

DUMELA



Newsletter from Botswana Sweden Friendship Association No 4/2014

Dear BOTSFA members!

For the northern hemisphere, it's autumn and trees are losing leaves. In Sweden, the birch, beech, oak and other hardwood trees stand naked in the chilling cold weather. Botswana's nature, on the other hand, is springing up with the flowering of jacaranda, syringa, bougainvillea and other beautifully clad trees. Mopane trees are spreading out their leaves for feeding mopane caterpillars. Life's cycle goes on, irrespective of where one finds himself or herself. I continue to enjoy both sides of the geographic divides.

In the previous issue of Dumela, I expressed the pleasure in being able to vote in two countries – Sweden, at the local level, and Botswana, at the national level. The elections are now a past thing for me, whatever the outcome. I am gearing myself for closing 2014 and opening 2015 with new resolutions, which include looking forward to being part of the Botswana-Sweden Friendship Association (BOTSFA), where Botswana and Sweden's friends meet. With a strong 145 members, BOTSFA has provided me enormous opportunities to link with people I had lost contact with; strengthen long-standing ties; and bring new friends into

my network of happiness. Thank you all for your friendship.

This issue of Dumela presents an article on Åke Aastrup, the first Swede to be assigned to work in Botswana by Sida. At 102, Åke continues to recount his experiences of living and working in Botswana with vividness. He and his wife, Greta (deceased), were part of the original members of BOTSFA. Dumela wishes you a belated Happy Birthday Åke!

Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year 2015!



Julia Majaha-Järtby
BOTSFA
Chairperson



REMINDER Membership Fees for 2015

To assist the Association in maintaining a current record of membership, please pay by February 28, 2015.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

- Individual: SEK 175
- Family: SEK 300 (incl. children up to 15 years of age)
- Student: SEK 100
- Institution: SEK 500

Plusgiro 85 10 39-8
or Bankgiro 428-6472

For an update of records, please send an e-mail to botsfa@botsfa.nu with the name(s) and contact details of the renewal or payment for new membership.

visit us on www.botsfa.nu



Åke Aastrup: Resilience par Excellence

Åke Aastrup, the first Swedish expert to be sent to Botswana by Sida in 1972, at the age of 60, has so far lived the longest. His memory continues to carry him forward and in an amazingly resilient way, at the age of 102.

TEXT **Julia Majaha-Järtby**

PHOTO **Järtby, Staffan Strand and Courtesy of Aastrup family**

THE AASTRUPS lived in Botswana during 1972 to 1977 at which time Åke worked as a technical assistance expert. They later lived in an apartment in Stockholm till Greta passed on in 2013, at the age of 95. Åke, born on 29 October 1912, now lives with daughter Helene in Stocka, Hälsingland. In Stockholm Åke was able to do grocery shopping using his walker which continues to take him around in Stocka.

When Dumela met him a few days before his 102nd birthday, he expressed gratitude to his daughter and son-in-law for taking care of him but lamented over the loss of freedom to take care of himself. Åke's strength is not only in his ability to push his walker, but also in his very sharp memory for recounting his international work experiences as related to one of the countries Sida assigned him, Botswana.

What did you know about Botswana when you decided to take up your assignment as a Sida-funded technical expert?

– It is difficult to go back in time to remember most things, but Botswana became a very interesting country for me during my work with Sida in Sweden. Being the first democracy in Africa, it attracted lots of interest in

Sweden. I was one of the people involved in the analysis of aid to developing countries. This provided me the opportunity to understand the country better. It was very clear from the beginning that Botswana needed support with the development of its infrastructure. That drew interest for Sida's involvement and my eventual assignment to work in Botswana.

In the views of some Swedish authorities, Botswana did not fit into the picture of the likes of Tanzania and Mozambique, which Sweden supported through aid at the time. How did Botswana become eligible for Sida's aid?

– Botswana was a very poor country, but showed signs of being well-managed. Seretse Khama's leadership proved to be very impressive paving the way for Sweden to have sound bilateral relations. Sida decided to support what was seen as a promising country in terms of aid absorption.

What were your first impressions of the country?

– Greta and I were supposed to travel together to Gaborone. But she broke a leg in Mallorca, en route to Botswana, while visiting our daughter Marie. I travelled



Åke and Greta Per, Åke and Julia

alone and Greta and Marie joined me later.

