

ety Library in the reference section he applied and was appointed to the post. Morrison took over as deputy director of the library in 1996 and became director in 1999. He oversaw its transition from the Natal Society Library, the only privately run public library in the country, to the Bessie Head municipal library it is today. He retired in 2011.

Morrison was a well-known runner and completed 28 Comrades Marathons. Following his first run in 1968, Morrison began seconding so-called

“ghost runners”, black runners who ran the race, but were not officially recognised, and was among those white runners who would hand their medals to black runners who had “unofficially” qualified.

Morrison leaves a wife, psychologist Floss Mitchell, and children Emma, Alice and Guy.

STEPHEN COAN

(With acknowledgements to The Witness)

Geoffrey Soni (1925 – 2014)

GEOFFREY Dixon Soni was born at Springvale on 28 January 1925. His parents were Elliott Soni and Annie Nzimande, who had been married at Springvale on 24 July 1917. Annie and Elliott brought Geoffrey for baptism at St Andrew’s Church on 15 February, eighteen days after he was born.

Springvale was one of the earliest Anglican missions to be established in the Colony of Natal. Henry Callaway started it in 1858, and it was developed in the usual way, typical at the time. Being a medical practitioner, Callaway opened a clinic, but a school was the first priority, and the extensive property was available for tenant farmers.

Springvale had been functioning for almost 70 years when Geoffrey Soni was born. Education was readily available for him, and his early years were immersed in an Anglican ethos which he would maintain for the rest of his life. He was baptised by the Reverend Walter Mzamo, the Priest-in-Charge of Springvale. In 1924 Mzamo had been

appointed the first African Priest-in-Charge at Springvale, having been at the Umzimkulwana Mission for 12 years. Mzamo served the Springvale Mission until his death in 1932.

Mzamo was an accomplished musician, having four of his compositions in the current Zulu hymnal, *Amaculo Esheshi*. Although Geoffrey Soni was still a child when Mzamo died, the musical tradition left behind must have influenced the young boy. His great interests were in education and in church music, but he also gave much attention to church history and to young people.

Geoffrey Soni was primarily an educationist, and he was trained as a teacher in Umlazi, where he became a school principal. He was transferred in 1956 to Ladysmith, where he was School Inspector.

Making good use of his background in education, Dr Soni gave dedicated and sustained service, during his latter years, on the boards of three educational institutions in Pietermaritzburg.

He chaired the Edendale Nursing College Council from 1985 to 2005, culminating in the merger of the college into the KwaZulu-Natal College of Nursing. He worked tirelessly and collaboratively with other key players in achieving this merger. A colleague, Mary Moleko, who was Senior Principal Tutor from 1982 to 1992 and kept an ongoing relationship with the college, says that his “high standard of performance”, always “careful of detail”, has left us with “an indelible memory”.

Dr Soni was a founding member of both the Council and Executive Committee of the newly established St Nicholas’ Diocesan School in January 1990. This was a school founded by the Anglican Church in KwaZulu-Natal primarily, but not solely, for black pupils in order to fill the terrible gap in church-sponsored education for black children since the introduction of the iniquitous system of Bantu education. Dr Soni remained a member of the Exco until 2003 and of the Council till 2007. His wife’s ill-health precipitated these resignations. In 2003 he was awarded a School Cap – the school’s highest award – in recognition of his long service during the critical opening years of the life of St Nicholas’.

Parallel with his involvement at both St Nicholas’ School and the Edendale College of Nursing, Dr Soni accepted an invitation to be on the Board of Governors of St John’s Diocesan School for Girls. His membership of this body lasted from November 1990 until March 2004. When he retired, the school’s headmistress, Jill Champion, wrote to thank him for his “outstanding record of dedicated, loyal service”. “You have enriched our school,” she said, “with your

wisdom and experience,” and she added appreciation of “your gentlemanly manners and well-chosen words expressed with dignity and charm”.

He also served on the Archbishop’s Education Committee.

Geoffrey Soni also exercised great leadership in the Diocese of Natal with regard to music. When he was a member of St Augustine’s Church in Umlazi he was organist, choirmaster and lay minister. He was also organist and choirmaster at St John’s, Ladysmith and St Martin’s, Edendale. He composed several hymns which appear in the present Zulu hymnal, *Amaculo Esheshi*, and among the editors’ acknowledgements are these words: “Special thanks are equally due to Dr G.D. Soni whose skills and compositions are a tremendous contribution”.

Alfred Mkhize, who was elected Bishop Suffragan of Natal in 1979, grew up with Geoffrey Soni at Springvale and was an assistant priest at Umlazi when Soni was teaching there. Their paths continued to run parallel, and especially when Bishop Mkhize initiated the establishment St Nicholas’ School in Pietermaritzburg in 1990.

As a church historian Geoffrey served on the Colenso Homestead Restoration Committee. In his time he was a representative on the Anglican Diocesan and Provincial Synods, and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Diocese. In 2008 he was awarded the Order of St Simon of Cyrene, an award made by the Archbishop of Cape Town to laypersons of outstanding calibre.

IAN DARBY & MICHAEL
NUTTALL