



AFRICAN SCHOLARS' FUND





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The stories which follow set out the history of the African Scholars' Fund and reflect something of the ideals which have sustained the Fund for so many years.

The opening section was contributed by our founder, Margaret Elsworth, and we pay tribute to her for her unflagging support and the immense sacrifices made by her and her family in supporting the work of ASF.

To the many who have contributed to making possible the record of our history and the role of our stakeholders in it, we extend our most heartfelt gratitude, especially to our wonderfully selfless volunteer, Tim Everingham, for having engaged so enthusiastically with our donors and bursars in obtaining their much-valued contributions.

May the stories herein shared bring your own unique memories to life and may you, too, look forward to the continued ASF journey.

MARGARET ELSWORTH Tells of ASF's beginnings

Drs Jack and Margaret Elsworth had five children who were all at school and, like everyone else, had to buy their schoolbooks. Sometimes they were lucky and found second-hand books but usually had to buy new ones, and spend a weekend covering them in brown paper to make them last. School began expensively every year.

In those mad days of burgeoning *apartheid* the Nationalist government suddenly decreed that white schoolchildren would receive free schoolbooks – whereas all children “of colour” would have to buy theirs. They said that black mothers were too proud to accept the charity of “free” books! All white families therefore had not only the books they had bought but also all the books, pens and other equipment which they were given free. One child received five rulers! A ridiculous but appalling situation. What should one do?

Let us, said our children, give all our books to black schools where those children have none. Put a notice in the newspaper. So they did – a tiny notice, a few lines of an inside column – just once.

EXPLOSION! The books began to arrive at the Elsworth house at any time of the day or night. They came from parents, and children, and then from schools. First they came in little car-loads and then in lorry-loads. Those bringing the books, appalled by the government decree, simply wanted to help. Their books filled the hall, sitting-room, corridors, spare room and dining-room, in great piles up to the ceiling. We tried to sort them using sisal string, binding them in batches - History books, Science, Maths, Afrikaans, English grammar. We filled the house and then the garage and then exploded into the car-port. We were literally choc-a-bloc!

At that time black people seen in white areas were often swept up by policemen in white vans lurking in the streets of suburbia looking for pass offenders. It did not matter how legitimate the people were, whether going to work or returning home – they were just picked up. Usually they were treated roughly, rudely, sworn at, and it was no use protesting innocence or saying “But I have a pass.” “Passes” had to be checked as valid, so the vans took them to Langa before searching them. Even if passes were in order people were not immediately freed because bribes were usually hoped for. No bribe and it would be prison, legally or not. Those were bad, bad times. Being caught in the daytime was bad. To be caught at night was a disaster.

It was one dark night in such times that, answering a timid knock on our front door, we met a quiet black man standing there with two of his friends. “We heard that there were some books.” “Come in, come in please.” And so the three of them came in, quietly and frightened. They were teachers from the township schools - Mr Mgijima, Mr Oniwe and Mr Plaatjie, brave men. “Please take as many as you can,” we said. So they did, and asked if they could come again. “Most certainly, and please tell your friends.”

We had not realised what we had unleashed. The next time there was a gentle knock on the door there were about twenty teachers standing there! They took piles of books (to our great relief) and we

all shared a cup of tea together! It was an amazing start and the teachers kept on coming.

The house was not suitable for a book depot and had become so full that it was difficult to live there. I had to consult the Bantu Education Department. It was a time of strict *apartheid*. If we were seriously to distribute books we would have to do so openly – indeed brazenly – so we had to keep on the right side of the laws of the land however obnoxious they were. The Departmental offices were accessible, in Plein Square, next to the Houses of Parliament and looking at the statue of Louis Botha! “You are not allowed just to give books to Bantu schools,” said Mr Heyns. “The Department has to check what you are handing out. Pretoria will want to know all the titles and be given a list in triplicate before they approve!” A silent “Ha Ha” was in his voice. “How will you get past that one?” Mr Heyns had been a missionary in Malawi and had been appointed Regional Manager of Bantu Education (B.E.D.). He had to obey the rules of the government department, or be dismissed and lose his pension after all his years of service. He was a good but disillusioned man.

His second-in-command, Mr Dill, had also been a missionary – a gentle soul, apologetic for the horrible rules he had to enforce. Mr Dill came to our meetings whenever he could, was welcome and helpful, bless him. After meeting them that first day, I just smiled, went home and phoned the School Board Secretary, Mr Malusi. “I should like to deliver some books to your Langa office next Monday evening. Would that be convenient?” With a couple of HiAce vans, a host of schoolchildren from Bishops, Langa and Westerford, someone with a typewriter, and a few packs of filing cards, in one evening, we filled all the offices of the Langa School Board up to the ceiling with packs of school books, and provided a full list in triplicate of all the books delivered and a card file - for Pretoria!

The Bantu Education Department could not complain and Mr Heyns was so delighted that, to my fury, he took two really good Oxford dictionaries for use in his own office. I never let him forget that he had actually stolen those books – but he, in return, could not have been more helpful until he finally retired. A happy discovery was that the handyman-cum-cleaner at the B.E.D. office was a bent little man called Mr Sapula, father of Roman, one of our first and best scholars at Fezeka. Those were early days. Later we had other officials who were dedicated to *apartheid* policy, usually one of two “Mr Scheepers” who seemed to turn up everywhere.

That was the beginning. A tidal wave of offerings of help was happily accepted – from friends, neighbours, sympathisers, all kinds of people with overflowing goodwill. The following week we filled the Guguletu School Board office and then, because there simply was not enough space, Mr Ngambu allowed access to the premises of the new Fezeka High School, of which he was Principal. The school had opened in the abandoned St Joseph’s Orthopaedic Hospital on the Lansdowne Road in Philippi. There we filled the staircases, sluice-rooms, vestries and chapel, and finally took over the huge “laundry” at the back, a building not unlike an aeroplane hangar.

Schoolchildren came to help sort and pack. They were both black and white from various schools, mostly Westerford and Fezeka, and after 20 years of *apartheid* they were meeting one another for the first time! Teachers from all over the country came and went, carrying off all they could so that books were distributed throughout South Africa, the whole of Lesotho (via their school feeding scheme) and even into Zimbabwe as far as Marondera. Valuable non-school books went to CAFDA.

This went on for about three years and the Bantu Education Department could do nothing to stop it. Because the school syllabuses were different there was a problem with "set books". The black, coloured, Indian and white schools not only had different books for English, but also for History and Geography. The craziest joke of all, the crowning irony, was that, after some months, the schoolbook printers ran into trouble because they could not keep up with the orders for new books. Their requests began to come in for whatever was short, and we could sell our second-hand books back to the white Education Department and give the money to a poor black child needing to buy a book we did not have, and that is how we began to have a little money available to buy books for black schoolchildren.

By 1970 the flood of second-hand schoolbooks was drying up. This was a great relief. While white children were being given free schoolbooks, to give second-hand books to black children could be considered insulting even if done simply as a stopgap. Otherwise they would all have been pulped. School Inspectors from all parts of the country were meeting in Cape Town and they were invited to take the 40 000 books which remained and no further books would be collected or distributed. Any residue would be the property of the Bantu Education Department. Second-hand book distribution formally ended in 1971.

EARLY DAYS

But the real problem remained: How could we help poor schoolchildren in ALL schools? Most of them were black. There was a profit of R37 in hand, and a desperate need for a school bursary scheme. Professor Hansi Pollak, Chairman of the SA Institute of Race Relations, was approached but said, very firmly, NO and "Run it yourself" and recommended someone as Hon. Treasurer.

Among our earliest supporters were those who had been "schoolchildren" helping with the distribution of schoolbooks, both black and white. Now the white children learned about conditions in black schools. They actually met and talked to black schoolchildren and found that they had so much in common. A great divide had been crossed. They formed National Youth Action and did some very useful fund-raising. They were very active especially when they left school and went to university. Many of them were there among those who were so horribly tear-gassed on the steps of St George's Cathedral. They persevered with protests for a long time. They were an inspiration.

The first bursar came through Red Cross Hospital. Pappie Vazana and his brother Joseph lived in Worcester and their parents were hit by a train on the railway crossing just outside Zwelethemba township. Both boys were at Freemantle High School in Transkei and were at home on holiday at the time. With both parents dead, who would now pay their fees? Both boys sometimes earned a little money selling fruit to train passengers on Worcester station, but they had no other income. Pappie made his way to Cape Town by train and somehow made his way to the Dept of Social Welfare in Wynberg – but they had no way to help him. Then someone remembered that Dr Elsworth at Red Cross Hospital had collected school-books and therefore referred him there. When he walked into my consulting room I knew, with a sinking feeling, that Pappie would be the first of many. There was no escape and this was going to grow beyond any imagining. There was R37 left from the sale of books and Pappie would get it. I had to devise a system, get his details, check his reports, make sure that he had money for stamps to write to me and find money for his brother! "I think that you may be the first of many," I said to him, and did not know what an understatement that was.

