



## MAST, Noel Richard

Noel MAST | 1938

NOEL RICHARD<sup>2</sup> MAST (THEODORE MAURICE<sup>1</sup>) was born 1938. He married JOSEPHINE WARNE. She was born 1938. He is the son of BARBARA ANNA<sup>7</sup> FLEMMER (JOHN DISTIN<sup>6</sup>, CHRISTIAN LUDVIG<sup>5</sup>) born 1910. She married THEODORE MAURICE MAST. He was born 1900.

-----

A BRIEF HISTORY OF NOEL RICHARD MAST BORN 24 DECEMBER 1938 IN THE JOHANNESBURG SUBURB OF HIGHLANDS NORTH WRITTEN ON 6 APRIL 2001

I was born in our home at Highlands North. The family moved from there to a small holding in Rivonia when I was 5, and my first school year was at the farm school in Rivonia. The following year our parents decided to send my elder brother John and I to the Rosebank government school, while my elder sister Patricia was sent to a private school in Bryanston. Whilst we were living at Rivonia my younger sister Wendy was born at home.

At the age of 10 my parents moved to Pietermaritzburg, where they bought a wattle plantation and I was sent to Merchiston. Due to the fall in the sale of wattle bark, (which at that time was used primarily for the tanning of leather) my father sold up and moved to a small farm near Gillitts (near Durban). I was sent to the Kloof government school, which entailed walking 6 kilometres from the farm to the Gillitts train station, catching the train to the Kloof station, and reversing the process in the afternoon. Occasionally I would get a lift but this was not often. The farm was a disaster, with my Dad losing all his money. We then rented a small cottage in Sykes Road, Fields Hill. The house was so small that my brother and I had to sleep on the open veranda (really cold and miserable in the winter, but lovely in the hot summer evenings). I started high school from here, going to the Natal Technical High School in Durban (which at that time was situated at the bottom of Smith Street). I would get a lift into Durban, with a church friend of the family (Alex Rose), and would catch the train from the Berea Road station in the afternoon. The trip to Fields Hill took a minimum of 1 hour 20 minutes. After having to commute like this for a year we moved to a double storied rented house in Trematon Drive in Durban. What a difference!, my own room, plenty of space and a short trip to and from school each day, in a double decker electrically driven bus. About two years later my parents purchased a house in Cherry Avenue Durban. During my last two years at high school I was in the shooting team.. We won many competitions, the most prestigious of these being the "Presidents Shield".

After completing schooling, I had a number of jobs, while waiting for a game ranger position to become vacant with the Natal Parks Board. I was initially stationed at Hluhluwe Game Reserve and then moved to the Umfolozi Game Reserve. However 9 months later I resigned as the work was not at all what I had thought it would be. We were poorly paid policemen, and I could not see myself doing this sort of work for the rest of my life. I then landed a job with National Cash Registers (NCR) on the conversion of their machines from pounds, shillings and pence to rands and cents. The position was in East London, so I loaded my worldly goods aboard my 350cc BSA motor bike and headed off. Six weeks after my arrival I met Jo on a blind date, and we were engaged a year later.

When the conversion of all the NCR machines had been completed, all the temporary staff were retrenched, so once again I headed back to Durban to take up a position as a shift operator at the Engen Refinery.

In those days it was known as Socony Mobil. I worked there for 18 months and really enjoyed the work. After a few months I had accumulated sufficient funds to buy a car. So for the princely sum of R275.00 I bought a Peugeot 403. By doing shift work I would have a long week end after every 6 week cycle. This enabled me to finish the night shift at 08h00 on a Friday, drive through to East London by Friday afternoon, in time to pick Jo up from work. We would then go out for the evening, usually getting home in the early hours. I had to be back at work on Monday at 16h00, so I would leave East London at about 06h00 in the morning. Many was the time I would not even have sufficient time to go home and wash, but would go straight to work with all my luggage still in the car. As you can imagine I was pretty exhausted by the end of my first afternoon shift on these occasions. We also utilised these trips to move most of Jo's worldly goods to Durban, with the poor old car loaded until the back bumper nearly touched the ground. That car was incredibly reliable, never breaking down once, despite the rough treatment it was getting.

We were married on 16 February 1963 at the St Marks Anglican church in East London by Canon Clack, and had our reception at the Bamboo room, Marine Hotel. Our honeymoon was spent at the Hogsback Inn, a truly lovely setting to the start of our marriage.

