

**Celebrating the life of**



# **William Kiptanui Chemweno**

**June 1929 - November 2020**

# PROGRAMME

## Friday November 20<sup>th</sup> 2020

9.30am Procession to the tent

10.00am Speeches

- Family
- Friends and neighbors
- Administration

12.00pm Mass

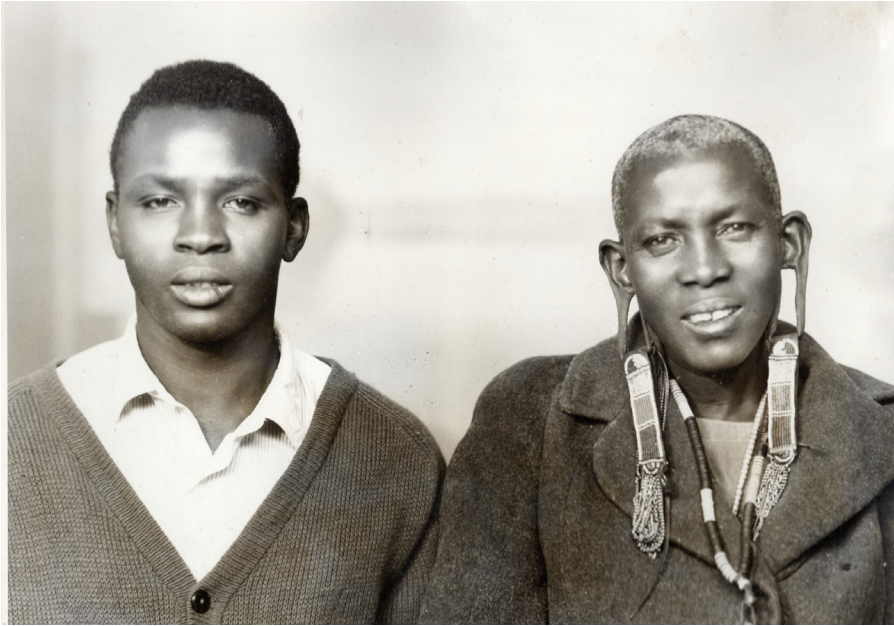
2.00pm Vote of thanks and final prayer

2.10pm Procession to the burial site

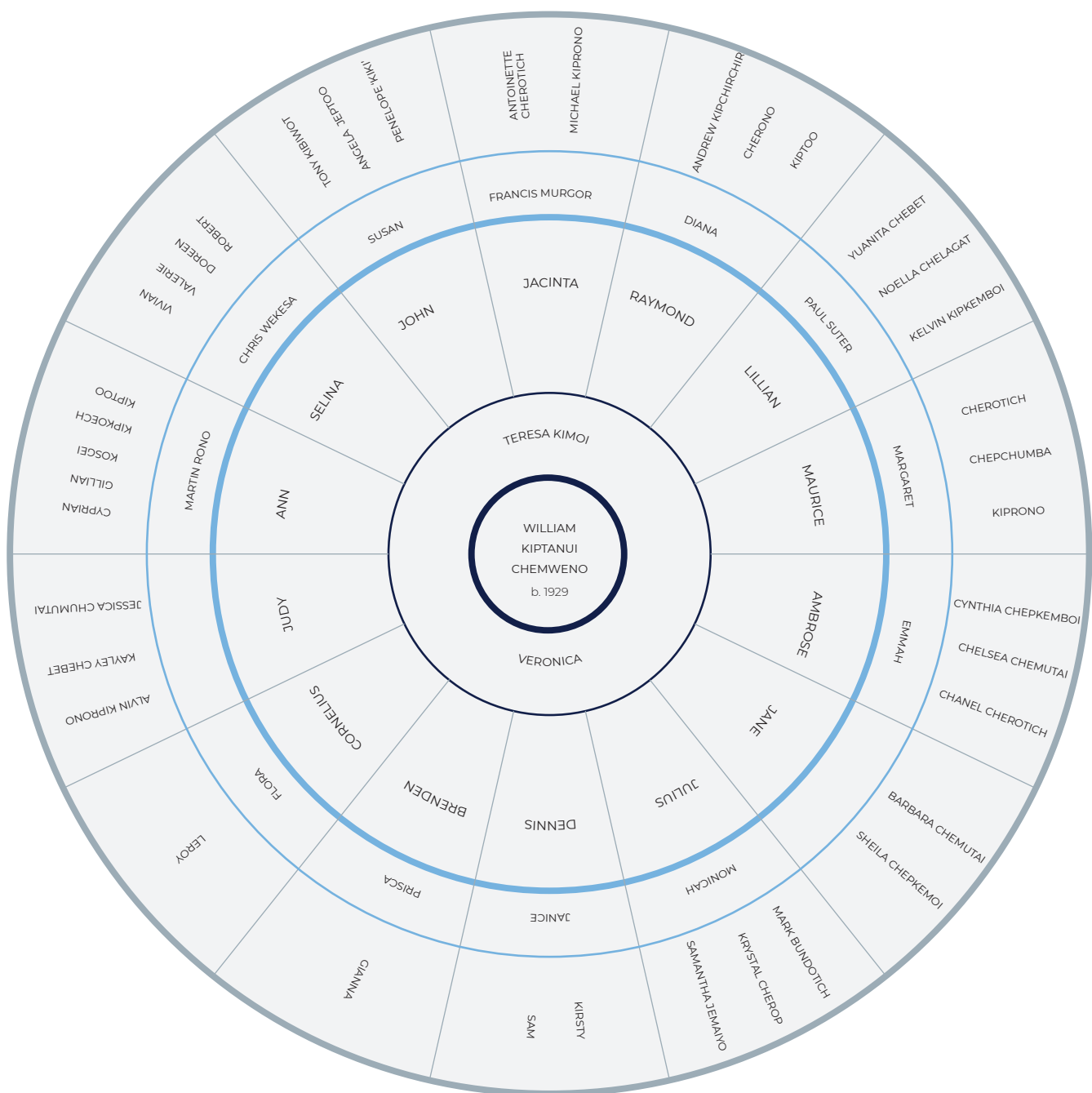
2.20pm Burial rites







# MZEE'S FAMILY





# REMEMBERING MZEE



On the morning of Wednesday 11th November 2020, our patriarch, Mzee William Kiptanui Chemweno finished his journey here on earth. He was 91 years old. Over the years, he gave meaning to his name

## **Chemweno**

The one that most people knew him by. It represents his personality and it demonstrates the values he upheld.

# Courage

Mzee was a man of immense courage, foresight and resolve.

Born in June 1929, the second child of Chemweno Barmareng and Teriki Kipsewergut (nickname Gogo Kapkichwa) his brothers were the late Ayabei Chemweno (arap Munjur) and Komen Chemweno (Araka). Mzee embraced modern learning at Tambach Intermediate School where one of his teachers was the man who would later be president - Daniel arap Moi. From Tambach he moved to Kabete near Nairobi to join the famous Jeanes School where he studied Agriculture & Survey. These subjects remained his life-long passion. Full of foresight and very determined, Mzee was always seeking new ways to improve his farming. For example, in 1956, at the height of colonialism, he took the bold step of buying a tractor and in 1957 he bought his first car, a Chevrolet pickup. Many years later, in the 1990s, together with Stephanus Kruger Mzee mobilized farmers to protest against the unfavourable