still marching on...

Therefore SA Soldier, as it was the case for the past two years, once again is pleased to devote its August edition to our women in defence to celebrate the program of women in Defence.

Much has been achieved since 1994 to make sure that in our country we have policies, legislation and structures to improve the quality of life of the women of South Africa. Within the Department of Defence (DOD) the White Paper on Defence stipulates that women must be represented in all mustering and rank levels, including those involved in combat. A lot more still needs though to be done to promote gender equality within our ranks.

As we commemorate Women’s Day on 9 August in the Age of Hope we applaud women’s achievements and refocus our attention on the tasks that lie ahead.

I want to echo the sentiments of Maj Gen Ntsiki Motumi, Chief Director Equal Opportunities - “It is a day for reflecting on how far our society has come and how far we still have to go. The anniversary of the 1956 March has consolidated the role of women as one of central importance in the country’s liberation and has also helped finally to highlight the emancipation of women as one of the key tasks on the transformation agenda of the Government”.

Please indulge yourselves by reading the captivating articles about all the empowered women serving in our Defence Force. Let all these success stories encourage and motivate each and every woman to fulfil her dreams.

Happy 50th anniversary of our Women’s Day!

Nelda Pienaar
Editor

Ho tswa ho Mohlophisi

Selemoneng sena, dilemo tse mashome a mahlano ka mora ho ba basadi ba hwantele Moahong wa Union Pitoria ka 1956, re hopola le ho keteka anivesari ya mashome a mahlano ya Letsatsi la Basadi! Dilemo tse mashome a mahlano kamora moo, basadi ba naha ya rona ba sa ntsa ba hwantele.

Kahoo SA Soldier, jwalo ka ha ho nnile ha etsahala dilemong tse pedi tse fettle, e boetse e behela kgatiso ya kgwedi ya Phato bakeng sa basadi ba ka hare ho tshireletso le ho keteka matla ao basadi ba nang le ona.

Ho se ho entswe ho hongata haholo ho tloha ka 1994 ho netefatsa hore naha ya rona e na le maano, molao le ditheo tsa ho ntlafatsa boleng ba bophelo ba basadi ba Afrika Borwa. Ka hare ho Lefapha la Tshireletso (DOD) Pampiri Tshweu ya Tshireletso e hlalosa hore basadi ba lokela ho ba le kemedi ka hare ho ditsebeletseng tsohle le direnkeng tsohle, ho kanyeletitswe le ba nkang karolo ntweng. Ho ntsa ho le hongata ho lokelang ho etswa ho ntsbetsapele ho lekana ha banna le basadi direnkeng tsa rona.

Jwalo ka ha re hopola Letsatsi la Basadi ka la 9 Phato, Nakong ena ya Tshepo, re thoholetsela boiphileleho ba basadi mme re boetse re tadinama le mesebetsi e re tobileleng.

Ke rata ho mamiella mantswe a Maj Gen Ntsiki Motumi, Molao ya ka Sehlohong wa Equal Opportunities - Ke letsatsi la hore le rekole hore na setjhaba sa rona se fihleleletho ho kae le hore ho sa setse seba- ka se se kae moo re yeang. Sehopotso sa Mohwantso wa 1956 se nkile karolo e bapalweng ke basadi e le e bohlokwa haholo tokolohong ya naha mme karolo ena e thusitse ho bontsha matlaftso ya basadi e le se notlolo se bohlokwa tsamaisong ya diphetoho tsa Mmuso.

Hle ka kopo balang dingolwa ka hare ho bukana ena tse buang ka basadi ba matlaftseteng ba sebeletseng Lebotho la rona la Tshireletso. Ha dipale tse tse tsvetseng pele di kgotathse le ho phahamisa morolo mosading e mong le e mong hore a fihlele ditoro tsa hae.

‘Happy’ bakeng sa sehopotso sa mashome a mahlano sa Letsatsi la Basadi!

Nelda Pienaar
Mohlophisi

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**Tribute to mothers**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all mothers around the globe for the tremendous support and co-operation given, even taking the initiative in assisting their children and husbands. And here is a poem especial for you.

Every moment of the day is a new happy birthday,
Shall try to learn something new about you and about the family you live in.
I may continue to experience all things as, If they have been newly born.

The “You” in yourself should be,
Underlined in everything you do, Mother.
Look beyond physical attraction, for compatibility,

Look at shared interests, and most importantly,
Love amongst us, Mother.
Take good care of myself, to love myself and
To appreciate me, Mother.

How happy I am born and taught by you,
Your love is better than high birth to me.
Richer than wealth, prouder than garments,
Come live with me and be my mother.

At first the infant, mewling and pulling in the nurses arms
And then the whining schoolboy, creeping like snail,
Thanks, thanks, to you my worthy Mother,
Within your nets of gold.

Where would I be without you,
Well, it all depends on what you mean by care,
Your cosmopolitan sympathies.
The hand that knows business would not be
But let there never be curtain drawn.

Between you and me,
You have seen me when I was taken and swept.
Nothing is so beautiful as you,
With these kisses let me remove your tears,
Never lose your dreams, Mother.

Mother, you have been so good to me and you will always be my mother, I wish you many years to come. The Almighty will protect you - Sgt N.S. Monyamane,

**First female Corporal of the Year 2000**

For the past two years I have noticed that in your August edition (dedicated to women’s achievements) for Women’s Day, you mention women who were appointed to important positions and who achieved honours and rewards. On page 26 of your December 2000 issue of SALUT you gave the results of the SA International Non-commissioned Officers (NCO) Competition. The Corporal of the Year for 2000 was Cpl D.N. Amaro. This person is a woman and the first woman in history to win this event. She beat her male counterparts in events involving fitness, individual neatness, individual drill, R4 rifle and 9 mm pistol shooting. I just thought she should get the same recognition as all the other female achievers - M.M. Brümmer, email.

**Lamentation for Mother Africa**

Africa land of our birth.
Land of our happy homes, full of intellectuals
Rich with natural resources for her inhabitants
To inherit and have a meaningful life
Africa no more unrest.

Africa land of our Forefathers
Mother Africa, now look your land is full
Of envies, agony and torture.
People are tormented and are calling for help
Children rise against parents
Women and children amputated for no reasons
Brothers fight against brothers.

War, famine and ignorance are all over.
Mothers are wailing
Babies are crying
Human flesh and bones have become food
For dogs.
Your blessed land is stained with the Innocent blood.
Africa no more atrocities.

Africa land of our joyfulness
Mother Africa, wherefrom all these things?
Who can tell?
Who can help Mother Africa?

Who can sing the song?
When will all this venom stop?
Who can stop these atrocities?
Which are destroying our motherland, Africa
No more wars, No more wars, No more wars.
Freedom fighters no more wars
Peace for Mother Africa, our land -
Cpl M. Nonyondla, Thaba Tshwane.
Deployment experiences in the Sudan

I was deployed in the Sudan from February 2005 until March 2006 in the second team of 29 SANDF members consisting of Military Observers (MILOBS), among them six were women, four staff officers and two MILOBS (SAMHS).

We were the first female MILOBS to be deployed in the Sudan. As the days progressed there were some improvements. The African Union (AU) managed to build separate showers for men and women. The support we got from our male counterparts was wonderful. The weather in the Sudan is very harsh. Temperatures rise from 53 degrees to 60 or above. Sandstorms are the rain in the Sudan - visibility becomes poor and it also affects the ability of helicopters and other aircraft not to land. It rains for three months in a year - a desert in the true sense. After a week’s induction course at Elasher Air Force Headquarters we were deployed in eight different sectors. I was deployed in sector 7 (Zalinje). These are villages with steep hills. The mountains of Jabbal Marrah are a stronghold of Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA).

I worked in that sector for four months as a MILOBS. After that I was nominated for a CIMIC Course (Civilian Military Co-operation). I liaised with local authorities, the military, the AU civilian police, the UN Agencies and non-governmental organisations and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), that is people who fled from their villages because of war and conflicts. This was really a big challenge for me as I was deployed as a MILOBS from my country. I was declared as a CIMIC Officer by the Force Headquarters after finishing the theory and practical side. Other courses were UN Agency courses, NGOs, ICRC and Office for Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

All these courses helped me to perform my duties diligently. I was the first female to be deployed in sector 7 (Zalinje). After a few months other women were shocked to see other women in combat. It was the first time for them to experience something like that. Others used to touch me to check if I was “real”.

When we were deployed in that sector there were many incidents of rape, abduction and sometimes killing of women. Women were targets because these incidents happened during the collection of firewood. They walk 36 kilometres to and fro with babies on their backs. Collecting firewood was their means of generating income as they were receiving dry rations from humanitarian sources. With the income that they generate they buy meat and vegetables. They also use firewood for cooking food for the family. I salute the Sudanese women. They are hard workers. They work for 24 hours and not do complain. They even build houses.

I organised meetings with these women to discuss security issues that affected them. They were open enough because I was a woman just like them. Otherwise, with my male counterparts, it was not easy because of their culture. Sudanese men are very possessive and overprotective towards their women. I managed to build their confidence when I was with them. I used to get firsthand information from them. We started embarking on firewood patrols with the AU civilian police to reduce the number of rapes and the statistics went down. There were four IDP camps that we were protecting, mostly of zaghawa tribe. Women and children in the Sudan are the most vulnerable.

Activities that I performed on a daily basis as a CIMIC Officer included attending meetings with OCHA, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), updating the AU about the statistics of the IDPs who had returned to their villages. Meetings with Umdas and Sheiks (chiefs) took place. IDPs attend these meetings because that is where they raise their concerns. At first the Umdas and Sheiks refused to let the women attend meetings. I had to be very polite in telling them that IDPs were not men only, but everybody who stayed in the IDP camps, and if they did not respect women they did not respect me. Immediately they calmed down.

I participated in civilian planning through the provision of advice and by monitoring sustainable projects carried out by IDPs, both men and women. They acted as a point of contact for humanitarian agencies. In spite of their vulnerability they still have big hearts. I would like to encourage women to be deployed in the Sudan. There are women out there who need our support. Women, let us face challenges! - Capt Thandeka Goqo, MILOBS/CIMIC Officer Deployment: Sudan.

Capt Thandeka Goqo with the Sudanese women, discussing issues that affect them on a daily basis.
**Every day is Women's Day**

For their tears for their triumphs! So says the story told by one of the struggle's stalwarts. I am dedicating these short notes to remember our fallen heroines. These women, young and old, demonstrated courage, which kept us hoping for the total liberation of our motherland. Thinking of their supreme sacrifice, we had no option but to pick up their spears and forge forward. Some of them fought in the frontline, some succumbed to illness. Others were murdered by unscrupulous elements within our ranks. They all died in the name of the struggle. We called them THE MIGHTY FEW for they were few indeed, yet their presence reverberated throughout the continent. They were a minority, yet so powerful. They endured both a hard life of exile and survived with limited resources and persevered. All the women I encountered rose to the challenge of soldiering. My aim is to remind all of us fellow Africans from poverty and misery, lest we want their demise to be futile. I want us to rededicate ourselves and commit ourselves to the emancipation of all South Africans from poverty and misery, lest we want their demise to be futile. I want us to rededicate ourselves and commit ourselves to make our beloved country EMZANZI (hospitable) to its citizens. They did not die in vain.

WATHINTA BAFAZI WATHINTA IMBOKODO

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**The purpose of IQ tests**

We are the children of the universe no less than the stars and the moon. We become what we affirm; we need to positively affirm our greatness, and fullest potential. Since 1987 I have been subjected to psychometric and IQ tests. One would like to know the difference between the two, as well as their purpose. In one sector of our population I was made to understand IQ was once used to gauge the intelligence of our population. On the other hand certain people are using it to undermine or divide people according to race. There are those who believe that people in one racial group are genetically superior to those in another. In fact, the whole concept of “race” has been proved to be a lack of common sense by DNA testing. These tests have clearly shown that there is only one “race” - the human race. Yet such attitudes are still gaining momentum in our society. What prompted me to ask this question of my learned friends, especially from DPSYCH, is that I was told that indigenous Africans (the black race) are doing badly in IQ tests. Both forms of media, electronic and print, are insulting the intelligence of indigenous Africans. The IQ of an adult African is perceived to be equal to that of a nine year old white child. What comes to mind then is why should a person from a completely different cultural background be able to answer questions evolved in another culture, by people of that particular culture? It is a fact that our standards of education were not the same. It is still not the same, and seemingly no one considered this seriously when these manuals were being written. Customs, traditions and the diversity of our culture are not taken into consideration at all. I would sincerely appreciate it if my learned friends who are engaged in these types of projects can take a very serious and broader look at these issues. I think it is about time that we refrain from mimicking our former colonial masters and mistresses. At the same time I would like to call upon our intellectuals to remedy this situation before it splits the future generation. Those who have clan names, who know our customs and culture, must stand up and be counted. I would appreciate it if this could be debated at length so that a solution can be found to this confusion that is caused by these tests - Lt P. Nxyitywa, email.
What is love?

I have tried many times to ask the people what is love, but they give me different answers. At the end of my researches, I came to the conclusion that some people are committing themselves to marriage because for three wrong reasons, namely money, status and sexual intercourse.

I hope and I believe that readers of SA Soldier magazine will agree with me if I say: There is a big difference between the marriages of our parents and ours. The rate of divorce is increasing seriously on account of these three wrong reasons that I have mentioned. As I have indicated, the rate of divorce is increasing. It also increases the rate of AIDS because many different people are met in a short space of time. When you advise them about AIDS, they do not listen. It is only when a person is infected that he or she starts to regret, but then it is too late already.

Let me now discuss these three reasons one by one.

Money: Most of the people get involved with other people because of their wealth. People start first by checking to see if their beloved ones have money or not. Those who are poor are unfortunate. Let us now accept that the marriage is there because of money. What is going to happen if the money disappears? People must remember that life has its ups and downs, including such things as retrenchments. A marriage will be destroyed because it was based on money, not love.

Status: Most of the women like people who drive beautiful and expensive cars. That means that they love those beautiful and expensive cars, not their partners. Clothing is one of the things that put people in hell because people are attracted to that and do not even check the character of the person concerned. It means that if that particular person is not dressed in a way to attract you, you are not going to love him or her anymore. Let us stop this thing of loving clothes more than people. Others love people who are educated and in professions without considering the character of the person. Who said educated people are always good or perfect? People must know that there are some who are not educated, but they are rich and successful.