1970

African Scholars' Fund began in 1970 in the Elsworth home. At first we used one



of the bedrooms as an office, but then it spread: into the sitting room, then the dining-room, then the corridors. There were papers everywhere, at least one typewriter, later a computer and printer. All the workers were volunteers. All were remarkable. All were ready to help. People came in and out, volunteers, working, talking, making tea. Trustee meetings were held there. The telephone never seemed to stop. But this was rewarding work. Some of the best educational people in Cape Town formed the new Trust Fund. We met every month. All we needed was a typewriter, paper, envelopes, stamps. We opened a bank account and a Post Box. And so it grew. There were valuable links with the National Council of Women (Ethel Hudson), the SA Teachers' Association (Joan Kenyon), Director of Bantu Administration (Mr Worrall), and Max Hales (Syfret, Godlonton & Low).

The basic idea was that a child performing reasonably well at secondary school should not have to leave because there was not enough money. However isolated that child might feel, he or she would not be alone. There was hope. Someone would be interested enough to help provided that the child was making good progress at any school, of any colour. Sadly we had to limit the area to the Cape Province, Eastern Cape (Transkei and Ciskei) and Northern Cape. The Free State, Natal and Transvaal were too far away for effective management. We would have to depend upon the teachers and social workers to identify the children. We were not looking for the top scholars, the brightest and best. We were looking for the steady children, who did not have to be brilliant but they did have to be competent and ready to learn wherever they were. And that is why we ended up having children in such out-of-the-way places as NababEEP!

For the first five years it was called the Bantu Scholars' Fund because we had to work with the officialdom of the Bantu Education Department (B.E.D.). But after becoming established and accepted by the B.E.D. it was possible to change the name to "African Scholars' Fund". They wanted us to be the Black Scholars' Fund but this suggestion was absolutely turned down. "African" can be any colour and has a geographical connotation.

Even government schools in poor areas cost money. Children have to buy uniforms, shoes, and books, and pay something to the School Fund. There were many people willing, indeed anxious, to help and so we began fund-raising, finding applicants, checking reports and keeping records. R40 p.a. for High School, R80-90 p.a. for boarding school, R30 p.a. for Junior Secondary School. Books in Form I (repeat Std 6) cost R22 p.a. – this was an extra year to consolidate Primary school.

The work was unremitting. Without the steady support of volunteers it would have been impossible. In later years some people being "paid" were really volunteers - R100 per month can hardly be called "wages". In the early years we were treated with suspicion by the government. "That man is here again" defined a Colonel from the Special Branch who repeatedly visited the Elsworth house hoping to find something subversive – but there were only school reports, and most of them said "Could do better". Policemen with guns bulging in their pockets were not allowed into the house because of the children. By contrast, on Tuesday mornings trustees who were free would drop in for coffee and discuss things, any problems, any ideas. These were the most rewarding times when we got to know each other well as ideas were shared and flourished.

A sponsorship system was put in place almost immediately. A donor was linked to a schoolchild and was sent details of school progress and home situation. Each child had to send a school report at least twice a year, preferably with

a letter. Copies of all correspondence were sent to the sponsor. A sponsor's donation did not go into a general "melting pot" but to a specific child - correspondence between donor and bursar happened via the office of the ASF. Noreen Saunders began to develop this system for the first ten years, until her tragic death, but in 1994 it became the dedicated portfolio of Lyn Daniel. Links were established with the Nyanga School Board (Rev Ndungane of Holy Cross), with the Press, Huisgenoot, Fair Lady, Round Table, Teachers Journals, the S A Council of Churches, the Lions, Rotary, Round Table. Raymond Ackerman helped with stationery. National Youth Action and teachers in the townships actively raised funds. The Murray Trust, the City Council, the Mauerberger Foundation and others assisted. In 1973 a Bank account was opened in the UK. 20 years later, in 1993, Sandy Elsworth linked this to the Charities' Aid Foundation – and still looks after it with no charge and apparently without any problems.



ABOVE: Lyn Daniel (1994) – retired
December 2018

1976

1976 was, of course, the year of revolt. All our children were affected and, although we heard terrible stories, there was nothing we could do. And then Jeffrey Mamputa, one of our bursars, arrived in Outpatients at Red Cross Hospital accompanying a small cousin to be seen by Dr Elsworth. Jeffrey was an active Comrade in the struggle and hiding from the police. "There is nothing wrong with her," he said. "This is the only way I could come to see you." Indeed, the Doctor's consulting room is private and he could not be arrested there. Between us we arranged a meeting with the Comrades for Sunday morning at the Elsworth house. This was possible because I was already acquainted with the police in Guguletu, especially the Captain, who was worried for my safety on repeated visits in and out of the township to see the schools. So they believed me when I told them: *"Not to interfere with arrangements or there would be no chance of reconciliation."*

It seemed almost miraculous when the "Comrades" arrived at our house that Sunday morning – so quietly. Dr Stuart Saunders led the meeting with understanding and kindness. The rest of us stayed in the background, not interfering. Two of us took notes of what was said and read them back to the Comrades to make sure we had got it right. It was a momentous morning! The statement "From the African Scholars of Cape Town" presented by the Comrades on that historic occasion is safely glued into our Minute Book. The young men were so pleased that someone had taken the trouble to listen to them, to sympathise. They were quiet leaders who tried hard to keep the peace and be reasonable. It was a wonderful morning. The final document was, shortly afterwards, taken to Brigadier Bischoff in Caledon Square for his information. His reaction was immediate: "Thank you. Now I know what this is all about. No-one had told us!" Precisely. The police themselves did not know what the true problems were. They were trying to keep order but were blind as to the causes of the trouble. Evidence from African Scholars' Fund, prepared with the help of Max Hales, was presented to the Cillie Commission.

VISITS TO SCHOOLS

In 1977 the Trustees began to visit the schools themselves to meet some of the teachers and children. Because the Cape townships were dangerous and dysfunctional, we went to the Eastern Cape, using our friends for overnight hospitality. Amazing journeys and experiences and meetings brought us together as people. Arriving at Clarkebury and not knowing the way in, I went through the school grounds where pupils were relaxing during "break" and asked a young man to show me to the office, saying that I was Dr Elsworth from African Scholars' Fund. He looked at me, amazed! And then shouted excitedly "He's a woman!" The Headmaster of a Primary School on a little hill from nowhere way beyond Idutywa asked me for an address and as I was writing it he made a gulping sort of noise and I looked up. His eyes were streaming with tears. "My dear Mr Mxengwa, what is the trouble?" "Nothing" he sobbed, "just that I have

seen that writing so often on your letters and it always brings good news." Hospitality and loving welcome met us everywhere – from NababEEP to Kuruman, Dimbaza to Sutherland, Mossel Bay to Noupoort, city townships, villages far from anywhere, gold teacups in Fort Beaufort. Wherever we went we were met by loving, caring people. They were doing great work in terrible circumstances – and our message was always the same: that no child had to feel alone. If you work and try your best there IS someone out there who can help – through African Scholars' Fund. The communication is by letter-writing. As one child said to us, "When they tell me that there is a letter for me, I know it is from you!"

Tragic unrest continued for too many years. Mary Livingstone, then the ASF secretary, also worked in the Black Sash Advice Office and was deeply involved. Sometimes our ASF office was truly a place of tears especially when one of our "children" came to show us his bruises. Township homes were invaded by police with strong torches, sjamboks and guns, usually in the middle of the night. Many of our "children" were pulled out of their beds, locked up in the police cells, beaten up, with no reasons given. Some were seriously tortured, particularly in the Eastern Cape and especially those who were leaders of some kind. Many were detained, some of them children under 16. A Head boy or prefect was always in danger. There were beatings and terror and torture. We saw the weals and wept. The black children lived in fear and grew hot with rebellion. The country wept. Here in the office we all wept too. We were all so helpless. There were usually one or two "refugees" living in the Elsworth house – or was it the ASF office? They were boys who had managed to get into school at Rondebosch Boys High School or South African College Schools. Revd L Redelinghuys, Principal in Crossroads, was torched in his car during a visit to I D Mkize High School and barely escaped with his life. Lingelihle High School in Cradock had an exceptional Headmaster, Matthew Goniwe, who was murdered by "police". Schooling in the 80s was disastrous and there was little we could do except try to bring hope to any schoolchild, however lonely, who showed ability but needed help.

Those were bad times. Few schools could function. Few children could write exams. Intimidation was crippling. Some children found refuge in "white" schools. Hopeless overcrowding in the classrooms (96 in a matric class) forced some schools to develop a platoon system – half the children went to school in the morning and the other half in the afternoon.

The Careers Research and Information Centre had by then been opened by Shirley Walters, later to become a Professor at U.W.C. This gave guidance to children leaving school, but opportunities for Technical or Trade trainings were mostly available in the Cape and very little in "the Homelands". Coordination with other organisations played a big part in our work and high on the lists were the Urban Foundation; the SAIRR (ASF took over all their school bursaries); and LEAF (which gave extra lessons particularly in Maths and Science). To avoid doubling the work, the Catholic Aid Foundation shared its lists. Even the Bantu Education Department suddenly decided to award Merit bursaries and usually gave them to the children who already had ASF awards so that we had to go to their offices (in Bellville) to check their lists! Those were so badly administered that it was a waste of time and did not last long. St Francis' Night School, headed by Sister Veronica, was magnificent. Some of the finest teachers in the city gave their teaching time at night, voluntarily, to hundreds of schoolchildren who could not pursue their education at ordinary schools.

