

Mpueleng Pooe

LRC Oral History Project**10th July 2008**

Int This is an interview with Mr. Mpueleng Pooe. (I think I got that almost right, but not quite: *refers to pronunciation of name*). Thank you very much for agreeing to be part of the LRC Oral History Project, we really appreciate it. I wondered whether we could start the interview by...talking about your early childhood memories, growing up in South Africa, what that was like, some of your memories, where your sense of social justice and injustice developed, and what were some of the formative influences...that may have led you into the legal profession?

MP Ok, I guess I must start off by telling you where I was born. I was born in Potchefstroom, it's a town in what is currently known as the North West Province, then was called the Western Transvaal, a relatively small town as compared to Johannesburg, for example, with a very strong Afrikaans culture and leaning. The main medium of communication officially and outside of home, of course, was Afrikaans. I went to the schools in and around what was then in the township attached to Potchefstroom, which was Ikageng, up to my junior high school years, and then I went off to attempt my senior high school studies in a rural village known as Hebron, which is in the north of Pretoria. Growing up in Potchefstroom in the sixties, because that's really when I start to be...I spent a lot of time from, I think, early age to about standard six, when I was ready for school, we were with grandparents and so on, away from Potchefstroom and I only really went back to start school in 1966, I believe...

Int But you didn't go to school when you were with your grandparents, away from Potchefstroom...?

MP No, I didn't go to school.

Int So you started school much later?

MP I started school when I was seven, which then was...I think it was...ya, you...that was a compulsory age at which you...you could not start earlier in those years.

Int Right...

MP But, you know, Potchefstroom, as I say is small, is very Afrikaans, and tended to be isolated from the mainstream of activity. I mean, a trip into Johannesburg took you the better part of the day. These days it takes you just over an hour from Potch to here; it took you the whole day to get to Johannesburg. So, you're sort of removed from really what is happening in the main centres of the country, and of course, the biggest influence on you is of this deeply Afrikaans and religious culture that was prevailing at that time. Your earlier exposure to politics was obviously under, you know, at the heart of the apartheid years, I think, that one of the prime ministers at that time was (Hendrik) Verwoerd, I think he died just as I was starting to become

aware of what was happening. And the influence at school was, by and large, very Afrikaans, and nationalist politics, where you, you know, when a government official comes to visit, you all lined up and you had to wave little flags, and you, you know, and be polite for the day. So, not much happened really in my very early years, which you probably might have found interesting, but not very much happened. I was a normal boy who went to school, and ran around bare-footed and tried to do his best at school, if such a school existed. Of course, I mean, the schools did not compare to...even the schools we have now in the black townships, I mean, they were...there, really we survived on bare minimum. You were lucky to have a desk, you didn't have heating in the rooms, so in winter you bore the full brunt of the elements, but nonetheless, it was a school with a classroom, with a teacher and they gave us a certain level of literacy and, you know, and numeric skills, and one progressed from junior primary to high school. And again, not a hell of a lot happened, we were vaguely aware...and you must understand the context...I mean, you did not have access to the sort of reading that you have these days. My first book, and I think I was one of the few kids to have a book, in a language other than my home language, was a book with nursery rhymes when I was in standard two, and I remember it had 'Baa Baa Black Sheep' in it. Which, you know, it was...if you look at it now, you sort of say: gosh, I missed out on a lot. But as compared to other kids, you know, at least I had a book in English, which I...which was some...the beginnings of getting me to start to learn the language and to converse in the language. And that was purely because my dad was a teacher, and amongst his many books there was this book which one afternoon, he said to me: read this. I mean, these days you probably, in standard two, you give your kid a book that is a little bit more sophisticated than nursery rhymes with 'Baa Baa Black Sheep', so...So other than...I mean, there wasn't as much access to good reading material, so we survived with what we had, certainly no access to material that could help...from a reading point of view, that could help shape up your thinking, you know, along political leanings, one way or another. Vaguely aware of...you knew you were living under...in a society where you were segregated because you could see, you know, we go...we move from here to there to do shopping and as I move further and further away from my home towards where the other parts of, you know, you can see there's a difference, you can see nicely kept...nicely mown, manicured lawns, you could see black people working there, and you knew that was them, and that was us, and...You knew not to stray into that territory beyond certain hours because you're not allowed to. You knew that you could be stopped at any time, certainly from when you were in your teens, from sixteen onwards and particularly if you were tall and looked strong, you could be stopped and be asked: well, by what right are you in this area, because it's a white area, and where do you come from, err, should you be...even be anywhere here, in the Potchefstroom district? Because of what was then the influx control laws and the pass laws and so on. So, yes, we knew that we were a different class of citizens as compared to other people. You know, there wasn't anything openly that we could point to, to say that needs resistance to that, I mean, you know, there might just against the passes, whatever, it happened a little bit before my time. Those things were not celebrated in those days, they were mentioned in hushed tones because if, you know, you believe that if you talk too much about it, you'd end up in trouble. We knew that there was an agency which was in exile, but that was all very low intensity and certainly not spoken about too much. I didn't grow up in a political family at all, I don't have a political background in as far as my parentage is concerned; my father was a teacher, my mother was a housekeeper in some white person's home. And

really the biggest exposure to the political situation really is in 1976, and then I was in junior high school and it just exploded. We were...Potchefstroom was, as I say, was removed, so we did not even have an inkling that that was going to happen. I think at that time we already had access to television, and so the first thing we saw, were images on television and images on, I think what was then the...it is a Bantu newspaper, it was called...I can't remember, but of...I think the first picture we saw were of Casspirs and of that little boy who was being carried, Hector (Pieterse)...

Int 1976...

MP 1976. And that really is the beginning of: oh, this is happening. Because it soon spread to other localities in South Africa, away from Soweto, and that was then...from then on, that was the environment within which I grew up with, you know, '76, the aftermath of '76, and really heightened political activity in and amongst student bodies, generally, rural, non-rural, if there was an activity. When I finished my...I won't say that I manned barricades and threw rocks or whatever, but certainly as a young person and as a student at that time, you know, we were aware, some of us were more involved than others, and some of us were, sort of, supporting from the sides maybe and from the back, and so forth. And I certainly was not the recipient of what was clearly then police brutality, I mean, I've had a few close shaves, I've had to run away, as most other kids who grew up in black society communities, have had to do...have had to run away from those sorts of things. University was a boiling point, I went to the University of the North and this again was at the heart of political turmoil and student activism, I mean, Turfloop, the University of the North, is particularly known for that sort of activity. It gave rise to people like Tiro and so on, who went into exile and was then killed. And throughout my student years, that was life, I mean, you studied when you could and you marched some of the time, a lot of the time on campus, and it was mass meetings and it was...it was just a hive of political activity. Which probably started shaping...I mean my...how I came to be involved in law and what led me to that was, maybe at first, because I...that formed in my head when I was still very young, and it was more...quite frankly, I thought it was a glamorous job, and I said to my dad, I think I was still, sort of, senior primary school, I said to him once: I want to be a lawyer...

