

The Legacy of a Master Storyteller: A Tribute to the Late Clem Sunter

By Wayne Visser

I heard a few days ago that Clem Sunter has died, aged 81. I had the privilege of knowing him and co-authoring my first book with him. There are few people I know who worked more consistently to make a positive impact in South Africa. Sunter was a widely respected corporate leader, who was head of the mining giant Anglo American's Gold and Uranium Division and later looked after their Chairman's Fund. Despite his illustrious business career, I think Clem's legacy is as a storyteller.

Sunter was trained in scenario planning by the global experts at Shell in the 1980s. His High-Road vs Low Road scenarios, which he developed and promoted during South Africa's turbulent transition to democracy, helped nudge the country away from civil war and towards a negotiated power-sharing agreement. And then his Mind of a Fox scenarios work with Chantel Illbury continued to challenge leaders to apply foresight-based thinking to strategy. He was a tireless advocate for change and many will remember him fondly for his books and talks.

I will always be grateful for his seminal role in my own development as a writer, speaker and thought-leader. When I sent Clem a draft of my book Beyond Reasonable Greed (originally called Shapeshifting), he suggested that I extend the metaphor of lion vs elephant companies from one chapter to a theme throughout the book. I felt honoured that, on reading the revised manuscript, he asked if he could be my co-author. His additions and suggestions were extremely light touch, but always constructive and encouraging.

He remains one of my strongest and most inspiring role models. R.I.P. Clem.

Source:

First published on Purpose Inspired, February 22, 2026. Available at:
<https://purposeinspired.substack.com/p/the-legacy-of-a-master-storyteller>