At the end of 1980 ASF made a disastrous investment with funds held for the following year which nearly lost thousands of rands. It could have been complete disaster but an investment gambling "marathon" by one man at Syfrets, over a few days and nights in early December, managed to retrieve that money just in time for the January intake. It was a nail-biting time. An Elsworth visit to Arizona soon afterwards encouraged many faithful new donors from the United States, and one of them even became a Trustee during his sojourn in Cape Town. In 1984 the Fund eventually managed to get Income

Tax Rebate on donations and the first scholars were recommended to the Yvonne Parfitt Trust for university bursaries.

But from 1980 to 1994 the educational scenario and revolutionary outbreaks became worse and worse. There were boycotts and gang warfare. Children were intimidated and threatened. We had children on bursaries studying while in prison. Unrest was everywhere – George, Hermanus, Beaufort West, Uitenhage. We made increasingly more visits to schools - Cradock, Graaff Reinet, Beaufort West, Aberdeen, Oudtshoorn. The office was often a place of tears.

Administration costs while the Fund was hosted in the Elsworth house were very low, at one stage only 2%, and when they rose to 6% we worried. Eulalie Stott, a very active member of the Cape Town City Council, told me that they were always amazed to see how low administration costs were. They renewed their grant each year, which came through the Mayoress's Charity Fund. Moving to a rented office and employing more staff was expensive but costs were contained by using volunteers to complement our secretaries.

STAFFING

Staffing was entirely voluntary for the first ten years, which included about 50 volunteers and an impressive contingent of people offering technical and career advice. The first attempts to employ a secretary to help the volunteers were not a success until Mary Livingstone came in 1980 at a monthly salary of R100. She walked to work but she was a brilliant teacher and the best letter-writer I have ever met, but she could not adjust to computers which had become essential to the work. Nevertheless she continued to produce literary masterpieces on the typewriter, a magnificent example to all our scholars.

1994 – OFFICE PREMISES

African Scholars' Fund was no longer a temporary stop-gap in a dysfunctional schooling system. It had become, like the school feeding schemes, something which was going to stay as long as there was poverty in the land, but clearly a more permanent administration was needed. In 1994, with a bequest from Professor J M Grieve, the office moved to rented premises in Rondebosch and the Elsworth family was able to see their dining room table again - no longer under a pile of papers. Clerical posts were made for a Treasurer, a Sponsor Secretary and a Manager for Technical College students. In 1998 the proposal that the Fund buy a flat in Rondebosch for permanent premises was turned down by the Trustees in favour of renting offices in Porter House but, when that was demolished in 2010, ASF had to find other offices at great inconvenience, not once but twice!

The years in Porter House were wonderful. Great work was done there by both staff and volunteers in an atmosphere of laughter and hope. These were always productive, interesting times because our trustees and volunteers were highly professional people with wide experience. The office was particularly busy at the beginning of the year when the reports were coming in, when many decisions had to be made and bursaries paid out. The busiest time was at the end of October when the new applications arrived. I shall never forget going to the Rondebosch Post Office to pick up the post. I had to get the car and a supermarket trolley and make two trips! Every October piles of application forms covered the table and floor of the main office. We took them home in batches and work through the night - the only way to keep up.

Richard Stoy, in charge of the building, was not an ordinary landlord – he looked after us. There were old family connections because his mother was part of the National Council of Women and his father, Dr Stoy, was Astronomer in Observatory – all strong supporters of ASF.

PEOPLE

Such lovely people came – Mike bringing us olives from his McGregor farm; Bronnie arranging sales for the clothing she brought from England; Miss Miller bringing us pots of marmalade; friends from Switzerland; visitors from near and far. It was a rich community indeed. Such wonderful people were involved. Wally Mears, our first Chairman, had received some of his schooling at Lovedale. He had been Headmaster of Rondebosch Boys’ High School. Many ex-Principals came to work with us – Robin Whiteford, Jack Kent, Margaret Thomson, John Gardener. Wally Judge had been Business Manager of the Cape Times. There is a long list of remarkable people who gave their time and concern to this Fund. The money they gave was important but even more vital was their continuing concern and interest to be part of our work and to do some of it.



ABOVE: Wally Judge, John Gardener



TOP RIGHT: Jack Kent, Mary Livingstone, Dr Jean Anderson

BOTTOM RIGHT: Will Rollo, Margaret Bull, Wally Judge

OTHER PROJECTS

TECSAT

Tragically, in 1994, the new government not only closed the Nursing Colleges, and the Teacher Training Colleges, but also discontinued the apprenticeship system of artisan training. The supply of well-trained nurses, teachers and artisans dried up. School leavers wanting to pursue a trade did not know where to go for training. So the Western Cape Technical College Principals came in a body to ask African Scholars’ Fund to help fund their students. This was agreed to on one condition: that all Technical College students subsidise the cost by an annual levy on the fees “to help those less fortunate than themselves”. And that is why each year, the core money for TECSAT bursaries came from the College students themselves because the Colleges added a small levy to all student fees to fund bursaries for those who were too poor to pay. TECSAT was successfully formed thanks to the determined efforts of Bob St Leger (Caltex), Peter Barry (Sivuyile Technical College), Peter Riches (SETAs), Jannie Isaacs (CT Technical College) and Debbie Chuter (ASF). Richard Knight helped to draw up the Deed of Trust and administration began using the staff of African Scholars’ Fund who were already familiar with the work. TECSAT, later called ACCESS Trust, then moved into its own offices and supported students until NSFAS funding was fully provided in 2017. Technical College Students mostly in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage, continued to be the responsibility of the ASF. The Nelson Mandela Metropole continued their support of the ASF with an annual grant.

UK FUNDING

Sandy Elsworth opened a branch of the Fund in the UK in 1999 and gained Tax Exemption for donors through the Charities’ Aid Foundation. This most valuable contribution to the work has remained active ever since and bears no administrative cost – thanks to Sandy.

WORKING WITH OTHER FUNDS

The Mendi Memorial Fund, Studietrust and the Catholic Welfare organisation

were all awarding bursaries and, to prevent overlapping, regular checks were required.

SECONDARY SCHOOLING AND O B E

Outcomes Based Education (OBE) was introduced at the turn of the century for idealistic reasons. During the 1990s many meetings of experienced educationalists were held at the Norval Institute and many representations made, but their advice and protests were not heeded. At the same time the practice of having Inspectors to visit the schools was discontinued. The serious decline of educational standards which followed can largely be attributed to both these major changes. The school reports issued in the new OBE system were often unintelligible and gave no indication of a pupil's competence. African Scholars' Fund could only make the best of the poor schooling system which remained during the first years of a new century that was supposed to usher in a new Golden Age of Freedom.

VISIT TO NORTHERN CAPE

This was just one of many remarkable trips and included travelling nearly as far as "Hotazel" beyond Kuruman. Because distances were so great and some roads could only be travelled with a 4-wheel drive, we could not visit schools which were high on our list, often where we had the most children, and this was a great disappointment. We wanted to go to Moedi, to Nametsegang, Oarabile, Itlotleng, Seoleseng, Pitso Jantjie and others because we corresponded with them but did not meet. They do not have Email, faxes or even telephones – just post office boxes or bags. Many lack the simplest facilities. So we invited them for a tea-party at the Kuruman Mission station, and they came, even from as far as 200 km away!

It was also possible for Barbara Elsworth and me to do one last school trip, mostly in the Karroo – Willowvale, Steytlerville, Noupoot and De Aar were all included. The many trips for ASF, made together in Barbara's car, mostly staying in B&B's and accompanied by at least two dogs, were unforgettable – and Barbara never wanted to take money even for the petrol! Of course the scenery and the travelling were wonderful experiences, but best of all was the joy of meeting the dedicated teachers, the hopeful children. In all those years and all those visits there was not one occasion when we were not met with great welcome and hospitality.

POSTSCRIPT

In August 2007 Margaret's offer to retire at the end of the year was accepted by the Trustees although she continued to work with the school-leavers for the next few months and with ACCESS Trust until it closed.

It is very important to realise that ASF could not have happened at all without the Elsworth family of five. They put up with an invasion of their home life by office work for many years but they all helped with parcelling books, stamping envelopes and many other tedious jobs. Home routines were disturbed but there were never complaints. The car was repeatedly used for ASF requirements but there were never claims for its use, even for petrol on their trips. Barbara hosted many glorious school visit tours. Sandy has, for 20 years, looked after the donors in the UK. Home was often overwhelmed with papers and telephone calls. Dr Grieve ("Uncle") made it possible to rent the first office from the bequest in his Will when he died. This was not just "Dr E". It was a whole family working together.

Unquestionably, though, the driving force behind this was Margaret Elsworth, whose determination and unflagging energy enabled the work of ASF to flourish and grow despite many obstacles. The sacrifices made by her and her family serve as an example and inspiration for the future.