Int Did you know a lawyer, did you get a sense...?

MP I...I'm trying to think whether there were any high profile cases, and, I mean, George (Bizos) with inquests and so...George Bizos with inquests and so on, had a...had quite a lot of impact and influence, but I think that was probably after I'd even formed the view. Quite frankly, when we grew up, you know, at primary school, at senior primary school, there was no television, I mean, we listened to the radio, and I think one of the things I used to listen to without fail, on the English service, was a programme called "Consider your Verdict".

Int Oh, right, ok.

MP Which was courtroom scenes condensed for thirty minutes and so on, where they took a case from beginning to end, and it was just something that appealed to me, you know...you know, they were articulate, they were clever...the cross examination was sharp and, you know, I think that was the first thing that, ya, ok, this is a nice job to do. Ok.

Int Some people listened to “Squad Cars” and wanted to become policemen...

MP Policemen and so...there was a time when I thought I’d become a soldier because I also liked, you know, macho things, and so on, but law won the game in the end. And then later on, of course, through media exposure to people like George (Bizos), again nothing face to face, just reading about what he was doing at that inquests, and so forth, that was just something that: wow, so this is what can happen. So, in fact when I said to my dad, I want to be a lawyer, he was terribly upset, he didn’t talk to me for a week, because he thought it was not an honourable profession, because lawyers lie.

Int Really. What would he...what work would he prefer?

MP Law was not one of those, maybe he would have wanted me to be a doctor or something like that, but I...it turned out that I was not that good at maths anyway, maths and science, so, I wasn’t bad, but I wasn’t that good. Ya, so, but really, you know, later on you say: I can actually play a role through law. That there was a hell of a lot that was happening of, you know, just coming out of police brutalities and so on, you know, the whole...you become more and more aware of your dire political situation, you have seen George Bizos in action, and that is his contribution towards the struggle and so on, and that is how you say: this is how I choose to make my contribution to the struggle. We cannot go into exile, and a hell of a lot of my friends went into exile, some of them we never saw, and some of them survived, came back, didn’t do so well, some of them survived extremely well, they’re still in politics, you know, in parliament, and so forth.

Int What period were you at University of the North?

MP I was at the University of the North, it was a four year degree that ended in 1983, so, that’s ’83, ’82, ’81, ’80, ok? I lost time a bit because I left high school, having caused some trouble there, we then fought government, we did have some disagreement and I was on the one side, and they were on the other side and...

Int When you say one side, you and the students, you were expelled?

MP Ya...not quite expelled but I...it was a situation where I wasn’t going to risk going back, because I knew that, having been that instrument, I mean, the closure of the school for a couple of weeks and so on, I was going back at my peril, I was going to be a marked person, so I lost a year, and then I went to varsity from ’82 to ’83. Legal Resources Centre, again, I seem to have just moved from places which are removed

from all activity, it's in Pietersburg, then it took us...you travelled from seven o'clock in the evening, until eight o'clock the next day to get to Pietersburg, because, you know, the most reliable mode of getting there was on a train, which took that long. So, it was far removed from what was happening, you know, it was not at Wits, you know, Wits students had access to...But, I actually just stumbled onto the Legal Resources Centre through some reading, by chance reading in the library, and I said: wow, this is the work they're doing. And I...it appealed to me that they were doing that kind of work, which I understood was public interest law, which to me didn't mean much, but the fact that they were giving legal services and assistance to the indigent and to the marginalised, was something that appealed to me, and I therefore applied for the position which I fortunately got. I was probably, maybe naive, maybe I was idealistic, because I actually fancied the idea of giving that service to people at no charge. For me, you know, it was secondary that I was going to maybe to earn a living out of it. So that then got me on the path of what I then practised for most of my professional life. Because I started off there in public interest law, I progressed into my Articles, in a law firm in 1985, and the natural progression was that I just continued to do employment law, it was then called labour law, I ended up doing lots of litigation relating to political...I was involved in the Delmas Trial with George (Bizos) and Arthur (Chaskalson), and all sorts of other public interest type work.

Int So you started as a Fellow in 1984?

MP Ya, I was a Fellow in 1984.

Int And then you did Articles as well.

MP I did Articles...

Int At the same place? At Legal Resources Centre?

MP No. Legal Resources at that time, did not have...Fellowship did not count towards Articles.

Int Right.

MP So, we did Articles, and then we went to do our two years, or however long we needed to do Articles, my Articles were two years, so I had...I had a three-year stint of internship...you...But it was time well spent, and quite frankly, if I hadn't been at the Legal Resources Centre, I would have struggled to find good Articles, it's as simple as that.

Int Really?

- MP Ya. Because it counted for a lot that I'd been there, and that Geoff Budlender could speak to my ability or lack thereof, as could Arthur (Chaskalson), as could Mahomed Navsa, you know, it was just something that counted in, it was difficult to find good Articles, I think it still is for different reasons, it was difficult then for other reasons, it is difficult now, because there is just that lot more good students that come out of university, so therefore it's become very competitive.
- Int But, before, why was it difficult?
- MP Um...Why was it? It was difficult...I mean, it was our perception, certainly, that if you are of a dark colour, you battle to find Articles in the main stream law firms.
- Int Right.
- MP And, I scored Articles at Bell Dewar & Hall, which, at that time, the senior partner was William Lane, he'd been involved in the Aggett case, you know Neil Aggett?
- Int Yes...
- MP He was involved with the newspapers, and so doing a lot of, you know, sort of press card cases to the extent that there was in those days. David Dison was very strong on doing labour law, and doing it on the side of the unions and the workers, as opposed to doing it on the side of the corporates, which was a difference. Ya, so, the firm already had a leaning towards public interest type work and it was, you know...you know, the fact that I had a bit of a foundation on that, helped, but I can tell you now, I would have battled and really battled to get into firms, other firms, that you mentioned, which were not...which did not have that leaning. Cheadle Thompson, yes, you could get Articles, Bell Dewar, you could get Articles, other firms which did that type of law...Priscilla Jana, I think Ayob and Associates, I think that's what those law firms, though it was those sorts of firms which had a leaning towards doing political, public interest type work.
- Int Ok. So, by 1985, you'd completed Articles?
- MP '86.
- Int '86, right...
- MP Two years. I did Articles '85, '86.
- Int Right. So by 1986, then what?