Sexual intercourse: Why are people attracted only to the body or appearance of other people? Most of the men will agree with me when I say that they say: "This lady is fit, she has nice curves". When they are talking about curves, they are talking about hips. It shows that if you have been attracted to her because of her fitness and curves you do not love that particular person, because if she is not fit and does not have curves anymore because of illness, you will leave her. How many women are going to attract you because of their body in this country? You must know what you want in life. At the end of the day you will end up having sexual intercourse with hundreds of people, which puts you in danger of being infected with AIDS.

People must love their partners deeply. Let us stop this attitude of loving people because of money, status and sexual intercourse because if one of these three things disappears, so does love. Marriage is not something that you decide in the darkness without thinking seriously of your partner. Do the right thing in respect of your partner, as you are going to live with him or her for the rest of your life. Let us work very hard to decrease the divorce rate and the large number of street kids. Love is not money, status and sexual intercourse.

NB: Take time to know him or her, so that you can make the right choice at the right time - Sgt Mlangeni Paulos, Pretoria.

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**AUGUST 2006 ‧ SA SOLDIER**
During the early 1950s the ANC developed new initiatives to assert women’s rights as Human Rights. The Women’s Charter of 1954 was a landmark in the process of asserting the rights of women and demanding freedom from discrimination on the basis of gender.

But long before that, Charlotte Maxeke in an extraordinary speech at a conference at Fort Hare in 1930 described movingly and vividly what became known subsequently as the triple oppression of black women. She concluded her speech with this insight: “If you definitely and earnestly set about uplifting women and children in social life, you will find that the men will benefit and thus the whole community, both black and white”. Fifty years later, the women of this country are still marching on.

The struggle for the emancipation of women has been a long and painful one, starting with the famous Women’s March to the Union Buildings in 1956. As a society we are not in a position to declare victory yet, for the majority of South African women still bear the brunt of poverty, ignorance and degradation. A lot has been achieved since 1994 to make sure that in this country we have policies, legislation and structures to improve the quality of life of the women in our country. Within the Department of Defence (DOD) the White Paper on Defence stipulates that women must be represented in all musterings and rank levels, including those involved in combat. A lot more still needs to be done to promote gender equality within our ranks.

This year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the famous Women’s March to the Union Buildings by over 20 000 women. Although this march was organised to oppose the extension of the pass laws to women and for the repeal of all pass laws, the petition ended in the language of rights. “We shall not rest until we have won for our children the fundamental rights of freedom, justice and security.”

As we commemorate this day in the Age of Hope we applaud women’s achievements and refocus our attention on the tasks which lie ahead. It is a day for reflecting on how far our society has come and how far we still have to go. The anniversary of the 1956 March has consolidated the role of women as one of central importance in the country’s liberation and has also helped finally to place the task of the emancipation of women as one of the key tasks on the transformation agenda of the Government.

As we move into the second decade of our democracy we need to ensure that the gender audit that has been conducted translates into the empowerment of women with the necessary skills, which would enable them to contribute positively to organisational objectives and position them as agents for transformation. The task that faces us now is to accelerate the process of bringing to fruition the mandates embodied in the White Paper on Defence and the Defence Review.

Women are no longer invisible, as within the DOD they comprise 22% of the total membership. It is therefore fitting that our organisation has put on its agenda the Advancement of Women in Defence. We have not arrived at the final destination.

We have moved from struggle to freedom, but we still have a long way to go towards the total emancipation of women. Let the stories of women in combat roles featured in this edition serve as an inspiration to all of us, because it means that the defence of our country is no longer only a male’s prerogative.

Happy 50th anniversary of our Women’s Day!
By Maj Gen Ntsiki Motumi, Chief Director Equal Opportunities

The Chief of the SANDF, Gen Godfrey Ngwenya, established a Gender Mainstreaming Council consisting of representatives from the Services and Divisions in February 2006. This Council was charged with two responsibilities: to develop the terms of reference of and to organise a National Women’s Conference which would facilitate dialogue within the DOD on issues pertinent to the advancement of women.

In terms of the Constitution of the Gender Mainstreaming Council its functions entail identifying and conducting research regarding all factors that impinge on the advancement of women in Defence. Secondly, to provide realistic targets to the Secretary for Defence and the Chief of the SANDF and for the promotion of gender equity in the DOD. Thirdly, to receive and analyse feedback regarding challenges experienced in the implementation of gender related policies in order to initiate a policy review and provide firm recommendations to the Secretary for Defence and the Chief of the SANDF. Fourthly, to engage with the Justice Crime Prevention Services (JCPS) Cluster, the International Relations on Peace and Security (IRPS) Cluster and other State entities regarding benchmarks for gender mainstreaming, and to determine what lessons could be learned. Lastly, to monitor and evaluate the correction of gender imbalances within the DOD. The Gender Mainstreaming Council meets every second Tuesday of the month in pursuit of these functions.

The National Conference on Women in Defence, which was held from 24 to 26 May 2006 at the Kopanong Conference Centre in Benoni, provided an opportunity to address a broad range of issues. After the conference the Secretary for Defence, Mr January Masilela, requested in the Plenary Defence Staff Council (PDSC) that was held on 29 May 2006 that the conference resolutions be discussed at the Daily Defence Staff Council (DDSC) on 5 June 2006. The purpose was to provide the top leadership with the opportunity to reflect further on the conference resolutions and determine how to support and take this initiative forward.

In this regard an action plan was presented which covered four main issues, namely the correction of the current gender imbalances, women’s roles in the furtherance of the Peace and Security Agenda, the psychosocial support needed during deployment and the support to the people of South Africa.

With regard to the correction of the current gender imbalances within the DOD, the leadership has committed itself to increasing the number of women promoted to senior and middle management levels immediately. The nomination of women to Military Development course will also be regarded as a priority from now on so that when the opportunities present themselves, the women will not be found wanting. The need to identify the women who will participate in the Africa Standby Force and the development of its doctrine was acknowledged, including the appointment of women commanders in the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN) missions. The top leadership also agreed in principle that a budget would be allocated to address the development of women leaders at all levels. The redress of current gender imbalances would start with an audit of women representatives in services and divisions in terms of the musternings, course qualifications and other skills. From this data the DOD will then be able to set realistic goals.

On enhancing women’s roles in the furtherance of the peace and security agenda, women in defence will be actively involved in post-conflict, reconstruction and development issues. Lessons learnt in SA’s democratisation process will be shared with countries emerging from conflict. Furthermore, close working relationships will be developed with women officers on the continent through the peace table seminars.

On the question of providing psychosocial support during development, the DOD acknowledges that family support is critical to maintain the mission readiness of SANDF soldiers. Studies conducted within the SANDF have shown that the majority of members (Continued on page 12)
Heading for the top

By Nomonde Vuthela
Photo: Cpl René Naicker

WO1 Sheron Strydom is the Acting Divisional Warrant Officer of Joint Operations; in October 2006 she will officially take over the post of Divisional Warrant Officer of Joint Operations.

“In June 2001 I was the first woman to be appointed on the operational side as the Acting Task Force Warrant Officer Regional Joint Task Force South. In 2002 I was officially appointed as the Task Force Warrant Officer Regional Joint Task Force South,” WO1 Strydom said speaking to SA Soldier. “Then the Task Force became the Tactical Headquarters and I became the Tactical HQ Warrant Officer and also the first woman to be appointed to that post,” she added. WO1 Strydom is also the first woman to be appointed as the Divisional Warrant Officer at Chief Joint Operations and the first woman to be appointed on Level 2 (Strategic Level). She was born in Cradock, and is the third of four sisters. “We are a lovely family and as sisters we are very close to each other,” she said. In 1972 her family moved to Port Elizabeth where she matriculated at DF Malherbe High School. “When I was in high school members of the South African Defence Force (SADF) would come to the school to drill us and that is how I got interested in joining,” WO1 Strydom remembered. “One time while I was in matric they had a programme on television about the women’s training in George. Then and there I decided to join the Permanent Force.”

WO1 Strydom joined the military in 1982, and completed her Basic Training Course in Pretoria at Personnel Service Corps School from where she was later transferred to 2 Signal Regiment as a telecommunication operator.

“You do get members who will say you cannot do this or you cannot do that because you are a woman, but in my whole career I must say that I have proved them wrong. It is all in the mind and it is all about attitude and commitment. I do not have an attitude problem,” she added. In 1994 she was integrated into the South African National Defence Force as a Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2). In August 1999 she was transferred to Regional Joint Task Force South as WO1 in the SO3 Communication Centre post. “In 1994 when the whole integration process started people were a bit nervous and did not know what to expect, and as time went by I actually realised that nothing was different to the way things were and was it not for the integration process I would not think that I would be where I am today,” she continued. “The integration process was obviously very positive because it has to do with your mind-set and I am a very positive person. Women have quite a lot to offer because when I look back at my career I find that the men always seem to ask for and want to know the woman’s opinion and sometimes they take what you have said and they implement it. As the first woman at Level 2 (Strategic Level) I most certainly want to move forward. My career path forward is open and I will do my utmost best to reach the highest position of a Warrant Officer in the SANDF and that is to be appointed as the Warrant Officer of the SANDF,” WO1 Strydom concluded.

African women united in their diversity acting together for a better life.”

The top leadership of the DOD is committed to the advancement of women within our ranks. Women in defence must therefore seize the opportunity and take responsibility for their own development. The National Conference facilitated dialogue on all the pertinent issues in this regard. The DOD context demands that the women in defence put their finger on the pulse of the situation and continue engaging constructively on these matters. When the next conference convenes, from 1 to 3 August 2007, women in defence should be in a position to take this dialogue to the next level.
A soldier ploughing back into society

By Nomonde Vuthela
Photo: Sgt Lebogang Tlhaole

"We are teaching everybody in the Department of Defence how the military can work in harmony with civil authority," said Col Dimakatso Naomi Major, SSO Civic Education Centre of Excellence under Joint Training, when speaking to SA Soldier. "For example the Minister of Defence and the Secretary for Defence are both civilians and on the other hand the Chief of the SANDF is a uniformed member, so we teach members to make sure that activities in the SANDF run parallel to the political climate of the country. We teach members that there is no way that we as uniformed members within Defence can just do our own thing without the Chief, the Secretariat and the Ministry being in agreement."

On 27 April 2006 Col Major participated in the national Freedom Day celebrations as an aide-de-camp to President Thabo Mbeki at Galeshewe Stadium in Kimberley. "My participation in that role was also a reflection of civic education," she said. "This shows that because the President is our Commander-in-Chief it is expected of us and it is our role to be seen at high-profile activities where the Government of the day celebrates events of this nature."

"This indicates that there is close co-operation between the Government and members of the Defence Force, with the implication that we are prepared to take a bullet before the President," she added. "Being an aide-de-camp to the President was more than an honour because I was born in the Northern Cape at Warrenton, just 70 km outside Kimberley. So as a daughter of Warrenton it was an aspi-

ation for the people of the Northern Cape to see a "home girl" take up such a role. "As a result of that day’s event I was later interviewed on "Radio Motswedeng", a local radio station, because everybody was so happy," she added: "Back home I am known as a very strict teacher and to see me in uniform as well was as if I was teaching them something different." Col Major was a teacher for three years after completing matric.

"Where I come from our youth is really going astray as there are no recreational activities for them. Back at home as an aide-de-camp I said to the young people that they could make the best of their lives regardless of where they came from. All one needs to do is to focus," Col Major continued.

According to Col Major things did not just end with the interview as more was to follow as a consequence of the role she played on Freedom Day. "I have also become a founder member of an education trust fund set up by a group of graduates who originate from my home area and who were successful in making their dreams to be educated come true. This education trust was the brainchild of a certain Godfrey Oliphant, a Member of Parliament who was also born in Warrenton. The idea is for the fund to help finance young people who are unable to further their education due to financial constraints. This is also a way for me to plough back into society because I was one of the more fortunate ones. Therefore a group of others and myself, who have made it despite hardships, decided to come together and set up a fund," she explained.

"We know that we come from a very poor community and for us to launch the ‘Magareng’ Education Trust Fund means that we can take the education of our younger brothers and sisters a step further," she said. The members of the trust fund will each contribute to the fund from their own pockets on a monthly basis. It is hoped that more graduates from the area will contribute to the fund once it gains a reputation.

Col Major suffered a setback as a young person at Turfloop University in Limpompo where she was studying social sciences. "My older brother, who was the main breadwinner, died in 1987. He was like our father. I did not have a bursary. I did not have anything and that is why I am proud to be a member of this trust fund," she said. "My mother and my sisters were working as domestic workers to pay for my education. Another factor that helped the situation was that I always did very well at school."

"I am in the process of enrolling for my MBA degree," she said on her future plans. In July 1998 Col Major was integrated into the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) as a communicator in the SA Air Force Corporate Communication Section.

"One day I want to see myself in the rank of a Lieutenant General, why not?" she proudly stated.
First females trained in the Air Force since WW II

By Lebohang Letaoana

Col Marthie Visser and Col Laetitia Eksteen are the only two women remaining of the original group of 33 young women who started their basic training at Air Force Base Waterkloof. They joined the SA Air Force on 21 January 1974. Their group was the first female group to be trained in the Air Force after World War II.

A career that exceeded all her expectations

By the time I left the office of Col Marthie Visser, I knew that she was one of the most remarkable persons that I had ever encountered. In her office are lots of certificates and books, and photos of different fighter jets, which indicate that she is well read.

Asked how she felt to be part of this history, she replied: “I feel very privileged; there is a lot that I have learnt - things such as cultural diversity. Remember that I used to work at Foreign Relations and it was interesting for me to meet people from different backgrounds,” said Col Visser who is the SSO Communication Strategy, Policy and Planning at Defence Corporate Communication.

I asked her if she still remembered her first day of basic training. “Yes, I still do. It was a mixture of excitement and nervousness. I was not sure what to expect,” she added. Col Visser started her career as a radar operator. “This was then the start of a career that soon promised to be a very rewarding one, a career that exceeded all my expectations,” said Col Visser.

