

GODFREY MAGAGULA

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Place: SA Agulhas

Interviewer (Q): Lize-Marie van der Watt | History Department | Stellenbosch University

Respondent (A): Godfrey Magagula | SANAP support personnel | 2005 +

V And it is today the 10th of February and we are on the SA Agulhas. And we are somewhere approaching the forties.

A Forties, *ja*.

V Yes.

A Roaring.

V Uhm, roaring.

A [Laughing].

V Yes, yes. So the sea will start to get rough – hopefully, for the adventurers amongst us.

A Okay.

V Okay. The first question I want to know is how did you start working for Antarctic Islands?

A Uhm, I applied like anybody. And I went for an interview. And I got the job. That was 2005.

V 2005?

A Ja. I was working as a general assistant, first. My first year and 2006 then I was approached to take part in this SANAP programme. So my first trip was 2006.

V So you applied to the directorate for a position.

A Yes.

V From where did you come? I mean.

A From Pretoria.

V From Pretoria?

A Yes.

V So how did you learn about this position? Was it just a normal job application?

A It was just a normal job application. I just, uhm... Ja, I was not working then, uhm...

V What's your background?

A I was a security officer before, back home.

V A what?

A A security officer.

V Security officer?

A Yes, security officer.

V Back home, being in Pretoria?

A *Ja*.

V For which department?

A Uhm, that was JS Security company. We were like security there. Shoprite and Checkers.

V Oh, okay!

A *Ja*. JS Security.

V A security officer?

A A security officer.

V So what made you decide to apply for a job working for the government?

A I was looking for a stable life and a stable job.

V A stable job.

A And you know government always creates... I didn't actually expect this voyages... It was not on my

mind. I just saw the job was advertised in the newspaper. Then I applied.

V And look. Do you have to move to Cape Town then?

A Yes.

V And how. I mean, what was that like? Coming from Gauteng, going to sleepy old Cape Town?

A Uhm, my... Like before I've never been in Cape Town. But I was looking forward and I was ready, you know. Well, after one day being in the Mother City, Cape Town and...

V Okay, so you've started then with your first voyage in 2006...

A Six, yes.

V Where to was that?

A To what?

V Gough, Marion...

A Oh, my first. It was Antarctica.

V Antarctica.

A It was my first.

V Before you applied for the job. Did you know a lot about Antarctica?

A No. Not yet, not at all.

V Did you know about the islands and that South Africa has a programme and that you could sign-up.

A Not at all. No, on the ad, it was like. Because like I said they were looking for a general assistant.

V Yes.

A Like working in a warehouse. Sweeping, cleaning, packing, the meteorologists' packing. No, all that stuff general assistants work and uhm... Okay, and that year they were looking for someone to come here as a general, what is it...

V ... Officer.

A Waste technician.

V Oh, as a waste technician!

A *Ja*, as a waste technician. That's where I started. Then I came down to Antarctica... Sorry?

V Like what Buhle is doing now.

A Buhle, *ja* like what Buhle is doing. Then I came here as a waste technician. Then I worked. I got training by the guys. They had a team there. And... *Ja*, it was successful and I worked nicely and on my way back. Oh, once... The time when I came back to Cape Town and then Mr Valentine phoned me because they were looking for admin officers then for Marion Island. And they approached me and then they say "You just came from Antarctica, don't you want to go to Marion Island?" And I was like "For what?" "Admin Officer, but okay, can you do that?" so I said "*Ja*, I can do that."

V Like that.

A That was my second trip. Immediately from...

V Back from Antarctica.

A From Antarctica. Just only stay a month, I think. A month, a couple of weeks. Then I went to Marion.

V And then, when did you... Are you currently logistic officer? What is your current job description?

A *Ja*, logistical clerk.

V Logistical clerk.

A *Ja*.

V So you got promoted.

A Yes, and then again I think I was level 4, general assistant. Then the advertiser gave me the internal ad. Then I applied for the job. Go for an interview. I was in Marion island then when this job was advertised. Where I am now. On Marion Island. On my way back then I got an interview. Then I got the job.

