

## *Daphne Duduzile Tshabalala*

Daphne passed on to the next world very peacefully on the 9th May 1983. After a short illness her doctor recommended hospitalisation and on the fateful day as she was being taken to hospital she breathed her last and was certified dead on arrival at the hospital. Another shining light was snuffed out in the community life of Edendale and Pietermaritzburg. Daphne left the world in the same way in which she had lived — peacefully.

She lived a full life, though she never married, and etched a lasting memory in the hearts and minds of many. Hers was a household name not only with the locals but also in parts beyond our boundaries. Her life blossomed in three particular fields viz:— love for learning and teaching, love for mankind and love for her Creator.

The eldest in a family of six she was born on 21 March 1930. Her education followed the normal pattern of any child up to Matriculation. At this point she was nearly lost to the world when a severe chest ailment caused her to undergo a pneumonectomy — and not many survived that in those days. Daphne was spared an early exit from the cares of this world and lived on to weather the storm to the mature age of 53.

### *Educationist*

Her love for learning and teaching produced in Daphne the ideal student and a very gifted teacher. After gaining her Teachers' Certificate Daphne started as a teacher at Smorzomeni, outside Richmond, Natal in 1953. Later she joined the Nichols Infant School in Edendale, Pietermaritzburg as an Assistant Teacher. She was promoted to the position of Principal of Nichols in 1963. She encouraged her pupils to join the Girl Guide and Scouting movement which she believed contributed in the moulding of the young characters in her charge. In the Girl Guide movement she excelled and achieved the rare honour of being elected to the position of South African

Headquarters Adviser. Highlights in her Guiding activities include presentation with the Silver Award for her contribution to the Girl Guide movement; first Black Guide to deal with girls of all race groups in the Ranger branch; an invitation in 1972 to be the first Black member of the Guide delegation to represent South Africa at the 21st World Conference of the World Association of Girl Guides in Toronto; attendance at the World Conference of Guides in Iran in 1979.



Daphne Tshabalala

(Photograph: Natal Witness)

Her talent as a teacher became evident in her drive for organisation of Nichols School which she managed under very trying conditions. The buildings were in an advanced state of dilapidation and the school lacked the normal furniture. But Daphne was able to motivate her group of assistant teachers to make good with whatever was available and ensure that the pupils were given the right education. She did not stop at the classroom level of education but expended herself in the organisational area of Teachers' Societies. She served as record-secretary of the Natal African Teachers' Union (N.A.T.U.). In Pietermaritzburg she organised Zulu classes for those white friends who desired them. Daphne's involvement in this field not only helped the white 'pupils' to learn the language but it gave them an insight into the culture of the Zulus. This was a breakthrough for Black/White relations.

*Philanthropist*

Inside the Nichols School and outside of it Daphne displayed a unique love for mankind. Her pupils were not only just children to be taught but she looked upon them as one large family. The mother instinct came to the fore when she observed how needy they were. She inculcated amongst her teacher colleagues the same concern for the children and their homes. As a result she was instrumental in starting a feeding scheme known as 'Bonginkosi' (thank the Lord) whereby children were supplied with something to eat at school. This scheme grew and was introduced in other local schools. Bands of concerned people joined and formed feeding schemes in several other places. Alongside the feeding scheme Daphne and some friends extended this philanthropic exercise so that today an impressive Community Centre stands as a memorial to her initiative in Edendale — the Thuthuka Community Centre. Here children gather after school to have a meal before returning to their homes. What a pity Daphne died just when we thought the Centre was reaching completion! Perhaps the good Lord will raise yet another Daphne to continue this good work. The story is told that even at her own home Daphne cared for a few waifs whom she adopted just so that they too might enjoy the warmth of a home life.

*Evangelist*

Perhaps it was her firm Christian background that led Daphne to be what she was. Born of sincere God-fearing parents she too grew to be a committed Christian. In the Methodist Church she played a full part both in worship and organisation. She was a member of the Young Women's Manyano (Auxiliary) whose focus is constant prayer. She also served her church as representative at the Annual District Synod. In the wider Christian family she served on the Board of Africa Enterprise, an organisation whose thrust is to proclaim the Gospel to all nations. Amongst her activities in this field was attending PACLA (Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly) in Kenya in 1976. Again in 1979 she was prevented from attending the South African Christian Leadership Assembly (SACLA) in Pretoria because of her mother's fatal illness. In 1982 she attended the Consultation on World Evangelism in Thailand. The fruit of her evangelistic fervour is that an on-going Bible Study group was established where a group of the teachers of Nichols School meet with members of Africa Enterprise to share on matters scriptural and spiritual.

So it was that on that gloomy Saturday afternoon in May 1983 at the Mountain Rise cemetery in Pietermaritzburg as the casket containing Daphne's remains was lowered into her last resting place I recited the solemn words of committal and felt the impact of the scripture which says 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord'.

And so departed a daughter of Africa — Natal's loss was God's gain.

ERNEST H.B. MKIZE