Why did you choose a career in the Department of Defence?

Col Visser: When I was still at school, I knew I was not meant to become something ordinary like a secretary or a teacher. My father then enrolled me at Potchefstroom University to study to become a librarian. Some weeks after enrolment I received a brochure in the post on careers in the SA Air Force. I thought this through for a day or two and then told my father that I had decided that a career in the SA Air Force was the thing to do. It seemed interesting, different and exciting, and the uniform appealed to me as very formal, neat and “charming”.

Are there any highlights during your 33 years of service that you would like to share with us?

Col Visser: I served in many different posts during my career and there were highlights in almost every post. A recent one was when I was awarded the Top Student Award for the Professional Certificate in Government Communications and Marketing. I felt very proud and overwhelmed when my name was announced, as I had worked hard in my studies. It shows that hard work and dedication pay off. The cherry on the top was an all expenses paid trip for two to London. I was also privileged to have met our former President, Mr Nelson Mandela.

What makes a military career different from any other career?

Col Visser: Originally I was attracted to the Air Force on account of its uniform, the military discipline and the variety of interesting career opportunities. It became a calling. There is no other company or organisation that has such an esprit de corps. I have a sense of belonging here. Serving as a member of the armed forces gives me fulfilment in knowing that I am able to serve the Government, my country and its people.

What message would you like to give to young women that aspire to start a career in the SANDF or who are already in the organisation?

Col Visser: I am proud to be a member of the SANDF and, if I can have my life over, I will choose the same career. I can assure the young women who begin a career in the DOD that they will be able to develop a rewarding and profes-
sional career and at the same time be able to live happy family lives. They must, however, take responsibility for their own growth and development. Know where in the organisation you want to go and constantly seek opportunities to achieve your objectives.

When Col Visser is not busy in the boardrooms discussing policies, she likes to spend her time outdoors. "I really enjoy the outdoor life, such as birdwatching or camping. I also enjoy reading, especially books about political science and environmental matters," says Col Visser. She is the eldest child in her family. She has three sisters and a mother. "I am a people's person," said Col Visser with confidence.

**Following in the footsteps of her father**

If you grow up being exposed to the military life by your father, you are bound to follow in his footsteps. This was the case with Col Laetitia Eksteen, who started her career in the logistics field. SA Soldier paid a visit to her office at the Liberty Life Building in Pretoria to get to know her better. In the office of Col Eksteen her military career is illustrated by means of certificat-
es and photos of events. A 21st key is also displayed that was awarded to SA Air Force women by the Chief of the Air Force on the 21st anniversary that took place on 21 February 1995.

**Why did you join the force?**

**Col Eksteen:** For me it was a natural choice as I was born at 1 Military Hospital and my father was working for the Air Force. My whole life has been with the Defence Force. Because of my father’s various transfers I had the opportunity to live in various Air Forces bases. My mother also worked for the Defence Force at Air Force Base Swartkop for many years. I was exposed to the military life from childhood.

It was a natural choice for me to apply for a career in the Defence Force as I had been part of the military family my whole life and I knew the career opportunities and development available in the Defence Force.

**You and Col Visser are the only two remaining female soldiers who were trained in the Air Force after World War II. How do you feel being part of such a history?**

**Col Eksteen:** I feel honoured to be part of this milestone. I joined the Defence Force at a young age. Initially I started as a civilian, in which capacity I worked from 1972 to 1974, because at that time they did not allow women to join the Air Force. When the opportunity arrived for women to join I did not hesitate to apply. I started my career as a Supply Clerk.

**Are there any highlights you want to share with us about your career?**

**Col Eksteen:** There were so many highlights over the years. Each post that I served in had its own highlights, but I would definitely say these were being accepted to attend the Officers Training Staff Course and then the Joint Staff Course in 1997. I was appointed as an Officer Commanding and was thereafter in a staff post at SA Air Force HQ where I had the opportunity to manage the Logistic Personnel Utilisation Section. I was privileged to be transferred to the SA Air Force Training Command where my involvement with Supply Support Training commenced. During this time the Chief of the Air Force, Lt Gen Kriel, decided that a parade and formal dinner were to be held to celebrate the SA Air Force Permanent Force Ladies’ 21st anniversary, which I had to co-ordinate. The celebrations took place on 21 February 1995.

With the transformation of the DOD I was transferred to the Logistic Agency to be part of a team to establish Joint Supply Support Training for the DOD. This was definitely a challenge and a highlight in my career. The Services Supply Support training schools/sections were closed and became one DOD School of Logistic Training. This meant continuous liaison with Services and exposure to the various cultures and traditions of the Services.

**Any message you want to share with young aspiring female soldiers?**

**Col Eksteen:** Be proud so serve in the Defence Force and be disciplined. Take the initiative and utilise all the opportunities to develop. Seek the learning opportunities that the Defence Force provides to make yourself competent to achieve success in your career. Be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Col Eksteen has a younger brother who is also working as a Colonel in the SA Air Force. "On weekends I normally do cooking, gardening or decorate the house. I also like to socialise with friends, go to movies and listen to all types of music," said Col Eksteen.
A Naval Officer in the Congo

Compiled by LS Jackie Pietbooi, Navy PR Clerk
Photo courtesy Capt (SAN) Sonica van Rooyen

Captain (SA Navy) Sonica van Rooyen was born in Groblersdal on 29 August 1960 and matriculated from Hoërskool Erasmus in 1977. After obtaining her BA (Ed) degree in 1981 from the University of Pretoria, she became a staff member at her former secondary school, where she taught English and Geography for four years. During this time she obtained a B Ed degree, also from the University of Pretoria. She joined Military Intelligence as a Military Geography Assistant and was transferred to the SA Navy in 1986.

Capt (SAN) van Rooyen attended the SA Navy Junior Staff and Warfare Course in 1991 and the Naval Command and Staff Course in 2000. She also successfully completed the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa’s Certificate in Public Relations in 1993 and their Certificate in Public Relations Management in 1997. She completed the Strategic Management Programme presented by the University of Stellenbosch, and subsequently, in 2003, the Presidential Strategic Leadership Development Programme.

Capt (SAN) Van Rooyen has served in various posts in the Public Relations Directorate, both in Simon’s Town and Pretoria and she has also spent some time in the Foreign Relations Directorate. She has acted as Presidential aide-de-camp and has been involved in foreign military liaison projects, such as the 1998 Non-aligned Movement Summit, the 1999 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and the Presidential Inauguration. She has been awarded the Military Merit, General Service, Unitas and 10-Year Service Medals. She was promoted to Captain on 1 January 2001 and served as the Senior Staff Officer Navy Public Relations until 15 July 2002, when she was accepted as a student on the Executive National Security Programme (ENSP) presented at the SA National Defence College.

After completing the course she was appointed to the Directorate Maritime Plans, where she served as Senior Staff Officer Risk Management until October 2005. She was then appointed to the South African Detachment Assisting with Integration and Training as the senior staff officer in charge of planning operations in support of the integration process in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This is a year-long appointment.

Capt (SAN) Van Rooyen also shared her disappointments and career highlights with us.

Disappointments in her career: "When I joined in 1986 I wanted to serve at sea, but women were not allowed to serve at sea officially until 1994."

Highlights of your career: "Being appointed as SSO Public Relations, after having served in the PR environment for the previous 17 years. This appointment also made me the first woman to sit on the Navy Board."

Why did you deploy? "Having been a part of the Navy HQ staff for 14 years, I felt that I needed to experience an environment away from the HQ. Deployment for the SANDF as part of an external mission seemed to present the challenge I was looking for and therefore I applied. Feeling that we are contributing and making a difference is very important to me - and I do feel that we are adding value here in the DRC. In Kinshasa, as senior staff officer in charge of planning operations of the South African Detachment Assisting with Integration and Training, is where I find myself currently. I wear the camouflage uniform, with my naval ranks proudly displayed and the Navy cap perched on my head. A strange place for a naval officer you might say, and a female at that! But I do enjoy this new challenge and believe that this is preparing me for whatever awaits me when I finish here. What the future holds I do not know, but it has never disappointed me. So I will continue to search for new and challenging opportunities and face them as they are presented."

Capt (SAN) Van Rooyen enjoys camping, bird watching, travelling, cycling and reading. She is married to Capt (SAN) Frank van Rooyen.

"My philosophy in a nutshell is one of careful optimism, with a healthy dose of realism and just enough bad temper added to survive life in the SANDF as Captain (Mrs) van Rooyen. The phrase by Cecil Parker: ‘Behold the turtle who makes progress only when he sticks his neck out’ truly appeals to me. I value integrity, loyalty, honesty and my husband and family above everything else. I believe that it is better to be alone than to be in bad company and I also believe that General George Patton knew what he was talking about when he said: ‘Success is how high you bounce when you hit bottom.’"
After trying for three days to obtain an interview with Lt Pearl Makgabutlane (a social worker) in the Comoros I finally tracked her down after supper. She was watching her favourite show “Oprah Winfrey”. I asked her if she was a fan of Oprah, and she responded in a husky voice: “Yes, she is an inspiration to a lot of women. I like her spirit.”

“I am sorry that you had to wait for this long, it is just that I have been busy,” apologised Lt Makgabutlane. She joined the SANDF in August 2002. “I did my Basic Training at Lohatlha and the SAMHS Training Formation,” said Lt Makgabutlane.

She is very passionate about her job. SA Soldier spent the entire election day with her (14 May 2006). We had the opportunity to see her interacting with the soldiers on the ground and giving morale support. “I love my job. I do not see myself doing anything other than helping other human beings,” says Lt Makgabutlane smiling.

She has a BA degree in social work from the University of Pretoria. I asked her what motivates her to get up every morning. “The fact that each and every day I can make an impact in someone’s life; that is the greatest reward in my job,” she says.

Lt Makgabutlane was born 27 years ago in Mmabatho, but currently resides in Mabopane. She still lives with her parents and two siblings (she is the eldest). Asked about the highs and lows of her job, she said: “I would say the highlights have been the deployments. This is my second deployment. I have been to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) before. We all know that to be apart from your family for six months is difficult. During deployments I have to make sure that I am here if any soldier wants to talk or seek advice.”

She said the downside of her job was to accommodate a lot of people in a short space of time. “Do not get me wrong; I love my job, but sometimes it can get hectic. I have three units (in South Africa) that need my service.”

She mentioned the SA Army College, the Personnel School and the DOD School of Catering as her clients. In her leisure time you will find her in a gym or relaxing with friends. “I am a gym fanatic. I love doing Tae Bo and aerobics. If I am not in the gym, I spend my time listening to music (R&B) or watching movies,” says Lt Makgabutlane. To conclude our interview I asked her to describe herself in five words: “Honest, kind, fun-loving and generous” - that is Lt Pearl Makgabutlane for you.
Our military story started in 1976 when we were two of the very first women to join the commandos. WO1 Marie Bodenstaff and myself, S Sgt Dale Marucchi, are now also the last of Group 15 still active. We are currently closing down six commandos and Group 15.

I am happy to report that WO1 Bodenstaff and I are still enjoying our great adventure and we hope to be of service for many, many more years to come.

We would like to take this opportunity to salute our friends and peers that are no longer with us, but they will never be forgotten.

On 1 June 1976 we joined the Benoni Commando under command of Group 16. We saw an advertisement in the Benoni City Times to which we responded, but did not realise that we were to embark on a lifelong commitment nor that we and 38 other women were to be the first to join the commandos.

We also did not realise that we would pilot a multitude of others to follow suit and that our decision to join the commandos would encourage our children to join the SANDF much later in life.

When we joined the Benoni Commando we worked on a strictly voluntary basis and received no wages for the first six months. We had no uniforms until the RSM, the late WO1 H.J. Coetzer, organised material and a tailor to create uniforms for us. I loved my uniform, which consisted of a blouse, a skirt and a web-belt. It was plain brown, nothing fancy, but it was beautiful and neat.

WO1 Marie Bodenstaff and myself literally fell in love with the idea of being soldiers. We liked it so much that we could not wait for "administrative evenings" and started working at the commando every single day to the dismay of Mrs Watsworth, who was then the "Unit Lady". She considered us "a bit of a nuisance"! (She did, however, confess later that she eventually got to depend on us being there and worried about us if we could not be there). She gave us envelopes to "lick and stick" on our first day, while she peeped over her glasses with a hint of pure sadistic pleasure and hoped that we would disappear. We did not! We went back for more! In all honesty we cannot recall or tell how many "man-hours" or camps or time spent there. We served time to embarrass even the most dedicated.

Group 16 organised Basic Training early in 1977 and we finally received our much sought after "force numbers". Now we were soldiers.

The truth, however, is that we had great men and women in uniform supporting us all the way. They encouraged us and gave us the necessary tools and knowledge. We are grateful to these people whom we were privileged to meet.

WO1 Bodenstaff joined the Permanent Force shortly after in 1979. (I am still trying!) Well, I am still here as a Reserve Force member, thirty years down the line. WO1 Bodenstaff and myself gained invaluable experience in administration and personnel management over the years. I started my career as a 'call up to border duty co-ordinator'. Over the years I worked at various commandos and Groups and gained experience in various positions, including as literary advisor, administrator and archiving consultant and co-ordinator. I am currently closing down six commandos and
Group 15 and hope to be of service for many years to come.

WO1 Marie Bodenstaff

I joined the Permanent Force in 1979 and started my career at Witwatersrand Command Unit in Johannesburg. I worked there for a year and was transferred to Directorate Logistics Section, where I became Chief Clerk. Later I was on detached duty to the Military Police in Boksburg at the old Cinderella jail to open a registry.

The offices there used to be old jails cells and inmates had sometimes been hanged there, depending on the crimes they committed. Thereafter I was transferred to Director OSC at the Personnel Office where I had the opportunity to work with all the border units and dealt with pay queries and personnel management problems. After I went on pension I joined the Reserve Force in 1994 to help with the integration of the project of the TBVC, the MK and the APLA. After that I did the administration of the Voluntary Service Packages (VSPs) at the Pensions Section. I was called up to duty by various units for different functions. At present I am co-ordinating the closure of six commandos and Group 15.

