

Correcting history: Madiba's first cup of tea after his release

YAZEED KAMALDIEN

NELSON Mandela's autobiography has been reworked, and among its corrections are details about where his convoy detoured on the day he was set free.

Mandela originally wrote in *Long Walk to Freedom* that his convoy stopped at the house of deceased justice minister Dullah Omar. The record has now been set straight; they in fact stopped at the home of ANC activist Saleem Mowzer.

Recalling the event of February 10, 1990, Mowzer this week revisited the house where Mandela stopped for tea, at 44 Haywood Road, Crawford, after his release from Victor Verster Prison. At the time Mowzer lived there with his parents.

"I was one of a number of activists on the Nelson Mandela reception committee... We had a day to organise the event on the Grand Parade," Mowzer said.

"When we left Victor Verster Prison we drove in convoy along the N1 into town. On that day we got blocked by huge crowds and eventually had to drive back on to the highway, and we ended up at UCT.

"There were close to an estimated 250 000 people on the Grand Parade that day. We somehow got into the middle of that crowd. We were surrounded by the crowd, and we had to get out of there."

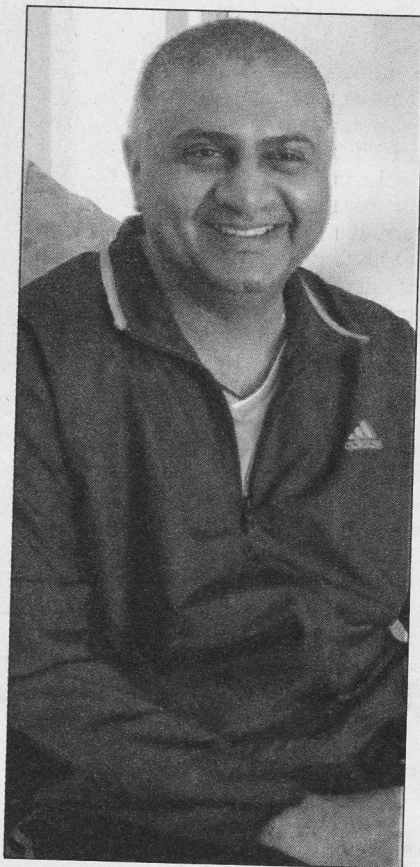
Mowzer said they eventually got back on to the highway, turned on to the M3, then stopped at UCT to consult.

"At that time we didn't have things like cellphones, where we could then communicate with our leadership at the Grand Parade. And they didn't know what was happening at the time.

"We were then talking about going to comrade Dullah's (Omar) house. His son said his dad and all of them were at the Parade. His mother was with us as part of the convoy as well.

"We then said (we could go to the home of) the Archbishop (Desmond Tutu) at Bishops court, but realised his family was also at the Grand Parade waiting for Madiba."

Among the ANC leaders in the convoy with Mandela were Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa.



MEMORY: Madiba visited Saleem Mowzer on his way to the Parade.

PICTURE: YAZEED KAMALDIEN

Mowzer said Omar had long wanted to see this detail corrected.

"At the time, when the book came out, comrade Dullah (Omar) actually called me to his house. He asked me if I had read the autobiography. I said, 'Yes'. And he said there's something that needs to be corrected."

Mowzer said Omar "placed a very strong emphasis on history, and the recording of history was very important to him".

Years later Omar called Mowzer again, with the same request to correct the facts about where Mandela stopped before the Grand Parade speech.

"In 2003, when Comrade Dullah became very ill he was in hospital and he called me. He told me he still feels very strongly about it. And he feels that it needs to be corrected..

"By then, many people like Valli Moosa, Cyril Ramaphosa and other activists knew (about the

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Comrade Jay Naidoo then said, "But Saleem, you live close by, can't we go to your place?" And without thinking, I agreed. And as we drove I realised the significance of us going to my place," Mowzer recalled.

"I then led the convoy to my house at 44 Haywood Road in Crawford... It's my parents place. We got there. Most of my family was on the Parade.

"But my sister from Johannesburg had flown down that day. She was highly pregnant. And she couldn't believe her eyes when she opened the door and in front of her stood Madiba and the rest of the ANC delegation."

They then "communicated via telephone with Comrade Dullah (Omar) and the archbishop at the Grand Parade".

"The question was, 'Is it safe for Madiba to come to the Grand Parade?' And the answer was, 'He must come back. He needs to address the country and the world'."

But first Madiba wanted a cup of tea, which Mowzer's sister made for him.

"His first cup of tea post-freedom was at my parents' house. He freshened up and was relaxing."

But the activists were anxious to get him back to the Grand Parade, where he delivered his famous freedom speech.

By the time *Long Walk* was published, Mandela's memory must have failed him, as he stated that he had stopped at Omar's house that day.

inaccuracy). Comrade Dullah eventually spoke to Professor Jakes Gerwel, who was the director-general in President Mandela's office."

A few years prior to Mandela's death, at one of his birthday celebrations in Joburg, the subject came up and Moosa told the story.

Fact checkers from the Nelson Mandela Foundation were then sent to interview Mowzer to find out the true story, to be reflected in a reworked *Long Walk* to be published early next year.

Mowzer said: "Comrade Dullah's wish is being answered... It is something that he always wanted corrected."

He added that it was not however "an honour" for him to see his involvement in the historical event recorded accurately.

"I don't want any recognition or honour that Madiba came to my house on the day of his release. The historical facts are important. But it's more about how do we lead our country... the way Madiba would have wanted to, in terms of his principles and morality," said Mowzer.

• Weekend Argus reported on December 20, that *Long Walk to Freedom* states that Mandela's father died when Mandela was 9 - which would have made it 1927 or 1928.

The Nelson Mandela Foundation, says they "have found documentation in Madiba's own handwriting saying that his father died in 1930, when he was 12.

'Missing' paddleskier apologises to NSRI

A PADDLESKIER who was reported missing at Pringle Bay interrupted his Christmas festivities to alert authorities that he was safe and sound, the NSRI yesterday.

"A paddleskier who was suspected to be missing at Pringle Bay on Saturday, December 20, has come forward after friends of his noticed a picture of his paddleski and the story on the NSRI website," NSRI spokesman Craig Lambinon said in a statement.

The man explained that the towline of a double sea-kayak to which he and friends had attached his paddleski had broken.

"His paddleski got washed away."

The man then went home.

However, on Christmas Day he was alerted to the fact that a search was being conducted for him.

"He called the NSRI and apolo-

gised for not alerting authorities that he had lost his paddleski at sea on that day."

Lambinon said paddlers should stencil their name and contact numbers on their equipment, and alert the NSRI if they abandoned it at sea.

Meanwhile, in East London a man who disappeared under waves after being swept out to sea by rip currents on Thursday, remains missing.

An extensive air, sea and shore search proved unsuccessful.

Yesterday in St Francis Bay the NSRI also helped a fisherman who had injured himself after falling out of bed. "While at fishing grounds off Tsitsikamma, near Plettenberg Bay, the chokka fishing boat experienced rough seas, causing the 25-year-old fisherman to fall out of his bunk bed and fracture his ribs." - Sapa