

Obituary in memory of John Humphrey Bowker as written by his daughter Trish.



John Humphrey Bowker, fondly known as “Long John,” was born on 12th February 1946 in Johannesburg. He attended St. John's College and matriculated at the age of 16. He received school colours for rugby and then attended the Naval Gym, where he met and became very good friends with Archie Norval. He also received his colours for rugby at the Gym but, unfortunately, contracted rheumatic fever, and was advised to give up sport.

In 1964, John, attended Rhodes University in Grahamstown, where he did his first year of Medicine. He then attended Onderstepoort where he graduated with a Bachelor of Veterinary Science BVSc. in 1968. He met his wife, Janet, during his year at Rhodes, and they were married in January 1970.

In 1965 he inherited farming land, “Reedsdale”, in the Grahamstown area from his great-uncle, who had no children. John was very grateful, as he had always dreamt of farming and loved animals.

John worked at various veterinary practices from 1969 until 1978, when he moved to the farm. It was difficult in the beginning as he had the land, but no stock. With time, he built the farm up to a very profitable concern by farming merino sheep and bonsmara cattle. He loved farming and providing veterinary assistance for his neighbours.

John involved himself in the community and was Chairman of the Farmers’ Association for many years, he served on the Governing Body of Graeme College, arranged for black fly control in the Fish River and was a member of various study groups. He was a patient man who had a calming influence on those around him. He was also very practical and could solve most problems. He was fond of saying, “If all else fails, read the instructions.” John had a larger-than-life personality, a booming voice, broad smile and a wicked sense of humour. He loved entertaining people with his jokes and stories. He enjoyed a special friendship with the “Hunting Boys” and “Fishing Boys” and treasured these trips away from the farm.

His daughter, Trish, was born in 1973 and his son, Andrew, in 1976. Both children attended boarding school in Grahamstown and went on to study at Rhodes University. John was very proud of his children, was never critical and always supportive of their ideas. He could be found most weekends and school holidays on the sidelines of their sportsfield cheering them on. Andrew is now farming “Reedsdale” and Trish has emigrated to New Zealand.

John and Janet retired to Kleinemonde in 2014 and enjoyed meeting new people and living at the coast. John loved to sit on the “stoep,” do cryptic crosswords, read history books and play suduko while watching the world go by on the river.

John passed away on 26 September 2018 due to complications with pneumonia.

He is sorely missed by his wife (Janet), children (Trish and Andrew), grandchildren (Caitlin, Cole, Chloe and Kelly), brothers (William and Meyrick), sisters (Susan and Judy) and his friends.