



# The Torch



## SO IT BEGAN

### St Dunstan's South Africa Centenary 1918- 2018

Taking the lead from St Dunstan's UK (Blind Veterans UK) The St Dunstan's South Africa committee was formally established in 1918, thanks to Charles Vincent and his wife who offered their services to Sir Arthur Pearson in continuing the work of St Dunstan's UK in South Africa and Rhodesia. ....

More to follow in the next edition.

### Blind dad raises the roof at his graduation ceremony

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2017-12-14 by Tammy Petersen, News 24



Ornette Danse at his graduation. (CPUT Facebook)

Cape Town – All Ornette Danse can remember about his walk across the Cape Peninsula University of Technology's (CPUT) auditorium stage to receive his diploma in public management is the loud and extended applause he received.

While the blind father of three could not see his proud mother, wife, grandmother and father-in-law in the audience, he could feel their pride as he officially became his family's first university graduate.

"I am overwhelmed, happy, glad – I can't properly describe this feeling," an incredulous and enthused Danse said on Wednesday, hours after one of the most exciting moments of his life.

"It was an overwhelming accomplishment. I felt like I made it."

And while three years of hard work and dedication has paid off, he is far from done with his studies – he is ready to tackle his Bachelor of Technology degree.

Danse, 32, lost his vision at the age of 10 after a botched operation to repair a retinal detachment which would have eventually resulted in blindness if not treated, he explained.

## **Multilingual**

During his matric year at school, he underwent switchboard training and volunteered during the holidays at his local police station as a switchboard operator.

"I knew that being blind would make getting a job straight out of school basically impossible. I had limited options so to ensure I was employable, I wanted to make sure I had work experience," Danse said.

After matriculating, he worked at the police station for another year until he landed a job as an operator at the 10111 call centre, where he has worked for the past decade.

He speaks six languages – Setswana, isiXhosa, English, Afrikaans, isiZulu and Sesotho.

While he is dedicated to assisting victims of crime and tries to go the extra mile when dealing with a call, he says his keen interest in public service, politics and current affairs encouraged him to enrol for a diploma in public management in 2015.

He received a bursary from the police and juggled his studies and work responsibilities for three years.

"It was very difficult – up and down – but I did it," he said proudly.

Danse was reliant on typed notes which were "read" to him by a screen reader programme.

"I can't read from the board so I would sit and listen intently. I think it helped me understand the material better as instead of concentrating on notes, I would take in everything, then explore it when I got the electronic version," he explained.

His hard work saw him achieve 10 distinctions over the course of his studies.

## **'All worth it'**

Among his biggest hurdles was travelling to and from CPUT's Bellville campus to his home in Delft.

Danse's classes sometimes finished as late as 21:00, after most public transport stops operating, but work colleagues and fellow students would come to his aid by giving him lifts.

In the end, it was all worth it, he insisted.

"My family is very proud of me. My mother – a single parent who raised two children on her own – and my wife expressed how grateful they are to God, and I want to thank Him as well," Danse said.

He celebrated his milestone on Wednesday night with a dinner, surrounded by his friends, loved ones and colleagues.

Danse plans to complete his degree next year, whereafter he will apply for a promotion in the SAPS.

He hopes his accomplishment will inspire others to do what seems impossible.

"My advice to people with disabilities is to try and break the boundaries. Be open and explore. A closed book can't be read. If you need help, ask and someone will assist," he encouraged.

Source: [News 24](#)

## **Farewell to Riette Malherbe**

In the beginning of 1992 I saw an advertisement for an Orientation and Mobility practitioner at Pioneer School. At that stage my children were school-going and I wanted to do something constructive with my life. As a qualified sport science teacher, my first loves were physical education, (or LO, as it was known in the good old days) sport coaching and specifically special education. I was at the De La Bat School for Hearing Impaired Children and there I realized that special education would always be near to my heart. For that reason the advertisement immediately caught my eye.