I have had a wonderful career and hope to continue with the closure of the commandos and Groups as I still enjoy my work, even after all these years. I received the 10 Years Good Service Medal, the 20 Years John Chard Decoration Medal, the Military Merit Medal and, at the end of this year, I will also receive the 30 Years Good Service Medal.

Although women are still outnumbered by their male colleagues in the military legal environment, it does not prevent them from practising their knowledge and expertise in their specific legal field of interest. One such woman is Maj Anina Els, SO1 Operational Legal Advice (Ops LS) at Chief Military Legal Services Headquarters.

She has been working in the Chief of Joint Operations environment since 2002 and is currently stationed at the Joint Operations Division Headquarters where she provides strategic operational legal advice to the clients of Joint Operations Division. She is also the only female within the Chief Military Legal Services Headquarters (Operational Legal Service) section.

Maj Els, who was admitted as an advocate of the High Court, obtained the degrees BLC and LLB at the University of Pretoria prior to her joining the SANDF. She has a keen interest in international law and this made her decide to continue her studies in this field on a part-time basis through the University of South Africa (Unisa) where she obtained an LLM degree, with distinction, in 2005. She majored in international law, international human rights law, air and maritime law and environmental law. She further attended a Law of Armed Conflict seminar presented by the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo, Italy, in November 2004.

As the South African Constitution of 1996 obliges the SANDF and its members to act in accordance with international law and international agreements binding on South Africa, these fields of law impact on the legal advice she has to give on a daily basis, e.g. the interpretation of international documents, such as United Nations Security Council resolutions, mandates, Status of Forces Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding, the review and submission of legal advice for draft international agreements to Chief Policy and Planning, campaign planning in respect of joint operations and exercises, the drafting and interpretation of Rules of Engagement and the submission of legal opinions and comment in respect of operational issues and ministerial inquiries. A sound knowledge of concepts of humanitarian and environmental law is a prerequisite for providing optimal legal advice in the peace support operations environment where human rights violations and the environmental impact of operations attract international scrutiny and action.

Maj Els also assisted with the drafting of the African Union peace support operations doctrine and was awarded the Chief Military Legal Services trophy as Best Regular Force Military Legal Practitioner for 2004/2005.
focus on women

Focus on self-development

By Ria le Grange, S01 Evaluation EOCG

"Working for the DOD is not just a job; it is a way of life... a disciplined way of life." Speaking is Lt Mamponeng Tauoa currently stationed at 1 SA Tank Regiment in Bloemfontein. She is the eldest child of a family of three siblings. Her parents were divorced when she was young, and she felt the responsibility of looking after her family from an early age. She supports her mother and siblings financially. One of the things she is very proud of is that she enabled her sister to study Human Resources Management. She was a good student herself, played excellent volleyball (she was chosen for the SANDF team), and matriculated in 1999. She went to work in a knitting factory in Bochabelo, all along feeling that she could do better. She regularly saw a neatly dressed Corporal walking in town and then decided "if she can do it, I can do it!" Notwithstanding the opposition of her parents and immediate family she joined the military in 1999 and was very motivated to succeed. When their school visited the Military Museum she saw armoured vehicles and was fascinated with the world of Armour. Although male dominated at that stage, she chose the Armour environment. Lt Tauoa likes challenges and completed her Basic Armour Training, Tank Driving and Maintenance, Tank Gunnery, and Crew Troop and Command Courses. She is now qualified to be a Troop Commander and is trained to be the commander of three tanks, and can receive orders or messages regarding the target and then relay them to her own and two other Olifant MK1A tanks. In 2005 she was deployed on the Lesotho border as a Platoon Commander, something she enjoyed tremendously and she is looking forward to her next deployment later this year. Her passion in life is to work hard for what she wants. She enjoys the fact that she inspires other young females. It motivates her even more if she sees that others respect her for her abilities and discipline. She sees discipline as a very important part of her professional and private life. "Discipline, for her, is to do the right thing even if no one is looking." For Lt Tauoa the future is bright as she focuses on self-develop-

Lt Mamponeng Tauoa is looking forward to her next deployment later this year.

Abesifazane abasebenza ukucincina izindizamshini zethu zisebenza

Ngu Hanrie Greebe, uMaluleke e-Ad Astra

Kwithubu i-41 Squadron elizinze kwi-Siqu sempi seButho lezaseMoyeni else-Waterkloof kunengcosana yabesifazane abena umsebenzi owubuciko wokugcinca izindizamshini zeButho lezaseMoyeni. Lt Tauoa is looking forward to her next deployment later this year.

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ukuba ngumshayeli wezindizamshini kodwa wakhethelwa ukuba aqeshelele ukuba ngumsebenzi oqeshehile. Ngaseisikathi-thi, uSgt Lesego Tlharipe bangabasebenzi benza. Ubane wokugqokelele ukubaluleke ngaphambi kodwa ngiyaziqhenya ngoba ngilihlonipha kakhulu ilifa lami lokuba ngumuntu wesifazane futhi ngiyazibona umzinga. Ngiyakuthanda uSgt Mabena yena ekuzilungiselela ngaphambi kakhulu umsebenzi wakhe. "Okuma-thi isinjini. Uma abantu bengibuza ukuba ngumuntu wesifazane abangamasosha kwenzweni omthetho omncane ekwenzeni umsebenzi wabo, nokuthi bona bazinje. Lt Tauoa is looking forward to her next deployment later this year.

Abesifazane abasebenza ukucincina izindizamshini zethu zisebenza

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The first mechanical engineering woman in our Navy

By Sea Manku Baloyi,
SA Navy Web photojournalist
Photo: Midshipman Leverne Benjamin

“We cannot afford that any level of our armed forces should be based primarily on one group. Special attention will be given to the considerable improvement of opportunities for women in the Defence Force.” This was said by a former Minister of Defence, the late Mr Joe Modise. Women are now being given a canvas on which to create their own masterpiece. That is what women like Lt Cdr Johanna Mars are accomplishing. The doors of opportunity for women in the SA Navy are wide open, and should be taken full advantage of. Lt Cdr Mars is the first Mechanical Engineering woman in the SA Navy. She attended Stellenbosch Girls High School until 1986 and started her journey of studying Mechanical Engineering with Stellenbosch University in 1987. After her second year of study she put her studies on hold so that she could find a job that would assist her to pay off her study loan. Every time she saved up enough money she would register for further study. This was the pattern she followed until she completed her degree in 1997. Perseverance and endurance are what brought this lady to where she is today. It might have taken ten years to complete her studies, but she walked away a winner at the end of that time. As part of a school project she had chosen to create a career to present in class. She chose Aero-nautical Engineering design, which came with working in the SANDF. After her Officers Course in Gordon’s Bay she worked in the Submarine Design Authority. In July this year she will be going to Germany for the Acquisition Project for S102 (the second submarine acquired by the SA Navy).

Lt Cdr Johanna Mars.

The submarine has to be handed over to the SA Navy and her job is to put in place documentation and address outstanding issues before the submarine is handed over to the crew. She also has to provide a maritime engineering design, specification, acceptance and management service to the SA Navy to meet the Navy’s engineering requirements.

Mufumakadzi wa u thoma wa munzhineri wa mitsitshi mmbini yashu ya zwifeke

Munwali ndi Sea Manku Baloyi wa SA Navy Web photojournalist Mushedandleli: S. Moshapo

An intellectual bridge builder and rugby fan

By Capt Priscilla Johnson, Com Officer Military Academy

Edna Lorraine van Harte was born in Elsies River near Cape Town. She matriculated from Elsies River High School where she was head girl.

Further education followed at the University College of the Western Cape, the University of South Africa, the City University of New York (Queens College), and the Teachers College and Columbia University. She obtained her doctorate in Counseling Psychology from the latter institution. Her other degrees were in the fields of the social sciences, communication and counselor education.

Professionally she worked as a senior social worker at the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence as a senior social research assistant at the University of the Western Cape, and was appointed as the first Campus Coordinator at the latter University. At Pace University in New York City she worked as a Counseling Psychologist and held several part-time teaching and counselling positions at other universities and colleges in New York City. She was promoted as the first Director of Multicultural Affairs at Pace University before leaving the United States.

Upon her return to South Africa she worked as Executive Director of the Desmond Tutu Educational Trust, then as Executive Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor and Rector at Stellenbosch University. She then served as Dean of Students at the same institution. Dr Van Harte was promoted to interim Dean at the Military Academy from May to December 2006.

Being fairly new at the Academy she loves the environment and is amazed at the potential of the Academy and how stimulating it is. Dr Van Harte believes that the Military Academy shows tremendous potential to become an important training facility in Africa.

In her contact thus far she believes that internationally there is support for and interest in the Military Academy. She hopes to play an important role in the positioning of the Military Academy in greater Africa. Dr Van Harte wishes to be instrumental in helping to take the Academy from being good to being great.

Dr Van Harte believes that the Defence Force is an example to non-military organisations on the promotion of women. She believes that women can make a difference in peace-keeping and peace building. She is of the opinion that women may be more inclined to seek peace before taking up arms. Her message to women is that we should not be reluctant to take on non-traditional roles.

Our goal should be to add value and to make a difference when we are appointed to positions where previously glass ceilings existed. She challenges all women with the following question: "Do you in your role bring something different to the playing field that can positively change the world?"

She believes in sharing one's talents and knowledge with the community. Community involvement by students allows them to put into practice what they have learned in the formal class environment and contributes to service to the community, and well developed graduates with marketable skills.

Dr Van Harte loves to travel, read and talk to people. She also loves politics and shows a keen interest in museums. She believes that all of us must help with the strengthening of our democracy and nation-building. Currently she is on the Board of the National Heritage Council, Acting Chair of the National Archives Advisory Council, Chair of the Afrikaans Language Museum and Monument and Trustee of the Freedom Park Trust.

The other love of her life is rugby and she is a member of the Executive Board of the Stellenbosch Rugby Football Club. She accompanied the Matie Sevens as manager to Scotland and the team came back as the champions of the Melrose Sevens Rugby Tournament. They were the first South Africans to accomplish this. She also serves on the WP Rugby Union Disciplinary Subcommittee.

She is known as a bridge builder and has perfected the art of bringing together people from different ethnic, religious, language, political and racial groups.

We salute you for your unwavering belief in the human race!
First female chaplain on the Chaplain General Staff Council

By Cpln M.T. Masuku, SSO Corp Com Chaplain Service

Chaplain N.C. Rweqana is the new Formation Chaplain in the DOD Logistic Support Formation in Pretoria.

She is also the first female chaplain to serve at this level and on the Chaplain General Staff Council.

Chaplain Rweqana comes from the village of Twecu near King William’s Town.

She received her training as a minister of religion from the John Wesley College, an affiliate of the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa.

She ministered at Middelburg in the Cape, Shawbury College of Education in the Transkei and at Thembisa on the East Rand.

The highlight of her ministry was when she was a radio presenter and manager of all religious programmes with Radio Umhlobo Wenene (previously Radio Xhosa).

Her ambition in the DOD is to make a difference in people’s lives in the areas of spiritual, ethical and social support. She has served at 1 Military Hospital and SAMHS Training Formation in Pretoria.

Lt Tarryn Bind, co-pilot on the Oryx helicopter at 87 Helicopter Flying School, started flying in the SA Air Force in 2004 on the Astras at AFB Langebaanweg.

In July 2005 Lt Bind went to 87 Helicopter Flying School at AFB Bloemspruit to start her Alouette Course. She has been flying Oryx helicopters since January 2006.

In March 2006 she participated in the high-altitude flying training in the Drakensberg Mountains, where she qualified as an Oryx co-pilot. The challenge during high-altitude flying is to land on various pinnacles at altitudes of up to 10 000 ft. Lt Bind explains that in the mountains, at 10 000 ft, the Oryx performs differently than it would at medium altitudes. At high altitudes the air is less dense, which reduces the effectivity of the helicopter. She explains: "It takes us longer to slow down as our air speed is higher."

She added: "Although flying the Oryx is not an easy task, she is very smooth to fly, very easy to handle. As with all helicopters, you need very small movements on the stick, collective and pedal. The Oryx is compared to a lady, and that is exactly what she is - treat her like a lady and she will treat you right."

"I have always wanted to fly helicopters and this is just the fulfilment of all my dreams. Flying the Oryx is an awesome experience," says Lt Bind, who aspires to fly the Rooivalk helicopter in the near future.

Lt Tarryn Bind, co-pilot on the Oryx helicopter at 87 Helicopter Flying School, AFB Bloemspruit.
When growing up Mrs Anthea Harris was interested in military matters and also enjoyed watching films on the subject. Soon after she matriculated she joined the SA Army at 2 Signal Regiment at Wonderboom in Pretoria in 1991 for the one year voluntary National Service. She completed leadership courses, qualified as a drill and shooting instructor and in 1992 she joined as a Permanent Force member and worked in various departments, namely the Communication Centre, and in administration and tactical stores.

In 1993 she was a Basic Training Instructor at Wonderboom Military Base and also completed various courses, including Formative Training at Infantry School, the Assistant Physical Training Instructors (PTI) Course and the SANDF Communication Security Course. Thereafter she was drafted to Wallmannsthal to give integration training to the MK and APLA female soldiers, which was a great experience for her. This integration training included drill, Physical Training (PT) and various subjects, such as Organisation, Communication and Basic First Aid.

Mrs Harris demilitarised in 1996 and worked as a PA in 213 Technical Squadron, 2 Signal Regiment, before being transferred to Cape Town where she took up a post in the C & A Node, Silvermine.

On 26 May 2002 she joined the Fleet Quality Assurance Division as an administration clerk. She completed various courses including Microsoft Package, Project Management, Public Administration and a Certificate in Total Quality Management at Unisa.

Working on the Combat Readiness Model from 2004 meant that she would be faced with different challenges on a daily basis. The Combat Readiness Model is a measurement tool implemented in the SA Army, the SA Navy (and soon the SAMHS) whose purpose is to provide facts for decision-making, primarily at strategic level. This measurement tool measures three properties of a combat/functional unit, namely the availability of the function, the dependability and the capability of the unit.