MP I stayed on at Bell Dewar & Hall, worked my way through the ranks, I stayed on as an attorney, professional assistant, and my work was really labour. When the last Delmas Treason Trial happened, the State versus Baleka, and others, happened, I went onto that case and it swallowed me up for...right up to the time when it went as a special case, to the Appellate Division that was my life. I lived either at Delmas or at Modderbee, and then I did a bit of shuttling to Robben Island to consult and have documents signed by the clients. And in between all of that, I did employment law, on the side of the employees, the unions, mainly. I worked for most of the major unions, the Telecoms Unions, Food and Allied, Paper and Printing, most of the major unions that we...even some of the other unions we...I did work for. At some point, while at Bell Dewar, I had involvement in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, representing the families of...the victim families...

Int So was that the big cases, like Biko?

MP It was...the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was...you know a bit about it?

Int Yes I know about it, but which cases were...the family cases, were they the cases that were against the ANC or were they those cases that were...?

MP It was the case...it was...we were representing the victim's families when the ex Security Services people were seeking amnesty.

Int Ok, so those were the cases?

MP Those were the cases.

Int So, it wasn't the cases that George (Bizos) had taken on, the big cases?

MP No, no, it wasn't the big...it was...

Int Chris Hani...?

MP Well, all of them are big, and all of them are important, but it wasn't those that...ya...it wasn't those that George (Bizos) was involved in.

Int Yes that's right...So you worked at Bell Dewar for a long time?

MP Ya.

Int ...until when did you work there?

MP I left there...I'll have to go through my notes and just see, when did I leave Bell Dewar? I left Bell Dewar in 1999.

Int Right.

MP So, I would have been there for about fifteen years, or so.

Int That's a long time.

MP It's a long time.

Int And then after that, what...?

MP I got lured into the corporate world. I...John Myburgh, who had been the Judge President of the Labour Court...

Int John?

MP Myburgh.

Int Myburgh, right.

MP ...had gone to join Anglo Gold as general counsel, and I had had a stint on the Labour Court as an acting judge, a couple of stints and...met John (Myburgh) and...when he got to Anglo Gold, he thought that I was the kind of person he wanted in the team, so he enticed me to go to Anglo Gold. So I joined Anglo Gold and I stayed there until 2003, I then left them to join, what was then known as Royal Bafokeng Resources, it's a company owned by the Bafokeng people, it's a community some...in the North West, in the Rustenberg Valley. They owned a resources company, and they have major relationships with Anglo Platinum, with Impala Platinum, around platinum mining activities, they're the biggest shareholder in Implats currently, um...

Int The community has shares?

MP The community has shares. I've got...to give you a bit of background of where I'm presently, it's just **inaudible** and most other stuff is on the website. The resources company got...there were two companies, it was the resources company and it was a non resources company they got...

Int ...merged...?

MP ...merged into what is currently RBH and I'm still...this is where I'm still sitting.

Int What do you do? Do you do legal work there?

MP I...the last time I did anything vaguely legal, (*laughter*), I guess it was while I was with the resources company, and I was...really I was an in-house corporate lawyer. And most of what I know about corporate commercial law, is really what I learnt when I was at Anglo Gold, John (Myburgh) took me and he said: you're not coming to do labour work, you're coming to go do work with the exploration team and you're going to help them on Trade Venture agreements, and those things. And that was my exposure and I continued to do that when I came onto the resources company...this resources company. When the two companies were merged, some people formed the view that I had talents other than legal, and that I should have a go at being the public affairs stakeholder relations executive, and I have since taken on a new curve in my life, and I do...that's what I do. So I take care of the stakeholder relations, which is the community, mainly, and we estimate them to be about three hundred thousand or so, in a defined geographical area which you can go to and say: here, you can see them. And then of course, I'm here, I mean, that's where we place the emphasis of our, you know, our work, because we are a commercial company, but we're a people-centred company, which make money, and the money's supposed to go here, and to benefit that community.

Int Does it?

MP Ya...does it...are you asking me whether it does? Um, an example, in the last decade or so, two billion Rand has gone into infrastructure development for the community in the form of schools, clinics, roads, water reticulation, sewerage, and the like. So, going by that history as it has, has the community gone where it ought to be? No, and we realise that there are challenges, I mean, there are still unemployment challenges, HIV challenges, the literacy levels need to be jacked up, so there are still challenges, but we believe...but the community has a plan to address those through...we've got a multi decade developmental plan to deal with all of those, and going into the future. Whereas, in the past decade, it was about infrastructure, there's going to be a mixture of infrastructure but then also in people development. So, lots of money is going to go into health, lots of money is going to go into education, particularly maths and science, right, right across the community, so, yes, I think, on track.

Int Alright, fair enough. I'm going to take you right back. It's a wonderful...wonderful narrative outline of your life, but I'm wondering...growing up in South Africa, you mentioned how you had a...you lived with your grandparents and then you came back to Potchefstroom, is that...?

MP Yes.

Int And you...you lived with your gran and, you know, you said that 1976 really was the, turning point at which you really became politically aware, where you saw what was happening in the country. I'm just wondering, before that...given the fact that your

father was a teacher, and I'm wondering in terms of family discussions...and your mother worked, of course, for a white family, was there ever a sense of...the fact that there's this apartheid system, and you couldn't do things? Did your family articulate it or was it just something that you saw, witnessed and accepted?

MP That we see, witness and accept, I don't think that anybody in their sound minds, ever accepted it...

Int Not accept by seeing it as part of your everyday lives, but as abnormal.

MP We certainly knew that it was abnormal, and I have already said that my, you know, I wouldn't want to do an injustice to my dad and my mom, but they were not politically...we knew that the white people were, you know, we knew that we were living in a repressive society.

Int Right.

MP But my family was...we were not political activists, I mean, I'd be lying to you if I say that.

Int Ok.

MP We...I certainly was aware, I mean, even at an early age, you know, when...who was stabbed to death? One of the prime ministers was killed.

Int (Hendrik) Verwoerd...?

MP Was it...it was (Hendrik) Verwoerd, wasn't it? We knew that he had died because we were told so, we found it extremely funny that we now have to switch off our radios and be quiet, because (Hendrik) Verwoerd had died, but, I must tell you, there was actually...even as a non...we were not apolitical but we were not activists, I mean, as we said: oh, maybe things will change. But no, we weren't out there...you know, we're not from that ilk no, we're not.

Int Right. So, you went to school, and in 1976 I think you were in high school, if I'm not mistaken, in 1976, you were in...secondary school?

MP I was...I'll tell you exactly where I was, I think I was in what is now standard eight.

Int Ok.

MP It was form...I think I was in form three...it could have been form two.