Riette Malherbe

But what is Orientation and Mobility and what is an Orientation and Mobility instructor? I quite like challenges and therefore I applied for the unknown post.

I had no idea how much there was to learn about Orientation and Mobility and how much it would change my life for the better!



Riette assisting a blind learner with his long cane



Riette spending time with one of the learners

After weeks of exposure and evaluation sessions while being blindfolded, I was appointed. Thus began my training as an O & M practitioner under the competent guidance of Miss Trudie Webb.

What an eye-opener and unbelievable experience to enter the world of the blind. My idea of a visually impaired person was initially that of somebody who cannot see and who needs help all the time. I gradually realised that a visually impaired person has the same needs and ideals as any other person. The practical part of the training was really interesting, but I also realised that the other components of the training were equally important. I discovered that the emotional welfare of a learner can make or break a lesson.

The daily O&M lessons not only consisted of training to use the wonderful long cane, map work, handling of routes, street crossing and the hazardous traffic world, but also involved communicating on a one-on-one basis, taking the welfare of each learner into consideration, sometimes playing the role of mother, sticking on plasters, wiping tears away and buoying up a learner's spirits.

My life was enriched through the insight I obtained into the lives of these learners. I learned that if a learner experienced a very good O&M lesson, it did not mean that the next lesson would also run so well because the next lesson may involve a repetition of the previous one and then it means concentrating on the acquired techniques. Therefore, every lesson requires a lot of patience, insight into the problems, abilities and needs of every learner. That way I learned that it pays so much more to be patient than impatient.

The courage and guts with which some of the learners took on the sighted world after they left school, and the success they had beyond expectation show that where there is a strong will, there is always a way.

Independence is the golden key to success in the sighted world. It adds so much dignity to the life of such a young person and in this way he/she becomes part of the world of young people filled with challenges, but also with satisfaction and successes. Without independence the student and young adult experiences tremendous stress and obstacles.

After 24 years and 3 months as Orientation and Mobility Instructor it is time to say goodbye to Pioneer School and all the learners who were part of my life during this period. But before I do that, I want to express my sincere gratitude to St Dunstan's and the John and Esther Ellerman Memorial Trust for their financial contributions to Pioneer School. Without their support it would not be possible to appoint a full-time O&M instructor.

In Afrikaans we have a lovely expression which we use to greet. We say: "Mooi loop." That means: look carefully where you go.....Don't get hurt...Please make sure that other people don't step on you...Walk upright and with pride. It also means...I'll see you again and: I carry you in my heart, in my thoughts and in my prayers. You are special and you have a special place in my heart.

"Mooi loop" also says: "May the steps you take into the future be purposeful, successful and blessed."

I therefore greet you with these two words: "Mooi loop!"

## **How Blind And Visually Impaired Student Take Notes And Write Exams**

### **Blind Students**

By the time blind students reach college (unless they are newly blind), they have probably mastered techniques for dealing with certain kinds of visual materials. Most blind students use a combination of methods, including readers, tape-recorded books and lectures and, sometimes, Braille materials. Students may use raised-line drawings of diagrams, charts, illustrations, relief maps, and three-dimensional models of physical organs, shapes, and microscopic organisms. Technology has made available other aids for blind people, including talking calculators, speech-time compressors, computer terminals with speech output, Braille printers, paperless Braille computer terminals, and paperless Braille machines.

Some blind students who read Braille prefer to take their own notes in class using a slate and stylus or a Perkins Braille, though both are being replaced by laptop computers and other technological devices. Some blind students will get copies of notes (taken on carbonless paper) from classmates and have someone type the notes onto disk for them. They then plug the disk into a computer with speech output to listen to the notes. Other blind students tape record the lecture and later transcribe notes from the tape into Braille. It is easier for some blind students to study from tactile copy rather than from recordings, though some blind students are able to develop strong auditory compensatory skills over a period of time. Either way, the process of reading and studying requires more time for a blind student than for a sighted student.