For her the project has been exciting from the start, because every day brings its own challenges and no two days are the same. At Fleet Quality Assurance Division her work entails the collection of data from various sources for the Director Fleet Quality Assurance, the Flag Officer Fleet and the Inspector General of the DOD. This includes data from the Combat Readiness Model, TIBS, and quarterly reports from Directors (Simon’s Town). Mrs Harris enjoys working in the SA Navy, but her greatest challenge is to adapt to the “Navy Culture”, as it is different from that of the SA Army. She says that it took a while for her to learn all the naval terminology. What drives her is her determination to succeed and excel at everything she does.
She has it all, this woman sitting opposite me, calmly answering all my questions and sharing with me her life portrait. She is vibrant, energetic, professional, feminine and stylish. She has a warm, friendly personality and a positive approach to life which is evident in everything she does. She is Dr Truda Smit, or as she is affectionately called, by colleagues and patients alike, Dr Truda.

Truda Smit was born and raised in Piketberg in the Western Cape. She is an only child who matriculated in Moorreesburg and studied at the University of Stellenbosch for her M.B.Ch B. She specialised in Internal Medicine, especially gastro-enterology, and is the Chief Specialist at Internal Medicine at 2 Military Hospital.

She started her career at Tygerberg Provincial Hospital in 1983 and joined the SANDF in 1992 at 2 Military Hospital. She chose to join the SAMHS because of the good working conditions, the structured environment and the many opportunities for education. Dr Truda is particularly involved with the training and monitoring of young interns and community service doctors. She says that the unit has a unique position as a tertiary department in a secondary health care environment.

She and her colleague, Dr Allen Tooke, have also been extensively involved in setting up a bilateral agreement with provincial hospitals like Grootte Schuur and Tygerberg to the benefit of patients. Dr Truda, who is unmarried and has time to get involved in various clinical aspects of the unit, says her aim is to maintain the excellent health care standards at 2 Military Hospital and even to extend them. She has a simple policy: “Success comes from within. It is the way in which you use every opportunity to surround yourself with positive people who can contribute to your life in a meaningful manner.”

Success comes from hard work and that is the bottom line.” No wonder her parents were her role models, as she states that her dad never declined a better career opportunity, however hard he had to work to make a success of it. No wonder women and men alike at 2 Military Hospital are proud of this woman who has a gentle and warm nature, who is not afraid to laugh and not afraid to apply her excellent people skills to patients and colleagues alike.

To keep the balance between a successful clinical career and her private life she enjoys cooking, ballroom dancing and hiking. It is evident that Dr Truda Smit is a happy person, both in her career and her private life. She makes use of every opportunity life has to offer and it shows.
**Women must take the challenge**

By Cdr Nomonde Gumede,  
SO1 Affirmative Action  
Photo: S Sgt N.P. Baloyi

Cpl Elmare Gersbach, currently a training instructor at 3 SA Infantry Battalion in Kimberley, is one of two women to complete the Basic Armour Training Course in Bloemfontein - only two women out of 22 candidates.

She was recruited by the SA Navy, but opted for the SA Army in 2001. She compares the Armour environment to a family, "because Armour is a close knit group, even now some of the Formation members and career managers do visit and update me on Armour issues, though I am no longer at the Armour training unit and that applies to other Armour members as well". Cpl Gersbach is challenged by long working hours and many students as she is in charge of the Basic Training of Military Skills Development members (MSDs). She said she would not be able to make it without the support of her family and fiancé. The limited number of women instructors for Basic Training concerns her. "There are many women who can be instructors, but they are probably scared of the responsibilities. They must just be strong and take up the challenge," she said.

She enjoys working at 3 SA Infantry Battalion because after the Basic Training of the MSDs she gets to see the positive results - moulded MSDs - who come fresh from the civilian sector without any understanding of the military and that engenders a feeling of pride.

Cpl Elmare Gersbach was born in Malmesbury in the Western Cape in 1982 and matriculated at Swartland High School.

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**Women show their steel in the Malutis**

Compiled by Maj Merle Meyer,  
SO1 Com Inf Fmn, and  
WO1 China Chinanayi  
Photo: WO1 China Chinanayi

The Warrant Officer of the SA Army, WO1 Joseph Tshabalala, and the Infantry Formation Sergeant Major, WO1 China Chinanayi, recently visited the members of 21 SA Infantry Battalion deployed in the Maluti Mountains and there they met several Infantry women who have shown their steel in this difficult terrain.

One of these women is Cpl Prisca Nobuhle Nene who is deployed near Qachasnek Border Post as a section commander. Their base is situated in an old Roman Catholic Church. This base is about 50 km away from Kokstad where the temperatures go down to -7 degrees and every year they get their quota of snow up to 1 metre thick. If it is snowing they are not allowed to move out of the base as they could get lost in the mist.

Their task is to man listening posts, hold ambushes for drug trafficking and stock thefts. They use troop packs, a new vehicle purchased especially for the internal deployment. The use of the vehicles is a challenge due to the poor road conditions, the mountainous areas and the snow.

They also do reconnaissance patrols on foot and man roadblocks and listening posts. In this area there is a lot of stock theft from neighbouring Lesotho, as well as the transporting of dagga. During this visit this section confiscated 350 kg of dagga destined for South Africa through Qachasnek.

Cpl Nene is well trained and copes very well in these extreme conditions. What impressed the two Warrant Officers on their visit was the way she controlled the troops and they recognised her not in the first place as a woman, but as a section leader.

The troops are deployed in such a way that they cover a large area in an effective manner. This woman is not afraid and she visits the troops during the night in their ambush areas, and this has contributed to their success. We can sleep peacefully knowing that the men and women in the Infantry are of the calibre of Cpl Nene, someone who will protect the country.

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**Focus on Women**

By Cdr Nomonde Gumede, SO1 Affirmative Action  
Photo: S Sgt N.P. Baloyi

Focus on women

S A S O L D I E R • A U G U S T 2 0 0 6
Our youth making the most of opportunities

By Lt Col Annelize Rademeyer,
SO1 Com SA Army Eng Fmn

The capabilities of the SA Army Engineer Formation were recently shown to the media during a Media Day at 35 Engineer Support Regiment at Dunnottar. An Engineer Troop (ten members) manned the water drill rig on which 21 engineer members received training at the Department of Water Affairs during March 2006.

Two of these members were Cpl Willemiaah Olifant and Cpl Jacoba Samuels. Cpl Samuels joined the Military Skills Development (MSD) Programme in January 2005 and was on her way to be deployed to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where she will be one of the operators of the water drill rig at Kindu. Cpl Olifant joined the MSD Programme in January 2004. She was deployed in the DRC at Kindu from April to October 2005 and was part of the team that ‘manned’ the Foldable Floatable Bridge System that is utilised to ferry deployed forces and equipment on the Congo River.

She said that her deployment taught her to appreciate the positive things in her life so much more. She enjoyed the exposure to the various cultures of both the Congolese and the other deployed forces, such as the Kenyans and Chinese.

Since the introduction of the MSD Programme the SA Army Engineer Formation has trained almost 280 members. Most members become Field Engineers, but there are also opportunities within the Operational Construction and Terrain Intelligence disciplines. Altogether 130 members of the MSD Programme January 2006 Intake started their Engineer Corps training at Bethlehem in the middle of April 2006. The training will include all field engineering tasks, such as water purification and bridge building. These members will also participate in Exercise SEBOKA at the SA Army Combat Training Centre at Lohatla in October this year.

Skills Development (MSD) member in 2005 and in February this year she was on her first deployment. It was a very wet month and nothing seemed to dry out, but despite this she was enjoying the area and she said she was ready if they should come across any illegal immigrants or car thieves. The area where they are deployed is right in the bush and it is not fenced off, so a visit from a wild animal can be expected at any time. This group of young soldiers was very happy when the Infantry Formation Sergeant Major, WO1 China Chinanayi, visited them. He said this small group was very positive and ready for any eventuality. These soldiers are an example to each of us and we must remember that men and women like L Cpl Lefowa keep our border safe.

Proud Infanteer

Compiled by Maj Merle Meyer,
SO1 Com Inf Fmn, and
WO1 China Chinanayi,
the Infantry Formation
Sergeant Major
Photo: WO1 China Chinanayi

Lance Corporal Emilita Lefowa from 10 SA Infantry Battalion is not a woman you can approach without gloves. She was recently deployed on the eastern side of the Kruger National Park in the Chokwane Border Post area.

She and the three other soldiers of her “stick” are responsible for manning the listening post, setting up road-blocks for car thefts and monitoring the border area for illegal immigrants crossing. The fact that they are 70 km from the closest camp and modern conveniences does not bother her and she says: “I am just a soldier”. Lance Corporal Lefowa joined the SANDF as a Military
Ready for combat and armed with knowledge

By Lt Maryke Lynn, Journalist Ad Astra

As a black female adversity is nothing new to her, but with a combination of her family’s love and support, her insatiable appetite for success, sheer determination, plenty of hard work, and trust in the Almighty she overcomes obstacles. “To rise above the prejudices of race and gender and to be outstanding and recognised, one must be assertive, bold and strong!” declares Lt Col Eva Gabashane.

She was born and brought up in Potchefstroom in the North West Province, where she also went to school until her education was interrupted by the student uprisings of 1976. After she had completed her studies overseas, her administrative career commenced in 1990 at the National Sorghum Breweries when business doors began to open for young black entrepreneurs. Before that, thanks to her driving instructor’s qualifications and experience, she had worked at the Potchefstroom Drivers’ Licensing Department.

Because she considers making a contribution and a difference in life essential, Lt Col Gabashane was integrated into the SA Air Force as a Captain in 1997. She started service as a Personnel Officer at 17 Squadron, where her dedication and diligence soon resulted in her being awarded a Commendation Certificate for Worker of the Month.

Now she is accountable to the Director Human Resource Services, under whom her responsibilities include the management of credible Human Resources Services designed to meet the organisational and individual needs of the SA Air Force. She is also responsible for monitoring the budget expenditure plan of the Directorate, as well as being accountable for the Air Force’s macro provisional recruiting targets for the Military Skills Development (MSD) System and Core Service Systems.

Astonishingly Lt Col Gabashane’s most terrifying Air Force moment transpired in 2002 when she accepted a Human Resources manager’s post at Air Force Base Hoedspruit and realised that she would soon have to face her most feared enemy - snakes! This daunting task she accomplished with charm. Even though her work demands a great deal of her time she is devoted to her role as a single mother of three daughters. She is the legal guardian of the youngest, who is her four-year old niece. “In the trying times after her mother passed away as a result of birth complications I developed an interest in this fragile innocent angel and since then formed a special bond with her,” she confides.

After a tough day she relaxes in a hot bubble bath as the sounds of deep jazz bring back memories and help to soothe her mind, body and soul. Watching the news to catch up with current events over a cup of steaming tea apparently “does the trick” for her as well.

In future this dedicated woman hopes to be the master both of her own destiny and the driving force that inspires a vision beyond conventional thinking. Ethics and integrity are paramount on her personal agenda. Armed with these values she intends to make a memorable contribution to the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and more specifically, “her beloved democratic country” - South Africa.

Another dream of hers is to draw in a working team of specialists, each with a wealth of experience and expertise, to deliver process-driven solutions, thus ensuring success and portraying the spirit of Ubuntu.

Women like Lt Col Gabashane are far more than mere observers: they are selfless, service minded individuals who are steadily working their way into the homes and hearts of those who feel helpless.

Lt Col Gabashane believes that the prerequisites for women working in an environment such as the Department of Defence are: leadership, respect for the people you work with, and the ability to be a role model and to set benchmark standards for others. With these characteristics in mind her message to women in the SANDF is: “Attitude is just as important as aptitude. So make ‘yes, I can’, your first response. Let all women of Mzansi Africa stand up, be focussed and show the world that they can make a difference. It is a proven fact that women tend to bring a lighter side to things. They have the ability to transform the culture in the DOD/SANDF, thereby ensuring an accessible environment in which women can work and excel.”
Colonel Antoinette Christina Alberts was born in Port Elizabeth and completed her schooling at the Andrew Rabie High School, after which she studied social work at the Hugenote College in Wellington. She attested in the South African Defence Force in January 1981 as a Senior Social Worker with the rank of Captain at the then Eastern Province Medical Command.

In January 1994 she was appointed the SO1 Force Support at the same command. Five years later she accepted the post of Chief of Staff and in March 2000 she was appointed Officer Commanding Area Military Health Unit Eastern Cape.

Colonel Alberts is a go-getter. She introduced the slogan “Go for Gold” at the unit and, taking into consideration the capabilities of her members, expects nothing but the best. She believes that service excellence is not negotiable and since her appointment as officer commanding the unit has gone from strength to strength.

She was awarded the Individual Batho Pele Award in 2003 and under her leadership the unit was awarded the Surgeon General Special Award in Recognition of Outstanding Performance and Service Delivery and the Physical Training, Sport and Recreation (PTSR) floating trophy in 2002. The unit continued to excel and in 2003 it was awarded the Batho Pele Floating Trophy for Excellent Service Delivery, the first SAMHS unit to receive this award, the Surgeon General Masibambisane Award and the Quality Award for Performance Excellence (Gold) floating trophy. In 2004 the unit was awarded the Surgeon General Masibambisane Award and the NCO’s Skills Competition Area Military Health Unit floating trophy. The latter was again awarded to the unit in 2005.

During her military career Col Alberts completed a number of military and functional courses, the most recent being the Executive National Security Programme (ENSP) for which she was awarded second place for her research paper.

She is actively involved in St John’s and takes the well-being of each and every unit member to heart. Notwithstanding her high expectations of all members, she is much loved, respected and admired. She has the ability to motivate her members in such a manner that they always render their very best and in the process this improves their self-esteem. Among others Col Alberts introduced an annual Gala Evening during which unit achievers are rewarded for their hard work and dedication.

The highlight of Col Albert’s career has most certainly been the induction of the Premier of the Eastern Cape, Premier N. Balindlela, as an Honorary Colonel in the SAMHS. After months of planning and organisation this prestigious and memorable event took place in March 2006.

Colonel Alberts approaches her life with all the knowledge and experience she has gained as a social worker and is an avid gardener, a lover of nature and people, sport, classical music and above all, the military culture. She is a single parent and has two children, a daughter and a son, and recently became the proud grandmother of a little boy.
WO1 Melanie Smith joined the SA Navy in 1983. During Basic Training she displayed great leadership skills and was awarded the Lt Cdr Abrahams Trophy for Leadership. She chose telecommunications as her field, completed the SACSA Crypto Course and worked as a cryptographer at Naval Base Simon’s Town.