V The job... What can you...

A That was in 2007.

V ...remember in 2006? That first journey to Antarctica, what was it like?

A Hell, it was scary!

V [laughs] Why?

A It was very scary because, I've never been there like before – during my planning, my preparation for that voyage then in 2006, all my colleagues they say, it's very cold, the environment is different and things like that. So I didn't know anything about Antarctica and all that. So it was a bit scary but looking forward to it.

V Did you get seasick that first time?

A No, no, never. I think this is my now, my 4th if not 5th trip. I never had seasick.

V To Antarctica. Wow.

A Marion. It's only Gough island that I've never been to.

V Have you never been to Gough island?

A No, no, no.

V Would you like to go?

A *Ja*. I've applied but my boss is like, Marion Island, I mean Gough Island is very small. So I'm a person who likes to work. So they said there is not much work for you.

V For you to do, *ja*.

A So only those people who like going to expose from this island, they can start at Gough Island because it's small.

V It is small. And they do smaller operations as well.

A It is small, *ja. Ja*.

V So, how does it work? How do you become DCO or ABCA? Do you apply?

A Through my... No, no, no. I didn't, what's happening is every trip, a DCO like submit our report...

V Yes.

A ...back to head of the department. And fortunately the DCOs and assistant DCOs that I was working with, then they recommended me that I must be given a chance. They've seen potential in me. I can do this. And then I went down, no after my trip as I said...

V To Marion.

A To Marion as an admin officer, then they asked me to come and help Adriaan Dreyer. Because this or then, and then further, he was an assistant DCO and I was an admin officer. My second trip to Antarctica. And on my way back, and then Mr Valentine first said: No, I think I've done this trip enough now. I can be an assistant DCO.

V So they...

A After the report they received from...

V So they, you kind of get recommended.

A *Ja, ja*.

V What I'm trying to ascertain is how does it work? How do they decide who's DCO and who is a DCO for every voyage?

A *Ja*, for instance now I am looking to run as an assistant, then, through my work, through this voyage then they will recommend. Mr Magagula is to be a DCO.

V Okay.

A Just give him a chance.

V Would you like to do a trip as a DCO?

A *Ja, ja, ja and* I think last year I was promised to take part in the Marion Trip as a DCO.

V Wonderful.

- A** So I'm looking forward to that.
- V** What are the challenges of your job in Antarctica?
- A** Challenges? Oh no, I'm this kind of person who like, you know. It is difficult for me to like, to stand in front of people and now, talk.
- V** Yes.
- A** I'm not that kind of a person. So this is one of the challenges like giving instructions, and then standing there and now. Things like that. But I don't see any of that sometimes.
- V** And working with scientists? What are the challenges working with scientists?
- A** Challenges with scientists? Because this people I meet them and back home, they've got a store like also like clothing store and they issue you clothing so I get used to them so I don't see any challenges with them.
- V** Yes, yes. What was your first impression of Antarctica? Can you remember?
- A** My first impressions? Obviously, the ice there, I don't know what you call the the ice shelf, others say bhukta, I was like wow, this is different. But the shocking part of it, that was when we had an accident.
- V** Okay, *ja*.
- A** The guy who just fell over a cliff. It was my first trip to Antarctica and then they had such an accident and it was like a bit shaky.
- V** A difficult place.
- A** *Ja, ja*.
- V** How did that change your take-over the fact that somebody got killed so early on? Was it more difficult?
- A** It was a bit difficult since most of the guys are like, most especially those who are going for their first time it was a bit shaky. But we managed to do our job and everyone...
- V** Yes. Why do you keep returning to Antarctica?
- A** I think I got fond of it, I love it. Every time when I'm getting this chance to go to Antarctica... Okay.
- V** What about Antarctica do you like?
- A** What is it that I like about it?
- V** *Ja*.
- A** It's a nice environment to be in. The logistics for the fact that there are some challenges I mean, it's not easy as Marion and, I've never been in Gough, but it's different. The logistics is different. It's more like challenging. Like, you see the weather changes like now and then, now and then, so that, fast-thinking and decision making.
- V** And Marion, what are the... What were your first impressions about Marion Island?
- A** Marion Island, my impression was that it was far different from Antarctica. Because there was land, the mayas the green, the penguins, the birds and all that, you are able to walk long distances, never raining. And things like that. It was total different from Antarctica.
- V** Have you ever slept over at one of the huts in Marion?
- A** No, I never do the...
- V** The round off the islands.
- A** What is it? The round off islands. But I went for like samplings and things like that.
- V** Uhm... So, as a logistical clerk, I suppose you are also involved in buying of clothes, buying of materials, what is the government, what is the DA policy on that, I mean, how do you decide what gear to buy?
- A** We've got our specifications specs that we have in the clothing store. What kind of item, material and things like that...

