



- CHAPTER 1 -

Upfronts

I make the following statements upfront which should be appreciated in terms of the spirit of this book:

- Eskom was a brilliant, caring, and the most stimulating organisation one could ever dream of working for. The experience was amazing but extremely pressurising too on many occasions. Never a dull moment.
- No, I did not work at Megawatt Park as so many people ask; I have always been in line functions... at the mine face, in overalls commissioning plant, helping customers and taking the punch... many times.
- When I joined in April 1979 the peak system demand for that year (probably during a cold snap in July) was only 12,855MW (Source: *The 1995 Statistical Yearbook*, Eskom). The last highest peak in about 2009 was 37,600MW, almost three times in 30 years – with no load shedding! In the period up to mid-2024, we have battled to satisfy a 30,000MW load.
- Although matters electricity is complex and technically flavoured as such, this is also about Eskom's customers, small and large – the very folk who paid our salaries, lest we ever forget.

- I apologise upfront to all the scientists and technocrats if they find fault in my interpretation and explanation of matters. I have tried to put matters into simple terms so the arty inclined and non-technical readers can perhaps understand matters electrical a bit better. Electricity when unpacked in its entirety is a very wide and extremely complex subject.
- This book should be read not in terms of getting ‘100% for the test’ but rather to get an understanding and sense of what the realities and relationships are in terms of all of Eskom’s businesses from power generation to the distribution of electricity, to customer’s accounts and service. I definitely cannot use Fourier analysis to analyse the total harmonic distortion of a waveform when customers ‘pollute’ the network with their harmonic generating equipment. Strange but true, you do get electrical pollution in networks!
- This book is about hard science but also about human science – the science of feelings, emotions, and the like and also about being totally satisfied to being totally pissed off at times!
- I do not purport to be an authority on matters physics and the like – this is a story, not a scientific journal subject to ratification by a committee prior to publication. Electricity, power, and energy are such wide topics and I have outlined my involvement and understanding on matters. I will most definitely fail the test if one asks, “What about this or that?” In essence, I have scratched the surface if you like; some topics I cover in a bit more detail than others.
- In terms of Eskom’s disciplinary code, Misconduct 8 says, “While on duty, conducts himself/herself in an improper or disgraceful manner or at any time behaves in such a manner that harms the image of Eskom.” I trust I will not be guilty of such an offence but what I have said is effectively truthful be it good or bad. Crumbs, I hope being a pensioner I am exempt. I would hate to be the other side of the chairperson’s table. By the way, I did chair a few hearings in my time – about 40. More of that later.
- The offerings in terms of training and of furthering one’s education were simply excellent. Eskom even assisted you in getting a driver’s

licence, never mind an MBA. I did a BCom financed by Eskom – I did reasonably well. No pass, no Eskom pay, exactly the way it should be.

- Benefits such as remuneration, bonuses, leave, housing, medical aid, bursaries and the like were most generous.
- Thirty-seven years' service a lot? No ways, many colleagues I knew had in excess of 40 years and one even 48 years! See Chapter 15.
- This book is filled with so much irony too, mind boggling stuff really. Years filled with too little power and load limiting, then to too much power and active power selling, to sufficient power, and lastly to no power and subsequent load shedding and outages.
- This is not a fairy tale I conjured up; it is in essence a truthful account of my time at Eskom. I may have got things wrong in terms of chronological order and titles, but Eskom was famous for changing names of departments and reporting structures. A good example is 'Key Customers' becoming 'Top Customers'.
- In essence this is an autobiography of your average 'Joe Bloggs', a totally ordinary member of a very large organisation, but who has so much to tell in terms of the goings on in the various departments of Eskom. No, it is not just about generation and keeping the lights on, which has sadly been the focus since 2008, yes for about 16 years. It is about so much more in terms of the total supply value chain that we are all so very reliant on. Some career 'chain' deluxe for 37 years.
- I had to bring in some humour, something that without, I may not have survived many a battle in the raging seas of load shedding and the like.
- I do apologise to all the Eskom folk who effected operations all over South Africa – this book is flavoured around my career which was predominantly in Gauteng.
- I also apologise for photographic content as you don't see many females or people of colour, mostly it was White males – but that is indicative of the period in our history, White males dominated many workspaces, not just at Eskom, simply everywhere.