

# Young, old add their voices to the Cathcart fundraiser

Book contains stories and memories from 68 contributors

GILLIAN MCAINSH

A new book, *Voices From Cathcart*, is truly what its title suggests it is, tales from 68 different residents of the Karoo town.

And, in a novel marketing twist, the editor asked some of these diverse contributors — one 95 years old — to read snippets from their stories in Facebook video interviews.

Yanga Sigidi, for example, shares his late father's memory of hiding from the police in the apartheid days, while Iso Wardle recollects the fragrance of fresh flowers in her mother's kitchen.

"Kenneth Sigidi and his wife Nombulelo, well-known and loved in Cathcart, and fierce fighters for justice and human rights, were sadly among the first victims of Covid-19 in our town.

"Days before he died, Mr Sigidi handed in the last piece of his story," book editor Liz Botha said.

On the whole, she said, contributors were "mostly old white people" as it was originally planned as a memoir-writing workshop for residents of the Callie Evens Retirement Lodge in Cathcart.

"In the run-up to the workshop, we realised that there were people who perhaps would find the physical act of writing difficult but who might have priceless memories to share," said Botha.

"So we interviewed a couple of people, recording their stories first on an audio-recorder and then in written form."

It soon became apparent that there were dozens of stories waiting to be told, and Botha decided to compile the book as a fundraiser for the Callie Evens Retirement Lodge.

Aileen Berrington, for exam-



**PHILOSOPHER:** Human rights activist Kenneth Sigidi wrote a piece for 'Voices of Cathcart'.



**HOSTESS QUEEN:** Aileen Berrington shares her story in the novel. Pictures: SUPPLIED

ple, who turned 95 on the same day as Britain's Queen Elizabeth, wrote a piece about the Memorable Order of Tin Hats (Moths), called Aileen and the Hairy Fairies.

"We now have more than 80 stories, articles or poems, from 68 people — people whose roots in Cathcart go back to the early 1800s and even further, and also from 'Johnny-come-latelies' who settled in town as recently as two or 10 years ago."

The front cover shows the oldest and youngest contributors: Molly Kemp, 99, and Taro Chiwara, nine.

Sadly, Kemp also passed away on October 20 2020, shortly after her photo was taken.

To encourage youngsters to take part, Botha ran an essay competition for young people, encouraging them to write about older relatives and community members, or about themselves, in any language.

"Because of the upheavals in schooling related to the lockdown, we eventually only had one contribution from nine-year-old Taro Chiwara.

"She won the prize, and ensured that the current ages of people represented in the book stretch from nine to 99!"

Botha said *Voices From Cathcart* could have included many more stories: "There are many, many Cathcart people, wonderful in myriad different ways, who are not in the book."

"Maybe — just maybe — there will be a second volume some day, and maybe there can be a young people's essay competition which is not disrupted by Covid-19!"

*Voices From Cathcart* will be launched at 10am on Friday May 28 at the Cathcart Methodist Fellowship Centre in the town.

The soft cover A4 book retails for R200 (black and white images) or R350 (full colour).

# Business chamber partners with Old Selbornian to raise disability awareness



**COLLABORATION:** Old Selbornian Alan Downey of Disability Info South Africa is partnering with the Border Kei Chambers of Business to raise awareness around disability. Picture: SUPPLIED

SIVENATHI GOSA

Old Selbornian Alan Downey, 48, broke his neck more than two decades ago after diving into a sand bank at Yellow Sands.

Over the years, Downey has received immense support from people across SA, including his former Selborne College classmates and former Springbok rugby captains Bob Skinstad and André Vos.

The Border Kei Chamber of Business (BKCOB) is partnering with Downey to raise awareness around disability.

He will deliver a speech at an event later this year.

Downey established a website and information service called Disability Info SA (DiSA) in 2015 to assist people with disabilities who want information that can help them.