She continued working as a cryptographer until she was appointed as a communication centre supervisor and promoted to the rank of Chief Petty Officer in 1990. During this time she served on various committees, such as the Warrant Officers', Chief Petty Officers' and Petty Officers' Mess Committees and the Sport Committee.

In 1991 she completed the MTR 3 Course with flying colours. She received trophies for the best staff methods student and the best academic student on course. In the same year she received the SA Navy Sports Award Silver for her work as Badminton Administrator.

WO1 Smith was appointed as Directing Staff at the MTR 3 School in March 2000 and was promoted to Warrant Officer Class 2 in 2000. Later during the same year she received a certificate for her contribution towards the development of the MTR 3 Staff Methods Course.

In 2002 she was elected to attend the "Senior Enlisted Academy in the United States Navy" for ten weeks and achieved outstanding results. For this she received a letter of praise from the Chief of the SA Navy. The experience gained in the US Navy gave her the opportunity to be appointed to redesign the MTR 3 Curriculum. It was a great challenge and a great opportunity to put into practice what she had learnt in the US Navy. WO1 Smith spent two years realigning the MTR 3 Curriculum with the profile of a SA Navy Warrant Officer, and using unit standards that could be introduced into the MTR 3 Curriculum, once the Fleet became accredited. During these two years, WO1 Smith acquainted herself with the Education, Training and Development (ETD) field by completing a number of courses, namely Facilitators, Assessors, Moderators and Skills Development Facilitators.

Apart from her normal duties as Directing Staff for MTR 3, WO1 Smith has co-ordinated and facilitated numerous "Spouses Orientation Courses" for the spouses of the MTR 3 learners, with remarkable success.

In 2003 she was promoted to Warrant Officer Class 1. She has acquitted herself extremely well and at times when the MTR 3 School was without a Course Officer or Senior Directing Staff, she has had to play the role of both, which was a tremendous strain for her.

Her biggest achievement to date was when she obtained a National Certificate as a South African Occupationally Directed Education and Training Practitioner (OD ETDIP), with ten other SA Navy members, a first in the SANDF. Her goal is to obtain a diploma in OD ETDIP by 2007 and the degree in 2008. WO1 Smith is a dedicated person who has always been a role model in everything she does.

PO Yoliswa Ndlumi completed her Basic Training in 1998 at SAS SALDANHA where she was the "Most Outstanding Woman on Course". After Basic Training she joined the Communications Branch and performed her duties at Slangkop Electronic Warfare Centre. In 2003 she was elected as Mess President of the Junior Rates Mess at Silvermine.

In 2004 she was drafted to SAS SALDANHA as a Military Instructor. She was thrown into the deep end with lots of responsibilities and she did not disappoint. Her responsibilities included the formation of the SAS SALDANHA woman’s soccer team and its development, organising fund-raising events and tournaments for the women’s soccer team, as well as assisting with coaching duties. This was over and above her responsibilities as a facilitator for MTR1 Military Skills Development (MSD) training.

PO Ndlumi was also rewarded for her efforts when she received an Honourable Gold Certificate from the Western Province Sports Club in 2004. When asked about the highlights in her career she said these were being part of the 2005 SANDF women’s soccer team that participated in the Military African Games (ESALO: CISM) and being nominated for the 2004 SANDF Sportswoman of the Year, where she was eventually the runner-up. The SA Navy and
A lady with wisdom and poise

By Lt Maryke Lynn, Journalist Ad Astra

The Secretary of the Chief of the SA Air Force, Ms Annie Ewouda Swanepoel, has her hands full managing Lt Gen Carlo Gagiano’s diary and administering his day-to-day activities. She is gracious, yet co-pilots his office with a firm hand, while her forthcoming attitude makes a visit to the so-called “blue carpet area” a pleasurable occasion.

Even though her open-door relationship with the Chief results in a comfortable operational environment, working in such a high-profile post naturally has its less pleasant side when the pressure starts to mount! But, last-minute appointments and hectic schedules do not drive her into a frenzy!

Memorable moments also occur, for example the honour of meeting various visiting chiefs of air forces from around the world.

She deems it imperative that one must have a passion for one’s principals and what one makes of one’s life. As might be expected from a true Blue Bulls’ supporter, her motto: “living every day as if it is your last”, serves as proof of the drive and dedication that she puts into her every effort.

Ms Swanepoel was born at Bethal in 1957 and grew up in Pretoria where she went to school, matriculating at Hoërskool Oos Moot in 1974, and later obtained her secretarial certificate at the then Pretoria Technikon. In earlier days she looked up to her parents as role models of integrity, love of life and devotion to their fellow-man: her road in the Defence Force, which began in 1976 in an Operations Division typing pool, has thus been one characterised by high moral values.

Together with her husband of thirty years, Rudi, and two sons, Grenville (26) and Gregory (23), she lives in Rooihuiskraal near Pretoria. The Swanepoel family treasures the time it spends together and draws on this “comfort zone” to unwind after a challenging day’s work.

As a religious person, Ms Swanepoel also enjoys spending quiet moments in Bible study as a powerful method of stress relief.

Outdoor living and a good book are important to her. When time for relaxation comes around, she puts on her hiking boots and enjoys spending time on game farms and getting her hands dirty with some gardening. She also holds fast to her dream of setting up her ideal home on a piece of land that she and her husband have purchased near Roodeplaat Dam.

Her special words of wisdom to women and, more specifically, other secretaries in the SA Air Force are: “Hold on to your values, always be a lady, and be respectful towards your colleagues and seniors”.

Ms Annie Ewouda Swanepoel, the Secretary of the Chief of the SA Air Force.
Who is the woman behind the staffing of individuals as staff officers, military observers and experts of mission? If you are combat ready and want to be registered in the central pool of deployable individuals, you need to know the woman who can assist you to serve your country in this very special way!

Wearing a blue uniform in the Joint Operations Divisional Headquarters at Swartkop Park in Thaba Tshwane, Lt Col Celesté van Rooyen (1.47 m) is the personnel officer who can facilitate the realisation of your aspirations.

Lt Col van Rooyen was born in Cradock on 31 August 1960 and grew up in Windhoek where she lived from 1963 to 1978. On completion of her school career she joined the SWA Territorial Force, first in an army uniform.

She joined the SA Air Force in 1982 and was the fittest lady Candidate Officer during her Officers Course at the SA Air Force College in 1992. She has been SO1 Personnel for Operations in the Directorate Operations Support of the Joint Operations Division since February 2003.

She is mainly responsible for advertisements and staffing of posts for military observers and staff officers, in conjunction with her fellow personnel officers from other Services and Divisions.

Her duties require, *inter alia*, liaison with the United Nations and African Union via the respective South African missions in New York and Addis Ababa. One should keep in mind that New York (the city that never sleeps?) only wakes up at the end of our working day and she often has to spend long hours at the office.

Staffing of individual posts for external operations involves complex personnel processes, including obtaining completed medical examination forms, *curriculum vitae*, travel arrangements, communication with members earmarked for deployment, and handing them over to the Joint Operational Headquarters for mobilisation and deployment. Lt Col van Rooyen conducts these tasks in conjunction with the respective Force Providers, Joint Operational Headquarters, Chief Directorate Defence Foreign Relations, and also the Department of Foreign Affairs. She works closely with her colleagues at the Joint Operations Division, especially with Directorate Operations, Director Special Medical Ruling, and Personnel for Operations at the Joint Operations Headquarters.

Lt Col van Rooyen had her turn on external deployment as personnel officer in the initial stages of the Africa Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB). As an over and above task, she also serves as the Joint Operations Division representative in the Project Resilience Advisory Committee.

She enjoys her work, loves her two children very much, and maintains that you need a good sense of humour to survive a day at the office in the demanding environment of the Joint Operations Division.

The next time you consider joining the fraternity of externally deployed individuals, contact Lt Col Celesté van Rooyen for further details. Just remember your concurrent health assessment (CHA), security vetting, curriculum vitae, official passport and visa, international driver’s license, qualifications befitting the specific post profile, approval from your Force Provider and the little lady in blue. But be aware, dynamite comes in small packages!
The Engineer Corps, like any other corps within the DOD, has over the past few years received many new Military Skills Development (MSD) Programme members. These members are spread all over the corps in different units around the country. Some of these members stationed at Sappers Heights in Pretoria were interviewed in their different workplaces to establish how they fit and operate within their different work areas. They all expressed great joy at being in the SA Engineer Corps and one said: 'There is no other place than the Engineer Corps within the DOD'. Their places of work range from assistant printers, desk top publishers, machine binders, working at the Photography Section at 1 Military Printing Regiment to assistant draughtsmen at 4 Survey and Mapping Regiment, to mention but a few. Although these members are not yet qualified they are working very hard to get themselves there. In units such as 4 Survey and Mapping Regiment and the Formation HQ some of these members were nominated to study at institutions, such as the Tshwane University of Technology. Some of these members are also given an opportunity to upgrade their qualifications at Tshwane South College, formerly Centurion College. When asked what their expectations were of the DOD they replied that it was not about what the DOD can do for you, but rather the question of what you can do for the Defence Force. One of these members is Spr Gloria Jwara who had a learning opportunity when she was deployed beyond the borders of South Africa. In April 2005 she was deployed with the rest of the South African contingent in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as a Geographical Information System (GIS) operator. Although she was deployed as an assistant GIS operator she told us that her deployment was the highlight of her life as she never expected that she would serve her country in an external deployment, before joining the DOD. Besides being the first MSD Programme member to be deployed as an assistant GIS operator she enjoys working at 4 Survey and Mapping Regiment, which is her home unit. Spr Jwara enjoys her work to such an extent that she would not trade it with anything else in the DOD. These youngsters fondly called "ama-Danone" see themselves as the future of the Defence Force, but they also acknowledge that to achieve this goal, they need to be educated. They therefore all applied for studies, some of them are already studying, and others went for aptitude tests at different institutions. These MSD Programme members also mentioned that they never expected the DOD to be what it is, and their expectations are now different from the time before they joined the DOD. They all see that hard work, dedication and attitude will determine your altitude in the end. With discipline, good guidance and their motivation it looks like the sky is the limit for these young soldiers.
The first African female sailor to go to Antarctica

Article and photo by
Sea Manku Baloyi,
SA Navy Web photojournalist

Leading Seaman Portia Maboa was born on 23 April 1978. After her matric she worked as a central statistics verifier. She completed her Basic Military Training in 1998 and trained for her Chef Part 1 Course at Naval Base Simon’s Town. She worked at Naval Station Durban until 2002. In 2003 she was transferred to Naval College in Gordon’s Bay.

In 2005 she sailed with the SA AGULAS to Antarctica as the designated chef for this trip. Leading Seaman (LS) Maboa said: "I felt like I was in heaven when I saw the ice, because everywhere you looked it was just white." LS Maboa was the first African woman to go to Antarctica. Even though the trip was hectic, with temperatures dropping to 20 degrees below zero, all was well at the end of the day. She always told herself that after a hard day at work the workers deserved a good meal to complete the day, and that was enough to keep her going.

Whether it was on land, at sea or on ice, she knew the right meal for a hungry stomach. She received a letter from the Department of Environmental Affairs commending her on a job well done. It was a great honour to be the first black woman to set foot there and it was an experience she will never forget.

Her mother, who she says is a very strong lady, inspires her. "I draw my inspiration from her because she had to endure a lot of hardship in her life to be where she is today. She taught me that believing in yourself was the greatest favour you could do for yourself." LS Maboa draws inspiration from criticism, whether it is good or bad.

LS Maboa’s dream is one day to become a catering officer, and she is confident that the SA Navy will provide her with the opportunity to make this dream a reality.

She guarded houses of cabinet ministers in Burundi

By Cdr Nomonde Gumede,
SO1 Affirmative Action
Photo: S Sgt N.P. Baloyi

When Gunner Yondi Kakora out of a sense of boredom and disappointment after unsuccessful applications to the public sector applied to join the SANDF with her six friends in 1999, little did she know that today she would be named as one of the few female gunners in the previously male dominated corps.

She was born in Kimberley in 1978, the only girl in the family of three to complete her matric at Pescodia Secondary School. She is married and has an eleven-month old boy.

In 2003 Gunner Kakora was deployed to Lohatlha for EXERCISE IRON EAGLE. In 2004 she was deployed to Burundi for six months as a static guard to guard the houses of cabinet ministers. She describes deployment as an adventure in which she gets to know many people.

She experienced a culture shock on her arrival in Burundi. She said: "We stayed in tents for 2-3 weeks where everything was cold and mosquitoes were feasting on us. Things improved when we were sent to houses we could call home to speak for five minutes everyday at State expense". Gunner Kakora mentioned that the deployed male soldiers had been very supportive in Burundi as compared when they are in South Africa.

In Burundi there was no distinction between women’s and men’s chores even though they shared the tents with men. Instead the men were more understanding and treated them like sisters. "Men will not ask women to do things for them, instead they would cook for us as well, sweep and do everything else that used to be done by women." Gunner Yondi Kakora describes deployment as an adventure in which she gets to know many people.
I knew that I would have at least a period of twenty years to contribute towards a pension. I knew what my capabilities were and that I could also render twenty years of good service to the country. It was a fast changing world culturally and technologically, where the roles of men and women were starting to overlap and it was necessary to realise that everyone, irrespective of gender, had a responsibility to render an optimal output.

Col Martin: Colonel, you are also working in the Planning environment of the SAMHS. You are the correct person to ask, where are women going to in the SANDF and in the SAMHS as a whole? What is their future and how do you see women levelling up to the men in the SAMHS?

Col O'Kennedy: Initially when I entered the Defence Force I realised that the bigger organisation was a male-orientated organisation, the old SAMS maybe less so than the Army. Since 1994, however, with new imperatives to acknowledge the worth of women there were subtle changes in the beginning that resulted in a number of women being promoted to Brigadier (later Brigadier General) level. There were high-level initiatives to establish a strong high-level command cadre representative of race and gender. Women have been and are task orientated. What they may lack in military experience and exposure they correct by their commitment and dedication. If women continue in this way, they will have a bright future in the SAMHS.