- V** And who worked out that?
- A** SABS approved things like that.
- V** And who works out what kind of material is needed and what kind of clothes are needed, who decides that?
- A** It's Mr Valentine. He decides on that, and also our, first it must go to my supervisor, then it was Mr Oosthuizen.
- V** Now Chuma(Phamoli)?
- A** *Ja*, it's now Chuma. Yes. So he look at the, what do you call... at for instances what you are going to buy, for instances a working T-shirt, and obviously there are a lot of companies that are on our database. Maybe they want to sell us those stuff. Then we take that to my supervisor and he checks the quality. And from there, if he feels that is a good quality of item and it is exactly the specs and our specs that we want, then it goes to Mr Valentine and he makes the decision. You can buy it.
- V** I see most of the clothes are from K-Way.
- A** K-Way, yes.
- V** It is not clothes that you see in stores. Do they make it especially for SANAP?
- A** *Ja*, it's only for SANAP, K-Way, especially the outer gear.
- V** Outer gear. They make it especially for...
- A** *Ja*. For SANAP yes.
- V** Do you know how long they have been making the clothes? Or has it been like this...
- A** Since I've came... It was all the time K-Way, from K-Way.
- V** Okay. And then like I will ask this to Mr Valentine again when I interview him again but why do you not buy female clothes?
- A** Female clothes?
- V** *Ja*.
- A** Yes. I don't have a clue, because since I came it is only like that, I don't know why. Really, I don't have any answer for that.
- V** So you said it's mostly Mr Valentine and his second or the supervisor then that now draws up the policy.
- A** Yes, the clothing store manager.
- V** Who is the store manager?
- A** Sorry?
- V** Shiraan(Watson)? Is he still manager?
- A** No, Nomsa is a warehouse manager. And then obviously in our clothing store, that was Mr Oosthuizen who was supervising the clothing store and then relocate the clothing from the clothing store, now it's Chuma.
- V** What is the most common complaint you get in terms of clothing?
- A** The clothing? Normally our items that... We [are] struggling and obviously we not sitting back – we trying our utmost to get the better gloves, because they always complain about that. And also like, currently the material that they use for the outer gear, the K-Way's is not a good material because they only, the team, that they complain immediately when they arrive in Antarctica, in two weeks, three weeks, maybe you have seen some of the guys. This jacket was like... So we've laid that complaint to K-Way and they said that the material that they used to make this gears before they no longer get it but they are trying their best to do something about it. We had a meeting with them, Mr Oosthuizen, they was there, unfortunately I was not there, complaining about this, the material is now like deteriorating, what's happening with it? That said no, the material they used to have before is no longer in the market but they trying their best. They're trying their best.
- V** It's all about prices. They try to cut on prices and it comes from China anyway. So why do you think is it necessary for South Africa to have a base in Antarctica?

