

Williamson Allan Moonsammy – Veteran Educationist **(Alan Moonsammy and Claudia Jeevananthum)**

Mr Williamson Allan Moonsammy (known as “Billy” to all) was born on 19 May 1927. He received his early education at Newtown Primary and Johannesburg High, where he matriculated with a first-class pass. He then obtained his Transvaal Teachers Diploma at the Eurafrikan Training Centre.



He started teaching in 1947 at City and Suburban and then at Gold Street Primary School. During this period, he obtained both a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education degrees as a part-time student at UNISA. This academic achievement is a testimony to his perseverance, industry and intelligence.

He was appointed principal of Kliptown Primary School in 1956 at the age of 29 years. In 1957 he moved to newly established First Primary School, later renamed Alpha Primary School, with an initial enrolment of 510 pupils, 16 classrooms and 14 teachers. He served at this institution from 1957 to 1969.

In August of 1969 he was requested by the Department to open and establish the third High School in Lenasia which became Trinity Secondary School. Billy and his brother Maurice moved to Lenasia in July of 1956 because of the Group Areas Act. Initially the First Primary School could accommodate the children of Lenasia.

However, with the increased forced removal of Indians, the population of Lenasia grew rapidly. Platoon Sessions for the burgeoning primary school population became necessary. The first Platoon Session was started in 1963. By 17 December 1963 the enrolment was 1018 with students accommodated in 28 classrooms and 4 additional classrooms erected. The Platoon Sessions,

that is morning and afternoon had to be continued as the schools roll in August 1965 stood at 2526 students.

Billy found himself managing two complete schools in one physical building with overwhelming numbers. The staff had also doubled. His school day started at 7:00 and ended at 6:00. This untenable situation fortunately culminated in the establishment of Park, Model and Greyville Primary schools.

He took an abiding interest in the affairs of teachers and was quick to realise the need for a national body of Indian teachers when the control of Indian Education was moved from the province to the Central Government.

He was directly involved in the formation of branches of SAITA in the late sixties. He accompanied the national president, Mr RS Naidoo to several areas in the Transvaal and established branches throughout the province.

During this time, he became a central community figure serving the people in all aspects of their social needs. He was an active participant in the religious, educational, social and sports activities in Lenasia. His warm and friendly personality inspired confidence among the wide circle he interacted with. Championing the cause of the underprivileged he shone as a light of hope to those he served, especially in the field of social welfare. Some of these social welfare issues related to writing affidavits for students who were not regarded as Indians by the authorities and could therefore not school in Lenasia.

He assisted the Tamil Association of Lenasia to acquire the land on which the first temple was built and played a significant role in the fundraising. Billy was a true educationist who helped several students in their endeavour to study medicine. This was accomplished by assisting with their applications to universities abroad. Since the Whites only, English universities, had a quota system, only a few Indians were accepted. University of Durban Westville did not offer medicine. This was a deliberate strategy by the apartheid government to retard the progress of Indians. Those who could afford to study abroad required reliable testimonials and sound letters of recommendation.

Being a community man, Billy was well known for assisting Lenasia businessmen. They were well aware that he was a more than accomplished letter writer, with a keen legal mind, which was utilised when submitting business related applications such as commercial properties and premises. The vast majority of these men were not educated and not proficient in English as their home language was Gujarati. He was well known for his excellent English and expert use of the typewriter. He willingly offered his time, expertise and services, at no cost, to these community members.

Billy was widely known in the community as, 'the go to guy' and because of his generosity of spirit, more and more were encouraged to seek his assistance. In essence he did the work that a lawyer would normally do.

Billy was very actively involved in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. In Lenasia with the support of fellow Anglicans, Messrs S Joseph, W Warnasuriya, M Moonsammy the Anglican Church in Lenasia was established and built. He was directly instrumental in acquiring the land and played an active role in the fundraising. The Anglican Church and hall were used by all the youth in the community, irrespective of religious affiliation. The Black People's Convention held their inaugural conference at the Anglican church hall, this was after they were denied the use of numerous venues.

In matters of sport Billy was a great enthusiast. He was heavily involved in primary school sports. He thus organised for Alpha Primary School's football team to travel to Durban and compete against other schools. They played football in Tongaat, Verulam and Curries Fountain.

He was the Deputy President of the Western Districts Football Association who successfully campaigned for the Sam China Football Tournament to be held in Lenasia. This took place in 1967. He was a patron of Bluebells United Football Club and played a major role in the development and establishment of the club. The founding meeting was held at his residence, which was commonly recognised as the unofficial headquarters of the club. He played a major role in the growth and development of Bluebells United over a long period.

In recognition of his contribution to the Lenasia community, the extension 3 Recreational Centre Library was named after him.