

DR VIC LIEBMANN: A TRIBUTE TO A SUPERB VET



In March 2021, Vic Liebmann finally succumbed to cancer at age 83. His parents had escaped the Nazi holocaust from Berlin just before WW2, and Vic was born in SA on 22 November 1938. He was conceivably the oldest practising veterinarian in Johannesburg and perhaps South Africa. Right up until his passing, he was still working as a vet consultant and surgeon, still mentoring other vets. His veterinary career was his life passion, and he gave his whole being to the profession. He always

took time to ensure that his staff learned and understood sound vet methodologies to handle all animals with care and compassion. He treated his team with the utmost respect and courtesy, and they were all fiercely loyal to him right to the end, and he ensured that they were handsomely rewarded after he passed away.

In addition to running his small animal practice (Corlett City Vet Hospital) for many decades, he and Stan Krawitz were also instrumental in opening the first vet clinical laboratory in Johannesburg. Many practices used this service to refer their clinical diagnoses. In addition, Vic was a member of a team of 4 vets (Dave Moore, Brian Romberg, George Frost and himself) who met monthly in the evenings to analyse and discuss Xrays to certify Hip Dysplasia-free dogs. This committee was later taken under the auspices of SAVA under Professor Roos. Additionally, to assist pet owners in approving appropriate treatment for their pets, he founded one of the first pet medical aid societies that his clients greatly appreciated.

Vic suffered significant personal loss and tragedy in his life, yet he never complained, and when people asked how he was, he always replied: "Good – good!" In his humble way, he never wanted to worry others or make himself the centre of attention. In 2017, he decided to close his practice to continue as a part-time locum vet due to his illness. His clients spanning over 50 years of practice, were devastated. A great many wrote emotional outpourings of emotion.

A few of their tributes are summarised below:

"An exceptional vet; an excellent diagnostician; an outstanding surgeon; an empathic and honourable gentleman; a true healer, a vet with the highest of ethics; a man of great humility; much more than a vet – always a great support; sensitive to our feelings as pet owners; cheerful and kind; adored by his staff; a wonderful sense of humour; the best vet ever! Utterly irreplaceable!"

He graduated from Pretoria University in 1961 and attained an M. Med. Vet. (Med) in 1979. His Masters degree dissertation was in Canine Cardiology. Over the years, many of his colleagues often enlisted his professional cardiology opinion. He also had a passionate interest in photography in which he was awarded a fellowship at the South African Institute of Photography. He adored visiting every game park in Southern Africa.

He was a regular attendee at monthly vet meetings and conferences with an insatiable thirst to keep up to date to further his knowledge and skills. His passing has left his wife, children, grandchildren, many lifelong friends and thousands of long-standing clients and colleagues bereft. But we are comforted that we were so privileged to have had the most wonderful human being as a role model of Ubuntu, humility, kindness, wisdom and dedication to excellence.

The veterinary profession has lost an outstanding vet, but his legacy will live on in the hearts and memories of all he touched during his lifetime.