- A Obviously, I mean, for the scientists, yes, to be able to do their work and research. And things like that, I think it's best to have...
- V Do you think you would ever consider over-wintering yourself?
- A I was looking forward to it. Unfortunately there's nothing for us there. As the Department...
- V Oh you can always be a *metkassie*.
- A But I have to resign my job. Ja, I was like... I'm dreaming, one day yes.
- V And then you would like to over-winter? What do you enjoy most about these take-overs?
- A Meeting people, no... Meeting different people, learning what they're doing, getting more experience. Maybe. Who knows? I might decide today I will be a *metkassie* one day or something.
- V [laughs] You've been on a cap train?
- A Ja.
- V How would you describe that experience?
- A This was of the... Another great challenge I have to face and it was interesting. It was like, you know, when you send drivers as managers, guy goes and do that, not knowing what they are facing. Only when they're there. So my first trip to do the cap-train is one of the great experiences I'll never forget.
- V Okay. And what do you think about tourism in Antarctica and to Marion? Would you like it if tourists could go?
- A Ja, I would love that to happen but because of the distance, especially Antarctica. But if it happens that those opportunities comes then It could be good. ...
- V Currently, do you know does SANAP fall under Ocean and Coasts, under the Department of Environmental Affairs? Is that right?
- A SANAP what? Come again?
- V Do they fall on under Oceans and Coasts of the Department of Environmental Affairs?
- A Is it, the Oceans and Coasts, is this a new what do you call it?
- V Okay. What I'm asking is what is the role of Oceans and Coasts in the SANAP programme at the moment?
- A At the moment, because the just the, what you call it? Ja, Ocean and Coast, came now, so little bit of this trying to, you know, to build Departments. So it's like a bit confusing. They are there and they don't understand why they're authority here and things like that. But I don't have a good answer for that.
- V But your budget still comes straight from the Department of Environmental Affairs?
- A Yes, yes, yes.
- V Since you've been coming down to Antarctica and to Marion, have you seen any change in the people that go, are they different every time?
- A Ja. Of course they're different. They're different.
- V Are there more women, less women, more ... diverse, less diverse?
- A I think it also depends on the, because this thing it gets *mos* advertised – you apply and come for an interview. But we see different groups, different teams, not always the very same team. Different.
- V And is it different. Is the take-over to Antarctica different from a take-over to Marion in terms of the group of people?
- A Yes, it's different, it's different. For instances in Marion Island you might find more blacks taking part in the, what you call... Whereas, yes, Antarctica they also must find blacks. But no. Ja.
- V It's just that there's more sealers, there's more scientists...
- A Ja.
- V ...In my opinion anyway. Anyway there will be more blacks on Marion than on...
- A Yes, yes. Exactly. Ja, so.

- V Also for people like [Ian Kock] and Steven Chown.
- A Yes.
- V And there's more *metkassies* of course, on Marion.
- A Of course *ja*, in Marion island. That's why I say the team differs every year.
- V Which is your favourite, Marion or Antarctica?
- A Antarctica. Then Marion.
- V And what did you think of the German Base?
- A I've been to German Base twice. I don't know, because maybe it's still a new base, but it was very classy.
- V What would you call, if you could choose, what would you like the new ship to be called?
- A This is difficult. We have been talking about this. I think the day before yesterday.
- V Who were talking about this? You and...?
- A No, we haven't. Some of the guys, somebody asked me. What are they going to call the new ship?
- V According to the SABC they call it the Thabo Mbeki.
- A Is it?
- V *Ja*. The SABC has a lot of facts wrong on what it's going to be called. I don't know if that is wrong. They say that this is the last Antarctic voyage.
- A Yes.
- V But the ships are normally named after women.
- A I know they are usually named after women... Not named, actually. We shouldn't really name anything after a person, according to me. What was the end of this conversation, what did you guys decide?
- V No, they've, they've... The question. No I came about but okay, somebody said, mentions this - it was a man's name. Then I was like, why can they call it a man because most of them, there's [Lillian Ngoyi Roda Ferris] and things like that. So I suggested it must be a woman's name, or somebody who has played a roll, somebody who has played a vital role in political things. Then I mentioned something like, why don't they say Winnie Mandela? And then somebody was like, the background and all of this scandal of Winnie.
- A Scandal.
- V Thank you so much, Godfrey.