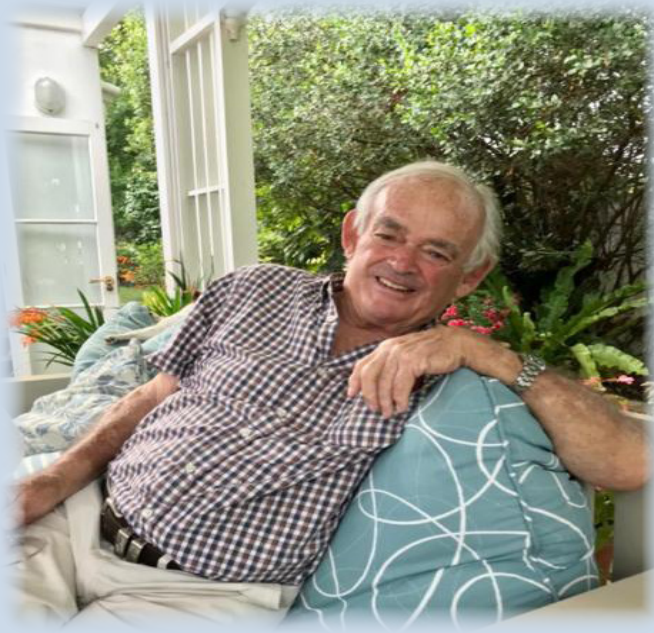


DR BRIAN RIPPON

04 FEBRUARY 1938 - 15 FEBRUARY 2022



One of the Eastern Cape's best known and most loved veterinarians, Dr Brian Rippon, passed away on 15 February 2022 after a short illness.

Brian farmed with livestock on, and practised from his farm Proctorsfontein in the Grahamstown district of the Eastern Cape for more than four decades. Due to Brian's legendary hospitality, Proctorsfontein was for decades a special place to the veterinary fraternity; especially those in the Eastern Cape, but also to many veterinarians from other provinces and from overseas.

Brian's fluency in isiXhosa and his sense of humour enabled him to build and maintain a special rapport with the staff on his farm and on the farms of his clients.

Brian and his wife, Jenny, moved to Knysna in 2007.

Brian was a very special person, always humble, loved by his colleagues and his clients. He had a puckish sense of humour and was the first to tell a joke against himself, such as the following which caused him great amusement: he was seeing a sick Afghan hound in his surgery and commented to the longhaired, long-faced owner (a legal friend); "funny how dogs and owners look alike", to which the quick-witted attorney parried: "have you not just acquired a bulldog?"

Always a great conversationist and raconteur and a great character, the stories about Brian himself are numerous and legendary.

In his younger days he was renowned for the speed at which he roared up and down country roads. - farm labourers compared the sound of his passing bakkie to that of a Boeing passing overhead. He once hit an ox at night at such speed that it flew over the cab and landed in the load body of his bakkie.

TB testing in his early days in practice involved accreditation schemes where every bovine on the farm had to be accounted for from test to test. This involved hours of office work and on one occasion Brian worked till 3am balancing the TB registers, realized that he had an early TB test near Port Alfred and drove straight there instead of going to bed. The farmer was rather surprised to find the veterinarian sleeping in his bakkie at the cattle crush in time for the test the next morning!

He would spend hours giving free advice to farmers, not a few of whom abused his kindness without making use of his professional services. This advice was given freely telephonically at all hours, in the cattle crush, and possibly most characteristically while he was seated in his bakkie, engine running and arm out of the window.

The latter habit was endearing and simultaneously infuriating – endearing to those who were getting a free consultation and infuriating to those who were waiting for him to keep an appointment!

Because Brian kept Eastern Cape time, not Greenwich time, he became universally known (in the Albany, Alexandria and Bathurst districts at any rate) as the late Dr Rippon. Because of this reputation, a competition developed amongst his many farmer clients as to who could delay Brian in characteristic pose with his bakkie engine running and his right arm out of the window for the longest. The record is said to be 20 minutes! (Brian of course denied this - he claimed it was 10 minutes!!)

A colleague told the story of visiting Brian and accompanying him on his rounds. Brian suddenly jammed on the brakes, jumped out of his bakkie, jumped over the fence and proceeded to inject a sick cow he had spotted next to the road. When the colleague queried the financial wisdom of such actions, he reportedly said – "it's old Jack's cow and both cow and owner are poorly - I won't charge him". Such was the man who served his clients and local community in the Albany district for 46 years.

Brian graduated from Onderstepoort in 1962 and worked in rural practise in the UK and Canada until 1965 when he returned to South Africa and opened his practice on the family farm.

Brian served the veterinary profession unstintingly. He served on the committee of the Eastern Cape & Karoo Branch of the SAVA for many years and as Chairman of the Branch from 1975 to 1978. He was an elected Federal Councilor of the SAVA for ten years from 1978 to 1988.

Brian was also involved in the founding of the SA Veterinary Foundation and served on its Board for several years. During this time he also ran his rural veterinary practice and ran his 3200ha farm.

Brian was awarded the Boswell Award for distinguished service to the South African Veterinary Association in 1978.

The South African Veterinary Association Congresses were held in Grahamstown in 1977 and 1992. Brian chaired the organizing committee of the 1977 Congress and served on the organizing committee of the 1992 Congress. Brian played host on his farm Proctorsfontein to congress attendees during both these congresses.

Brian was not immune to personal setbacks such as family tragedies and a farm attack which saw him severely beaten and bound and shoved under a bed (his resourcefulness enabled him to escape and thus save his life); a vehicle accident put an end to his veterinary practice. Through all of this he retained his sense of humour and good natured approach to people and life.

Brian was a talented artist. His beautiful paintings of South African and Namibian scenes which adorn many homes attest to this. A painting by Brian of an Eastern Cape cattle farm hangs in Vethouse. It was presented to the SAVA by the Eastern Cape & Karoo branch of the SAVA. Brian was also known to write the odd poem such as Ode to the Angora goat (which was inspired by his exasperation at their propensity to die!)

In short, Brian Rippon was an exceptional person, a wonderful friend and colleague who was characterized by honesty, integrity, caring and empathy. He was the ultimate gentleman.

It was a great privilege to know Brian. To his wife Jenny and to his children, Clare, Craig and Alastair and his extended family, we extend our heartfelt condolences. We share your loss.

Francois van Niekerk