

Capetonian was among the pit tragedy heroes

WHILE South Africa and the world were preparing for the centenary commemoration of SS Mendi and its heroic crew, disaster struck again when six young men lost their lives in the Salisbury Island Sewer Pit at the Durban Naval Base last Friday.

Warren Williams from Grassy Park in Cape Town was one of the six who died tragically two weeks short of his 30th birthday.

Contrary to what has been extensively reported, Warren was not a Department of Public Works contract worker working in the sewer pit, nor was he a member of the SA National Defence Force in Durban for the celebration of Armed Forces Day. He was an accomplished artisan employed by a Cape Town-based specialised marine engineering company.

A hundred years after the SS Mendi sailed from Cape Town on February 16, 1916, the city offered up a brave and courageous son. Warren was a selfless mentor to apprentices under his guidance at Riodor Marine, the company contracted to the SA Navy for the past four years, providing technical upkeep solutions.

He was at the Durban Naval base to carry out specialised maintenance work aboard the warrior-class fast attack craft offshore patrol vessel, the SAS Makhanda, work that was totally unrelated to the sewer pit.

On the day of the incident, Warren was on the deck of the SAS Makhanda which was berthed close to the building which houses the sewer pit when he heard the panicked screams from the front of the building. Being the sort of person that would always selflessly

help others in need, Warren, along with vessel crew members, rushed to try to assist. He was part of a human chain formed to try to rescue a worker who had fallen into the 5m deep pit. He could not have known about the odourless, colourless and lethal gas which awaited them and he succumbed to the methane gas leak and died at the scene with the others. Warren and those brave heroes could have feared for their lives and chosen to be silent spectators but instead they truly lived up to Madiba's words that "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." Warren died as he lived, a courageous, brave and yet unsung hero.

The news of his death came as a shock and was heartbreaking for the

Riodor Marine family, management and his colleagues. Even more difficult was to have to break the news of his tragic, yet heroic death to the family and loved ones.

Warren embodied the scriptural precept "do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit but with humility of heart regard one another as more important than yourself (Phillipians 3:2)".

Warren's altruistic bravery and courage merited that the record be set straight about his heroic last day.

Rest in Peace dear friend, colleague and loved one, as always you truly regarded others as more important than yourself.

Your memory will live on forever.

Alan de Cerrff

Chief executive Riodor Marine



WARREN WILLIAMS