Col Martin: Colonel, where do you see yourself in the next few years, seeing that you have been in this rank for such a long time, and how do you see yourself further inspiring women to join the ranks of the SANDF and the SAMHS, especially young women, in the manner that the women of August 9th did? How do we rally women irrespective of race, colour or creed to stand together in defence of our nation, our country and our continent?

Thank you Colonel, we in the SAMHS wish you all success in the future, and look up to you as a leader in the ranks of senior women and wish that you will continue inspiring us and help all women irrespective of who they are, especially young women in all their ranks, to achieve the best they can to realise their potential, and always in your daily work remember that women need to occupy their rightful place everywhere they find themselves. Thanks again, and a happy celebration on 9 August 2006 for the women in the Department of Defence.
Two librarians are the heartbeat of the Military Academy

By Capt Priscilla Johnson,
Com Officer Military Academy

Both librarians of the Military Academy, Mrs Ina Botes and Mrs Soraya Daniels, have been employed by the military for 17 years and both of them are currently senior library assistants. The Military Academy will not be able to execute its core business without these two loyal, patient and diligent members. They are truly the heartbeat of the Military Academy.

Mrs Ina Botes was born on 16 August 1958 in Orkney. She matriculated in 1976 at Orkney High School. She moved to Saldanha in 1992 and was a typist from 1992 to 1996. She started at the Military Academy Library as a library assistant and completed her Diploma in Library and Information Studies in 2002.

Her job entails assisting the staff and students of the Military Academy who are conducting research. Her hobbies are needlework, reading and walking. She would love to have more librarian staff, more books in the library and better security for the library. After 14 years the Military Academy already feels like her second home she says. Mrs Soraya Daniels was born on 12 February 1969 in Athlone, Cape Town. She matriculated in 1987 at George High School. She has been at the Military Academy since 2001. Soraya says that after 17 years of being employed by the military she is used to having uniformed colleagues around her. Previous units where she has served includes the then Navy Headquarters where she was a registry clerk. She is a first year National Diploma Library student and is focusing her attention on her studies. Her hobbies include reading and studying.

Young woman rugby coach for the West Coast

By Capt Priscilla Johnson,
Communication Officer Military Academy

Sharonitha Henecke, the eldest of four children, was born at Ravensmead and matriculated at Ravensmead Senior Secondary School in 1993. She started her rugby career in 2002 when she played for the Free State for four years. In 2004 she was chosen for the SA National Defence Force team and for the SA Northern Region team, which played a home match against Wales. In 2005 she was selected as a member of the SA Springbok Women’s team, which undertook its first tour to the United Kingdom. At the end of 2005 she hung up her rugby boots and is currently the coach of the Saldanha Military Women’s Rugby Team. In 2005 Sharonitha was chosen as the best woman rugby player in the Free State.

Sharonitha Henecke, the coach of the Saldanha Military Women’s Rugby Team.
A diver with spunk

By Sea Manku Baloyi,
SA Navy Web photojournalist
Photo: Ms Karen Engledow,
Navy News

Lize Lötter was born in Oudtshoorn in the Little Karoo in 1982. She matriculated in 2000 and her best subject was English. If she had not joined the military she would have loved to study other languages. After completing matric, Lize managed an upmarket gift shop for three years in Oudtshoorn. She became tired of working indoors and needed a challenge in life; hence she decided to join the SA Navy.

Joining the Navy was perfect for relieving her boredom because she had to be on her toes constantly and she never knew what tomorrow held. She enjoys being in the military and says: "It is great. One grows in a very big way". The transition that takes place when you move from being a civilian to being a military person is huge and civilians cannot comprehend just how your views change. Able Seaman (AB) Lötter has her Boland colours in volleyball and she is a dedicated hockey player. She was in the first hockey team in high school and she wishes to make it through to play for the SANDF in the near future.

AB Lötter shared the trophy for the Best Academic Student at SAS SALDANHA in 2004, and decided that her future in the Navy would be in the Diving mustering. She was only the second woman to complete the Fleet Support Course. This course is physically very demanding, but she managed to hold her own against the men on course. She is now qualified to dive to a depth of 39 m, to do underwater damage control and act as a chamber attendant.

AB Lötter believes: "If you believe in something and love what you do, you must try by all means to make it work." She claims that she has a fantastic job and is happy because she was never scared to hold on to her passion and conviction. She is one of the people who are proving that women can play ball with their male counterparts.

"In life you must always strive for what makes you happy. You must learn to write your own ticket to success. If this means that you must get your hands dirty, then so be it - as long as one feels fulfilled at the end of the day." AB Lötter said: "It was not easy getting to where I am today, but I measured myself against my colleagues and thought to myself, we are all human, if they can make it, well, so can I."

She found a new home in gunner mustering

By Cdr Nomonde Gumede,
SO1 Affirmative Action
Photo: S Sgt N.P. Baloyi

Gunner Anry Botes, who is based at 10 Anti-Aircraft Regiment, grew up wanting to be a soldier, but was unaware that she would end up in one of the most male dominated corps in the SANDF - the Gunners.

She was born in Klerksdorp in 1977 and came from a family of three. This single mother of an eight-month old boy matriculated at Schoonspruit High School in Klerksdorp. She was influenced by friends at high school to join the SANDF and was accepted in 2001.

Gunner Botes is currently a regimental signaller and is in charge of communication in her battery. During her career as a gunner she was deployed in KwaZulu-Natal for three months in 2003 where she had infantry based duties, such as conducting searches during roadblocks. She was deployed in Burundi in 2004 for six months as a static guard at the houses of cabinet ministers.

She believes that the presence of women during deployments is important as it brings the softer side to people.

She added: "In Burundi the Burundians would rather go to them (women) for help than to the male soldiers, especially the children." She smiled when I asked about her experiences during deployments and said that she had never felt discriminated against by men. There was so much unity among them. The only downfall was that she missed home when she was deployed for six months. Other than that she was excited about deploying.
Technical women keeping our aircraft serviceable

By Hanrie Greebe, Consultant Ad Astra
Photos: JP van Vuuren and Hanrie Greebe

At 41 Squadron at Air Force Base Waterkloof a few remarkable technicians are part of a steadily increasing number of women who maintain the serviceability of the aircraft of the SA Air Force. Cpl Melissa Leslie and Sgt Lesego Tlharipe are aircraft avionics technicians, while Sgt Zoleka Mabena is an aircraft mechanic.

After completing their respective ground school phases at 68 Air School, where they were introduced to basic aircraft technical mechanisms, Cpl Leslie and Sgt Tlharipe went to 5 Air Servicing Unit for their depot phase, while Sgt Mabena did her depot phase at 1 Air Servicing Unit. The three technicians qualified on the Casa at 44 Squadron in their specialist fields.

A former member of APLA, Sgt Mabena was integrated into the SA Air Force and although she wanted to become a pilot she was selected for technical training instead. By the time she was to qualify on the Casa at 44 Squadron she was already married and eight months pregnant. She laughs when she recalls how amazed her examiner was when she performed her qualification test with ease. "There is nothing that we cannot do as well as our male colleagues. I can change the wheels of an aircraft or fix the airframe or engine components. When people ask me what I do for a living, they cannot believe that I, a married mother of two, fix aircraft. However, in the workplace it is not about gender, but about getting the job done."

Prior to her qualification, Sgt Tlharipe was stationed at Air Force Base Ysterplaat. In the absence of an instructor she consulted volumes of manuals and information to prepare her for her qualification test. Sgt Tlharipe always wanted to be in uniform and is very proud of her mustering. Cpl Leslie has a bubbling personality and says that it has been a childhood dream to be in the Air Force. She has always been interested in avionics and thoroughly enjoys her work.

All three technicians are adamant that they are soldiers first and part of a team. Being women in uniform makes little difference to their productivity and how they see themselves. Cpl Leslie brilliantly summarises: "The best is when I dress up for an evening out and let my hair down, and then see how amazed people are when I tell them that I am an aircraft avionics technician of the SA Air Force. I love being a woman and I revere my Coloured heritage - but I am proud to be a South African!"
Never too old to learn

By Nomonde Vuthela
Photo: Sgt Lebogang Tlhaole

Thank you Mr Billy Mayisela, you took us to greener pastures,” said Ms Victoria Moitere Madisha to SA Soldier as she paid tribute to an individual responsible for championing self-empowerment among civil servants working within the defence environment. “Thank you to the office of Mr Masilela for making us stand up and for the support and encouragement to do better.”

“I have worked at 1 Military Hospital as a cleaner since 1982 and was a hard worker,” said Ms Madisha. “When I started working there I already had my Junior Certificate.”

“When I decided to go back to school people told me not to do it because they said I was too old. I say: People let us stand up! Never say you are too old for new knowledge. You can learn until you drop!” Ms Madisha stressed. “Right now I am proud of myself, and so are my children and colleagues.”

“In 1999 I got my Matric Certificate and I did this through Phelindaba High School in Pretoria. In 2003 I was placed on detached duty from 1 Military Hospital to the office of the Secretary for Defence. Here we were taught how to use a computer. I did not even know how to switch it on,” exclaimed Madisha.

“At the Secretary for Defence’s office I realised that my colleagues and I were women who were ready for development and they started to empower us by sending us on a secretarial course.” The secretarial course was followed by a series of other courses, including a Diploma in Office Administration at Damelin Management School, awarded in 2005,” added Ms Madisha, now an office clerk.

“It was not easy, more especially when you were a woman, because you had to look after your children and cook for your husband and also make sure that you remained a hard worker at the Office,” continued Ms Madisha. She is a mother of three children. “My children are encouraging me to go further and to enrol at other institutions. The good thing is when they see me studying they are also encouraged to study.”

New-found success achieved

Also jubilant and celebrating her new-found success achieved through furthering her education is Ms Margaret Keabetswe Msiza, also from the Office of the Secretary for Defence. She too shares a similar history to that of Ms Madisha. “I too worked as cleaner at 1 Military Hospital for twenty years,” said Ms Msiza, who is now fifty years old.

“When I came to the Secretary for Defence’s office I began to learn a lot, and I now work as an office clerk,” she added. “While I was working a 1 Military Hospital I took myself to computer school, prior to which I had gone back to school to do my matric, but no one took me seriously,” she continued. “Then I heard about the self-empowerment programme headed by Mr Billy Mayisela at the Poyntons Building in Central Pretoria, I took my CV and went to see him.”

“I was then posted to the Secretary for Defence’s office and have done many courses since then,” she added. “I decided to further my academic qualifications because I was now working for a department that supported my education.” Ms Msiza has done Excel and MS Word computer courses and, like Ms Madisha, she now holds a Diploma in Office Administration.

“I was not satisfied to work as a cleaner and I decided to change my life and improve myself,” she said. “Maybe now I can start thinking about going for a degree in Human Resources. Women must strive to be recognised by other people,” said Ms Msiza.

The example set by Ms Msiza and Ms Madisha caused quite a fever, as women in other environments now also want to empower themselves.

A determined grandmother

Ms Leah Mapadimeng worked as a domestic worker before joining the SANDF. She was employed in the organisation as a “Tea Lady”, but now works in the Joint Training Formation environment as a Personnel Officer.

Some of her responsibilities include compiling documents for meetings, arranging venues and refreshments for meetings, dispatching documents to other directorates, receiving visitors to the office, answering the phone, and so the list goes on.

“I started by learning how to use the photocopier machine and other office equipment,” she revealed to SA Soldier, as she related what followed after she went back to school and got her matric.

“I enjoyed my job as a domestic worker and tea lady; it is just that I realised that I could learn something here,” added Ms Mapadimeng. “Watching Ms Msiza and Ms Madisha get their diplomas encouraged me to study too. I want to get a Diploma in Human Resources, which I will do six months at a time. The opportunities are there for everyone now,” said the determined Grandmother.

From left: Ms Victoria Moitere Madisha, Ms Leah Mapadimeng and Ms Margaret Keabetswe Msiza.
A true sailor at heart

Article and photo by
Sea Manku Baloyi,
SA Navy Web photojournalist

In the olden days women were believed to belong at home in the kitchen, but thanks to outstanding women like Petty Officer (PO) M.T. Moreki these and other misconceptions are fast being eradicated. As soon as PO Moreki walks into a room her cheerfulness just rubs off on everyone, and the atmosphere in the room becomes lighter. Just by looking at her liveliness one can tell that she adores and take pleasure in her work.

PO Thelma Moreki is a Personnel Rating serving on board the SAS MENDI. She was born in 1976 in the town of Kroonstad in the Free State. This is where she spent most of her teenage years. After completing her matric she followed her dreams in Pretoria where she was studying to become an Accountant at the Tshwane University of Technology. Owing to financial constraints, she could not complete her studies and therefore she had to leave Pretoria and go back to Kroonstad.

After staying at home for a few months she attended the Academy of Learning, at the time the only affordable institution within her parents’ means. There she graduated as a Junior Accountant. In 1998 she saw an advertisement in the newspapers for people to join the SA Navy. She applied and was accepted.

On 25 January 1999 this young lady full of heed and passion began a gratifying career in the South African National Defence Force. After completing her Basic Training in SAS SALDANHA she was staffed as a Steward and stayed in that position until 2002. During her career she was afforded the chance of serving on board SAS DRAKENSBERG which afforded her the opportunity to sail to La Reunion and England. While a steward she studied Internal Auditing at Technikon SA. Later in 2002 Petty Officer Moreki decided to do an Inter-Branch Transfer to the Personnel Department, where her full potential was recognised. She continued to do a Human Resources Support during Operations course through the Personnel Services School in Thaba Tshwane, in which she excelled.

Her inspiration is her 8-year-old daughter, who is living in Kroonstad with her grandparents. "My baby is my inspiration because I am working to secure a future for her. It fulfills me to give her opportunities in life that I by no means had."

She said that being a single mother was not easy, particularly when she does not get a chance to see her child as often as she would like to, but PO Moreki does not let disappointment get the better of her. She believes that disappointments are there to inspire us to be better in all we do.