Int So it was secondary school. And did you, after that time, it seemed to me from what you told me, you had disagreements with the Bop government, it seemed to me that you did become quite politically involved. Was it at high school or was it really at university?

MP I...it...my awareness...ok, my awareness...the awareness was always there, that, you know, this is an abnormal society whatever. It hit home fully with '76, and even though, I mean, for us, and you must remember, '76, the background of that was, you know, enforced medium, even though we were coping, we come from...I mean, Afrikaans was a second language and we were being instructed in Afrikaans, we did not have an issue at all, because we coped with it. But one got a sense, that yes, actually...it's fine for us because you can cope, but if you are enforcing it and ramming it down people's throats, that's wrong. So, the awareness got heightened at that time, that, you know, things are happening and things ought to happen to change, to change this. But I think most people, if you...if you'd asked them then, whether they could foretell and foresee a change, I mean, we were...I mean, that...most of us thought this thing is never...this government is just...

Int Right, entrenched...?

MP ...too powerful, too entrenched, how the hell are we going to...you know. And you must remember, you didn't...other than through Radio Freedom, which you didn't dare play too loudly, you know, because you never knew who was listening and who was going to tell on you, we didn't know, we had no clue what was happening externally, with the ANC and MK, and whatever.

Int Right.

MP So, yes, my sense of political awareness heightens at that point and remains at that level...at that level throughout. And as I say, my involvement in politics was not necessarily being at the forefront of barricades all of the time, but it was being part of that debates and that inputs by, as we were all growing up, of, there's MK, some people opted to go, some people opted to stay and give logistical support, you know? I mean, I, at that time, I used to shiver because I, it was a stream of sick, you know, my house was a bit of a 'safe house'.

Int Ok.

MP My parents were gone by then.

Int Oh right.

MP I think they would have probably freaked out.

- Int Ok, so they'd gone back to the rural area?
- MP No my parents had passed on since then.
- Int Oh, I see...
- MP Ya. So, you know, again lots of people knew to come and, you know, and then move on, so, ya. So that is...that is the extent, it wasn't...I mean the marches, I mean, we joined the marches, we did all of what normal or what aware, young people did in those days, yes, that was my involvement.
- Int So you then...you went to University of the North and you mentioned to me the difficulties. Wits at that time was not open to black students?
- MP You could get into Wits if you got special dispensation. It was a mission, it was a mission getting into Wits and...did I even try? I remember...no. I remember it was difficult to get into Wits if you were going to study something like law. Ok, I mean, it was...it became easier if you wanted to do...go in to medical studies and so on, but you still needed some ministerial consent to do that. And I think I took the view that I actually wasn't going to do that, you know, inaudible, I'm not going to go away, so just left it and I'm going to...ya. I went to Turfloop.
- Int So after Turfloop, I remember you saying to me that you are sitting in the library and you noticed the LRC and then you decided to go to the LRC, but throughout that, you also mentioned George (Bizos), George's name comes up quite a bit and clearly that was...?
- MP George (Bizos) was not at the LRC...
- Int He wasn't?
- MP ...at the time, he was at the Jo'burg Bar as...he was already a senior advocate. There was one particular...it must be...what newspaper was that...I can't remember what newspaper...is it The Star...but there was a full page spread of George's (Bizos) cross examination of some policeman, or was it a doctor, one of them...and George's face looming, you know, I mean, it was...there was George (Bizos), and there was this article and ya, it made riveting reading, and ya, I mean, ya. He was at the Bar but he had taken on that case at that time.
- Int Ok. And had you heard about people such as Arthur (Chaskalson), etc, before you joined the Legal Resources Centre?

MP Arthur...Arthur (Chaskalson), I was aware of, but quite frankly and honestly, and I think it is because of the nature of the man George (Bizos), you know, George is...George is George, so we tended to be more aware of George's...you know, what George was doing than what Arthur (Chaskalson) was doing...Arthur (Chaskalson) featured in one or other of the cases as well, but my lasting impression out of all of those cases those days, was George Bizos SC, you know, ripping into one or other...

Int So, when you joined the Legal Resources Centre, they'd just started in 1979, they had the Hoek Street Clinic, and also they had...at that time, I think, probably succeeded in the Rikhoto case, and then there was the Komani case, and these were key influx control/pass law cases, and as a Fellow, what were some of the things that you engaged in, what kinds of work?

MP Ok, I...I thought long and hard about that, because it's a long, long time.

Int Of course, of course.

MP But Hoek Street closed...

Int In 1984?

MP In 1984. Mr Zimmerman, I remember they moved into the LRC, in Elizabeth House, with Pinkie Madlala, and so forth, she may still be there, but Zim has passed on.

Int She passed away.

MP Hey?

Int She passed away.

MP Has Pinkie (Madlala) also passed away?

Int Last year.

MP I wasn't aware, I wasn't aware. It was in the aftermath of Rikhotso (*Rikhoto*) and, in fact, Rikhotso (*Rikhoto*) featured in the article which I had read, **inaudible** at Turfloop, you know, there was a bit of a write up about it and it led...it was a dreadful piece of legislation that, and could we just digress for a second?

Int Sure.

MP Whenever I travelled from Potch to Pietersburg, you leave Potch at nine o'clock in the morning, you jump onto a train, you get here at twelve, ok, you then have from twelve to seven in the evening to kill, and you're not going to sit in the station the whole day, so, you're going to venture out into town, and, you know, sightsee and bypass through, and do all the things that young people do, you were always exposed that you may not reach your final destination, because you...if you get nabbed by the police, and you don't have a stamp that entitles you to be in Johannesburg, you were in trouble, so it was always just...phew!

Int Risky?

MP It was always risky, so it was a dreadful piece of legislation, and it featured in that article, it was in my final year, it featured...Rikhotso (*Rikhoto*) featured in that article, so that was one of the things that clicked to my mind. So when I joined the LRC in '84, that...most of the work which we did, certainly in my sphere of operation under Mahomed Navsa, was with the advice centres, and the Zola one, Reiger Park one, and whatever, and most of the cases that we tended to take on, were Section Ten cases, and really building onto Rikhotso (*Rikhoto*) because the officials were still...they would still give the applicant a hard time because no-one, you know, men in the street and women in the street, did not know, so our role mostly was to say: hang on a second, but the court has said...We had almost a standard letter which...oh, ok, Section Ten...ok, give us a bit of your history...how many years...ok...and you being back...ok...how many years...ten years...fine. And then it was almost a standard letter which we used to say: take this letter, go give it to that official, ok, and see what happens. So there wasn't a lot of litigation around that, but it was just...

Int It was affecting people's lives?