In August 2007 Margaret Elsworth resigned as Director of ASF. She was subsequently appointed as Patron of ASF in recognition of her uniquely long and valuable service to the organisation she had created and led for so long.

HISTORY OF FINANCES

In February 1970, Mr T B Lang was elected Hon Treasurer and it was resolved that cheque and savings accounts be opened at the Standard Bank Rondebosch - who remain the Fund's bankers to this day.

A fortnight later Mr Lang reported to the trustees' meeting that R27 had been deposited in the current account. At that meeting, it was agreed that 'a reasonable amount' for a bursary was R40 at local schools, and R80 - 90 at boarding schools in the Ciskei and Transkei - including the boarding fees. Clearly the R27 would not go very far, but it was reported that Zonnebloem Training School was collecting money and had over R200 already. So funding was under way albeit with modest beginnings.

By April of 1970, R540 had been received, including a personal cheque from Mr Raymond Ackerman for R100, which must make him our longest standing donor. By the end of its first year, the Fund had granted 18 bursaries to the value of R740, and with no less than R2 832 in the bank, was well placed for the years that lay ahead. The frugality which came to characterise the administration of the Fund was evident in that costs, mostly printing, amounted to no more than R81.43.

GROWING RAPIDLY

Growth was rapid - in August 1971, Margaret Elsworth, as chairman, stated that if growth continued at the current rate, R20 000 might be needed for 1972, and that it might be necessary to employ a paid secretary. In 1971 there were 87 bursars supported.

Mr Lang resigned as Treasurer in 1972, and Erika Targett -who remained a volunteer until 2018 - took on the task. The trustees were careful about governance and accountability with regular financial reports, and with an annual audit introduced at an early stage with Gurney Close, a predecessor firm of Deloitte, as the first auditors. In that year bursaries paid to 155 bursars amounted to R7 700.

Numbers continued to grow and despite the schools' unrest of 1976, numbers of bursars exceeded the 300 mark, funded by a growing number of donors, providing in excess of R20 000 in 1977. By the beginning of 1980, the trustees noted with a degree of satisfaction that 1205 scholars had been helped during the first 10 years of the fund's life with a total of R131 474 having been paid out.

1982 saw a sharp increase in the number of applicants, with the result that 603 bursars received awards totaling R58 770 in 1983, almost double the amount of the previous year; happily the cost was funded through the ongoing support of existing donors plus two new substantial donors. Further impetus for donations was provided a year later when approval for tax-deductibility of donations was finally obtained, after protracted negotiations. Support now varied from R50 in Standard 6 (Grade 8), to R90 in Standard 10 (Grade 12).

Inflation was relatively high in the 1980s, consistently in double digits, so it is not surprising that the minimum bursary was increased to R100 in 1990; in that year 789 bursaries were awarded at a cost of R133 105. If that seems a modest amount in today's terms, it's worth recalling that in 1990 only 94c was needed to buy a litre of petrol!

WATCHING THE PENNIES

A characteristic of the earlier years of ASF was the care taken to manage costs diligently and to ensure that funds for bursars were well spent. In terms of costs, sadly, with the passage of time and the professionalism expected from NGOs, less reliance could be placed on volunteers, and paid staff were

needed, with first appointments made in the 1990s. However, this has enabled fresh forms of support to be provided : for example, in the recent booklet introducing bursars to computer usage. With regard to bursars, it is clear that applications were carefully vetted and monitored. Thus, in 1992 when a bursar approached ASF for support on the grounds that her home had been burned, the trustees' suspicion was aroused and engagement of a social worker confirmed that the claim was fraudulent. Ironically instances of attempted fraud still occur, with a recent case involving the forging of exam results.

Reading the minutes of this era, one is struck by the energy of the trustees, and Dr Elsworth in particular, in seeking sources of funding to ensure the sustainability of ASF. Bequests were beginning to come in, for example R20 000 each from the estates of W E Maunder and Margaret Malherbe in the early 1990s.

The year 1993 was the first in which the number of bursars passed the 1000 mark, yet individual cases continued to be considered by trustees at their meetings, and minutes contain a full list of every bursar and the amount allocated to each, as attachments. The expansion of the ASF's activities meant that more space was needed and in April 1994 a lease was signed for the rent of a flat at Erica Court in Station Road, Rondebosch, at a rental of R1 200 per month.

FINANCIAL STRAINS

By 1995, with continuing demands placed on ASF (bursars exceeding 1500 in that year), costly educational costs at the Technikons where ASF was supporting students, and rising inflation, it was clear that the annual budget would, before long, exceed R1m, and that this threatened the sustainability of ASF.

Fortunately the situation was eased by a bequest from the estate of the late Miss Norah Henshilwood and an improvement in recurrent giving.

1995 represented the Silver Jubilee of the ASF, with just over R450 000 awarded to 1636 bursars, 140 of whom were attending technical colleges. The minimum bursary was R200. This may seem a very small amount even allowing for this being 25 years ago; however, an analysis at that time of bursars' household income indicated that the majority came from homes that had an income of R500 per month or less.

By 1997, the ASF had accumulated assets of some R600 000, equivalent to a year's expenditure, and was budgeting for annual deficits, which generally did not materialize or were less than budgeted, due to the generosity of donors, and bequests – a pattern which prevails to this day! Fundraising was vigorous, and in 1997 application was made (and later granted) for registration as a charity with the Charity Commissioners of England and Wales.

In February 1999, the offices moved to Porter House, also in Rondebosch, at a monthly rental of R3 000. Finances were looking good – and this was a time when surplus funds could be invested at high rates of interest, well into double digits. Bursaries were now a minimum of R300.

MOVING TOWARDS A MILLION

The turn of the century saw ASF budgeting a total of R779 000 in expenditure, including bursaries of R550 000; donations were projected to be R521 000 and the deficit thus R258 000. Yet the year ended with a surplus of R130 000! Just on 1600 learners had been supported.

The annual budget exceeded R1m for the first time in 2003. The number of bursars had stabilized at 1542, and the grant was increased to R400 for Grades 8 and 9, and R500 for the remainder. However, it was not long before there was a surge in numbers and these passed the 2000 mark in 2005.

AUDIT AND TREASURER

As we saw earlier, ASF's financial statements were audited from the very beginning, and at a

NUMBER OF BURSARS AND AMOUNT OF GRANTS



reduced rate, by Deloitte (or its predecessor firms). In 2005, Mark Lancaster, who had been the audit partner for many years, retired. The audit responsibility was assumed by Richard Browne of Browne and Associates, who continues as our auditor to this day.

The bookkeeping has been handled by Zena Stanfliet since the early 2000's and oversight has been provided by Stephen Flesch who volunteered for the role of Treasurer in 2002 and who has faithfully discharged this responsibility since then, making regular visits to the office to authorise payments.

COPING WITH CHANGE

Although the global financial crisis of 2008 had massive consequences for South Africa, the loyalty of our donors enabled ASF to continue with its work, and bequests continued to enhance the capital funds. Porter House was sold in 2009 and ASF was obliged to move its offices once more, to Waverley Business Park in Observatory. Generous donations from the DG Murray Trust and the Croudace Trust covered the cost of the move. The premises proved unsuitable and in 2011 the offices moved back to Rondebosch, to Tannery Park.

2010 was a record year in that ASF supported no fewer than 2565 bursars at a cost of just under R2.4m. The minimum award was adjusted from R700 to R800 in that year.

The number of bursars declined unexpectedly in 2014, to just over 2000, and since then the numbers have remained between 2000 and 2500. As the ASF has increasingly extended its activities beyond the making of grants to providing support material for learners in areas such as subject choice and career guidance, salaries have continued to be a considerable expense, but necessary in equipping our bursars to cope with the complex world that awaits them once they have matriculated. Together with inflation causing the grants to increase to R1 000 p.a., this has meant that the annual budget has increased steadily. We have been fortunate in the loyalty of our donors and in receiving some significant bequests; in particular that of the late Sheila Eckford enabled us to acquire our own premises in Fleming Road, Wynberg, at a cost of some R2m, thus saving on escalating rental costs.

From very humble beginnings, ASF has matured into a stable organisation which we believe makes a very meaningful difference in the lives of young South Africans who would otherwise struggle to attend secondary school with dignity and who would be ill-equipped to make sensible choices as to their future. One would have hoped that as the country has progressed, particularly since the end of *apartheid*, that our role would have become unnecessary. Sadly, that is not so. Thankfully our donors understand this and with their help we will continue, in our modest way, to offer hope for the future.

African Scholars' Fund started 50 years ago as a response to an immediate need, with no staff, no offices and no funding. Driven by the enthusiasm and energy of Margaret Elsworth and her husband Jack, the organisation drew in numerous volunteers, and it was only later, as ASF grew in size and evolved in its activities, that staff needed to be employed to achieve its objectives. The early days of African Scholars' Fund were characterised by a spirit of volunteering.

EARLY VOLUNTEERS

Thus, from 1970 until 1994 ASF was almost entirely the work of volunteers; people who wanted to help, had the will to persevere, were proud of their work and, like mobile advertisements, told other people about it! Their experience, knowledge and enthusiasm provided some of the best ideas for management and, most of all, allowed for visions for improvement. Because they were not paid staff, they could say what they thought and they provided especially entertaining times on Tuesday mornings when meeting informally to talk about the work – problems, joys, plans ... and plenty of jokes.

