

PENSIONERS' HOMES

The Rhodesia Association of South Africa (RASA) started on 31 May 1981 with a dream. That dream was a farm not far from Bloemfontein, with a memorial, a museum and a retirement village for Rhodesians. The farm had a manager, and supplied the basic food needs of its residents. A frail care centre catered for the aged and handicapped on the farm. It was a little Rhodesia within South Africa.

As with all dreams, this one came to an end with the death of its owner, Roland Mackey, who had promised to donate the land to RASA.

Why Stilfontein?

The demise of 90 year-old Mr Mackey almost brought about the death of RASA as well. Fortunately, RASA was resuscitated in 1983 and grew rapidly, with the support of Rhodesian clubs and associations scattered around South Africa. Its offspring - ten branches in the mid-1980 - tried to turn the old dream into a new vision. But no rich benefactor came up with another similar offer of land, and nobody with the financial means stepped forward to make the dream a reality.

For several years, RASA stumbled through the wilderness looking for the promised land. Little towns in the impoverished Eastern Cape were visited, where some Rhodesians had found affordable homes, among them Jamestown, Bedford and Rhodes - before it was discovered by the mink and manure Joburg set. But none was ideal for elderly pensioners. Besides, money had to be found for the purchase of land and suitable dwellings.

In the late 1980s an ideal place suddenly appeared on the horizon. No, it wasn't a mirage - it was a former clinic situated in a quiet Pretoria suburb. It had 15 rooms, each with its own hand-basin, and the building

had all the other trappings needed in a home for elderly people, including a central dining area and large kitchen. All that RASA needed was the money. RASA National set about raising the R59 000 needed within the sixty-day window period. An application to the Zimbabwe Rhodesia Relief Fund in the UK for a loan failed, so the Natmancom (National Managing Committee) turned to our members. R36 000 was raised through Life Membership, at R500 per person or married couple, before the deadline. When the Natmancom asked for an extension, the sellers withdrew the sale. Having seen what RASA intended doing with the old clinic, the owners turned it into what is now an up-market home for the elderly. Thus ended another dream.

Another option appeared on the horizon, at Virginia in the Orange Free State. A mining company was selling empty houses at giveaway prices. With the money raised for the clinic in Pretoria, RASA could have bought two of these houses. We let our members know about the opportunity to buy houses at affordable prices, and we arranged a group outing to Virginia. Alas, the houses available were not in a favourable area for RASA's purpose and the scheme was abandoned, although some members did buy there and seemed reasonably happy.

It was not long after our trip to Virginia that we heard about Stilfontein - the "rose town" near Klerksdorp.



Victoria (left) and Tuli

Stilfontein mine had closed down, and whole blocks of houses were up for grabs. Again, we passed this information on to our members. Many of our members and other Rhodesians snapped up homes at half the price of an equivalent house in any of South Africa's main cities. RASA selected a block with ten houses, close to a primary school and a cafe, with the idea of buying one or two houses, and having Rhodesians buy the others in the block. Unfortunately, the agent got greedy and sold some of the houses to non-Rhodesians. But half the houses, including RASA's first house, were bought by Rhodesians.



Charter House, February 2005

And now?

The Flame Lily Foundation (incorporating RASA) now owns four houses in the block of ten, and a fifth house in another part of Stilfontein. Each house has been converted into two or three self-contained flats, suitable for either a single person or a couple. At time of writing, all but one of the eleven flats are occupied. The vacant flat (Macdonald No. 2) is in the last house we converted and has not yet had a tenant (a married couple).

The Pretoria Branch is responsible for the "software" (the people and movable assets) while National is responsible for the "hardware" (buildings and fixed



Salisbury (left) and Macdonald Sep 2005

assets). Each of the first four houses is named after a Rhodesian pioneer fort - Tuli, Victoria, Charter and Salisbury. The fifth house is named in honour of the FLF's Honorary President, Judge Hector Macdonald. Our houses are for persons over the age of 60 who can live independently. They are not suitable for pensioners who need to be cared for. However, we do have a resident caretaker who is one of our tenants (Rodney Pinnick). Cecil and Evelyn Promnitz previously looked after our properties and tenants. The late John Rolfe helped us with the conversion of our last two houses. Without their involvement, and that of Les and Marjorie Milne before them, we could not have managed, as Stilfontein is some 220 km from Pretoria.

Anyone wishing to apply for a flat at Stilfontein should contact Mary Redfern at the FLF office in Pretoria.