MP It was just pushing that...the court has spoken and thou shall obey. And I'm sure the LRC would have stats of how many people who got the Section Ten rights based on the Rikhotso (*Rikhoto*) job. So it was...it was following from the courts, so that was the bulk of...the bulk of our work. But we...the advice centres you also tended...maybe just to, again just pause. I mean, Section Ten had an impact on a whole lot of other things. If your Section Ten rights were suspect, you were exposed from a job security point of view. I mean, it was the easiest way to get rid of an employee to say: ha, I can't take you because you're not legal, so you go sort it out, when you sort it out, come back, maybe I'll have a space for you. So, it tended to overlap onto the area of employment law. It had impact on access to housing, such as, you know, it existed at that time, so, you know, it was...not only did it entitle you to walk the streets, but it gave you access to other things, so it was important that we did it absolutely right. We could not afford to fluff that one. And then, of course, there was employment law which I wasn't involved with extensively, I think Tim Bruinders and Mark Euijen who were my other Fellows, those years...that year, tended to do more of the employment law matters with Charles Nupen and Paul Pretorius and Karel Tip. Ellem Francis did very much what I was doing, which was the advice centre thing. But then you know, it was that, you know, when you go into an advice centre, it's a whole range of things, it's Section Ten, it's...oh, my unemployment benefits are being withheld, it is somebody who got injured at work and the employer isn't going to file

a claim with, what was then Workmen's Compensation, because the employer is scared Workmen's Comp will say: ya, you must look at your safety issues, and so on. It was consumer protection, we had a lot of that, and one can understand the context then, of just, you know, people with no ethics who would sell you a piece of junk, you pay a deposit, even as you drive this thing, it packs up right in front of, you know, the dealership. Sorry, but that's what you've bought, you know? So we...we tended to do a lot of those cases as well. There were resettlement cases, because at that time, communities were just being uprooted, you know, left, right, centre. Geoff Budlender did a lot of that work, and I had some involvement in those as well. More in...as a Fellow and going and seeing and helping with the consultations, and so forth, ya. I do not remember in our year, that there was any...it was really just a year where I'm proceeding of building onto the gains that had been made the year before. Certainly in my space there wasn't any new, ground-breaking precedent-setting case. Maybe other people may recollect...may recollect differently.

Int Ok. And then you mentioned to me that your Articles was with...?

MP Bell Dewar & Hall.

Int Bell Dewar & Hall, and you said that being at the LRC really prepared you, and I wondered whether you could really unpack that, in what ways do you think that it prepared you?

MP In a general sense it had taken somebody who came out of a fairly small town, went to a university in a very small locality, far removed from what real life in practice is, and really, I'm not going to say rough diamond, but just call it raw material, ok? And that year had helped shape you into...a bridge from tertiary education to real life situation, there had been that bridge. On a more specific basis, maybe an exposure then, as a Fellow, to the employment law environment, and so, you know, I went into Bell Dewar & Hall and I could produce documents which not many of my peers, quite frankly, could produce, because I had come through very good practitioners, such as Paul (Pretorius) and Charles (Nupen) and Karel (Tip) and Mahomed (Navsa). So, yes it had given me...it had...firstly, I think, it had prepared me for what lay ahead and secondly it had given me specific real skills that I could take in, you know, to my next...the next stage of my career, so to say.

Int Sure, sure. So you spent fifteen years at Bell Dewar & Hall, I wonder whether you could talk...you mentioned some of the work you did, but were there some key political issues, cases, the apartheid legislation that may have been overthrown that you took part in, apart from the TRC later on?

MP Well, if I did a search I probably could be able to talk to you a little bit more meaningfully about that, but the one thing that comes to mind, and really it was one of the very last political cases that I can remember, certainly...ya. It was a countrywide case, it was State versus Baleka and, you know, George (Bizos) was involved, and I'm sure when you speak to George (Bizos), he'll talk to you about it.

Int State versus Baleka?

MP Well, it was part of it. Yes, State versus Baleka. And it was 22 accused among...Baleka who was...the State versus Baleka because **inaudible** (*Laughs*). But Popo Molefe, Terror Lekota, Geoff Moselane, who has now passed on, there were 22 accused.

Int Right.

MP And it was to be...the case to beat all the cases. I think that the...it involved the UDF element, it actually sought to establish a conspiracy, taking the UDF, taking the Black Consciousness Movement, taking all of them, and saying there is a wide conspiracy amongst all of you, to overthrow the State. And I think that...

Int This was in the eighties?

MP Was it the eighties? When was State versus Baleka? Yes, it was the eighties, late eighties.

Int Late eighties?

MP Yes, and it went on for four years or so, which is why I say it absorbed a lot of my time. That was the case, I think, which was to sign the final death knell on political activity, you know, it was seeking to destroy UDF, Black Consciousness and just destroy in one fell swoop. So I...that was...and I think that it had far reaching implications and I don't want to say that, you know, when it failed maybe the writing was on the wall, because everything that had been found in the High Court by Judge (Kees)Van Dijkhorst was then undone in no time when we went to the Appellate Division, so, I think that that was a case of great import to...certainly given the political landscape in the country.

Int And you worked in conjunction with the LRC on this?

MP Uh, no, the LRC...

Int Or you worked on it privately with Arthur (Chaskalson) and George (Bizos)?

MP No, no, the LRC was not involved, this, no...

Int This was Bell Dewar?

MP This was Bell Dewar, but we combined with a whole lot of other case...law firms such as Priscilla Jana, such as Ismail Ayob, we, you know, we tended to...a firm...we had as clients, people from the Black Consciousness background, (Geoff) Moselane and (Patrick Mabuya) Baleka, **inaudible**, and Priscilla Jana had the UDF clan, (Popo) Molefe, (Terror) Lekota, (Gcinumuzi Petrus) Malindi, who I'm sure you will speak to, who's now at the Johannesburg Bar, Caroline Nicholls was the lawyer. Ya, so, we combined with a whole lot of other firms to fight in that case and then, of course, at advocate level, it was led by George (Bizos) and Arthur (Chaskalson). Karel Tip was involved, so it was...it was more or less the old LRC...

Int LRC?

MP ...team combined, you know...

Int That's

MP ...and Arthur (Chaskalson), Karel Tip, myself...who else was there, I can't remember, ya.

Int And the outcome? What was the judgment based on?

MP The judgment in the High Court, they were found guilty, somebody gave them the sentences outside, but the big ones like (Popo) Molefe, (Terror) Lekota, (Gcinumuzi Petrus) Malindi...can't remember who else...were sent to Robben Island, but they came off in about two years or so, after the Appellate Division overthrew the matter.

Int So, and then you...

MP No, no, no, no, no, I was saying, I mean, the...I had been involved in other precedent-setting labour cases but they don't come to me now, but you know...