Margaret Elsworth writes –

“It was a double pleasure to work with so many wonderful volunteers in ASF during its long history – Mike Harker, Wally Judge, Jack Kent, Margaret Thompson, Mary Livingstone, Hilda Barry ... there is a long list of people who gave their time, experience and effort to this cause. Teachers about to retire knew that African Scholars' Fund had already marked them for further work – people like Wally Mears, Robin Whiteford, Margaret Thomson and Jack Kent – but other professionals too, like Wally Judge, and Bob St Leger.”

Many of the volunteers were not retired but still very active in their professional lives. The sponsor system, for instance, was begun by Noreen Saunders, developed and maintained by Sue Folb and then Kathleen Brodrick. Similarly, before staff were employed, all the financial work was done by Erika Targett, and then Mike Harker, whereas Margaret Elsworth managed to continue working at Red Cross Hospital until 1994 while battling with reports at home. However, as the number of bursars grew, it became increasingly apparent that some ongoing administrative support was needed.

THE FIRST MEMBERS OF STAFF

In 1980, 10 years into the life of the ASF, Mary Livingstone, co-founder of the Black Sash and the Athlone Advice Office, took on the role of secretary. This was a voluntary position which she filled for 11 years. In acknowledgement of her contribution, an annual essay competition was established by the ASF. Mary passed away five years later, in 1996. It is quite remarkable that the ASF could function with minimal administrative costs and a dedicated team of volunteers for its first 20 years.





The number of bursars continued to grow, and in the early 1990s was fast approaching the 1000 mark – clearly the point was being reached where the volunteers needed strengthening by at least one paid employee. Thus, in December 1992, Katharine Hall (a music graduate!) joined ASF as a paid secretary, later taking on the task of maintaining the financial records as well.

A SMALL STAFF TEAM

In June 1994 Corrie Hayter took over from Katherine Hall, and Debbie Chuter was employed to maintain the records of the bursars, providing guidance and counselling particularly for the Technical College students who ASF was supporting at the time. Lyn Daniel joined the ASF in August 1994 as sponsor secretary and fundraiser, and together with Debbie and Corrie started working at the Station Road offices in Rondebosch, to which ASF had moved during the elections earlier that year. This sense of a small but committed team working together with a common purpose prevails to this day.

SOME CHANGES OCCUR

In 1996, Debbie Chuter went on maternity leave and Nobathembu Rululu (Nobbi) temporarily assumed her duties. On Debbie's return Nobbi was made a permanent member of the staff. Debbie was now managing the Western Cape Technical College students and Nobbi managed the schools portfolio. Lyn Daniel was assigned to looking after the donors and helping with whatever else she could. Then there was Nomkhosi, who worked "out of hours" recording the names of all past bursars for our archives. Thando Cofu joined the team briefly from September 2001 to June 2002, before moving back to the Eastern Cape – but she became a donor for a few years, and typically of the strong bonds formed, is still in contact with ASF.

When Corrie resigned, Zena Stanfliet stepped in to take over the bookkeeping function, which she streamlined and computerised in short order. Nobbi took a "maternity leave of absence" and Mpumi (Nompumelelo) Williams replaced her, coming straight from college - she had been awarded ASF bursaries both at school and at Technical College! By then, in 1996, TECSAT (serving the Cape Province Technical Colleges) had been formed, with its origins in ASF and using ASF's offices with Debbie as manager. Nobbi initiated and managed the Technical College Student work in the Eastern and Northern Cape and Mpumi managed the school bursaries.

MARGARET 'RETIRES'

Only in January 2008 did Margaret retire, having served ASF with incredible commitment for 40 years. She had been honoured by the award of an MBE by Queen Elizabeth in 1996, and after her retirement was also honoured at a Civic Reception of the City of Cape Town, at which the Mayor, Helen Zille, paid her tribute.

Eliza James, a UCT Graduate School of Business Graduate, was appointed as Director in November 2008, and continues to manage the organisation. Also, in 2008, to assist Mpumi with the ever-growing schools portfolio, Nonthutuzelo (Ntuthu) Ngcetane was appointed as school secretary. The team now comprised Eliza (Director), Zena (Accounts Manager), Nobbi (TVET Manager), Lyn (Sponsor Secretary), Mpumi (Schools Portfolio Manager) and Ntuthu (School Secretary).

OFFICE MOVES AND MORE CHANGES

Finding suitable premises was always a problem. The offices in Rondebosch next to the station, and after that in Porter House, were spacious and very convenient but, in both cases, the buildings were marked for “development” so we had to move – first to Waverley Park in Observatory and then to Tannery Park in Rondebosch. Whilst in Tannery Park, Nobbi was offered an opportunity to join NSFAS as Bursary manager and after 17 years of dedicated service bade the ASF a fond farewell. Mpumi took over Nobbi’s portfolio with Ntuthu now managing the school portfolio.

In 2016 Mpumi, having given the ASF 11 years of sterling service resigned and soon thereafter went back home to birth her daughter. Asanda Gigaba, ex-TECSAT, took over the TVET Portfolio. With the extra workload involved in supporting over 2000 students, Ntuthu needed extra assistance and Busisiwe Magwentshu (Busi) was employed early in 2018. Asanda was reluctantly retrenched at the end of 2018 as the provision of free tertiary education following the ‘Fees must fall’ campaign meant that our support for students at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges was greatly reduced.

LYN DANIEL’S RETIREMENT

At about the same time, after almost 25 years service, Lyn Daniel, who had been the ‘face’ of ASF to our donors, retired. Lyn writes: “I formed many special bonds during the span of my employment and we all, as individuals, faced many personal challenges and stuck together like ‘Margaret’s home-made glue’! I am still in touch with my ASF colleagues with whom I have formed friendships that are everlasting!”

THE CURRENT STAFF TEAM

Following Lyn Daniel’s retirement, Bianca Rousseau, having recently graduated from the UCT Graduate School of Business, joined ASF in November 2018, with a broadened mandate reflecting the evolution of ASF to giving increasing support to bursars, joining with potential corporate partners, and widening the donor base. Nonthuthuzelo Ngcetane and Busisiwe Magwentshu continue to manage our relationship with the school management teams and our bursars.

We are fortunate to have the considerable experience of Eliza James as Director, and of Zena Stanfliet, whose service is now approaching 20 years of keeping our finances in good order. Our most recent appointee, Miche Nicholas, who joined the ASF in February 2020, completes our team of dedicated and enthusiastic staff, now permanently settled in our own premises in Wynberg (Eckford House), and we look forward to the future with confidence.



TRIBUTES FROM OUR DONORS

Much has changed over 50 years, but one thing that has remained ever-present is the importance of our donors. ASF takes pride in having longstanding relationships with many of our donors and our celebration of the 50th anniversary of ASF is as much a celebration of those longstanding relationships.

To commemorate their commitment, we reached out to many of these donors and invited them to share their stories with us. We wanted to provide them with an opportunity to give insight into how their relationship with the ASF started, why they chose to donate and continue donating for as long as they have, and what sort of social impact they hoped their donations would have.

The wide variety of donors that we received responses from is remarkable, and whilst many of them differ in how they came across ASF and why they started donating, there were many similarities in their motivations.

Given the history of the organisation, many of our longest-standing donors had a personal relationship with our founder Dr Elsworth and were introduced to the organisation by her or someone close to her, such as her late husband Jack.

Virginia Ogilvie Thompson explains how she first started donating because "I have supported AFS because, like everyone else, I had a huge respect for your founder (Dr Elsworth)".

Professor Rubin Battino, a donor for 44 years, based in America, wrote in to say:

"I have been supporting ASF since my two trips to South Africa as a visiting scholar. Visited townships in Grahamstown and Capetown. The latter trip in Capetown was with Dame Margaret Elsworth. Her late husband Jack was a chemistry colleague of mine. So, this is a small tribute to both of them, as well as to a good cause."

There has always been a strong connection between the ASF and those involved in academia, as illustrated by the history and connections to tertiary education, specifically at UCT. **Dr Stuart Saunders** is a long-standing donor. Dr Saunders wrote in very succinctly saying:

"I have supported the African Scholars' Fund because I believe that a good education is a human right and that many in South Africa do not enjoy that and need our support."

Interestingly another donor mentioned Dr Saunders when she wrote in. **Fay Thornley**, a donor since 1973, wrote in saying:

"As Stuart Saunders (a previous Vice-chancellor of UCT) said, "Education before chaos". Being part of the ASF enabled me to add my little bit to the bigger whole to help disadvantaged students to achieve an education they were unlikely to get without assistance. The ASF also emphasised that the scholars had to put effort into their studies. The ASF's work is akin to the old saying "Give a man a fish and you will feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you will feed him for life." That is what education does".

There are few who understand the need for a quality high school education better than those who teach or have lectured at universities. **Professors Peter Moll and Masami Kojima**, who have been active donors since 1984, wrote in and provided a great summary of this.