agricultural policies facing cereal farmers. They brought Eldoret to a standstill. Mzee had the courage to complain about the appointment of KCC directors who were not dairy farmers and who had no direct links to the sector, so he was fronted for a position at KCC. Unfortunately, he didn't win. Some say he was rigged out by the powers of the day.

# Hard-working, honest and humble

As a young man, Mzee traded hides, skins, beads, and lumber with his brother Ayabei. He also tried his hand as a tailor – no wonder that throughout his life, he was always formally dressed, in a suit! In 1953, after his training in Kabete, he worked as an Agricultural Extension Officer in Uasin Gishu. There he met William Spencer, the Uasin Gishu District Agricultural Officer who became his mentor, giving him exposure and introducing him to new farming networks. They worked together for a year before Mzee left that job to take another one at Chebiemit Sawmill. He stood out as he rode his bicycle to work, but he did not allow this attention to limit his ambition. Soon after, he bought the tractor and then in 1964 he purchased Kapkapai Farm, and later Karuna Farm.

Mzee was full of ideas and energy. As a businessman he distributed beer with Mzee Jackson Kibor and Mzee John Kibogy. He also invested in commercial and residential real estate in urban areas. Sometimes, he undertook tough projects that were not commercial, but which brought great joy to others. A skilled carpenter, he made table that still stands in Gogo Teresa's Kitchen. A humble man throughout his life, Mzee did not allow his wealth to create a barrier between himself and others. He stood for honesty and he treated everyone equally and measured people on the basis of their effort and hard work.