Int Fair enough. I'm wondering....and this a question that is difficult to ask you because I just think...you had this dream of being a lawyer at quite an early age, but did you really think that under apartheid, if parliament was supreme, and that legal victories could be overturned by a parliament, did you think the law could be used as an effective means to actually challenge a system that was legalised?

MP I didn't start off as a disillusioned...(laughter), you know, I...and maybe it's just purely because maybe I was more naive than I care to admit. I mean, for me...for me, that was the vehicle, I didn't sit to think: oh, you know, but what is, I sit and question myself, what is the effectiveness of what I'm about to do...of what I'm doing? For me, that was as much as trying to take on a whole battalion with a little, you know, bottle in which you have some flammable material, and so on, you know, I mean, and as you

throw it they, you know, they shoot you, you know, to pieces. So I...no, it...for me it was an intellect...this was an intellectual gymnastics of...you know, of sitting and reflecting...because there, I mean, the option, I guess if I'd gone through that process the option would have then been: you know what, bugger this, wasting my time, leave this country, go to any of the other people and try and make an influence that way. I didn't go...this was...because for me this was going to be...how you...how you contribute, and there wasn't going to be one...one solution to this, but there was a need.

Int When you were at the LRC, did you think that the law could be used, did you get a sense...was there optimism for you that the law could be used to challenge apartheid?

MP Yes. I mean, a case such as Rikhotso (*Rikhoto*)...you know, you...it...those were hard fought victories and they were far reaching, and it really...it was...sometimes it was the roll of the dice, you know, what judge...which judge do you draw, and what sort of feel has he got for administrative justice, and so forth. I mean the Constitution was, you know, at that time, it was of no help, I mean there was no Bill of Rights or anything like that, so you really relied on a judge who was going to be able and willing to listen and see that viewpoint. And, you know, the sort of victories such as the one Rikhotso (*Rikhoto*) provided, gives you hope, that, you know, you make gains, you make an impact. You're not going to free all of the South Africans by this, but you're going to make a hell of a difference to the lives of a lot of people, and that was all that...

Int ...during the 1980s, it was a particularly rough time, how did you manage, as someone who was working in very difficult circumstances, whether it was at the LRC or at Bell Dewar & Hall, not to come under scrutiny from the Security Police?

MP I don't know that I was not under scrutiny...

Int Sure...

MP ...because they would have not let you know.

Int Of course, but you were never...you weren't detained, let me put it that way...?

MP I was not detained...I was never detained. I guess they had bigger fish to fry. (*Laughter*). Sorry, excuse the...

Int Maybe, but maybe they...but, as you rightly say, you never know.

MP Ya.

- Int I'm also wondering when apartheid ended and...transition happened in 1990, if I interview people, for example LRC people in Durban, in the KwaZulu-Natal region, they'll tell me a different story, they'll say...things didn't change for us, things intensified. I'm wondering, in terms of your practice at Bell Dewar & Hall, were there changes to the kinds of laws you were practising...from 1990 onwards?
- MP (*Laughs*). Most of our union client base from employment law, sort of, disappeared. And it was a mixture of the aid agencies said: ok, we've taken you this far...
- Int You can manage without it?
- MP ...now, you know, we're going to switch...
- Int Yes...
- MP Ok. So, and I know...and I said it...for me it was sort of keen to do these things free of charge but, you know, the reality of life is that you have to...Ok, so the unions, I mean, that client base disappeared basically, because there was no more aid. The political type cases ended because the people that we defended and fought for, were now in government, so yes, there definitely was a switch, there was a switch in that we needed to...as much as we sought to enable these people during the struggle days, we now need to switch and be of assistance and enable them in a different environment, so this is...this is a different ball game. And yes, we then tended to do lots of...I tended to do lots of work with various government agencies, and with time, you know, because of the grounding I'd had in employment law, I drifted back into employment law and I then tended to be acting against the employees. I tended to...I mean, I took on a more corporate outlook...
- Int This was at Anglo Gold?
- MP No, even at Bell Dewar. My last couple of years, maybe my last five years or so, I was doing employment law, but I was advising the corporates.
- Int Was that difficult, that transition, because you've had such a strong background in...grounding in public interest and in the interests of the underdog?
- MP Um, was it? It...I won't say it was difficult, because I probably, I mean...I'd be lying to you, I mean it was...you know, it was...it happened, and I think that it was a natural...a natural...it sort of seemed like a natural progression. It was not as unpalatable as it would have been pre '94. Um, because your employer, post '94 and later on, was different, I mean, they had learnt, I mean, we taught them, we gave them good solid hiding, you know, in the days when we litigated. I mean, and if you look at...if you look at how cases can later progress in the...you know, in the old labour court, the employers were always on the losing side because they had not the faintest feel about worker's rights and industrial relations and employment law, and so on, so

they learnt. And their practices and ways of doing things got better and better and better, and we certainly, I'm not justifying what we did, I mean, we sought to make sure that our clients did the right thing. You know, it would be: ok, now, you would have an issue with Dr. Patel, you want to fire Dr. Patel, you tell me why you want to fire Dr. Patel, ok, but I can tell you now you can't do it for that basis. Oh, and in fact...I've just told her to leave and go sit in the car...But you can't do that, you know that Dr. Patel...has to be heard on this matter, and let me tell you what happens if you don't do it properly, this is what is going to happen to you. And so, you know, we tended, because we...if you give your advice...if you give advice which sets the client on the path to do, I mean, that's...it's of no use...so it was...it was, maybe a little bit more palatable because, I think, we were also enhancing the process of the employers and so on. But more importantly, we did not have a client base other than the employers, for whom to do the work.

Int I'm wondering...now that we're in a post apartheid situation, the LRC...there's of course the funding issue, the crunch factor in terms of funding, the other issue that it comes under...there are lots of other smaller public interest law organisations that have opened up, so where...what do you think...where would the LRC be positioned within this new milieu, what do you think it should be doing in terms of the kinds of work?

MP *(Laughs).*

Int Just your sense of it....?

MP Yes, it's not a considered view at all, and it's difficult, having been away from the mainstream of...I mean, I'm aware that the LRC has, more or less, shifted into taking cases that tends to give weight and effectiveness to the Bill of Rights. Is it an issue? Maybe it's not an issue, maybe...you know, maybe when they were doing Rikhotso (*Rikhoto*), you know, there wasn't a Bill of Rights but, you know, that was a certain...

Int Rights based issue?