“Bridging the educational performance gap is critical for equal life-long opportunities and needs to start early in a child’s life. We appreciate the African Scholars’ Fund because it provides assistance to high schoolers. There are quite a few opportunities to support tertiary education, but having been tertiary-level educators ourselves, we know how critical pre-tertiary preparation is. The African Scholars’ Fund provides that rare opportunity, for which we are grateful.

This is one of the reasons that we strongly support the mission and methods of the African Scholars’ Fund. It is essential to give high schoolers an incentive to study and to study well, and to give them some resources to enable them to stay in school rather than drop out.”

As one would expect, most of our donors share similar motivations for their support, namely the fact that they value the importance of education and understand the complexities surrounding it. We allowed for the donors to write as much or as little as they felt comfortable with. All the responses were appreciated, and the best way to present them is without trying to summarise them or change them too much and allow the words to speak for themselves.

Justice Craig Howie wrote in and shared his reasons for supporting the ASF which are as follows:

“Education is the greatest gift to a young person. Stupidly, an activist slogan in the 1980s “Liberation before education” set back thousands. Encouragingly, a recent Black interviewee on TV contradicted that slogan, emphasising the need for “education, education, education”. When I was on UCT Council it was sadly apparent to what extent students from disadvantaged backgrounds were getting bad school education and that was making their transition to university difficult. I don’t expect that the help we are giving can improve the quality of teaching or the teachers’ attitude but it might just make it possible for a special talent to get to school and make it successfully at the third stage. And the many who aren’t university material can have a better chance to make it in the job market.”

Penny Hoff, now living in Germany with her husband Dr Werner Hoff, has continued supporting the ASF ever since she started in 1979. Her son and other relatives of hers are also donors, which is wonderful to see. This is the message we received from the Hoffes.

“Thank you for your interest in our continuing support of the African Scholars’ Fund. I grew up in the Mother City, married a German and have been living in Germany for too long to count. My husband knows South Africa well. We remain faithful to the ASF because of:

The courage and independence of the organisation, irrespective of which political dispensation it is dealing with. This stance enables the ASF to realistically assess and respond to the often bitter reality of its bursars, long before government is prepared to recognise this. There is no such thing as a free lunch with the ASF. While showing compassionate realism to its students, it requires them to deliver and if they don’t they’re out. It monitors its bursars meticulously while simultaneously providing individualised feedback to its donors. The ASF is constantly seeking practical solutions to problems which present themselves at the coal face, which it knows too well. In all, a unique institution. We wish it many more fruitful years.”

Mrs King fondly recalls how she and her late husband got involved with the ASF:

“During the late 1980s my late husband (**Judge Edwin King**) met Dr Elsworth. It was her calibre and relentless spirit that influenced Edwin in supporting the ASF during the dark *Apartheid* years. There followed the impressive accountability and openness of dedicated staff, such as Lyn Daniel, who was only a phone call away and was always patient and kind. Education of the underprivileged, some living in the most shocking circumstances, giving them some hope for the future, was of mutual interest to both Judge King and the ASF. And judging by the critical state of our nation, much more support for the ASF will be required in the future, but so, too, there is hope for much goodness is emerging.”

It is special to see how the passion that our donors have for education is passed on to those around them and is carried on by different generations. **Alexandra Davidge** details exactly this in her message. She has been a donor since 1998, and when she married her husband John in 2008 they organised for their guests to donate to the ASF in lieu of wedding gifts!

“I was raised in a family that placed a high premium on education and was blessed with a wonderful education myself. My parents supported African Scholars’ Fund and I was inspired by this organisation that recognised individuals and helped them to shine, despite their circumstances. So when I was awarded a scholarship for university, ASF was the obvious way to share some of this bounty. My husband John was also the recipient of a wonderful education and it has given us both great joy to support the fund over the years.

African Scholars’ Fund always impressed me by how it ran on a shoestring budget (I knew almost all my money was going straight to the learners), how hands on Dr Elsworth was with the schools involved, traveling across the country to challenge and inspire head teachers, and how the staff and volunteers cared for the learners as individuals. I loved reading the comments from learners in the newsletters and particularly seeing how much courage and hope they showed as a result of their bursaries.

Thank you, African Scholars’ Fund for providing such a wonderful vehicle for investing in the future of our country.”

The **Andrew Family** has been donating since the early 2000s. Roy Andrew was introduced to ASF by his brother Ken, and Roy sent in a message outlining clearly why he continues to be a donor.

“That education is so important. That such a small amount of money can make such a big difference to ordinary poor school going children is why I give. That you monitor the donations to ensure they have the best benefit. Some of their marks are truly remarkable. That we donors are allocated an unknown recipient who is so grateful for the award. The personal circumstances of each is so heart-wrenching. That as being part of the Rondebosch community as was the AFS, I liked the connection. That ASF keeps donors and recipients personal is your USP.”

Ken Andrew also wrote in with an equally special message.

“I have supported the ASF because I believe strongly that a good education is a key to success in life and that one should do what one can to help others less fortunate than oneself. I chose ASF because (a) I knew and had confidence in a number of members of the committee; (b) administrative costs are kept as low as possible; (c) despite the enormous difficulties that most of the beneficiaries face, ASF does not continue to support scholars who are not performing, so the limited funds available are used in a way that maximises the positive outcomes; (d) modest donations to ASF make a big difference to the identified beneficiaries; (e) the moving letters of appreciation from learners remind one of how much a little caring can mean to a child having to cope in extremely difficult circumstances; and (f) the feedback and appreciation of ASF given to its donors confirms that one is not taken for granted.”

We are proud to have a wide variety of donors, from individuals and families to trusts and organisations. One such organisation is the **Carl and Emily Fuchs Foundation**, who started donating in the late 90s. The message we received on behalf of the foundation reads as follows:

“We believe that the country and its future require as much investment into technical and vocational training as we need in the areas of Mathematics, Science, Engineering and Technology. For us, it is not only about making an investment into the potential of a young learner or student – ultimately, it is about ensuring the delivery of high quality, professional services and facilitating development in these critical areas – also in deep rural parts of the country.”

The **Rotary Club of Kirstenbosch**, who have also been donors since the late 90s, sent a wonderful message detailing their relationship with the ASF and their motivations for their continued donations.

“Our Rotary Club’s relationship with ASF was initiated by Ruth, who as a mother and a teacher, knows the value of education of all persons. The importance of a good education and fair opportunity is, and remains, the common thread of good relationship. The good relationship which we share with your hard-working staff remains important. Good communications, including positive and regular feedback, as to how contributions are applied to the targeted objective, is appreciated. It is great to hear how funds are applied and for us to receive personalised feedback on your scholars’ education and development. Over time the good relationship between your offices and our Club has built up - this all goes to the “trust” between parties, essential for on-going mutually beneficial relationships.”

Dubbi Rabinowitz summed up his story perfectly in the succinct message he sent.

“A gentleman came into my office in Kuils River 25 years ago and made a case for the African Scholars’ Fund. I was fully aware of the educational poverty in South Africa, as I employed about 2 000 individuals in those days, many of whom would be considered educationally deprived in a first world environment, so I was pleased to help, even in a small way. And so I continue.”

Sally and David Carter have been donors since 1998 and clearly outlined their motivations in a very complimentary message which read as follows:

“The reason why we have been supporting The Africans Scholars’ Fund is 1) We believe that apart from providing a secure family life, providing a child with an education is one of the most important gifts you can give; 2) The updating of the pupils’ progress adds a personal touch, not found in any other organisations; 3) One really knows where the money goes, and not just into a bottomless pit. 4) We receive numerous annual reports from other institutions and we consider ASF to be one of the best- run NPOs in the country. We hope that we can continue to support you for many years to come.”

Ben Rabinowitz has been a donor since 1993 and sent in a very clear and powerful message as to why he donates.

“I firmly believe that without education our society will go backwards. In any event one cannot teach a hungry learner. Your organisation satisfies both of these criteria and deserves support.”

Viewing education as something which can assist our country is mirrored by **Dr Jim & Mrs Marilyn McNamara**.

“We have been proud to support the ASF for these past 15 years, will continue to do so in future, and have included ASF in our will. The cause that it supports is incredibly

important to our country, and we all have a duty of care to help our young people who need a bit of financial assistance. But also, importantly, providing that assistance via ASF ensures us that the disbursements are very carefully scrutinised to ensure that the recipients are diligently applying themselves strongly enough to earn our continued support. That is important to donors, and we thank the ASF for its sterling work in this regard.”

Roy and Liz Melville have their own special approach to donating to the ASF which they explained in the message that they sent in.

“We decided many years ago that our lives have been so truly blessed that we would like to make a difference, however small, in the lives of those not as fortunate as we’ve been. Christmas time seemed just the right time to do this and the ASF were the perfect medium. Our donations are the very best Christmas presents we could ever give or receive from one another. This is brought home to us every year as we read the letters from the scholars involved, past and present. A truly humbling but uplifting experience. What a privilege it has been for us to be a very tiny cog in the African Scholars’ Fund organisation.”

