Land court judge Fikile Bam dies at 74

JOHANNESBURG — Judge President of the Land Claims Court, Fikile Bam, died at the Milpark Hospital in Johannesburg on Sunday, SABC radio news reported.

His nephew told the broadcaster that 74-year-old Bam suffered with cancer for many years.

SA History Online states that Fikile Charles Bam was born on July 18, 1937, in Tsolo in the Eastern Cape.

He attended St Peter’s Secondary School from 1956, and went on to study law at the University of Cape Town in 1960.

Bam was a member of the Yu Chi Chan Club (Chinese for guerrilla warfare) which was a study group that met to discuss ways of achieving liberation.

In 1960 he was arrested and detained after the Sharpeville and Langa massacres, when a state of emergency was declared in South Africa. Bam was sentenced to imprisonment on Robben Island in 1963 and served an 11-year term on the island, from 1964 to 1975.

He was detained with other prominent political leaders, including Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu.

After his release from prison Bam obtained a bachelor of law degree in 1975 and a B.Proc. in 1976, both from Unisa.

Bam applied unsuccessfully to join the Pretoria Bar Council in 1978. That year he was admitted as an attorney.

Bam was a partner in Deneys Reitz Attorneys from 1994 to 1995, a member of the SABC from 1993 to 1996 and the director at the Legal Resources Centre in Port Elizabeth in 1985.

He was appointed a commissioner on the Goldstone Commission from 1992 to 1993 and was an advocate in both the Supreme Court of South Africa and the Transkei.

He served as a mediator for the Independent Electoral Committee in 1994 when the first democratic elections took place in South Africa.

Bam was a visiting fellow to Yale University in 1985 and served as chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand from 1997 to 1998.

He was awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree by Rhodes University in 2001.

Source: South African History Online — Sapa.