

## ARIZONA STORYTELLERS

I was lucky to have met Nelson Mandela Oct. 7, 1990. He was not so well known at the time outside of South Africa but was a celebrity and icon in his own country. As a rare, White American living in South Africa during these years, I was somewhat of an oddity. Sanctions and apartheid had run most foreign businesses and tourists out of town. Because of this, however, I did enjoy some special privileges. I could go into almost any White South African government office without an appointment and be warmly greeted (while they were having tea), plus, Blacks in general loved Americans since our Blacks were free and could do the same things as Whites. I fell in love with all of Africa while delivering aircraft and then selling second-hand clothing in some of the African countries I visited. I had fun and the weather everywhere was magnificent. I liked it hot because I played tennis.

I didn't realize the significance of meeting Mandela until a few years later. In fact, when I did meet him it was totally by accident. I like to call it Divine Providence. I had attended a funeral that Sunday in Soweto for a young, Black activist student of mine who had committed suicide after reprimand by White administrators and I was returning home to Johannesburg. I had two possible exits to take but instead continued straight towards the International Airport. My steering wheel simply froze on me and refused to turn left (driving is on the left). I went some miles before stopping at a Holiday Inn. The White female receptionist said nothing was going on there, but, I might try the near-by World Trade Centre. It was like going on a scavenger hunt – receiving clues and traveling from place to place.

I went to the World Trade Centre and it was dark. I drove around and saw a few cars parked at one end. I went inside the unlocked main doors (no security) and walked along the inner rotunda. Waking up to reality, I realized I was getting in too deep and would not be able to talk my way out of this one if stopped by a watchman or policeman. I have never liked retracing my steps (the male ego) so I kept moving forward until I saw another set of exit doors. It was at this exact moment I heard a voice that was distinctly Nelson Mandela's. There was no doubt it was the same kind, gentle voice I had heard many times before. A kind of inner-peace came over me and I knew, then, I was safe from any harm or threat. I followed the voice I heard to where two Afrikaans guards in crumpled khakis were having a friendly conversation and smoking cigarettes at the entrance. I showed them my passport and said I was late for the meeting and they let me in without hesitation. Thinking back, it was just two years later that a top Black Presidential candidate, Chris Hani, was murdered in his drive-way by a White Supremacist. I believe most White South Africans would have been happy if Mandela had died on the gallows or been taken out later. They would have been sorry for the consequences.

After surreptitiously gaining admission to the banquet (ala party crashing at the White House) I wasn't sure what my next move would be – which was good – as I needed more time to think and adjust to the darkness (Mandela was on stage). I slowly crept along the wall which was closest to me until I found an empty chair amongst some men sitting against the wall. When the lights went on, I discovered I was in the middle of Mandela's security team with Nelson and Winnie (his former wife) being served ice cream a few feet away. The ice cream was vanilla but I knew I was in a pickle. I instantaneously turned to a blank page in my passport and asked the guard next to me if he would ask Mandela for an autograph. He happily agreed and just before throngs of people surrounded his table Mandela, through his guard, motioned me over. We didn't shake hands but I was able to tell him I was separate from the banquet and came late after a funeral in Soweto for a student of mine (while he wrote in my passport). When he heard me say "Soweto" he raised his eyebrows at me and said, "You went to Soweto? That's good!" He then extended his condolences to the family when I nervously gave him more detail. I wrote down what Mandela said to me as best I could after I left.

This should be the end of the story, but, it isn't. I followed everything Mandela said and did, prodigiously, while he was running for President. I overheard from Black policemen in Soweto (while volunteering for Hospice) about a truckload of ballots hijacked prior to the 1994 election and recovered afterwards. The unused ballots were found intact. I inquired with the IEC, advertising agency, Tender Board, Home Affairs and finally two newspapers who exposed an attempt to defraud the government. The two Afrikaans newspapers reported an insider deal worth more than \$600,000 (see [www.afriidom.com](http://www.afriidom.com)) to sell the missing ballots to an American company. After a short article appeared in *The Star* newspaper about the hijacking and subsequent recovery, the culprits apparently got cold feet and the ballots surfaced as an RSA government Tender (bid) which I won as highest bidder. I am sorry to say, however, that some people in South Africa appear to be unhappy with me as I was served a "cease and desist" order prior to the 2010 World Cup by the government's IEC preventing my marketing the ballots during The Games. I am expecting the same unfair and unilateral treatment during the upcoming 2012 Olympics held in London, Mandela's favorite city. The RSAG, ANC and Mandela Foundations appear intent on using the \$billion dollar Mandela name and likeness for themselves only.

Sadly, the new elite one-party state in South Africa is a clone of the elite one-party state of the apartheid years. RSA is imitating Russia under Putin as an Authoritarian State. A good source on political and economic corruption since the ANC came into power is seven (7) year former ANC South African MP, Andrew Feinstein, and his new book, *AFTER THE PARTY*.

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