A number of our very faithful donors are based in the United Kingdom, where ASF is a registered charity. This has been overseen voluntarily by Sandy Elsworth for some twenty years and we are enormously grateful to him for the exemplary way in which he has handled this, on top of the demands of his working life.

Indeed, what a privilege it has been to have been able to share the input that was given to us by such a wide variety of donors from around the world, each of whom had their own story to add to that of the African Scholars’ Fund.

The wonderfully inspiring stories that past bursars, now donors themselves, share, is an amazing testament to the human spirit and what can be achieved when support of another enables access to opportunities that would otherwise have seemed like an impossible dream.

Lungelo Solombela says:

“My journey with ASF has been a humbling and rewarding one. I started receiving assistance at high school and coming from a single parent-headed home, this assisted me a lot. I attended Langa High and then went on to study at CPUT. I am now a HR Executive for an organisation based in Johannesburg. I am currently studying MSc in HR with University of Salford, Manchester. I have been a donor for more than 10 years now, and it is a blessing to give more than to receive.”

Lynette Oliver (nee Ferndale) fondly recalls:

“My fondest memory of ASF was when I used to wait for the postman to come to deliver that long awaited ASF letter containing the good news! Whenever I would hear the dogs bark, I knew the postman was close by, so I waited in anticipation! Wow, that was always such a good feeling – opening that letter. My older brother, many years ago, introduced myself and my other brother to ASF, so we followed his advice and applied for bursaries. We were at high school then. Back then the bursary was R150 and R200, but what a difference it made! I am the youngest of six children and with my dad being the sole breadwinner, we could not always afford all the elements required at school. The bursaries were a great help. We received bursaries over quite a few years and we were very thankful for that.”

"Today, my brother is a teacher and I a qualified attorney and conveyancer. I salute people like you, who makes the time and effort to help needy students. Keep up the good work! And to the students, education is the best reward and gift you can receive, so make use of it and make the best thereof – it is worthwhile!"

James Mzinkhulu Dyasi gives a wonderful account of his journey with the ASF:

"Giving and kindness is what I got from my parents. They taught me to value umntu (human being) and treat everyone with respect and dignity. Another gift from my parents was the value of education. As uneducated as they were, they wanted their children educated. Now, enter African Scholars' Fund (ASF). My mother was a domestic worker at Claremont and got to know about ASF through Dr Margaret Elsworth. I was then offered a bursary while I was in primary school around 1980s.

ASF supported me until Standard 8 and I then went to All Saints Senior College in Bhisho in 1987, where I completed my high school, fully sponsored. Knowing that you do not have to worry about schooling needs goes a long way in improving performance. I am a living testament. Throughout my schooling I never worried about school fees, books and some stationery. I knew that ASF will be there for that. I just had to focus on doing well. This was also a relief to my parents.

"Dr Elsworth and ASF had a personal touch. They wanted to know how each learner was doing and wished us well, throughout the journey. African Scholars' Fund demonstrated Ubuntu. They saw me and others like me as fellow human beings who should be treated with dignity and be given opportunities to succeed. Under harsh *apartheid* conditions they continued to raise funds so that an African child can be educated. I never took that for granted. I am always grateful.

"Now that I have a successful career in a leading Energy and Chemicals company, I am giving back, as a donor at African Scholars' Fund. In IsiXhosa we say, *isandla sihlamba esinye* (loosely translated as *one hand washes the other*). I am committed to helping educate more children. This is my contribution to South Africa."

It has been 50 years, a period in which ASF lent a helping hand, shaped a future and influenced its coming to rest. Such is the full-circle journey shared by **Lungile Taliwe**:

"I am currently in retirement. I appreciate everything the ASF did for me and will always owe my accomplishments to your support. I was able to accomplish things that other people, who were in the same situation as me, could only dream of. I landed a Managerial position at Transnet and years later started my own business. All of this was possible because the ASF helped me with my high school education through the most difficult time in the history of our beloved country.

We were able to educate our children in one of the best schools within the Cape Town area, thanks to the life-changing support I got from ASF. I always regard myself as an Ambassador of ASF, reminding those who were helped to be donors as well.

Keep up the good work you've been doing – *kwande apho nithatha khona* (loosely translated as *may your donor-territory increase abundantly*)."

Though it is no small task to track throughout the years, given the amount of schools and bursars the ASF has been involved with over 50 years, we have done our best to stay in contact with our alumni.

Some alumni have become donors and many serve as role models or success stories which we are proud to feature on our website and in our annual reports. We reached out to many and the feedback we received was from a wide range of past bursars of many different ages and from all over the country. Some had applied to the ASF for high school and others received continued support at a TVET college. Each of our alumni has their own wonderfully inspiring and unique story to share in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the ASF.

Dr Phindiswa Mnana is one of the success stories featured on the ASF website. She attended Sandisiwe High School at Mdantsane in East London. She was raised by a single mother who had to feed and clothe five people on her salary of under R1500 p.m.

“It is a great honour to be remembered as one of the recipients of the fund. Without the African Scholars’ Fund my progress at high school would not have been possible. I received the bursary from std 7 until matric. With the fund I was able to buy study guides which assisted me in studying and passing my Matric. That secured me a place at the medical school. Today I am an experienced General Medical Practitioner because of the assistance I received from ASF. I wish ASF all the best as they continue helping other children who are in need.”

Another of our alumni who has found herself in the healthcare sector is **Asithandile Malote**, who matriculated in 2010 and provided us with an inspirational message.

“I couldn’t be more grateful to ASF. My achievements have surpassed my initial goals. I completed high school with a bachelor’s pass. Thanks to ASF for making my high school life smooth sailing. I then went on to further my studies at Wits University where I completed my two degrees in biomedical engineering. I’m now working as a data scientist in healthcare and I couldn’t be happier. It feels great to add value in the department of health clinics in the rural areas”.

Thuleka Bekwa was delighted to hear from the ASF and responded with much enthusiasm:

“Wow, thank you for asking me to do this. I was an ASF Bursar from 2003 to 2008. This covers my high school and college years. Even though when I passed my grade 12 so well, I was unable to study Law, you gave me a way out which saw me attending at Buffalo City College. This has paved my career in various ways, not one, but many ways – I’ve been evolving! I’ve been in the corporate sector for more than 10 years now – mostly in the educational project management sector. I started as a PA and am now a Senior Administrative Officer for the Centre for Learning Technologies at Stellenbosch University.

Graduating with my Diploma in Management, thanks to you, was only a start in my life. At this point I have, to mention a few, a Degree in Social Science, Honours in Development Studies and currently studying towards a postgraduate diploma in Monitoring and Evaluation through the Centre of Research, Evaluation, Science and Technology at Stellenbosch University.”

In 2016 I was able to build a house for my Mom who has been a domestic worker all her life. A house in her name – a house we call HOME! You gave me a chance that saw me where I am today – I can never thank you enough for this. I truly started from nothing, but now my track record tells a tale – a little tale. Thank you!”

So too, **Arthur Mabentsela** shared his achievements with a well-deserved sense of pride and hard-won achievement:

“Thank you for your invitation to share with you in celebration of the ASF 50th Anniversary. I am now a lecturer at University of Botswana where I teach mineral extractive causes with a love for Pyrometallurgy and Hydrometallurgy. I am also President of the Khayelitsha Engineering Society (an NGO of graduates who wish to use their studies for better Kassis). In my spare time I try to be a musician with thought provoking statuses, with hip hop flavours and I am also an active Member of Astronomy Club.”

Asonela Velaphi is one of our more recent alumni and one of many who are currently continuing their studies at university.

“ASF helped me while I was doing my matric in 2018. They helped me to pay school fees , tutors and buy other things that I needed for school. I was about to give up because I didn't have money to pay for all these things. I was staying with my mother who was unemployed. There are eight siblings and a social grant was the only income that we received in the household. Thanks to ASF you made my matric year successful, I conquer because of you.”

Another matriculant of 2018, **Lukhanyo Vena** made headlines when he matriculated as the top achiever at Greenpoint Secondary School, thanks to his five distinctions.

“I am very grateful that the African Scholars’ Fund assisted me throughout my high school years. It removed the burden of my parents having to pay the school fees, which they could not afford. The bursary also gave me motivation to do better in school. I wish that more children could be assisted in this way. I am currently studying Electrical Engineering at the University of Cape Town.”

Sinoxolo Mapompo was featured in our presentation in 2012 of stories of hope after she had completed a course in financial management. She continues to be an example of motivation and hope for us all.

“I am really grateful for the opportunity African Scholars’ Fund gave me. The bursary came when I most needed it. I am currently employed permanently at South African Local Government Association in East London. I am doing B-Tech in Business Administration at Walter Sisulu University. I would like to wish ASF well for its 50th birthday in advance and thank you so much for what ASF has done for me.”

Elgee Davies wrote in a wonderful letter which we had previously shared in our 2008 annual report. Twelve years on he wrote again with an even more inspirational update.