MP It was a rights based issue. Um, but, I mean, I think the challenges are such that, certainly for the emerging public interest law institutions will not, I mean, are just too vast, I think that the LRC could devolve some of their experience and learnings, which they gained over the years, to those smaller emerging public interest law institutions, and hopefully those are dispersed as widely as possible, deeper into our communities, reaching down into the rural, you know, deeply rural communities, and so on, and thereby maybe seen to reach much wider than what it would do, I mean, even as it is currently constituted, with an office in Durban, Cape Town, wherever, I mean, you know, I think that you need that to filter down. Because I think that '94...post '94, and the coming of democracy solved one thing, but it also just presented a challenge in that you now have to be...have to ensure that democracy reaches out, and is being informed to people broadly. So, I think that that's probably is the one way. Devolve some of your learnings and experience to other institutions.

- Int Ok. I'm sitting here in very nice offices, you've obviously done very well, and there are other people who've been at the LRC, Mahomed Navsa, Charles Nupen and Karel Tip, lots of people, have done extremely well, and they've all seem to come from the LRC. What do thing makes the LRC this kind of base from which such amazing people; if you counted the number of people on the Bench who have come from the LRC, what's your sense of that?
- MP You mean apart from the fact that when they pick their candidates, they pick the cream of the crop (*Laughter*).
- Int They do, yes.
- MP That sounds immodest,
- Int It does. I would have said that.
- MP That sounds immodest and I by no means call myself the cream of the crop, ok. But, they probably, I mean, all of those people in their own right, that you mentioned, I think are very solid people, I think, they've had solid backgrounds even before they got to the LRC. I mean, Charles Nupen was in NUSAS, so, they...Karel Tip, I mean, they are all the people, firstly who have always had, I think, a sense of...well grounded in social justice. I think they are intellectually gifted, much more than what I would ever, ever, ever pretend that I am, and I think that, having come under the... you cannot help but just, when you come under the influence of somebody like Arthur Chaskalson, just be fired up and it sets you on the right path. You're not going to take in anything that Arthur gives you, and you should not, because I'm sure he has bad traits, but you pick up a hell of a lot of good from somebody like Arthur Chaskalson, I think.
- Int Ok. The problem...the dilemma that the LRC now seems to have, appears to be facing is that it's unable to attract good, high quality lawyers because...and particularly black lawyers, because they will be at the top firms... black lawyers are highly sought after, they can command a good...very good salary, certainly not one that the LRC can manage to compare with. What's your sense of what would happen in a situation...what could possibly be a solution...?
- MP Well, the solution is very much...I mean, there are two difficulties that immediately come to mind and, you know, you spring these things on me, I haven't...(laughter). The one thing is that the LRC's probably unlikely to compete with the big a) corporates, b) other law firms, thirdly, you know, we've become global citizens now and skills are readily...you know, you can take them anywhere you like, even as a South African qualified lawyer, and fourthly, maybe not many...ya...people don't necessarily...they study law but they go off to do...what...public affairs, something like that. Young people certainly, the world is their oyster. If it had been in my time, it is, I mean, it was a lot more easy for me to go to the LRC, because for me there was

this clear...it wasn't...it was an ideology...I don't think I was that ideologically driven, funnily enough, but it was just a sense that, this is where you take your skill because there is just so much happening in our country, where you can make a bit of a contribution, ok? There was a clear distinguishable enemy, then, which we all needed to...it was probably...it was easy to go in there and be...and do leftist type of law, than it would be now, I mean...the LRC is, I think, probably has gone a little bit under the radar screen.

Int ...why do you think that's the case?

MP I don't know whether it is in the nature of the cases they take...I don't know whether they...but that ought not to be, I mean, if...they probably need to do a little bit more work in...in selling the kind of work they're doing now, I mean, I think that they did a pretty good job then to solve the kind of job that they would do. I think that maybe there isn't enough of that currently. But then it's a host of things, again like I said, I mean, it's going to be a combination of the remuneration, the same thing like what the Public Defender, I mean, they also face difficulties like that, where, you know, they can't get good people to go and do Articles with them, because they go to the good law firms. And the good laws firms will pay them slightly better than the public...you know, a state agent is going to pay them, and so it's a combination of pay, it's a combination of, you know, I don't want to use the word branding, brand this thing a little bit differently, and do a bit of a more steady job about the kind of work you do. I think they still do a good job, good work, because, as I say, you know, the gains that we make on a, just, democracy point of view mean nothing if they don't translate to socio-economic rights, and so on, and so they're still doing a fantastic job.

Int ...during apartheid the ANC had a clear enemy, in a way, the LRC actually had the sense that it could fight the apartheid state using legal means and on the principles of the rule of law. I'm wondering, in terms of now...they've taken on some cases against an ANC government....there's a difficulty to do that, to attach the...to take on cases against...a former, in some ways, ally, or a closely ideologically-aligned organisation. What do you think are the difficulties there...or should there be difficulties? What's your sense, as a lawyer, in terms of a public interest law organisation in post apartheid South Africa?

MP Look, I mean, I don't think that they can escape from...I mean, they are a public interest law organisation and I don't think that they can escape having to do what a public interest law organisation has done, and you are always going to be, as that type of organisation, on the side of the marginalised.

Int Ok.

MP So, are there people who might look at this and say: oh, hang on, but now, suddenly you're fighting us? I mean, probably...probably will be, but that's their job. Could it have an impact on people wanting to go and be part of the LRC? Maybe, but I don't think that...may play...may be a factor, but I'm sure you will still find people who find it attractive and desirable, that they should be involved in that way, to enforce what

we gained and what is in the Constitution, to try and enforce it. So, it's...an LRC-type organisation is not unique to South Africa, I mean, in other...you know...established...long established democracies, you have...you have lobbying groups, you have people who take on class actions, you have...so, we're no different, quite frankly.

Int Ok...particularly when I interview people abroad, they always comment on...that the LRC is probably the greatest public interest law organisation in the world, and the second thing that they say is...an important thing they say is that the Constitution is an extremely advanced document, probably the most advanced in the world. Having come to South Africa recently...I hear stories about how there are problems...attacks against the Constitutional Court, and politics gets involved in the judiciary. As a lawyer, what's your sense of how that impacts on rule of law issues, the legality of the judiciary, ultimately, and for the future of the country?

MP (*Laughs*). Um, I mean, I guess maybe, I mean, the general comment is that I, as a lawyer, I clearly subscribe fully to the independence of the judiciary, a clear separation, and I think that we cannot have anything but, a society where those institutions are separate and independent and so on. We...I mean, it is...just to be sentimental, it is unfortunate...the recent events are unfortunate, in that they seem to suggest, I mean, the utterances from the new brigade at...within the ANC, and so forth, are unfortunate in that they seem to suggest that there is likely to be a threat on the independence of the judiciary. Do I personally think that we're headed down that road? I believe in the long term, no. I think...I think there's probably lots of posturing at this point, and it's unfortunate that people who posture around an institution as important as, you know, as our Constitution and the Constitutional Court, but there is a lot of posturing, leading...you know we're coming up to elections quite soon and I think people, by no means **inaudible**, you know, there's quite a lot of **inaudible** mentioned here, and it's unfortunate. The goings on at...within the courts themselves, between...as between and amongst judges equally unfortunate, it is...I think that it is a matter which maybe puts a bit of a blot on our judicial system, and it is a matter which, personally, you know, I believe could...should have been handled differently.

