

Mandela's former aide to publish memoirs

The long-serving and trusted white personal aide of Nelson Mandela will publish her memoirs in June about how her life was transformed by South Africa's late anti-apartheid icon, Penguin Books announced on Thursday.



Nelson Mandela nicknamed Zelda la Grange "Zeldina".

Zelda la Grange, Mandela's private assistant during his 1994-1999 presidency and subsequent retirement, had become a fixture by the Nobel laureate's side.

"Good Morning, Mr Mandela," to be published on June 19, is an "extra-ordinary story of how a young woman had her life and everything she once believed in transformed by the greatest man in her time," said Penguin in a statement.

Publishing director Helen Conford promised readers the book "will touch your life and make you believe that every one of us, no matter who we are or what we have done, has the power to change."

Nicknamed "Zeldina" by Mandela, the 43-year-old emerged from Afrikaner middle-class obscurity to become the main aide of South Africa's first black president.

She travelled with Mandela across the world, organising his every move and shielding him from a stream of people clamouring for a moment with him.

Devotion 'surprises'

Her devotion surprised some, given her origins in the Afrikaner community that had jailed Mandela for 27 years under the apartheid laws of racial segregation.

"The lessons Nelson Mandela gave her as he renewed his country offer hope to everyone," said Conford.

The book has brought "tears" to everyone who has read it and it "shines with honesty and love," said Conford.

Sometimes referred to as Mandela's "honorary granddaughter" she had described him shortly after his death on December 5 as the "easiest person to work with, the best teacher and a mentor".

She has been widely hailed for her loyalty to Mandela.

Mandela became South Africa's first black president after the first all-race elections in 1994 and his politics of forgiveness and reconciliation made him a global peace icon.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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