# Excellence

A progressive man, Mzee embraced technology especially in farming, adapting new methods and techniques of farming which is a factor that led to his success. He won numerous awards at agricultural shows. Surprisingly, he had an award for pyrethrum and though he was known everywhere as a cereal and dairy farmer, his first farming endeavour was actually pyrethrum and apparently, he excelled at it. He never stopped learning or appreciating new ways of farming and he set aside resources to travel to Israel, Zimbabwe, and the U.K where he attended the Royal Show that used to be held every year by the Royal Agricultural Society of England. Combining his knowledge of farming and survey, he undertook expert terracing. He also served on the Lands Control Board of Uasin Gishu for a long time.



# Methodical

Mzee farmed year in, year out and his operations followed a strict schedule that allowed him to cover a vast acreage all on his own. The way he organized things on the farm extended to the way he planned for our home. He had a special car for Gogo Teresia to go to church every Sunday. Even though it wasn't until the 2000s that he found time to join her in church, he supported the development of the Catholic Church in Moiben. His methods did not always please his children. He over-worked himself and he overworked them! All his children worked on the farm after Form 4 as they awaited their examination results. The tasks included milk delivery, taking food to the workers, picking farm inputs from town and anything else that Mzee decided needed to be done fast and well. Often very stern he was really quick to instill discipline.

## Will(iam) Power...no White Cap

There was a light-hearted side to Mzee and Gogo Teresia often made him laugh. He was always relaxed after having a beer, enjoying the time with his friends and laughing a lot with them and with his children. He really laughed at the antics of his grandchildren. Not too long ago, his grandchildren Sheila, Boi and Kibi asked Mzee to host a party on the hill. Their Guga jokingly replied he would only host a party if Kibi got married. His response caused everyone to burst into laughter, knowing that there would be a long, long wait for such a party. That conversation took place at Chepkinoyo bar, Karuna which was Mzee's "local" and yes, they were drinking White Cap! Mzee never failed to make a big deal in celebrating weddings in the family. It made him happy when he saw his children and grand-children happy. Having his children and grandchildren around while enjoying his White cap was truly the fun side of his sunset years.



# Education

As a person who reaped the benefits of modern education in his early years, Mzee strived for his family to receive a good education, up to the tertiary level. He would pay school fees for the grandchildren who had topped their class in either first, second or third position in the previous school term and made a point of celebrating milestones like graduations. He also taught his children and grandchildren valuable skills out of school. For example, cutting a sheep's tail and using salt to disinfect it. Always community-minded, Mzee educated very many of his relatives, contributed to the development of schools in his community such as Moiben Day Secondary and served as Chairman of the Board of Governors of various schools and as a board member of several others like Sing'ore Girls and St.Patrick's Iten.

# No

Some of us think that Mzee said 'no' too often. He stood his ground, rigid, his mind firmly made up. His eldest, John, describes him as "intelligently-stubborn". Once he had arrived at a decision, it was final and as many came to learn later, he was usually right. Mzee taught us never to seek easy answers because he did not entertain our lazy requests; you had to plead, prove the worth of your argument and of your need. Sometimes, he said 'no' to force you to be more resourceful in seeking solutions to your problems and he was not going to be diplomatic about it. As his son, Julius says, his nature led to a few burnt bridges. Yes, very often his 'no' felt harsh, but in the long run it stamped the values of hard-work and independence in our family and it discouraged us from poor preparation and making quick assumptions. Also, we did get to see his love for all of us as something that run deep within him. Losing close family members made him extremely sad. He cried openly last year when he lost his first wife, Gogo Teresa, and earlier too, when his children Anne, Lillian and his grandchild Lagati (Noella) passed away. Inside the harsh exterior there was a caring and sensitive man.

## One, united as family

In 1952 Mzee married Gogo Teresa Kimoi in a traditional wedding. They had a church wedding at the Catholic Church in Iten in 1957 and were blessed with seven children - Ann Rono, Selina Wekesa, John, Jacinta Murgor, Raymond, Maurice and Jane. In 1962, he married Gogo Veronica in a traditional wedding and they had seven children - Lillian, Ambrose, Julius, Dennis Kibet, Brenden, Cornelius Kigen and Judy Chemeli. Mzee was blessed with 38 Great grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. Though a polygamous man, Mzee worked for the unity of his family. Jacinta, his daughter, observes thoughtfully, "He treated all his children equally - I don't think he favored any of his children". Mzee was not one for outward or elaborate shows of love or affection, but with time we grew to know that his unspoken love-language was visible in his actions. His actions were focused on the long run, teaching us to be honest and resourceful while providing without spoiling us. He provided so much for us, his family, and he gave a lot to his workers. Mzee loved to throw parties at Christmas and on New Year's Day he would slaughter a cow for the workers and family. The workers also received gifts like blankets, oil, sugar, as a way of rewarding and motivating them.