Downey, who is now based in Cape Town, said: "After 20 years in a wheelchair, I realised that there was still an urgent need for a free information service to support and assist people with disabilities and their families, who are looking for information that will help them to be better equipped to face the challenges of their circumstances and any related barriers presented by society."

It was during his third year as an apprentice at a panel beating establishment that on November 20 1994, he broke his neck. "I was lucky to have friends with me who pulled me from the river, as I could not move and my head was submerged under the water."

"I was sent to Conradie Spinal Unit here in Cape Town for an operation and five months' rehabilitation, and was classified as a C5 quadriplegic, which meant that I had no feeling from the chest down and only limited use of my arms," Downey said.

BKCOB member and Securo Group director Colin Beard said the purpose behind the event and partnership was to inform and raise awareness in the corporate environment about disability in the workplace.

This covers a number of topics, with the main aim being to assist in clarifying and educating all parties involved.

"This will not only help an employee with a disability to earn an income, but it will help

employers to uplift the company's status too.

"BKCOB will be posting surveys in the form of questionnaires to its members that will highlight a number of issues related to disability in the workplace," Beard said.

Beard, who is also an Old Selbornian, was one of the organisers of an event that raised funds for Downey to buy a motorised wheelchair worth about R130,000 in 2013.

Skinstad and Vos were the main guests at the event.

Funds also went towards the development of the website and the formation of DiSA.

Traditionally, the Old Boys gather in East London annually on Founders' Day to celebrate the anniversary of their former school.

Due to Covid-19 regulations, the 2021 reunion was postponed but will be celebrated in 2022 in conjunction with the college's 150th birthday.

"We have a number of exciting fundraising events planned," said Beard.

As this is the first time DiSA and BKCOB work together, Downey said: "We want to create more awareness about people with disabilities in the workplace, as companies often do not necessarily understand the difficulties they face at their place of work."

"BKCOB are interested in working with us, and also to do events where awareness is increased and people are informed about the needs of people with disabilities."

Downey said the future plans for DiSA were to grow and become more than just an information website.

"We are also building a platform to inform people with disabilities of their rights so that they can lay a complaint, which we will then follow up on to make sure that it is dealt with."

"Companies that are non-compliant will be encouraged to become accessible and compliant, thereby creating an accessible SA free of barriers," he said.

"We have recently become a registered NPC and have received our NPO registration number (NPO Reg 256-154), in the hope that we can get funding to grow this service to assist more people."

# Dylan's 'Lay Lady Lay', Cobain self-portrait and hand-written letters from Spears on auction

Bob Dylan's handwritten lyrics to *Lay Lady Lay*, a cheeky self-portrait by Kurt Cobain and five guitars designed by the late Eddie Van Halen are among 1,500 items going up for auction in June.

A series of hand-written letters from Britney Spears to her high school boyfriend will also be offered for sale in the Music Icons event at Julien's Auctions in Beverly Hills.

The lyrics to Dylan's 1969 song, written in pencil on a sheet of notepaper from a lumber company, carry an estimate



of \$500,000-600,000.

"That's the most expensive item in the auction in June."

"It's with all the hand notations from Bob Dylan, including chord notations," said Martin Nolan, executive



director of Julien's.

Cobain's self-portrait is a caricature in black felt pen that he drew in 1992 during a tour in Singapore for his punk band Nirvana's *Nevermind* album.

It depicts the late singer play-



**NEVER FORGOTTEN:** Bob Dylan, Kurt Cobain and Britney Spears. Pictures: SUPPLIED

ing the guitar with the words "I don't know how to play and I don't give a hoot!" Cobain memorabilia has soared in price in recent years; an acoustic guitar he played in 1993 sold for \$6 million last year.

The collection of letters between Spears and her boyfriend Donald "Reg" Jones were written just as her pop career was about to explode in the late 1990s, and carry an estimate of \$4,000-6,000.

The two-day auction will take place in Beverly Hills from June 12-13. — Reuters

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