



Old Res at Onderstepoort: 100 years old

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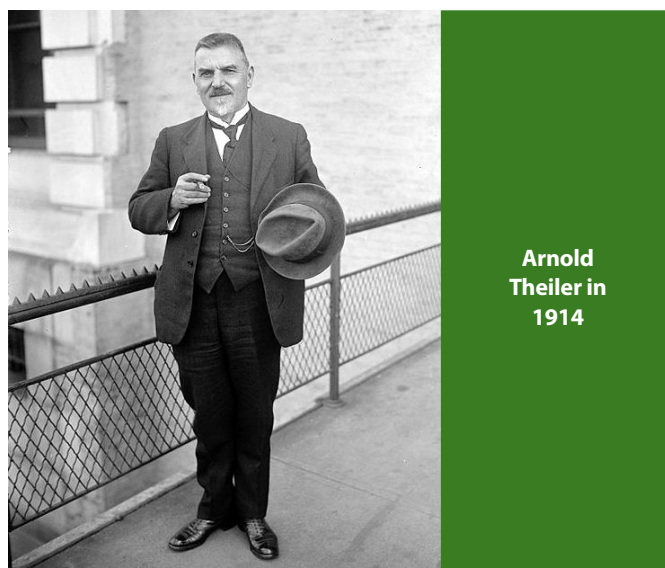
Sir Arnold Theiler, who was the first Director of the Onderstepoort Veterinary Research Institute (established 1908) and also the first Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science (established 1920), inaugurated a brand-new student residence on 14 April 1924. Old Res, as the hostel has become known, celebrated its 100th anniversary this year.

A music festival, reunions and other events were hosted in April this year to honour the day (See the **VetNews** issues of May, June and October this year). This is the last of a series of twelve articles in **VetNews** to commemorate the history of Old Res and the Onderstepoort residences.

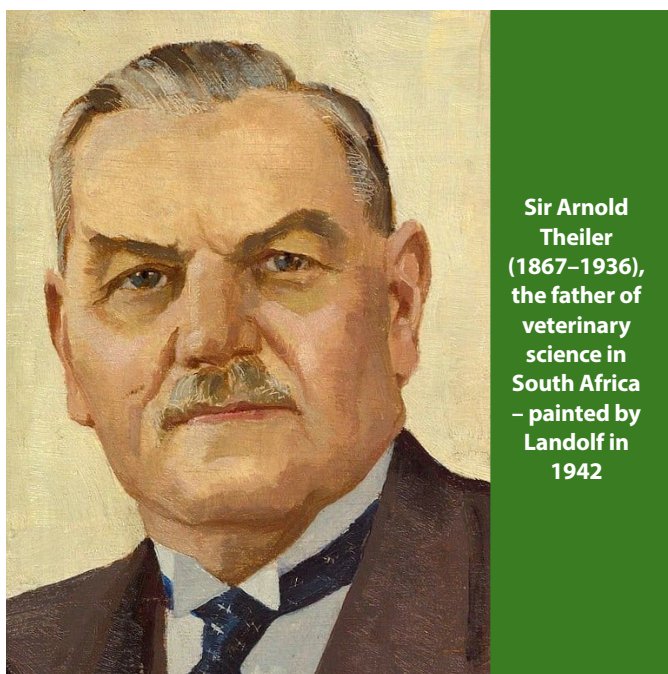
From Huis Onderstepoort to OP Village

Old Res was built to house 40 students and has been home to nearly four thousand students over the past century. Today, OP Village offers a living space for close to 700 students in 20 residential blocks (and in the old OVI houses).

Very few women were admitted to the BVSc course in the beginning. As a matter of fact, only ten of the nearly 400 graduates were women during the first 40 years of the existence of the Veterinary Faculty. However, 75% of the residents of OP Village today are female.



