

## Local News

# Tribute to David Martin

## 'Mzungu' who had Africa at heart

BY Elisha Mayallah

Sometime in 2002 when I took an early morning flight from Dar es Salaam to Kilimanjaro International Airport, I sat near an 'old' mzungu who after exchanging pleasantries I came to learn that he was David Martin, a renowned journalist.

I had read his writings about the Uganda and Tanzania war and later publications on Tanzania national parks that included guidebooks.

On arriving at Kilimanjaro International Airport he asked if I had transport arranged for me. I answered in affirmative and invited him to take a ride with me to Arusha. He agreed and was happy for the offer.

As we talked on our way I noticed two things. First, he was a chain-smoker, and in fact he was smoking a cigar. The smell from the cigar was awful for a non-smoker like me. But his friendly and informative talk made me sit even closer to listen attentively to this renowned journalist who chose Africa as his home.

He spoke of his close working relationships with 'then' President Ben Mkapa at the Tanganyika Standard, now The Daily News/ Sunday News of Tanzania. He spoke highly of the tourism development of Tanzania national parks and then he had all praises to Mr. Lota Melamari, the former Director-General of Tanzania National Parks.

Secondly, he was booked to stay at Mount Meru Hotel where I was working thought we could have another meeting during his stay, a proposal which was readily accepted.

Because of his engagement with TANAPA during that visit he was left with little time to converse. And when we did meet over the week it was in a rush and brief.

So proud was David Martin in being associated with the struggle and development of Africa. In him I found a 'mzungu' who had Africa at heart and informed on many issues.

Nearer to the end of May in 2004, Martin sent an e-mail that he was to attend the tourism fair in Arusha and suggested that we meet again. When we met at the tourism fair I could see that he was still

smoking the cigar. After a lengthy talk I learnt how he grew up liking Tanzania and in particular Africa.

After a successful journalism career, David Martin finally bade farewell to research, writing and the world on Saturday, August 18, 2007. Martin, died following a prolonged battle against throat cancer. He was a head of a research and democracy centre based in Harare - African Publishing Group [International]