Int In what way?

MP I don't think that this was a matter for, you know, the first example about this was in the newspapers, and much as, of course, the press has its job, and so on, but I believe that the custodians of our judicial system have a duty to ensure that they don't do anything that compromises that. I'm sure there could have been better processes of handling this and, you know, if it transpires that there is a charge then, of course, then it comes out, there is a charge against a particular judge, but this thing was out long before there was even any complaint formulated. And then it took four weeks or six, I don't know how long it took, before anything concrete came out, I mean, by then, this country had been whipped...and the country...and overseas, had been whipped into a frenzy about the, you know, what's happening with the South African judicial system, and so forth. All of which are...are unfortunate, but I don't think that the situation, it's a personal thing, is beyond redeem, I think that we will come out of this. And maybe again, I'm just a naive who believes...who believes what he wants to believe.

- Int Maybe an optimist. (*Laughs*). We need more of those. I wondered...I've asked you a range of questions, and I wondered whether there was something I neglected to ask you, which you think really ought to be part of your Oral History?
- MP No, I don't think so. I've spoken too much already, and I'm not even sure what I've said...
- Int Well, you prepared. (*Laughs*).
- MP No, I just picked out a couple of...no, I just do that...bit of a road...because it was...I thought...'94, what am I going to tell you, and I was, sort of...ok, what did I do? Who was there? You know? And I had to think hard about some of the people who were there, you know? No, I don't think so, but, I mean, if....equally, I mean, if you...this is not...you know, I hope this is not about me...this is about me...this is about me, in the context of the LRC.
- Int Absolutely.
- MP Ok, the approach we take with my current company is, we don't talk about ourselves, we talk about the company, as a people's centre, we talk about our stakeholders, which is the community, and so forth, we don't do interviews about what you had for breakfast and...what...
- Int Sure. (*Laughs*).
- MP ...you know, do you take part in sports, we don't do that sort of thing...
- Int Ok.
- MP ...but I guess I will have a bit of will to panel beat it if possible...
- Int ..maybe we could end at the point of...do you have a particular memory... I know you spent a year in the LRC, but before and after, I think you've come into contact with people such as Arthur Chaskalson and George Bizo, etc, I'm wondering whether there's a particular memory of a client, or a colleague, or something about the LRC, that you hold dear, that's memorable, and I wondered whether you could share that story...?
- MP A story or a friend that I hold dear, or an event...Um...there are too many memories and they're all muddled up.
- Int Ok, fair enough.

MP Um...and I mean, really, all of the people that I came into contact with then, from the other Fellows that I served with...Tim Bruinders, Mark Euijen, Ellem Francis, Tim (Bruinders) is at the Bar, Ellem (Francis), I think, is at the Labour Court as a judge, Mark (Euijen) I think is at the Bar, but I'm not sure, I mean, had a tremendous impact on my life and you know, one could just not help noticing what unique individuals they were. They certainly enriched my experience because we all came from different backgrounds. Mahomed Navsa who was always a very supportive...sometimes, you know, an explosive kind of fellow, he didn't mind letting out an expletive or two if I got onto the wrong side of him, but he taught me well. And then, of course, I mean, I've mentioned the impact of Arthur (Chaskalson), Geoff (Budlender) in his quiet way, Paul Pretorius who contributed a lot to my writing skills and just how he conceptualised things, I remember he gave me a letter to write and I wrote it and he says: oh, your English is very good, but your letter is a load of shit. Um, (*laughs*), it was the kind of thing. Um, Karel Tip and Charles Nupen, also quite an explosive kind of person, but, you know, he taught you, you know, you hang in there, you know, if...you give it your go...you give it your all, I mean, Charles (Nupen) never knew the word 'give up' when he was fighting a case for workers and so on. So, they all had an impact on me, all of these people had an impact on my life. One particular incident, you probably...I mean you can record it, but I know I will chop it out when... (*Laughter*). I think it was on an occasion of our year-end party. It was December, and a client walked in, and it was one of these people who'd been chased away from...he worked for a security company, they'd chased him away, would not give him his documents, and so forth, and what we tended to do was, you get into the boardroom and make a call to the employer and say: listen, I've got Mr. so and so, he tells me this, what's the case, can we just sort this thing out. And I went to do all that...he was an elderly guy. I left him to go and make the call, and I remember that I didn't even speak for one minute and the employer was on to me, he was swearing at me, he promised to come in and to give me a hiding second to none...how dare I call him, and so on, and I thought: of course he knows where I am, (*laughs*) he's going to come and beat me up and...I really was...I was shaken. Unbeknown to me, my client had then decided he's going to leave the office and he's going to go to the loo, and unbeknown to me, he'd been drinking. It was early in the morning, it was like, nine o'clock, or ten o'clock or something, and unbeknown to me, that as he was walking from where I left him to the loo, he deposited little mishaps along the way, and I came out of that call, and the whole office was in a mess, and somebody's coming to beat me up, and ya...it was not a...(*laughter*), it was...I mean, there's a lot of good things I remember, but that one particular, and it didn't only end up being funny because, you know, Arthur (Chaskalson) was standing at reception and he just quietly looked at all of this and of course, now I'm terrified...Arthur (Chaskalson)...you know, like it's my fault, but it's not my fault. And he quietly said to the reception: just be careful, don't let people in here who are not sober. He said nothing to me, and Cecilie (Palmer)...Cecilie (Palmer) still at LRC? Cecilie (Palmer) was Charles' (Nupen's PA, actually helped me...I felt I had to clean, and Cecilie (Palmer) helped me. Anyway, it's not an amusing story but it was...

Int Yes..

MP ...but that was the, you know, that was the nature of the client you tended to get...very desperate, obviously he lived in a hostel, you know, he would have been in a desperate situation, woke up that morning, probably didn't eat, then drank whatever it is he drank, and walked in with what was a pretty desperate situation, and anyway...that's just one of...it's a bit of a shocking memory.

Int But that's what you remember...

MP Other than that, other than that, we had lots of fun.

Int Good. It was really a pleasure to meet you and to interview you. Thank you ever so much for a wonderful interview.

MP Ah, I hope you find it useful.

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