When I arrived at Gaborone airport, I was impressed by the welcome I received. As I exited the airport building, I found a young man waiting for me and, next to him, a bicycle. It would turn out to be Festus Mogae, then a young economist. He took my suitcase on his bicycle and off we walked to President Hotel. This is the man who would later become the third President of Botswana. The humility of people in Botswana left huge positive impressions on me.

What did you work with?

– I was the first Swedish expert sent to Botswana by Sida and I worked for the Ministry of Works and Communications, as Chief Engineer. Two years later, I was assigned to work with the development of the infrastructure for the Sowa project in Dukwi. This was to prepare for the extraction of soda ash and there had to be infrastructure for the development of a town that would accommodate the workforce.

Who were the key players in your work?

– I can't exactly remember, but there were young economists including Festus Mogae, who had studied in the United Kingdom, Baledzi Gaolathe and Lawrence Lekalake who were very much engaged in policy discussions and decisions. From Sweden, I worked closely with Ernst Michanek who was then Sida's Director General.

Åke points to the warmth of the people as something that stood out in his and Greta's international experiences. He specifically names the Lekalake family as having been very special in their relationship with Botswana and Batswana and concludes by saying that it was a pleasure to work in a

country where one could see results of projects implementations and outcomes.

Åke also relates that his three children had some contribution to the country which stole their parents' hearts. Marie, their youngest daughter, lived with the parents in Botswana for a year, worked as a volunteer at the national museum and was also engaged as a producer for a Radio Botswana while Helene did some research based on Botswana's National Development Plan. Helene also participated in a film festival in Gaborone with a documentary, »Born Slave« she filmed in Mauritania. Mats, their older brother and a hydrologist, worked with a team from a British-Australian-Swedish consulting firm on a National Water Master Plan for Botswana. Åke looks back at the links with pride and wishes that the legacy of international involvement is carried forward by Aastrup lineage.

For the young Swedish experts, volunteers and their families, Åke and Greta became more like parents to all. Their home was always open for visits.



Ngamiland's Baskets

Our Livelihood – Our Heritage – Our Pride

Mr. Tshepo Mogotsi, Minister Counsellor of the Embassy of Botswana in Sweden, officially opened the exhibition on Ngamiland Baskets at *Just Africa* in Stockholm. The exhibition had been planned for a couple of years in cooperation between the Municipality of Hultsfred in Sweden and the North West District Council of Maun in Botswana. Speeches were held by representatives of the NWDC, Councillor Duncan Enga, and official representatives of

Hultsfred's Community, notably the Mayor, Mr. Lars Rosander. Two weavers participated, Doris Mbire representing Ngamiland Women Baskets Weavers; and Maemi Die, who started make baskets at the age of 10. The two ladies' art-works were much admired, and also bought by many. Words like »I'll buy this for Christmas present« were heard from many visitors. The Exhibition continues through December 23rd.

TEXT AND PHOTO Ulla Odqvist



Weavers Maemi Die and Doris Mbire



Minister Counsellor Tshepo Mogotsi, Maemi Die and Ulla Odqvist

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2014 will be held on March 21, 2015.

Further information regarding venue and time will be posted on www.botsfa.nu and/or sent by e-mail to members.



To paint zebra-stripes on a Swedish dala-horse and create a BOTSFA symbol was a quite tricky task! Ulla Odqvist, Viera Larsson and Hanne Heli here in painting action.



BOTSFA
Photo
Competition



Photo Competition 2014

It is time for annual BOTSFA Photo Competition

Members are invited to submit 1–3 photos. The theme for the 2014 competition is »Water«.

- The picture(s) should have been taken in Botswana, by the member
- Prints, slides, scanned or digital images
- Closing date is 31 January 2015
- Entries may be printed in Dumela and/or shown on BOTSFA web site

Images may be sent electronically to per@jartby.com or by post to: Per Järtby, Olof Skötkonungs väg 25, S-193 32 Sigtuna, Sweden

THE PICTURES WILL BE ANONYMOUSLY JUDGED BY A JURY TO BE CONSTITUTED.

GOOD LUCK!

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Information, articles etc. to be included in DUMELA should be sent to the publisher's address.

MEMBERSHIP FEES: Individual: SEK 175 • Family SEK: 300 • Student: SEK 100 • Institution: SEK 500 • Plusgiro Account: 851039-8 • Bankgiro Account: 428-6472