**Therefore, today, we stand as one as we bid farewell to our patriarch. He built this wheel that will move us into a future without him. Though he will no longer be there to steer us, we know the strength that he consolidated in this wheel.**

**Each one of us, a spoke in this wheel, has a part to play and a solid commitment to keep his values, to build on the legacy and the memory of William Kiptanui Chemweno for future generations.**







# TRIBUTES



Dad, as you sleep today, we know you were a success. You have left the world better than you found it! You never failed to express your appreciation to your children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and all who came knocking at your door. You always looked out for the best in others and eternally gave the best.

Dad, you gave us the best things in life: your guidance, your time, your care and your love. We are truly grateful to have called you Dad!

You were our pillar of support and always there for us regardless of the numerous times we embarrassed you, made you sad, or didn't meet your expectations.... You held our hands and told us to be strong. You were not overly expressive, but your actions spoke for you.

We will cherish our childhood memories and all that you did to make our home a happy and fun place to grow up in. Precious memories, forever cherished as souvenirs.

We will always remember that special smile, that caring heart, your warm embrace, the advice you always gave us and you being there for your family, through good and bad times no matter what. We will always remember you Dad because you are irreplaceable!

We, as your Children will endeavour to continue shining your light and carry on with your legacy. God saw you getting tired and with no cure in sight, He put His loving arm around you and whispered "come to me"

We know it is well up there, you have awesome company.

**Your sons & daughters**





Guga, your time on earth has ended and our world will never be the same without you in it. The strongest limb has fallen from our family tree, but we will grieve not, knowing that your soul is at rest; a rest well deserved. You have worked tirelessly for as long as we can all remember; not once do we remember you staying home because you were tired. Today we celebrate you and hope that you are getting the much-needed rest you deserve.

There was a special way each one of us communicated with you, special ways we each showed you love and respect for your wisdom, and appreciation for all of your accomplishments. We hold on to the fond memories that you have created for us; the Christmas gatherings, wedding celebrations, picnics on the hill, parties of all kinds, the infamous pig fest, monetary tokens, endless stories, just to mention a few.

You narrated stories to us about your childhood. Stories about the colonizer and about how you worked hard to obtain your success and wealth. Under your watch, there was no room for laziness or excuses.

You appreciated a good education and always wanted us to excel in school. If you were unhappy with our performances, we sure heard about it. You spoke plainly and honestly, if our grades were bad and we knew not to bring nothing but good grades back to you. We knew if we needed to ask you for something, we would have to rise up very early and meet you in your office before you went to work. We will forever remember you for pushing us to success. Your hard work and discipline is a true epitome of "if you love your work, your work will love you back". It is because of your hard work, tenacity, wisdom and pride that we are here today. You were a provider for your family but also gave back and supported the community.

On behalf of our family, we thank you all for coming here today to pay your last respects to our loving grandfather. We are rest assured that Gogo, who was an avid planner, has prepared a place for you right by her side. You and Gogo will be reunited, together with your loving daughters, Anne and Lillian. Your grandchildren will feel your physical absence, but we have very many unforgettable memories of you. Our family chain is broken but as God calls us home one by one, the chain will link again. We promise to keep your fire burning, until we meet again!

In your honor today, we tip our hats off to you.  
Our legend! Our Hero! Our GrandFather!

**We love you!!**

**Your grandchildren**





I can't think of a more appropriate way to start my tribute than by thanking you from the bottom of my heart for providing for us so adequately while growing up. Even though you had plenty yours was a life of modesty. Infact I did not realize the extent of our privilege until I was much older. We harvested maize and hang out with the temporary workers (except when they were being paid cos we didn't get paid) and felt just like them. Working on the farm back then felt punitive. It's only later in life that I realized it was lesson Hardwork 101.

When I went to secondary school in Nairobi you personally dropped me off and picked me up every opening day, half term and closing day. I remember the stop overs at Midlands and Oyster Shell in Nakuru when you would dump half your plate on to mine because I was a growing child and needed to eat more.

I remember the morning you were supposed to drop me off at school and the wheel of the trusted 504, KLR 767, broke off. You remained calm and assured me that I would get to school on time. A few hours later we were at the Eldoret Airfield boarding farmer Smith's small plane. You sat in front with the pilot and Julius and I sat in the back. While we were flying over the Rift Valley we encountered turbulence and you kept laughing and telling us "don't throw up, don't throw up!". That was my 1st flight. Somebody else would have borrowed a friend's car to drop me off at school but not you. That to me was an illustration of your creativity and desire for efficiency. I was, of course, the cool kid in school that term. I remember one of the 1st things you told me after I got my drivers license was " If you're stopped by the police and they ask for a bribe don't bribe them. I maintain my cars well so we'll see them in court". Integrity meant everything to you. To you character mattered. You would probably wonder how 71 million Americans voted for Trump. Your word was your bond and you constantly reminded us to live an honest life and not to take advantage of anybody. These are the values I acquired from you and they have guided me through my entire adulthood.

