



## Obituary

### Professor Oswald Hercules Daluxolo Makunga (1932–2013)

Professor Oswald Makunga was born on the 5th May 1932 at Engojini Mission, a Moravian mission station which was established in 1854 by the Moravian missionaries from Germany. He grew up in a rural community in the area of Whittlesea, helping to look after cattle, sheep and goats. This brought about a life-long love for cattle farming.

He did his primary schooling at Engojini Moravian Mission School and the Moravian Higher Mission School at Shiloh (Whittlesea) where he passed standard six in 1946. Due to the lack of funds he left school in 1947. He then enrolled as a student at Bantu High School in Queenstown in 1948 where he passed the Junior Certificate examination in 1950 and Matriculation examination in 1952 under the Cape Province Department of Education. Both examinations were passed first class – a rare achievement at the time for a black pupil. He excelled in Mathematics, Physical Science, Latin and Biological Sciences. He was one of only three Black students who obtained first class passes in matric in the Cape Province that year. He represented the school as a long distance runner.

Through the efforts of his teachers, C.M. Mciteka and J.M. Mesatywa, he was awarded (as a first-time recipient) a Zonk Publication Scholarship. This enabled him to do a Bachelor of Science degree followed by the University Education Diploma at the then University College of Fort Hare. At the time, Fort Hare was affiliated to Rhodes University. He completed a B.Sc. degree in 1955 (Rhodes University) with Botany and Chemistry as majors. This was followed by a University Education Diploma (U.E.D.) in 1956. During 1956, when he was a post-graduate U.E.D. student, he was appointed as a teaching assistant in the Chemistry Department. After teaching for two years at Nkwanca Secondary School, he took up a post at Fort Hare University as a technician in the Botany Department. In 1965 to 1966 he was awarded a scholarship in Germany under the *Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst* (German Academic Exchange Service) which enabled him to learn German at *Rotenburg ob der Tauber* for four months. Later, he transferred and spent time at the University of Wurzburg studying under Prof Wilhelm Simonis where he specialized in experimental plant physiology. On return to South Africa he researched the chemotaxonomy of the Iridaceae for an M.Sc. During his tenure at Fort Hare, he was a British Council research scholar spending time at the Rothamsted Agricultural Research Institute. In 1977 he was a Fulbright Scholar at Cornell University. In 1981 he spent time in Uppsala Institute for Systematic Botany sponsored by the Swedish Government in commemoration of contributions made by Swedish botanists to South African botany.

Prof Makunga is a co-author of a series of science textbooks for Grades 7, 8 and 9, used throughout southern Africa for teaching Biology in Black schools.

Throughout his working career Oswald was an active member of the South African Association of Botanists and in 1997 he and the Botany Department organized the first ever SAAB Conference at the University of Fort Hare.

Many of his students entered various academic and professional fields where they rose to prominence, excelling in the medical field and teaching profession at Universities as academicians.

After 41 years Oswald retired and tried his hand at cattle farming. As a budding cattle farmer he became Deputy Mayor and finally Mayor of Alice.

Oswald leaves his wife, Nosisa, three children Sibongisiwe, Daluvuyo and Nokwanda, and two grand-daughters, Lehlogonolo and Hlumelo.



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