

Grosskopf meets his victim

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Pretoria - Hein Grosskopf, the MK member responsible for the 1987 blast at Wits Command was confronted for the first time on Tuesday with one of his victims injured in the explosion.

Aletta Klaasen was only 17 years old when she lost her left eye in the explosion. Minutes before the blast she had been talking to two soldiers in front of the building, when Grosskopf parked a Valiant bakkie close by.

She said he got out and looked in her direction. "I asked him: What are you looking at – I'm not for sale. He turned around and walked off and shortly after that the bomb went off."

When asked how she felt seeing him again after all the years, she said with an awkward smile: When I saw him this morning, I recognised him immediately. I'll never forget his face.

Klaasen was the only victim to oppose Grosskop's amnesty application, because it is difficult to forget what he did to me.

Grosskopf was accompanied by five officers of the police VIP protection unit after the hearing on Tuesday.

In an earlier statement he explained in detail what had compelled him to join the ANC in 1986 and how, after six months of military training in Angola, he trained for a further six months at the ANC's headquarters for the Command attack.

An attack on the Braamfontein gas works in Johannesburg had also been considered, but it was rejected as too dangerous for civilians in

the area.

The plan had been to detonate a powerful bomb in Quartz Street in order to blast a hole in the army building and to injure people inside.

He drove a manual bakkie to the scene of the blast and designed a device to change gears after he had parked it. The plan was for the bakkie to roll across the street by itself, mount the pavement and, in crashing against the wall of the army building, detonate the bomb.

The bomb made up of 120kg of explosives, had been placed on the back of the bakkie in a trunk. It was packaged so as to limit shrapnel release and prevent injuries to bystanders.

Grosskopf said after he got out of the bakkie, he walked away quickly towards the Sterland cinema complex.

Just before I reached the cinema I heard the Valiant's revolutions increasing. Then there was a loud blast which shattered all the glass in front of me.

He then ran to a motorbike he had parked a few blocks away. After picking up a few belongings from his Linden flat, he drove to the Botswana border and fled the country.

Grosskopf concluded by saying that he was proud of the small role he had played in the struggle for freedom. "Taking a life is never easy. I believe all life, even that of my enemies is sacrosanct. Violence can never be good; it can only be necessary. I am truly sorry for the injuries and suffering I caused.

At her request Klaasen and Grosskopf met for a few minutes in private after the hearing and then posed briefly and awkwardly for a photograph.

Neither of them wanted to elaborate on their meeting. Klaasen was only prepared to say that it had been good.