In Memoriam

Maatje (Malie) Marie Sophie Smuts

27 Februarie 1933 – 23 Mei 2023

Malie, soos almal haar geken het, is op 27 Februarie 1933 in Potchefstroom gebore. Sy was die kleindogter van die Duitse sendeling Daniel Heese wat tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog blykbaar deur lede van 'n Britse regiment vermoor is. Haar laerskoolopleiding geskied hoofsaaklik aan die Laerskool Pretoria-Oos en sy matrikuleer in 1948 aan die Hoër Meisieskool Bloemhof te Stellenbosch.

Op sterkte van haar eerstejaarstudies aan die Stellenbosch Universiteit word sy in 1951, as enigste vrouestudent van 18 studente, gekeur vir die tweedejaar veeartsekundestudies aan die Onderstepoort Fakulteit. Aan die einde van 1954 kwalifiseer Malie as veearts en verwerf, as die beste student in die klas, die gesogte Theilermedalje. As sesde vroulike Onderstepoort graduandus, was sy die eerste een om dié medalje te verower.

Sy aanvaar 'n assistant pos in die bekende Rondeboschpraktyk van drs Faull en Burgess, maar besluit na 'n jaar om by die internasionaal aktiewe Morele Herbewapenings beweging, met hoofkantoor in Switserland, aan te sluit waar sy tot 1969 vrywillige morele opwekkingswerk doen.

In 1970, egter, aanvaar sy professor HPA de Boom se uitnodiging om as lektor by sy Anatomiedepartement van die Onderstepoort Fakulteit aan te sluit waar sy, as eerste vroulike aanstelling, snel haar stempel as uiters bekwame, gewilde dosent begin afdruk. Op sterkte van 'n tesis getiteld *The Blood vessels of the Cervical Vertebrae of the Ox* word die DVSc-graad in 1976 met 'n gemiddelde punt van 90% aan haar toegeken.

Malie besoek in 1977/78 agt Anatomiedepartemente aan Europese fakulteite om die mees suksesvolle metodes van onderwys in veterinêre anatomie te bestudeer.

In 1982 volg sy prof JMW le Roux as professor en hoof van die Departement Anatomie op toe hy as dekaan van die Fakulteit aangestel word. Malie se reputasie as 'n altyd vriendelike, regverdige, dog ontoegeeflike eksaminator het aan haar die gepaste studentebynaam van 'The smiling executioner' besorg. Op haar versoek, word 'n beleid van roterende hoof van die department in 1986 ingestel.

Malie het inderdaad 'n merkwaardige loopbaan deurspek van prestasies gehad. Mees uitstaande van haar uitgebreide internasionale betrokkenheid, is waarskynlik die anatomiese studie op die dromedaris kameel wat sy op uitnodiging van prof D Cohen, direkteur van die Ben Gurion Universiteit se 'Desert Research Centre' in die Negev in Israel, gedoen het.

Die teksboek, *The Anatomy of the Dromedary*, met Smuts as senior outeur, verskyn in 1987. Sy dien ook in 1991 as gasprofessor aan die 'Koret Veterinary School' in Rehovot, Israel. Op sterkte van die dromedarisstudie bied sy op uitnodiging in 2002 'n gaslesing by die Texas A & M universiteit in die VSA aan.

Benewens *The Anatomy of the Dromedary*, was sy ook senior outeur van die teksboek Die Kameel/The Camel. Voorts was sy, met prof JMW le Roux, mede-outeur van die omvattende boek 'Anatomie van die huisdiere' die eerste veterinêre disseksiegids in Afrikaans

Daar het ook verskeie wetenskaplike publikasies uit haar pen verskyn terwyl sy senior- of mede-outeur van ander artikels was. Sy het verder as skrywer van kinderverhale naam gemaak. Sedert 1983 het sy vyf TV-onderhoude toegestaan.

Haar nagraadse toekennings is so indrukwekkend dat dit bykans soos 'n feëverhaal lees:

- The Star-koerant se *Star Woman of the Year* in 1976.
- *Outstanding Woman Veterinarian of the Year* deur die 'Women's Veterinary Association of the USA' in 1979.
- *Pretorian of the Year* in 1987.
- Die *Laureatus Toekenning* van die Universiteit van Pretoria in 1994.
- *Ad Educandum* toekennings van die Universiteit van Pretoria in 1989 en 1992.
- Verering deur die Anatomiese Vereniging van suider Afrika vir: 'Uitstaande toewyding aan onderwys en navorsing' in 2003.