Test adaptation is another concern for blind students. Students will usually have a preference for taking tests. These preferences often involve either a reader or a taped Braille test. The student will either type the answers or dictate them to a proctor to record. Some may prefer to Braille their answers first and then read them for a scribe to record in longhand. Whatever method is proposed, the student and faculty member should agree early in the semester about how the student's academic work would be evaluated.

### **Visually Impaired Students**

Partially sighted students meet the challenge of gaining access to printed information in much the same way as blind students except for using Braille. They use taped texts, readers, raised line drawings, talking computer terminals, and other equipment. In addition, they use large print materials, closed circuit magnifiers, or other magnifying devices, as well as large print computer terminals, or telescopic lenses. Partially sighted students may also use large print typing elements for papers. Some will be able to take

their own notes in class by printing large letters with a felt-tip pen. Others will tape record lectures for later use.

Most partially sighted students will require some adaptation for taking tests. Such adaptations may include a large print test, use of closed circuit magnifiers, a reader, a scribe, or a word processor. Many visually impaired students cannot see well enough to use a computerized answer sheet and will need to write answers on a separate sheet for someone else to record on the answer sheet. Partially sighted students will usually need extra time on their test, especially if they are reading the test themselves. The SDS coordinator can help faculty members plan appropriate instructional test accommodations. For the full article read more here.

## The Talking Microwave

From George

This easy-to-use talking microwave has a power rating of 800 watts and is a 25 litre / 0.9 cu ft oven. It offers a full range of features, including: rotating turntable, talking clock, adjustable speech volume and talking kitchen timer independent of the oven. Basic operation is by selecting power level and time. Programmed operation is by selecting cook / defrost, food type and weight or by selecting from a range of frozen and un-frozen convenience foods and weight.

It has three "Favourite" buttons to store your three most frequently used programmes and a fully tactile and wipe clean keypad. It also has auto-minute and programme pause functions, spoken requests to stir or turn food during cooking and to leave food to stand after cooking.



The talking microwave

The oven speaks when the door is opened or closed and speaks confirmation of functions selected and cooking time. The time remaining is spoken at the press of a button at any stage whilst cooking. The microwave has a rugged stainless steel interior.

The Talking Microwave is currently selling at R6 300.00



## A student has created a Rubik's Cube for blind people as part of her grad project.

Kristen Sharpless from University of Massachusetts was given a task to create an adapted recreational game for a blind person. Inspired by her best friend's obsession with Rubik's Cube, she decided to create one that would work for the blind community. 'I had my best friend in mind (she's not blind, she just loves playing with these things), so I thought I would make it tactile and blindfold her to have her try it out!' she told Mashable.



The Braille Rubik Cube (Picture: @Notafakeinterpreter)

Her prototype included tactile inputs so people who were visually impaired could use it. It currently has over 1,436,464 views so far and after posting it on Reddit, she received an overwhelmingly positive feedback. She thanks Redditors for helping her notice things to correct. 'Because I posted this to Reddit, I've learned of so many ways I could adapt this to make it perfect, so I am definitely keeping this in mind if and when I make it for an actual person and not a school project!' she said. The Rubik's Cube apparently took her ten minutes to create for less than \$15 (about £11.19). So what's the difference? Kristen's Rubik's cube has a smooth side, a side with nine buttons, a side with nine parts of Velcro, a side with star-shaped foam stickers and a side with plastic domed-jewels. She said she was surprised by how big the traction was.

Source: <http://metro.co.uk/2017/11/29/a-gra...>

## Birthday Wishes



Happy Birthday to Peter Hall who turned 60 this month.

## **Making A Move**



Braam in front of his new place

Braam recently made a move to live on his own in the lovely Magaliesburg. We wish him the best of luck and many adventures.

## **Lelethu is off to varsity**



Lelethu smiling at the camera

Congrats to Lulethu as she sets off to varsity.