PO Moreki believes that in the military set-up men and women are given the same opportunities and it is up to individuals to create a good impression and leave a mark wherever they go. Being a woman in the military is hard because some people still have preconceived ideas about what women should be doing. Women have as much potential as their male counterparts. PO Moreki is also an enthusiastic netball player and has attained her Western Province colours in netball. Her ambition is to play one day for the national team. She was the first woman to serve in the SAS MENDI Ship’s Office which she organised effectively. She believes that the office is now more structured because of the female touch she brought to it.

PO Moreki is studying for her (BCom) in Human Resources at the University Of South Africa. This young lady proves that as a woman in the military, one can accomplish as much as one’s male counterparts, and beyond anyone’s expectations.

"I believe that hardships are there to be conquered, and after conquering them we can only shine."

PO Thelma Moreki has Western Province colours in netball.
They call her Judge Judy

By Ms Y.C.M. Khanyile, Assistant Director Equal Opportunities

Maj Jeanett Mofokeng from 3 SA Infantry Battalion in Kimberley was born in Witbank and completed her matric at Boleu Senior Secondary School at Tafel-kop (Groblerdsdal). She then obtained a certificate in Higher Security Management from Unisa.

She is currently busy with B Tech Degree in Security Management at Unisa. She is single and has two daughters.

She was inspired by her brother to join the Defence Force, when he (who was a soldier) told her stories about the military and the use of the R4 rifle. She became interested and wanted to know more how the R4 rifle operated. The rest is history!

Maj Mofokeng started her military career in George at the SA Army Women’s College - appointed at an instructor from 1995 to 1997. Between 1998 and 2000 she was deployed at the Macadamia borders (between Mozambique and South African) for three months at intervals. She was also deployed in KwaZulu-Natal and Cape Town as Platoon Commander. During her deployment at the Macadamia borders she was the only woman Logistics Platoon Sergeant. Other soldiers supported her as she was the only woman.

She is currently a Company Commander of more than 296 staff members at 3 SA Infantry Battalion. As a Company Commander there are so many challenges, one of which is to deliver excellent results despite the fact that the resources are limited at 3 SA Infantry Battalion. Sometimes she is required to improvise so that the expected goods can be delivered at the right time (eg the training of members of the Military Skills Development (MSD) System).

Maj Mofokeng is called “Judge Judy” because she is very strict and wants the work done efficiently. She said that they think she does not know that they call her Judge Judy, but she was perfectly aware. As a female commander both genders respect her. She enjoys her job very much. When there is a problem she will involve the problem maker in the solution. This is how she solves most of her problems, and for this she is respected by the people she works with.

During the interview she recalled the time when she was still a Platoon Commander. Men would challenge her to increase her running distance hoping that because she was a woman she would not make it, but only to find out that they were the ones who could not cope. She would encourage them to keep on running. Maj Mofokeng had to prove to them that despite being a woman she could challenge them and run faster than they could imagine.

A positive aspect about her job is that she has good relationships with her subordinates. “Sometimes one needs to be firm and strict so that one cannot be taken advantage of,” said Maj Mofokeng. “As a woman I love to do my job very well so that nobody can say the female company commander is not able to perform.”
**focus on women**

**A rugby player to be reckoned with**

By S Lt Sam Khasuli, 
PRO for SAS SALDANHA  
Photo: CPO L. Wadsworth

With only four years of experience in the military environment, Able Seaman (AB) Gaynor Fritz became a force to be reckoned with. She might be young, but her achievements speak to the contrary. In 2004 she represented the West Coast Military Sports Club in the SANDF Rugby Championships, held in Pretoria. As a result of her performance in the tournament she was selected for the SANDF ladies rugby team.

During the same year she was the captain of the SAS SALDANHA women’s rugby team and was voted Player of the Tournament at the Navy Women’s Rugby Championships. Her excellent performance in rugby afforded her the opportunity to be called for trials to play in the Boland women’s rugby team. She succeeded in the trials and in 2005 represented the Boland women’s rugby team in the National Women’s Rugby Championships in Port Elizabeth. AB Fritz is a versatile player who does not only play rugby, but also soccer, cricket, volleyball and golf.

In 2005 she also represented the West Coast Military Sports Club soccer team in the SANDF Championships held in Bloemfontein. She was voted the best soccer player of the tournament, top goal scorer, best female player and was selected for the SANDF women’s soccer team!

AB Fritz was called to represent the SANDF in the World Military Women’s Football Championships in the Netherlands from 21 to 31 May 2006. She represented the Eastern Southern Africa Liaison Office (ESALO), made up of players representing South Africa and Namibia. There were six teams altogether and the SA team came sixth. The other teams were from Germany, the Netherlands, the USA, France and Canada. The SA team was awarded the Fair Play Award for their positive conduct in the tournament. They have been invited to attend the World Military Games in India in 2007 and the World Military Women’s Football tournament in the Netherlands in 2008. Asked what the driving force behind all her achievements was, she replied: “Commitment and dedication is not enough, everything that you do must be done with passion, and most importantly - have fun! This is the driving force that makes me reach my potential”. AB Fritz was born in Cape Town and joined the SA Navy in 2003. She is currently performing her duties at SAS SALDANHA as a Physical Training Instructor.

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**Learner played in Schools Soccer World Cup Tournament**

By Lebohang Letaoana  
Photo: Sgt Lebogang Tlhaole

The results of bilateral agreements between South Africa and Germany saw learners from a South African school, Pula Difate Primary School, realising their dreams of playing soccer abroad. The children will not be representing South Africa, but Germany, as part of the agreements.

Rebecca Matlala (12) and five of her team-mates will be taking part in the Schools Soccer World Cup Tournament beginning on 5 June 2006. The War Simulation Centre at SA Army College where Rebecca’s father, said he knew that his daughter had potential and that he was glad that someone had noticed her talent.
Young lieutenant yearns for her flying wings

By CO Frans Pale, Journalist Ad Astra

Lieutenant Maryke Lynn (24) presents a bright and radiant face as she looks to the future. She is in the prime of her life and has worked hard to be where she is. Come what may, nothing will stop her from becoming a pilot in the SA Air Force.

Currently on an Officers Forming Course in the Military Skills Development Programme with the SA Air Force, Lt Lynn is destined to greater heights in the blue skies. “I hope to obtain my flying wings by the end of 2008,” she says with a smile.

Looking back along the path she has travelled, Lt Lynn praises God for allowing her to achieve her goals in life. “If it were not for God’s blessings, I would not be what I am now. I pray that God leads me all the way and all the time,” she says.

Born in the Moedersbond Hospital in Pretoria and growing up in Centurion, Lt Lynn started her primary education at Wierda Park Primary School, where she also played netball and softball.

Upon completion of her primary school education, Lt Lynn went to Eldoraigne High School where she also played netball and softball.

Of her matric subjects she enjoyed English and Geography the most. She confesses that the latter actually influenced her love of flying. “As soon as I learned in Geography about all the degrees, contours and angles, I realised that the subject was going to make an impact on my life,” says Lt Lynn. In addition to her love of Geography, something very special brought her closer to the flying machines when she was in Standard 7: her father worked as Project Manager at Denel Aerospace Systems and he would always take her along whenever there were aircraft displays. “I was so fascinated by seeing these flying machines that I immediately developed an innate yearning to fly them,” she says.

Her curiosity about aircraft landed her in a selection test for pilots when she was only 17 years old. Though she failed the test, she was not discouraged. “I knew I had to get more education to pass the test,” says Lt Lynn.

To boost her morale Lt Lynn enrolled for a one-year course in Metamorphosis at Doxa Deo Church (Brooklyn Campus) in 2001. The course entailed life skills, such as personality development and presentation.

The turning point came when she was admitted to a three-year Journalism Programme at the then Randse Afrikaanse University. “The reason why I chose Journalism was that I always wanted to be adventurous and meet people at different levels.”

Her studies in journalism brought her back to her love of flying machines. At the end of her studies in 2004 she went with her father to an Africa Aerospace and Defence Day Display at Air Force Base Waterkloof.

It was on this occasion that Lt Lynn was introduced to Lt Col Frans Schoombee of the SA Air Force, who immediately recruited her to join the staff at Ad Astra magazine at the SA Air Force Headquarters in Pretoria as a journalist. “I loved my new job at Ad Astra because it included writing and flying in different aircraft.”

Lt Lynn has advice for beginners in the Air Force: “Follow your dreams and your heart. Try to turn negative situations into positive ones by learning from hardships.”
focus on women

Social worker boosts morale

Col Lynn Nilsen, SSO Evaluation
Photo: Maj Amora Taljaard

Capt Mantombi Mbengashe is a Social Work Officer at 2 Military Hospital in the Western Cape, who originally came from Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape. She has been interested in social work since she was a child. While she was working for the Child and Family Welfare Society, she was informed by a colleague of the vacant social work post at 2 Military Hospital.

She is currently rendering a social work service in a medical ward and for Phidisa (HIV/AIDS research project). She provides individual and family therapy to patients suffering from a wide range of illnesses to help them cope with the illness in itself and the impact it has on their functioning.

She was recently on three months’ deployment in Beni, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This area is very rural and life is hard. Among other responsibilities she was an adviser to the Battalion Commanding Officer on social work issues. As is well known, separation from loved ones for months on end leads to stress, and therefore a number of difficulties in coping with deployment occur. This requires social work intervention to promote and enhance resilience.

As a member of the SANDF, Capt Mbengashe feels that she has been fully accepted by all her colleagues, men and women, and has not felt discriminated against on the basis that she is a woman. She feels that working in the SANDF has been different and challenging in comparison with her civilian social work client system because civilians struggle with life issues due to low socio-economic status, whereas the SANDF members struggle more with issues related to separation, eg courses and deployment.

Attending in flight

By Hanrie Greebe, Consultant Ad Astra
Photo: J.P. van Vuuren

F Sgt Gift Lebona is a flight attendant on strength at 21 Squadron, flying in the Falcon 50, Falcon 900 and the Presidential Boeing 737 (Boeing Business Jet). When she joined the SA Air Force she had no idea what she was “up against” as she initially wanted to become a meteorological assistant. She recalls: “I had to do physical training and things like that, and then I ended up in the operations environment which I found very interesting.”

F Sgt Lebona has been a flight attendant for the past six years and her duties focus on catering for the different needs of her clients. These responsibilities include setting up menus for specific flights to ensure that the caterers deliver on time and tending to the comfort of passengers during a flight.

Being a flight attendant in the SA Air Force is not as glamorous a task as it sounds. There are at present only twelve active flight attendants in the SA Air Force, and they serve on flights of 21 Squadron, 60 Squadron and 28 Squadron to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi. Apart from attending to clients during a flight, flight attendants are responsible for cleaning the interior of the aircraft after flights.

F Sgt Lebona explains that it is a challenge for her to maintain the very high standard she offers her clients as resources are limited. "We really try and make the most of what we have available to make our passengers comfortable," she says.

One of the highlights of her career was flying with former President Nelson Mandela: "He appreciates everything you do for him. It is fulfilling to oneself to see such a famous person who really appreciates every little thing that you do. And also the current President, Mr Thabo Mbeki - it is an honour to fly with him. He has that way of looking at you with that appreciation for everything that you have done for him," affirms F Sgt Lebona. Since 80% of all SA Air Force flights with flight attendants on board fly after hours and over weekends, it is quite usual to find F Sgt Lebona ready to receive her passengers at 03:00 in the morning! Our Air Force is privileged to have on-board flight attendants, such as F Sgt Lebona as the “face” of this organisation, which serves our country’s Government, personnel and other dignitaries so well.
A wise woman is worth more than gold

By Chaplain Melanie Smit, AFB Waterkloof

When the king died his son took over from him. He decided to test all his father’s leaders and if they were not wise enough, the young king would dismiss them from his service. One of the people that the king wanted to test was the bishop who was the leader of that country’s church. The king sent a message to the bishop: “In three days you must appear before me and answer these three questions: In which direction does God look? How much am I worth? And what do I think? If your answers do not please me, I will dismiss you from my service.”

The bishop was very upset and distraught about these unfair questions. His wife calmed him and suggested that she will go to the king in the disguise of a bishop. The bishop was so desperate that he consented to his wife’s wild plan.

The bishop’s wife appeared before the king and he immediately demanded: “In which direction does God look?” The bishop’s wife said: “Before I answer your question, Your Majesty, answer my question. In which direction does this candle give light?” The king said: “In all directions - of course!” “God is just like the candle - there is light wherever He looks. He sees everything.” “Good answer!” said the king and proceeded to ask the second question: “What am I thinking?” The bishop’s wife answered: “You think I am the bishop, but I am his wife.” She took off the mitre from her head and the king saw that she was indeed the bishop’s wife. At first the king was shocked, but then he started laughing. “You are a wise woman. You have humbled me with your answers and you have saved your husband his job” (Naude’ 2002:64).

Many a person can tell you how a woman has played a part in saving his life or at least influenced it positively. On the 9th of August we are celebrating National Women’s Day. On this day we look back in history and honour all the women who sacrificed so much so that the people and the country they loved could prosper (benefit) from their sacrifice. Some women might think that it is only these famous women who have made and are still making a difference to people’s lives and that deserve to be honoured. They feel that they are just ordinary women trying to provide for their families and that they deserve no praise.

Proverbs 31:30 explains which women are deserving of praise: “Charm is deceptive and beauty disappears, but a woman who honours the LORD should be praised.” In verses 10 to 31 we read about the different roles that a woman can play in building successful family relationships. To her husband she can be a trustworthy partner who has his best interests at heart. She does not sit back and expect him to take sole responsibility in providing for the family. She uses her talents and business skills to assist and support her husband in this.

Mothers have an enormous impact on their children by teaching them the things that they need to know. Through the teachings and wise words from their mothers, children learn important lessons that will assist and guide them to make wise decisions in their lives. Her constant love for them and her example will be an inspiration for them during their lives. Many famous people, like Ghandi, have mentioned what a significant role their mothers played in influencing their decisions.

A wise woman, a woman whose life is centred on God and who uses all her talents to bring honour to God, her family and herself is deserving of praise. If we look at this description, we see that millions of women in South Africa fit this description.

To all the women of South Africa - let us strive to live a life worthy of honour and praise. If you know a woman that fits this description - “Give her credit for all she does. She deserves the respect of everyone” (Prov 31:31).

God bless!

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