Dis duidelik dat benewens erkenning as uitstaande wetenskaplike en akademikus, Malie veral ook as vroulike presteerder van formaat erkenning geniet het. Sy was 'n besonder dinamiese welsprekende mens met 'n uitgaande, vriendelike persoonlikheid wat haar plaaslik sowel as in die buiteland baie gewild gemaak het. Sy het haar christelike beginsels daagliks onopsigtelik uitgeleef en sodoende ook aangetrokkenheid tot haar verwek. Haar belangstelling in die kunste en ander dissiplines het sy onder meer gestalte gegee deur saam met ander Fakultietsdosente die Onderstepoort Kultuurklub en Onderstepoort Forum te stig om belangstelling in die kunste, wêreldgebeure, politiek en sport by die studentekorps te prikkel.

Prof Smuts het in 1993 by die Onderstepoort Fakulteit afgetree en in 'n aftree-oord in Somersetwes in die WesKaap gaan woon. Ten spyte van afnemende gesondheid, het sy ook daar haar reputasie as besonder aangename en dus geliefde persoon gestand gedoen. Die plaaslike veterinêre professie is inderdaad baie bevoorreg om so 'n wonderlike mens soos Malie onder sy geledere te kan tel.

Rudolph Bigalke
17/07/2023

Maatje (Malie) Marie Sophie Smuts
27 February 1933 – 23 May 2023
(Translated from the Eulogy by Prof Bigalke)

Malie, as she was lovingly known, was born on 27 February 1933 in Potchefstroom. She was the granddaughter of the German missionary Daniel Heese murdered during the Second Boer War. Her primary school years she completed in Pretoria at the Laerskool Pretoria-Oos, and she went on to matriculate from the Hoër Meisieskool Bloemhof in Stellenbosch. Due to her excellent marks during her first-year studies at the University of Stellenbosch, she was selected into the Faculty of Veterinary Studies Onderstepoort in 1951 as a second-year student. She was the only female student in her class of 18. At the end of 1954, Malie qualifies as a veterinarian and received the coveted Theiler medal for the best student in the class. As the sixth female Onderstepoort graduandi, she is the first to obtain this outstanding honourous medal.

She accepts an assistant post at the well-known Rondebosch practice of Drs Faull and Burgess, but after a year decides to join the internationally active "Morele Herbewapenings beweging" or Moral Rearmament movement with its headquarters in Switzerland, to do voluntary moral upliftment work until 1969

Approached by Prof HPA de Boom, she was appointed lecturer in the Onderstepoort Faculty's Department of Anatomy in 1970, the first female appointee, and was awarded a DVSc degree in 1976 with a thesis entitled The Blood Vessels of the Cervical Vertebrae of the Ox. In 1977/78, Malie visits eight Departments of Anatomy at European Faculties to study the most successful way to teach veterinary anatomy.

In 1982 she succeeded Prof JMW le Roux as professor and Head of the Department of Anatomy when he became Dean of the Faculty. Her reputation as an always friendly but uncompromising examiner earned her the apt student nickname of 'The smiling executioner'. At her request, a rotating headship of the Department was introduced in 1986.

Most noteworthy of her extensive international veterinary involvement was an anatomical study on the dromedary conducted as a guest on the invitation of Prof D Cohen, director at the Ben Gurion University's Desert Research Centre in the Negev in Israel. The textbook, The Anatomy of the Dromedary, with Smuts as senior author, was published in 1987. She also served as a guest professor at the Koret Veterinary School in Rehovot, Israel in 1991.

In 1976 she was nominated Star Woman of the Year by the Star newspaper; in 1979, Outstanding Woman Veterinarian of the Year by the Women's Veterinary Association of the USA; in 1987, Pretorian of the Year and in 1994 she received the Laureatus Award from the University of Pretoria. She also received Ad Educandum awards from the University of Pretoria in 1989 and 1992.

It is obvious that apart from recognition as an outstanding scientist and academic, Malie, especially as a female achiever of note also earns recognition. She was an exceptional, dynamic, well-spoken woman with an outgoing, friendly personality that made her very popular both locally and internationally. She lived her Christian values in her quiet way and attracted people with her wonderful personality. Her love for the arts and other cultural disciplines gave birth, together with other colleagues, to the Onderstepoort Culture Club and the Onderstepoort Forum.

After retiring from Onderstepoort in 1993, she went to stay in Somerset West where she passed away in May this year. Despite her failing health, she gained a reputation in the retirement village as an endearing and loving person. The veterinary profession will be poorer due to her passing but richer due to her contributions.