

#UPGraduation2023: Meet the UP family of vets

Posted on **May 02, 2023**



Marlie and Sybrand Harris

Siblings Sybrand and Marlie Harris are part of a one-of-a-kind unit: they are two of a family of five veterinarians who have all graduated from the University of Pretoria (UP) – and they were thrilled to be sharing a stage at the [Faculty of Veterinary Science](#)'s autumn graduation ceremony, where they both received their degrees.

“I am so happy to be sharing a stage with my brother at this year’s graduation!” said Marlie (24), who has graduated with a Bachelor of Veterinary Science (BVSc) degree and is doing her compulsory community service (CCS) year in Upington, Northern Cape. “I grew up spending a lot of time in my dad’s vet practice and was always intrigued by the diverse career opportunities in the veterinary science field.”

She was also recognised for her exceptional work over the course of the six-year BVSc programme, with the Sir Arnold Theiler Memorial Award for Best Veterinary Student.

“The Sir Arnold Theiler Memorial Award was a lovely reward for six years of very hard work, and I am extremely proud of myself,” she said.

Sybrand, her older brother, graduated with a master’s degree in Veterinary Science during the same graduation ceremony. In 2019, he completed his undergraduate degree at UP and did his CCS year at Sybrandskraal animal clinic in KwaMhlanga, Mpumalanga. In 2021, he did an internship at UP’s Small Animal Clinic in Onderstepoort and a year later, started working at Ou Kaapse Vet Animal Hospital in Cape Town.

Despite working a full-time job, Sybrand managed to complete his master’s studies, *cum laude*. His master’s thesis was entitled ‘An epidemiological study of canine lymphoma in South Africa’.

The generations of veterinarians in the Harris family began with two brothers, Frederick and Willem Harris.

Willem, who is Sybrand and Marlie's father, studied towards a Veterinary Science degree between 1986 and 1991 at UP, before doing compulsory army service for two years at Voortrekkerhoogte and Swartwater; this is the equivalent to veterinarians doing their CCS for a year. From 1994 to 2011, he worked with his older brother Frederick at his vet practice, the Blouberg Dierkliniek in Louis Trichardt. Willem continued his studies and obtained two postgraduate qualifications in small stock and equine reproduction at UP. In 2011, he started his own mixed practice, Noordkaap Repro- en Veeartsenydiens, in Uppington.

Frederick studied Veterinary Science from 1982 to 1987 at UP and did army service as a veterinarian in Alldays thereafter. He worked for two years at a dairy in Limpopo before starting his private practice with his brother, where he is still involved.

The siblings took the vet baton from their cousin Barend, Fredrick's son, who completed his Veterinary Science degree in 2015 at UP. In 2016, Barend did his CCS year in Louis Trichardt and joined his father's private practice thereafter.

"I am proud of the legacy that we have created in the vet sciences landscape as a family; we all look forward to making a bigger impact in society and flying the UP flag," Marlie said.

Her plans include practising as a general practitioner for a few years and then she hopes to specialise in small animal internal medicine.