**Arnold
Theiler in
1914**



**Sir Arnold
Theiler
(1867–1936),
the father of
veterinary
science in
South Africa
– painted by
Landolf in
1942**



**The newly-built Onderstepoort residence in 1924
– today known as Old Res**



**Originally the matron's house
– now housing for the kitchen staff**



Aerial view of the Onderstepoort residence complex in the 1950s



Aerial view of the OP village complex in 2024

Houseparents of Onderstepoort residence

Tributes to the houseparents of Onderstepoort were published in the **VetNews** issues of April, July and September 2024:

Alischa and Tiaan Henning (2018 to date)

Jan and Susan Myburgh (2004 – 2017)

Japie and Estelle Venter (1988 - 2004)

Marius Hornsveld (1985 – 1988)

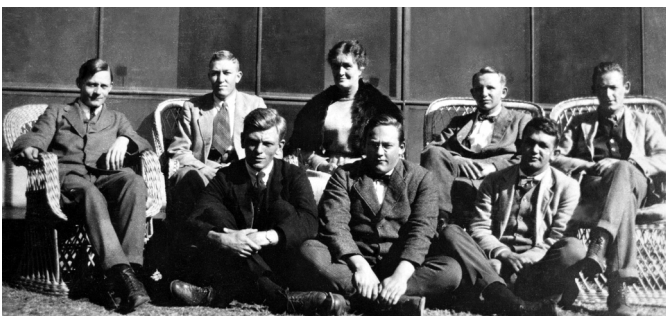
Eddie and Christa Genis (1975 - 1985)

Glyn Horton and his wife (1973 – 1975)

Dick Loveday (1962 – 1972)

Tom Adelaar (c. 1955 – 1961)

Very little was found about the housefathers or so-called hostel wardens and matrons before 1955. There is a photograph of seven of the first eight graduates with a housemother in front of Theiler's house from c. 1921. They were accommodated in the first hostel built at the Institute in 1908, but that was only used for the purpose from 1922 to April 1924 (when the new residence was built).



Class of 1924 in front of Arnold Theiler's house in c. 1921. Front (from left to right): JHR (Baas) Bisschop, M (Mike) Bergh, PC (Flip) Snyman; back (from left to right): CvE (Carl) Maré, JI Quin, the housemother (name unknown), JG (Hardy) Williams, WJB Green. Absent: G (Tony) Martinaglia (who joined the third-year class in 1922)

It is unknown whether there were only housemothers or matrons during the early years or hostel wardens as well. It could be that a housemother or matron was appointed to take charge of the students who stayed in the old hostel at the Institute (that now

houses the **National Veterinary Museum of South Africa**) and when the new residence, as well as a house for the houseparents and a matron's flat, were built 'across the road' in 1924, a hostel warden and a matron were appointed.

A complete list could not be established, but the old Onderstepoort class photographs and articles written by the late Dr Rudolph Bigalke give a glimpse of who might have been the head of the Onderstepoort hostel, alias Old Res.

There are no formal class photographs with the dean and hostel warden for 1926-1931, 1934, 1937, 1939 and 1940 available at **the University of Pretoria Repository** and it was thus not possible to establish who the housefathers were for the early years.

There are, however, individual photographs of the graduates available for all these years except for 1940. Nonetheless, it appears that relatively young hostel wardens were appointed from the 1930s onward at least, namely:

- **WO Neitz**, who appears as the hostel warden on the class photographs of 1932 and 1933 and who was *the housemaster for several years* (Bigalke: **VetNews** November 1997);
- **HPA de Boom**, who is listed as the head of the hostel in 1938;
- **DA Haig**, who is listed as the hostel warden in 1941, 1942 and 1944.

An older, **JDWA Coles**, who sits proudly with the Dean on eight class photographs, might have been the housefather from c. 1946 to c. 1954.

Link to the
Onderstepoort Class
Photographs from 1924
to date:

<https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/76027/>



Wilhelm Otto Daniel Martin Neitz (1896-1973, BVSc 1929)



Henri Pieter Albert de Boom (1913-1998, BVSc 1936)



David Arthur Haig (1913-1987, BVSc 1936)



Johan Douglas Walters Alliston Coles (1905-1987, BVSc 1926)

Frau Christa Genis visits Onderstepoort after 40 years

On Tuesday 5 November, Frau Christa Genis visited Onderstepoort for the first time after 40 years. This remarkable lady is the widow of Dr Eddie Genis and they were the houseparents from 1975 to 1985. Their story was captured in the July issue of **VetNews**.

Frau Christa's visit included a tour of the Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital (OVAH), with Srs Nicolien Fourie and Bev Olivier showing her around the impressive facilities. It was all veld and fields back in the day where the hospital now stands and Frau Christa was suitably impressed.

