

Nelson Mandela Artillery Regiment (NMAR)

Change of Command

Article by Lt: Col J.A. Conradie, SO1 PO WC and Mrs R. Lord

Photographs by: Mr C. Bezuidenhout

On Saturday 21 March 2020, Major (Maj) Dalene Coetzee, MMM, DWD with 46 years' service handed over command to the 47th Officer Commanding in the unit's history.

Command was transferred to Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col) L.G. Claassen who started her military career in 2002; as a Regular Force Officer, she followed a career in the SA Artillery Corps until 2019, when she resigned and enlisted in the SA Army Reserve Force. On 23 February 2020, she was promoted to the rank of Lt Col and appointed as Officer Commanding (OC) of the Regiment with effect from 21 March 2020.



Maj D. Coetzee handing over command to Lt Col L.G. Claassen.

Maj Coetzee was a living example of and gave true meaning to being a volunteer and serving the country as a Reserve Force Officer. Her desire to serve, her

knowledge and experience from both her civilian career as a teacher and her military career, and her spontaneous tendency to volunteer for military tasks had her involved in a number of military initiatives and projects. Early in the 1970s her father, Colonel (Col) Manie Redelinghuys, DWD, was one of four Reserve Force Officers who successfully completed the Senior Command and Staff Duties Course. After completing the course, he was promoted from a Commandant to a Col, and appointed as the OC Group 4. In Maj Coetzee's case, the apple did not fall far from the tree; remarkably, she was the first lady to become an Officer through the Reserve Force System.



Maj Coetzee standing with the RSM NMAR,
MWO B. Havenga.



NMAR Pipes and Drums entertaining the guests
with Drum Major Bill White in the lead.

Being raised on a farm, she naturally enjoyed the sport of shooting and became a member of the WP Service Shooting team in 1995. Maj Coetzee enjoyed sport and a healthy lifestyle; she will be remembered for her true spirit of voluntarism when she took leave from her work in 2004 to participate (without military compensation) in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) Endurance Walking Championships in Parys, Free State, as part of the Defence Reserves Provincial Office Western Cape Endurance Walking Team. Always ready to volunteer for tasks over and above her civilian job and Reserve Force responsibilities, Maj Coetzee was instrumental as a Committee Member in the planning and presentation of the Cape Town Military Tattoos. She is also a keen photographer and made it her business to promote the Reserves, especially NMAR, digitally. A number of her photographs have been used by local newspapers for articles involving the military. The outstanding quality of her photos resulted in a private company offering her the opportunity to accompany a wild life safari as the official photographer. She has a heart for the Reserves and the community. On several occasions Major Coetzee on her own initiative arranged

social responsibility outreaches, such as Operation Winter Hope, Mandela Day and parcels for the Reserves on duty on Christmas Day. On these occasions, the needy and the Reserves were provided with clothing, food, treats and other essentials.



Lt Col and Mrs Conradie with Maj Coetzee, after wishing her well in her new endeavours.



Maj Coetzee a professional Reserve Force Officer who served the unit with pride, standing smartly at ease prior to the handing over of command ceremony.

CURRICULUM VITAE – MAJOR D. COETZEE MMM, DWD



Maj Dalene Coetzee (Née Redelinghuys) was born on 09 of October 1955 on a farm near Oudtshoorn. She completed primary school in the little village of De Rust and then attended Outeniqua High School in George, where she matriculated.

She completed her teacher's diploma at the Teachers College in Oudtshoorn and thereafter studied further, specialising in teaching the hard of hearing and special needs pupils at the University of Cape Town. She also obtained a diploma in public relations and tour-guiding in the Western Cape. She was a teacher for special needs learners for 36 years and spent the last 20 years of her teaching career at Tafelberg High School, where she taught Computer Applications Technology to pupils in Grades 7 to 12.

Maj Coetzee's military career started after school, when she joined SALVCOL in 1974 as one of the 4th intake of the college, and finished basic military training. Thereafter, she joined the commandos with the rank of Corporal (Cpl), and worked her way up through the ranks, completing military courses during the school holidays. She was the first woman to become an officer through the Commando Reserve Force. She was a member of Oudtshoorn Commando and then Cape Town Rifles. When Cape Town Rifles decided that they did not have place for women members, as women had to be area-bound, she was transferred to the Lions Head Commando. When Lions Head Commando, Wynberg Battalion and False Bay Commando amalgamated, Maj Coetzee (a Captain at the time) was appointed as 2IC of Two Oceans Commando. After the closure of the Commandos, she was transferred to Cape Garrison Artillery, but soon after was offered a post at Cape Field Artillery.

From 2003, Major Coetzee was involved with the Cape Town Military Tattoo, and from 2009 until the last Tattoo in 2015, she served on the executive committee of the Tattoo in the position of Media Liaison.

She also obtained her Western Province colours in Service Shooting.

During her military career, Maj Coetzee was awarded the following Decorations and Medals:

- *Military Merit Medal*
- *General Service Medal*
- *Unitas Medal*
- *Tshumelo Ikatelaho Medal*
- *Mandela Medal*
- *Commando Medal*
- *Good Service Medal (10 Year)*
- *De Wet Decoration (20 Year)*
- *De Wet Medal + Bar (30 Year)*

Maj Coetzee served the South African Defence Force (SADF) and the SANDF for 46 years as a volunteer.

The Reserves salute Maj Coetzee for her exceptional service. Her spirit of true voluntarism, her eagerness to assist and help her fellow Reserves, and her service, which more than often went beyond the call of duty, will sincerely be missed.

Once a Reserve, always a Reserve, we salute you!