“I cannot begin to express my gratitude to the African Scholars’ Fund for backing me in my studies at a time when few would have believed in me. I received my first ASF assistance during my first year at College after having barely scraped through Matric. I still relive the immense pride I felt when I received the letter informing me that my tuition for the remainder of the year was covered. It was a key factor spurring me on to excel in my studies, in which I later gained top achiever accolades in my class and business faculty. To that initial vote of confidence by the ASF I attribute much of my later success in my subsequent academic and business careers. I might otherwise never have garnered the inner self-belief and confidence to go on and excel in my later life and career. Thank you for backing me when it made no sense. Thank you also for the wonderful work you continue to do in the lives of others like myself. Your impact is felt by those who receive assistance from the ASF, but also by countless others directly affected by the future doors you open. Keep keeping on.”

It is amazing how many of our alumni take to academia with such vigour and enthusiasm. **Sihle Tom** is a great example of this.

“I would like to express my gratitude for your financial support throughout my high school years from 2008 to matric in 2011. It was because of your generosity that I could focus on my studies. I remember my parents were not working and ASF was there to help and support us financially. Hence, I never stressed about food and completely focused on my studies. I would have been in a different situation if ASF had not intervened and helped me with my studies. A little goes a long way. I am really thankful for your support. I am now enrolled for a PhD in Electronics Engineering. Thank you once again for your support.”

Another alumnus who went into engineering, albeit a very different field of engineering, **Thapelo Victor Maswe**, who is from the Northern Cape, explains his journey with the ASF and his journey to becoming a mining engineer.

“It has been a great pleasure to hear from African Scholars’ Fund. Ever since I finished matric, I have been doing quite well and I am very thankful for the role that you have played in my education during schooling and the first trimester I spent at college. After receiving my N2 engineering certificate I got the opportunity to study Mining Engineering through the University of South Africa from June 2013 to June 2016. Although I struggled financially, I have managed to continue with my hard work with the goal of completing the qualification in record time. I did also find it difficult to get a placement in mines to do my in-service training till 2018 when I was offered the opportunity by Petra Diamonds Finsch mine. Your institution is the best and I am greatly thankful for the big impact you have made towards my education and personal development.”

The story of **Zukile Betana** is another that we have featured on our website as one of our success stories. Zukile wrote and provided us with an update and timeline on his further achievements.

“It is my honour and privilege to be amongst one of African Scholars’ Fund’s success stories. It has been seven years since our last correspondence, when I was still in my first year at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University pursuing a diploma in Medical Technology.

By the Grace of the Lord and with extra hard work and determination, I completed my diploma (Cum Laude) in 2014. Thereafter, in 2015, I enrolled for Bachelor of Technology in Medical Technology in which I graduated in the very same year. It was not an easy ride but I worked very hard, because I knew what I wanted and what it would require of me to get there. In 2016 I got an internship with the South African National Blood Service (SANBS) for a period of 18 months.

Currently I am a permanent employee of the SANBS practising at Pelonomi Blood Bank in Bloemfontein. I am pleased to report that I have been accepted to do my Masters in Medical Technology at the Central University of Technology, in Bloemfontein for the academic year 2020. I’m very excited about this opportunity and hope things will go my way as I continue to grow and better myself.”

One of our alumni who is currently studying at Nelson Mandela University is **Hlela Nkumanda**. She provides valuable insight into the impact the ASF bursary had on her high school career.

“My name is Hlela Nkumanda from the Eastern Cape and I attended at Phillip Mtywaku SSS. I was one of the recipients of your bursary during my high school years. I remember when I was told that I would be given a bursary I was very excited and so was my grandmother. I am writing this email with joy and I am so grateful for your financial assistance during my high school years. I would use the money to buy school uniform, stationery, toiletries and also cover for my school trips. I remember when I got my first blazer and I had a full school uniform. I became motivated to study further and coming from a poor background where no one at home is working I had to work hard and pass. I gained a Bachelor pass in Matric and I enrolled for Quantity surveying at Nelson Mandela University. I’m grateful for everything that

you did for me and when I am also successful I want to give back to those who are in need and suffering. Keep up doing the good work.”

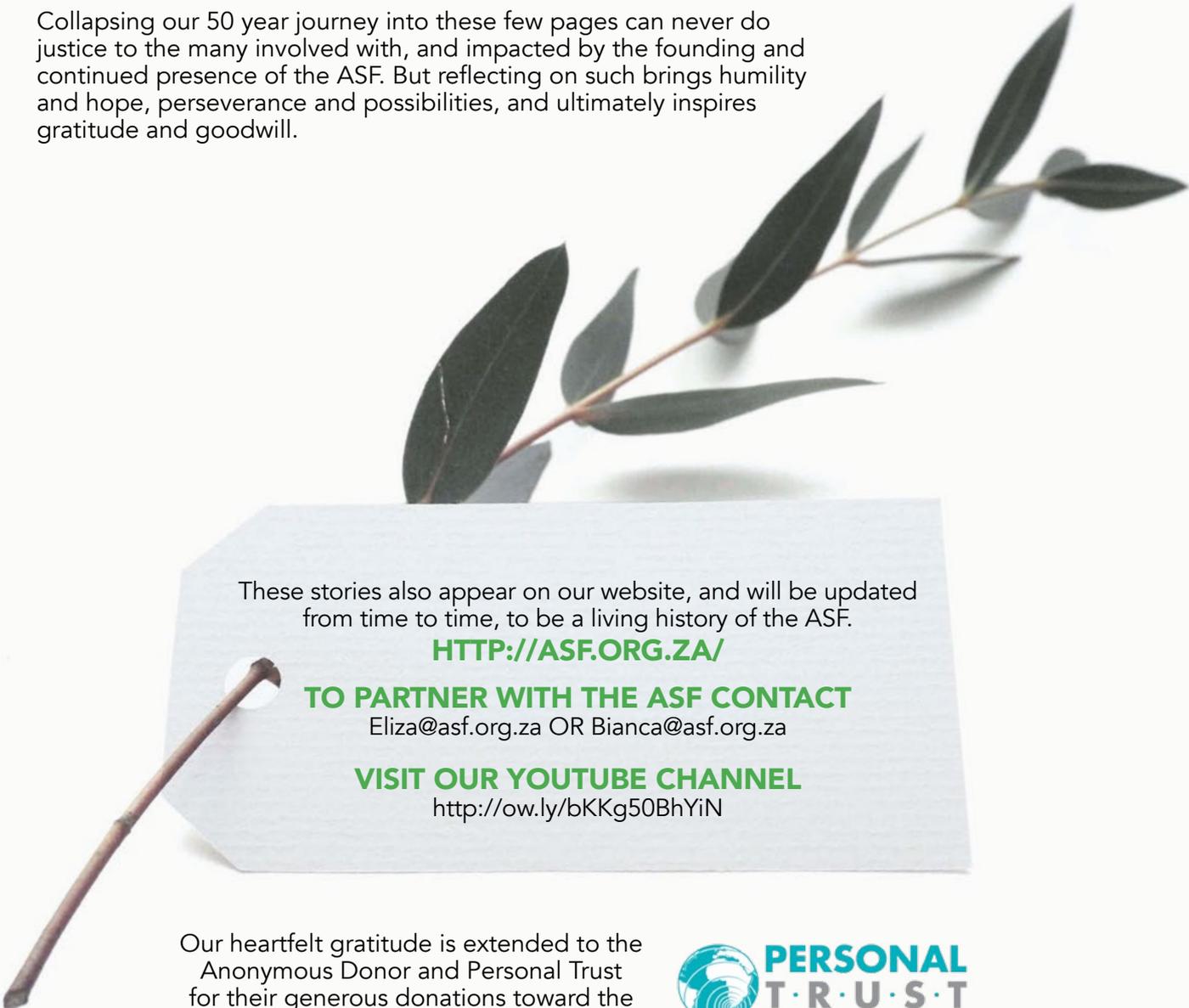
Chumani Mahlombe also wrote in and shared how through hard work, coupled with the guidance and encouragement from ASF, he has overcome difficult situations.

“Even in the Bible it is stated that a giving hand is more blessed than an accepting hand. Throughout the way from grade 7 to grade 12, ASF helped me to go from darkness to light. At times when I wanted to give up, especially in Grade 11, the ASF team awakened me to work harder with encouraging words on the booklets they sent. ASF was able to reach ends my parents couldn’t both emotionally and financially. Today there are options galore for my higher education because of the extra classes that ASF motivated me to attend.”

“May the ASF team carry on helping financially and emotionally disadvantaged learners like me.”

These extracts exemplify the tone and substance of the many heartfelt thank-you letters from bursars that ASF has received down the years. They are movingly sincere and appreciative, acknowledging the writers’ realisation of the crucially timeous role in their academic and personal early years. They reveal the bursars’ awareness of having been enabled to become qualified to serve their communities in a range of ways. Many have themselves also become donors to the ASF and are noteworthy role models in their communities.

Collapsing our 50 year journey into these few pages can never do justice to the many involved with, and impacted by the founding and continued presence of the ASF. But reflecting on such brings humility and hope, perseverance and possibilities, and ultimately inspires gratitude and goodwill.



These stories also appear on our website, and will be updated from time to time, to be a living history of the ASF.

[HTTP://ASF.ORG.ZA/](http://ASF.ORG.ZA/)

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<http://ow.ly/bKKg50BhYiN>

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