Next up was a visit to the OP Village Archive, where Yusuf Matwadia, Chairperson and Ceilidh Ferguson, Vice Chairperson: Wellbeing of the House Committee of 2024/2025 welcomed Frau Christa. She marvelled at all that was on display and recognised the faces of the students of their time in the old photographs.

Although much had changed at the OP Village complex, the walk on the famous 'rooi stoep' to the dining hall, was well remembered. Frau Christa recollected that the students always greeted them with ***I was born under a wandering star*** when the Genis family entered the dining hall in the evenings - the song that her husband regularly sang in his deep opera voice.

Frau Christa, who is 80 years old and still working at Protea Boekhuis in Hatfield, climbed the stairs to the Old Res balcony without effort. She pondered on the palm tree on the circle that was a feature during their time and she remembered how she covered students who had passed out on the lawn with newspapers. Alas, students pushed the envelope hard back then as well.

A delight was the last stop at the houseparents' home, where Alischa and Tiaan Henning are now raising their two boys, Rudolph and Laubscher, just as Eddie and Christa had done with Christoph and Rainhardt 50 years ago. The houseparents' house is a charming old home, also 100 years old this year. Although the kitchen and bathrooms have been modernised, the old wooden floors, thick walls and fireplaces are still there. Frau Christa, Alischa, Yusuf, Cailidh and the authors, Annette and Heloise spent a lovely half-hour in the houseparents' garden, grateful for those who had toiled in the past to make Onderstepoort the remarkable place that it is to this day.



Frau Christa Genis with Yusuf Matwadia, Chairperson (left) and Ceilidh Ferguson, Vice Chairperson OP Village House Committee 2024/25 (right) in the OP Village Archive



Frau Christa studying the old photographs with Yusuf. She recognised old faces and names



Frau Christa Genis and Heloise Heyne in front of the OVAH





Frau Christa Genis in the dining hall, recalling dining here with her family for a decade from 1975 to 1985



Frau Christa Genis welcomed at the entrance to the houseparents' home by Dr Alischa Henning, the current houseparent



Frau Christa Genis in front of Old Res – back for the first time in 40 years



Frau Christa Genis pointing out to Alischa Henning and Heloise Heyne where some fruit trees were and how things looked 40 years ago (in front of the houseparents' kitchen)



Frau Christa Genis in the dining room of the houseparents' house where countless family gatherings and parties with the students were enjoyed in the past



Frau Christa standing by one of the original trees in the houseparents' garden – a garden that was the playground for the children of successive houseparents over many years

We would like to express our appreciation for the invaluable input from Maryke Henton, Shan Ellis, David and Anne Lize Mordant, Neels and Ingrid Roos, Alischa Henning, Marnus Zaaiman, Sarah Biesman-Simons, Cecilia van der Walt, Marius Hornsveld, Jan Myburgh, Japie and Estelle Venter, Marina Bredell, Lesley Lunn, Antoinette van Schalkwyk, Frau Christa Genis, Dok Faffa Malan, Prof Gareth Bath and the late Dr Rudolph Bigalke. In addition, many of the photographs used are from the OP Village Archive and the ARC-OVI Archive.

Any information on or photographs of Huis Onderstepoort / OP Village are invited and can be sent to

oldres100years@gmail.com

or the Chair of the Veterinary History Society of South Africa:

<https://vethistorysa.co.za/>

Errata:

1. **VetNews** February 2024, p. 31: Legend 21 should read "*OP Village house*" instead of "*Houses used and managed by OBP*". This was corrected in **VetNews** March 2024 on p.32.
2. **VetNews** March 2024, p.28: [The first women who studied veterinary science at Onderstepoort could not stay in Old Res and had to find alternative accommodation.] It was believed that this was the case for all the other women who came to study at Onderstepoort until the 1970s. However, Dr Ingrid Wolleschak BVSc 1958 alerted us to the fact that a few rooms on the ground floor to the southern end of Old Res were partitioned off for female students during the 1950s. The story of the 'Ladies of Old Res' was subsequently told in **VetNews** August 2024 – with input from Prof Neels Roos BVSc 1958, Dr Ingrid Roos (née Wolleschak) BVSc 1958, David and Anne Lize Mordant BVSc 1961.
3. **VetNews** September 2024, pp. 36 to 37: Dick Loveday's surname is erroneously given as Lovedale in the captions to the photographs.