We moved into the flat at the back of my parents home in Cherry Avenue, so that we could save as much as possible towards the purchase of our own home. This we achieved in two and a half years, with us moving into 22 Marshall Grove, Carrington Heights Durban in October 1965.

In July 1963 I resigned from Mobil, taking up a position with Shell and BP Refineries (Sapref) as a shift operator. Promotion at Sapref came thick and fast, and I had become a foreman within 18 months of joining the company. This was the fastest promotional progress ever achieved by any staff member in the Shell group starting from operator to foreman.

Clive was born a year later on 7 October 1966, and Michelle on 2 December 1969 both at the St Augustine's hospital in Durban.

When Clive was 5 months old a team of 6 staff members were sent to the Shell refinery in Geelong Australia, to train on a new base lubeoil manufacturing plant which was being built at Sapref. We were there for 5 months, which made the separation from Jo and Clive very hard for me to bear.

Before the start up of the new plant (which was scheduled for September 1967), all 6 members of the start up team were sent on leave. We went off to East London in July. We stayed the first night at Kockstad, and when we woke in the morning it had started snowing. This was the first time in my life that I had seen snow close up, what an experience. We left soon after and had the most hairy ride negotiating the Brooks Neck pass. In fact soon after we left the motel the pass was closed to traffic. The heater in the car was not designed for such cold weather so we were wrapped in blankets to try and keep warm.

After the holiday, the start up of the base lubeoil manufacturing plant began in earnest, and in fact ended most successfully being one of the quickest start ups of a plant this complexity and size in the group, being completed ahead of schedule, well below budget, and with only minor glitches.

Two years later I was offered the position of dispatch supervisor at the bitumen blending plant. Where I was responsible for the scheduling, manufacture, quality control and dispatch of a range of 32 different products. All of this was done with a staff of 58 members, of whom I was responsible.

In 1975 the Sapref Sports Club started a pistol shooting club, which both Jo and I joined, we used to have regular competitions amongst the 8 pistol shooting clubs each month. This association was called "The Durban and District Pistol Association". We enjoyed both the social as well as the competitive aspects of this sport. I was on the committee as the Sapref member for 2 years then vice chairman for 18 months and chairman for a further 2 years. During this time I was selected to shoot for Natal, and did so until we left for George. A total of 10 years. I was also on the Natal Pistol Association committee for 4 years.

In 1988 I was seconded to the Sapref IT department to head up the development of a dispatch software system to replace the existing system, which had become outdated. However before the system had been installed I was approached by Mossgas, who offered me the position of product co-ordinator at Mossgas. This was the new synthetic fuel manufacturing plant being built at Mossel Bay. The financial package they offered was nearly double of what I was earning at Sapref, so after 27 years service with Sapref, I took an early retirement package, and we then moved to George, with me commuting to Mossel Bay each day, a trip of 58 kilometres.

Initially I was responsible for the setting up of the Mossgas dispatch systems, both computer and operational. I then had to engage and train a staff of 6 people to run the sales side of the business. We were also required to ensure, that product measurements were controlled and accurate through a set of audit trails, thereby keeping product losses to an absolute minimum. Over a number of years we were able, through fine tuning and complete computerisation of the process, able to reduce the staff complement to 3 members.

I had been pressing Mossgas management for over 2 years to give me a retirement package, and on 30 November 1998, my dream came true. I was still required to help out at Mossgas on a contract basis for nearly a year after I had retired, as the intricacies of running the month end process, was initially too difficult for them.

Both Jo and I have very active lives, with me being on the Wildlife committee as treasurer, Probus as vice president and I have now been nominated for the committee of ARP&P, with the AGM in April 2001. Jo has now been social convenor for ARP&P for a year and she really enjoys this. She does a great deal of sewing, makes most of our clothing, as well as for the rest of the family, especially for the two grand children. Our daughter Michelle is married to Bruce Paterson and they have two children, Justine (6) and Nicholas (4). I enjoy woodwork, welding and repairs and alterations to the house, having recently completely retiled both bathrooms from floor to ceiling. My next project is modifying the brick drive and path. We do a fair amount of walking, with a group of friends, our walks being on a Friday morning. We would really love to see more of our children, but Clive lives in Durban and Michelle and her family live on a forestry station near Melmoth in northern Kwa Zulu Natal, so our visits are usually over Christmas, where the photo below was taken last Christmas. We live in a truly beautiful part of our country, with George hugging the Outeniqua range of mountains. Any number of hiking trails are within very close proximity, and we have a large and interesting group of friends. The area has a relatively low crime rate, so we can honestly say that we are truly blessed.