

IN THE HIGH COURT OF SOUTH AFRICA

GAUTENG SOUTH

Case number: 2019/445

Original Case Number: 1982/130

In the matter of:

THE REOPENED INQUEST:

LATE NEIL HUDSON AGGETT

AFFIDAVIT OF NICOLAAS JOHANNES DEETLEFS

I the undersigned:

NICOLAAS JOHANNES DEETLEFS

Do hereby make oath and state:

1.

1.1 I am a 69 year old male pensioner resident in KwaZulu- Natal.

1.2 The facts contained herein are within my personal knowledge except where

the contents indicate the contrary and are, to the best of my knowledge, true

and correct.

1.3 The incident that I will testify about hereunder took place 38 years ago and my memory on the detail is not as good as it was, I can however remember what is stated hereunder.

My health deteriorated further the last 10 years after I suffered a light stroke in 2010. It has a negative effect on my memory. I am also diagnosed with a kind of throat cancer and had an operation in October 2019. I had to undergo a follow up operation in January 2020 but as a result of this court proceedings it was postponed to March 2020. Further I am also a diabetic.

1.4 I am advised that these proceedings are limited to the investigation into the circumstances leading to the death of Dr Neil Aggett. I will therefore not burden the court with all the incidents that I was engaged in during my career.

1.5 The very remembrance of the period during which I served is not pleasant to relive and the last few weeks caused me a lot of stress.

1.6 I am advised that this court is concerned with the reopened inquest into the

death of Dr Neil, Aggett and the circumstances surrounding it and I will

endeavour as far as I know to describe the incident as complete as possible.

2.

2.1 I joined the South African Police Force in October 1968 and was

medically boarded for further service in August 1995. I then had the

rank of Captain.

2.2 In 1982 I was in the service of the South African Police Force with the rank of

sergeant major.

3.

On 30 January 1982 I performed duties at John Vorster Square and was busy with

tasks allocated to me. At that stage I did not have anything to do with the

interrogation of Dr Aggett but I was aware of his detention.

4.

On completion of my duties on 3 January 1982 I was approached by Lt Whitehead

that instructed me to report for duty that evening. He referred me to his office where I

met Dr Aggett and Lt Woensdrecht. Lt Whitehead told me that I had to help with the interrogation of Dr Aggett that evening. I did not have background on the interrogation and Lt Whitehead informed me briefly. I cannot remember the detail of what he told me.

5.

After a while Lt Whitehead told me that both he and Lt Woensdrecht had to attend functions and that I should proceed on my own with the interrogation and that they would join in later.

6.

Dr Aggett and I discussed general matters and I noticed that the started to relax after Lt Whitehead and Woensdrecht left. We discussed his youth in Kenia, his family and his lady friend Liz Floyd. At that stage I did not know that Liz Floyd was in detention. I may mention here that my tactic during interrogation was to put the detainees at ease and to win their trust. In this way I had a lot of success and time and again obtained the information that the Security Branch needed. I did not use force to

intimidate detainees as I was of the opinion that it was not successful and rather put a person at ease.

7.

Dr Aggett told me about personal aspects of his life and I gradually steered the conversation in the direction of the information I needed. I can remember that Dr Aggett told me about his involvement with the trade unions but cannot remember the detail of his statement.

8.

I handed Dr Aggett a pen and paper and as I questioned him, he wrote down. I also took notes. Dr Aggett told me that his best friend, Johan Theron, of the Cape was the leader of SACTU underground and that he was responsible for the labour unrest at the time. Dr Aggett then became quiet and I could see that he was uneasy and he suddenly jumped up. He uttered words to the effect that he did not know how he would live with himself with the knowledge that he betrayed his best friend. I told him that it was not necessary to write the name of his friend in the statement, but I made

a note thereof.

9.

After the statement was completed, I was satisfied that the information I obtained would be of value to Lt Whitehead. Dr Aggett was clearly tired, and I told him that he could sleep on the stretcher in the office, which he did. I remained seated on the chair and waited for Lt Whitehead and Woensdrecht to return from the functions so that they could return Dr Aggett to the cells.

10.

Much later and late at night they arrived, and I reported to Lt Whitehead what Dr Aggett told me. I handed the statement as well as my notes to him. I specifically told him that I was concerned that Dr Aggett could be a suicide risk. Dr Aggett was taken to the cells thereafter.

11.

On the next working day Lt Whitehead called me in with an enquiry on one of my notes. Dr Aggett was present in the office of Lt Whitehead. I then left his office and

proceeded with my work.

12.

A few days later, after reaching John Vorster Square, I heard that Dr Aggett hanged himself. I was called in by Lt Whitehead and he was worried that it will become known that he and Lt Woensdrecht were not present on the evening of 30 January during the interrogation and that I warned him against the risk of suicide. He instructed me to keep this information quiet. I then made a statement that both Lt Whitehead and Woensdrecht were present during the interrogation and did not mention about the warning of suicide.

13.

I am aware that my evidence before the inquest in 1982 was incorrect and not the truth and that my affidavit that served before the investigation in 1982 did not contain the correct facts. At the time that I testified before the first inquest senior officers of the Security Branch were present in court.

14.

In the security culture of that time there was no space for members to split or accuse other members of irregularities. We had to stand together and cover each other in order to protect the Security Branch. On many an occasion Maj Cronwright made it clear that our work at the Security Branch was in the interest of the country and that we should do everything in our ability to protect the country against communism and the ANC