I joined St Patrick's Iten for high school. Up to this point I had always winged my way through school. This caught up with me in high school and I was actually a failing student. This changed very quickly a[er I had an audience with you and the headmaster in his office. Thanks to you this was a turning point for me that enabled me to pursue an engineering degree shortly after. Throughout my studies in Birmingham I did not lack. You always paid my fees on time even though you had to go through a difficult foreign exchange regiment at the time. I remember when you came for my graduation and we tried to retrace the places you had visited when you 1st went to the UK, like the Indian restaurants in Leicester. That was also one of the few times you let your guard down and ended up walking into a glass pane mistaking it for a door.



After college it did feel a little weird sitting at the counter at Wagon Wheel with you while having a beer. I didn't have a beer preference then so I naturally asked for White Cap, which was your trade mark drink and that became my choice of beer to this day.

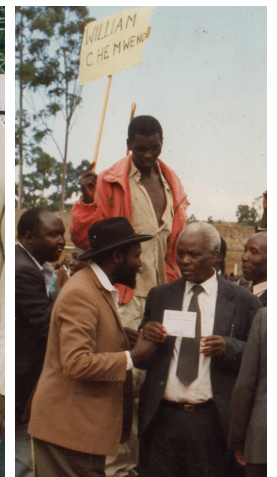
Our generation was the 1st generation to experience such a big cultural shift from their parents. This of course created challenges. We may have had our ideological differences but this was rooted more in doing what you encouraged us to do rather than disrespect. You encouraged us to be honest and to speak our minds.

Our strive for independence didn't mean we didn't appreciate what you had done. It was our way of growing the pie. Your shadow and success already loomed so large that our effort at independence appeared futile and we had to live, and we still live, with the curse of privilege. I wouldn't have it any other way though.

We all know that inside that tough exterior there was a soft interior. One that was caring, loving and considerate. When my wife Margaret passed away 6 years ago you showed your rare emotions and you stepped up both morally and financially for me and my family and for that I will be forever grateful.

You leave a legacy that we can only dream of. Our combined efforts will only equal a fraction of yours. You have set up your family for success for many generations to come. Only legends do that and you are one unique legend.

## Maurice Chemweno





# FOND MEMORIES

When he took the kids for trips in particular Midlands Hotel in Nakuru and to Nairobi in 1975, we had so much fun. The parties he used to throw during Christmas and New Year were unforgettable.

## Ambrose



My father was understanding, and he could be tolerant. Around 1979 I was sent away from school in Form 4. Mum gave him the letter from school, and he sent her and uncle, Arap Munjur, to school to inquire what had happened. The school said I needed to be at home for two weeks as ordered. Dad said I should go and stay with my sister, the late Ann, until schools opened. Despite the suspension he never showed me any anger. I learnt from him the importance of building trust and always being very honest.

## Jacinta



When he was in Nairobi, he would invite all his children who lived in Nairobi to Plums Hotel for dinner and breakfast. I also found his morning routine at the farm - going to visit Gogo Teresa for breakfast and a tete-a-tete - very endearing.

## Diana

He loved his grandchildren and was always so happy to see them, he threw parties and fed them alot. There was always soda for the grandkids.

## Monica

Christmas and New Years parties.

## Cynthia



During the Christmas holiday he would gather all of his children, nieces and nephews and take us to town. He would buy us clothes and shoes then take us to a milk bar for ice cream before heading home. His love for hats is something that will always make me smile.

## Selina



Recently, when Guga was hospitalized, I was with him and started chatting. He asked me how farming was going. I started telling him how it is tough and before I finished, he said, "I didn't get all these things on a silver platter. There will be good days and bad days, just work hard, be resilient and in the end, it will pay off". In short, he was saying Moibenshire wasn't built in a day.

## Tony

I remember being insulted for my grades. I was traumatized then, but now I look at it fondly because it was just his way of emphasizing that education is important.

## Antoinette



In April 1993, we went to visit Guga in Karuna. I remember being the first to jump out of the car when it stopped and running to say hi to Gogo and Guga. I got there first, stretched out my skinny hand to greet Guga then sat down to wait for the rest. When everyone was done saying hello, Guga reached into his pocket and removed a crisp 50-shilling note and handed it to me. That was my reward for being the first to say hi.

## Chebet

His infectious smile.

## Emma

# MAP

