

Renowned Economist And Former Adviser To The Reserve Bank Of Zimbabwe, Eric Bloch Has Died (1939 - 2014)

Prominent economist Eric Bloch died shortly after 7pm on Saturday night at his home in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe after a long battle with cancer. He was 75. A chartered accountant by profession, Bloch was a regular Zimbabwe Independent newspaper columnist who spent most of his life analyzing Zimbabwe's complex economic and political challenges.

According to Zimbabwe's News Day, the Bulawayo-based former adviser to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, had been poor health since last December. Family spokesperson and son, Mark, who had flown in two days earlier from his Scotland base said, "In December last year he was very ill and he collapsed. From that time he never fully recovered and had pneumonia and chest pains; he became thin and frail and lost almost 30 kilogrammes of his weight."



Eric Bloch, Economist & former adviser to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe

Tributes poured in for the man who had risen to fame for his role as the quiz-master on a National High Schools Quiz show that aired on national television in Zimbabwe.

The mayor of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city, Martin Moyo said the city and indeed the country had lost a huge asset. "Bloch was a very prominent intellectual who would advise on what to do. He was an asset to council, an asset to Bulawayo and Zimbabwe as a whole," he said. "His death is shocking in a way. He had a sharp mind and is really going to be missed by Bulawayo, particularly the business community."

Former Minister of Education in the 2009-2013 Zimbabwe coalition government, David Coltart said, "I am very sorry to hear that Eric Bloch has passed away. He was a true Zimbabwean patriot who was always fair and spoke his mind boldly."

"He didn't criticise other people, but policies," he said. "To that extent, he was non-partisan and was a person you would trust as he had no political interests."

The President of the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CZI) Charles Msipa described Bloch's deep commitment to the economics of Zimbabwe. "He was generous with his time and knowledge and a great supporter of the CZI. We are all the poorer with Dr Bloch's death."

Fellow economist John Robertson expressed his condolences on the passing on of Bloch whom he had known for many years. "He used his experience to the advantage of many people and he leaves a legacy in the business sector in which he played an enormous role," Robertson said.

In July 2011, Bloch's wife of 50 years, Baileh, died at the age of 75 after heart attack while having lunch. Mark, who was at his father's bedside when he passed away that said that since his mother's death, Bloch's health had been deteriorating. "He began showing signs of tiring and after the death of my mother, he was lonely," Mark said. The couple at the time had three sons, Raphi, Barry and Mark, one daughter, Ruth and 10 grandchildren.

Bloch was born on April 2, 1939 in Johannesburg, South Africa, and migrated to Bulawayo, Zimbabwe with his parents when he was a child.

A funeral service will be held at the Jewish Cemetery, Donovan Street in North End, Bulawayo, on Wednesday at 10AM.

Eric Bloch was a great Zimbabwean

September 26, 2014 in **Opinion**

ERIC Bloch was born in South Africa in 1939 but was resident continuously in Zimbabwe since 1950.

David Harrison - Managing Director of Human Resources Pvt. Ltd

He qualified as a Chartered Accountant in 1964 and after 15 years in an audit and accounting practice was professionally engaged as a financial, management, taxation and economic consultant.

He became a director of a large number of companies and was an office bearer or trustee of many local and international trusts and similar organisations, including the Committee for the Development of Bulawayo and the Bulawayo and District Publicity Association.

He was chairman of the Advisory Board of the National University of Science and Technology (Nust) Faculty of Architecture and Quantity Surveying, and a member of the Industrial Advisory Board of the Faculty of Journalism and Media Studies.

He was also a patron of the Nust Student Bankers Association and of the Matabeleland Taekwondo Association. Bloch was further a trustee of the Pro Africa Development Trust, Black Umfolosi, The Ulwazi Institute (of which he was past chairman), Girls' College, The Junior Achievement Zimbabwe Trust, the Marwell Zimbabwe Trust, the National Gallery in Bulawayo and he served on numerous other bodies and committees.

In addition, he was patron of St Joseph's House for Boys and a past president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Zimbabwe. He served on numerous of its committees, including its Tax and Other Legislation Committee which he chaired for several years. He served on the City of Bulawayo Ad Hoc Budget Advisory Committee and was an International Trustee of the Centre for Peace Initiatives in Africa.

In May 1999 Solusi University conferred upon him an Honorary Doctorate in Business Administration, in recognition of service to the Zimbabwean community. Bloch was a regular contributor to the Zimbabwean and International financial, professional and general press and he undertook extensive public speaking engagements throughout Zimbabwe and further afield.

He was co-author of "Zimbabwe: Facing the Facts — an economic dialogue with John Robertson" (1996). Many of the clearly expressed predictions of that book have been confirmed in recent years, and must have Nostradamus tossing in his grave. He was the first editor of The Zimbabwe Chartered Accountant, which post he filled for eight years. In 1990 he won the "Financial Writer of the Year" award.

Eric's consistent articles in his column in the Zimbabwe Independent over 18 years were evidence of his intense and anguished love for Zimbabwe and its people. His economic analyses, commentaries and advice had large local and international followings.

He was always scrupulously fair in giving credit to opposing views but frequently used the phrase "government must" in which he persisted despite being cautioned that perhaps, in response, "government won't..." Indeed, by and large, government didn't, but let's hope that the legacy of his advice will eventually be applied for Zimbabwe's economic benefit.

I worked with Bloch on over 180 conferences, seminars and training courses in Southern Africa and as far as Monte Carlo (Barter and Countertrade).

His papers were always well received but his brilliance was seen to best effect when, upon being asked a broad ranging and complex question, he would say (for example) "I have seven points to make" and then he would run through them to such effect that he often received a standing ovation.

As an incredibly busy person he was a “star turn” in seminars for managers, public officials and politicians on Personal Time Management when the techniques which he explained were inspirational models of efficiency.

He was the kindest person I have ever known, or known about. Despite always being very busy providing professional services within the restricted accountancy fee structure, he gave his time generously and without fees to those organisations listed and many others. He was always available to give kindly and constructive advice.

This gave him much pleasure, as did reading, classical music, setting quiz questions, and giving educational support. In recent years he worked under extreme financial pressure for numerous clients who couldn't pay – “I worked for them for 30 years and I'm not giving them up now!” he would say.

Eric was a “soft touch” to all. In recent years 15 employees and their relatives lived on his ½ acre domestic premises. He even delivered some of the children to school!

He was a genuine humanitarian. He was invariably kindly and friendly to everyone. He had a mischievous sense of humour. As I am a social scientist/statistician, he used to infuriate me when “statistics” came up in conversation by asserting “the trouble with statistics is that they are like a bikini. They expose the unimportant but cover up the essentials.”

Eric's adored wife, Baileh, also a dedicated and genuinely selfless supporter of Bulawayo's communities and beyond, died two years ago. He was devastated by the loss. But they are survived by four very successful children and, so far, 10 grandchildren. He was eagerly anticipating a family reunion in October this year.

If one asked about his health, he would reply “not good, but I'm not worried. Only the good die young”.

Clearly, that is not the case. Eric died much too soon. A terrible loss to his much loved, and loving family and to all of Zimbabwe.

David Harrison is Managing Director of Human Resources Pvt. Ltd

