

**Cedric Radcliffe Mayson: 16<sup>th</sup> July 1927 – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2015**



Penelope and Cedric Mayson in the Amphitheatre of the Union Buildings in Pretoria in 1999 at the time of the swearing in of South Africa's second democratically elected President, Thabo Mbeki.

On Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2015, a great South African was laid to rest in Benoni, near Johannesburg. At a non-confessional venue, his tributes came from Hindu, Jewish, Moslem, agnostic and Christian comrades – all of whom shared, in varying degrees, a similar radical view of the failings of institutional religion. If Cedric had been present, he would have felt vindicated and very proud that his writings and ideas have taken root and that he had built a new basis for tolerance between people from different faith traditions.

The Mayson family attended the funeral in impressive numbers. They included his sister Rhona, wife Penelope, 7 children and 9 of his 14 grand children (his 2 great grandchildren were too young to attend), besides spouses and in-laws. The Rev. Frank Chikane officiated. The most senior person present was ex President Thabo Mbeki. Also present were Prof. Barney Pityana and his brother Siphosiso, theologian Albert Nolan, Tom Waspe, Barbara Hogan (one time prisoner with Cedric and former Cabinet Minister), Derek and Trish Hanekom (Derek, now Minister of Tourism) and Aziz Pahad (former Deputy Foreign Minister), Judge Cathy Satchwell, amongst others.

Present too were those who had shared prison life with Cedric: Jabu Ngwenya, Alan Fine and Frank Chikane and Barbara Hogan. Many others who attended, were equally familiar with detention and torture.

Contributions from Yashika Singh from the Hindu tradition, Lael Bethlehem from the Jewish faith, Mohammed Dangor representing the Moslem faith, as well as other tributes (close to 300) will be posted on a Cedric Mayson website the family will launch in coming weeks. The website will include the programme of the ceremony as well as photos taken on the day. A photo gallery of Cedric from a young age until just prior to his death will also be posted. The tributes by David, Cedric's youngest son and that of Horst Kleinschmidt, colleague and collaborator in the Christian Institute and subsequently in the underground will also be posted on the website.

It was a celebration of Cedric's rich life, wonderfully told by Cedric's son David. He traced the story of this often irreverent, former Methodist Minister. His daughters complimented this, beautifully singing well-known hymns and spirituals that Cedric re-wrote the lyrics of, the very songs that contributed to Cedric being asked to leave every one of the three white congregations he served.

In his impromptu address, ex President Mbeki recalled how the reports smuggled out of the country by Cedric Mayson (amongst others) informed and created the response by the exile movement in support of internal resistance. The reports were obtained via clergymen who visited South Africa. They, mostly unwittingly, brought back gifts from Cedric or Beyers Naudé to 'their friend Horst in London'. Horst then knew to take the 'gifts' apart to find hidden in its inner works/seams/false bottoms the reports Cedric and Beyers had written. Frequently, the reports had been transferred on to microfiche, the earliest form of electronically reduced writing. Communication back into the country followed the same procedure in reverse. Many of the clergymen had no idea what vital service they rendered. The SB's remained equally ignorant of this form of communication and none of the items ever became the subject of interrogation or court evidence.



**Example of actual microfiche sent during 1970's and 1980's**

Expanding on Cedric's secret flights between South Africa to Botswana, the ex President told of the difficulties and dangers to organize the first substantive meeting between the ANC and BCM leaders. Steve was banned (house arrested) in 1973 and the ANC was outlawed in South Africa. Was it possible for Cedric to fly Steve clandestinely from the Eastern Cape to an appointed landing strip in the open veld near Molepololi in Botswana? After the meeting, fly him back so that it would not appear to the SB that Steve had been away, broken the terms of his banning order, crossed an international boundary illegally, and met with an outlawed organisation? Various attempts were made but delayed. The ANC also had to tread cautiously. A nervous Botswana Government preferred high-ranking ANC officials to enter Botswana from Zambia or Angola only when invited to official functions such as the annual independence celebrations. Botswana knew, but could do little about SB agents from South Africa crossing the border to spy and conduct acts of terror against suspected ANC people.

Tragically, the meeting between Steve Biko and Oliver Tambo never took place because the Security Police killed Steve on 12 September 1977.

Thabo Mbeki concluded that the spy Craig Williamson, still operating inside South Africa at that time, had close connections with some BCM people. Williamson admitted before the TRC that his operations, later also in the ANC externally, resulted in the murder of the key figures. Thus the murder of Steve Biko, points the finger at Williamson.

The story Thabo Mbeki told reveals the part Cedric and the Christian Institute played in the unfolding struggle and efforts to build bridges literally, but mostly in other ways, between the internal and external parts of the struggle.

The celebration of Cedric's life was concluded with sons, daughters and grandchildren carrying the simple coffin, made of plywood and rope, to the hearse. A last prayer by Rev. Barney Pityana, followed by a solemn rendition of Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika and those present strewing rose petals on Cedric's coffin brought a dignified ending to the life of a remarkable man.

## Memorial Service.

On Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June, in the Johannesburg City Hall, the ANC arranged a Remembrance Service to honour Cedric. Those paying their last respects to Cedric came mostly from Soweto and thunderously sang liberation songs in memory of a fallen hero. Then the ANC Choir provided, with equal thunder, their last respects. Bishop Paul Verryn of the Methodist Church, with comrades Nandi Mayathula-Khoza and Mohammed Dangor spoke movingly while directing the evenings' events.

Once more Horst Kleinschmidt and Cedric's son David spoke and both concluded by telling of Cedric's deep disappointment of what the ANC had become twenty-one years after it had brought democracy to our land. The SA Council of Churches, the SA National Civics Organisation, and the SA Communist Party all made statements that spoke to the significance of Cedric in the struggle. The Muslim tribute ended with the words that Cedric was "a man who knew how to live a Godly life". This was followed by an old Christian Institute friend, Alex Mbatha, Chairperson of the ANC Veterans League who in a rousing tribute, paid respect to Cedric's solidarity with "the Black people" and for his singular courage to carry out underground work.

The closing and impressive address was from Dr Gwen Ramakgopa, Deputy Minister of Health, and former mayor of Tswane.

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