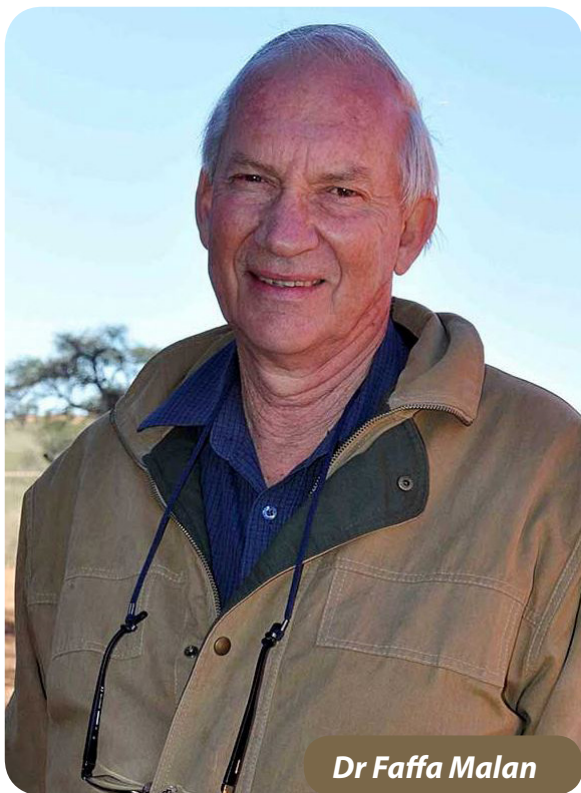




Huis Onderstepoort in the 1960s

Sir Arnold Theiler inaugurated a new student residence on 14 April 1924. This grand old building became known as Old Res when additional accommodation blocks were built. The number of beds available grew from 40 in Old Res to close to 700 at the OP Village complex as of today. To commemorate the historic event, a reunion was held on 5 April 2024 that included a visit to the South African National Veterinary Museum, CPD talks, a tour of the state-of-the-art skills laboratory at the Onderstepoort Faculty and a dinner at the OP Village Clubhouse on Friday 5 April (see VetNews May 2024). The festivities continued the following day with live music and food and drinks stalls on the sports fields of OP Village on Saturday 6 April (see VetNews June 2024). The celebrations included a chance to visit an exhibition in the Common Room where memorabilia was put on display and a timeline of traditions depicted on a 9-meter-long banner created by Cecilia van der Walt and Sarah Biesman-Simons of the Centenary Committee (see VetNews September 2024).

In this edition of VetNews, two students of the 1960s share their memories of yesteryear at Onderstepoort. This is the second last of twelve articles to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the inauguration of Old Res, compiled by Annette Boshoff and Heloise Heyne.



Dr Faffa Malan

Dok Faffa Malan remembers the 'good old days' at Huis Onderstepoort

The new arrivals at Onderstepoort had to learn everyone's names [which must have been achievable in those days when there were between 30 and 45 students per class]. One of the tasks of the second years was to light the cigarettes of the 5th-year senior students while kneeling and when striking Libido [Leon] Loots' cigarettes, we had to say: "*Donderbalkie, bron van lig, Enigste hoop vir donker Afrika. Brand, Bliksem, brand!*"

Other *hardships* included waiting in line to use the pay phone [probably using a long *tiekie*] and getting left out in the boondocks after midnight: no clothes, no shoes and no idea where we were.

Although there were only a dozen or so female students at Onderstepoort during my time, the ladies from the main campus visited Onderstepoort on occasion. First-year ladies were blindfolded on their first visit to Onderstepoort and their inside leg length had to be measured with a tape measure while they were standing on a table in front of everyone in the Rec Room. Their own (female) seniors did the measuring, but the blindfolded innocent girls were led to believe it was the OP boys doing it.

Right under the nose of the housefather, Dick Loveday (see *VetNews* September 2024), one had to check whether there were not already girls showering before taking a shower over the weekends. Apart from the visits of the ladies to uplift the spirits of the OP Boys, there were the visits to the Hi-Way Hotel – every single visit was memorable (even though the words of many of the songs have been forgotten).

On a more sober note, Sybrand van den Berg's dog, Lida, was famous for carrying his book bag and opening the door to his room in Old Res to deliver the book bag.

Dr François Stephanus Malan graduated from Onderstepoort in 1968. He is affectionally known as Dok Faffa and has made an outstanding contribution to veterinary science – as a scientist and as an entrepreneur. He has a particular knack for communicating with farmers and the public – disseminating valuable veterinary knowledge worldwide. He is South Africa's first virtual vet who provides weekly advice to farmers on Landbouweekliks and a regular speaker at African Farming's Livestock Farmers Days. The focus of Dr Malan's research was the resistance to anthelmintic treatment, especially related to the economically important infestation of wireworm in sheep. Dr Malan and his co-workers developed a colour-coded card test for the concept of targeted selective treatment – the FAMACHA® method. He continued his work after his retirement in 2008 when he chaired the Livestock Health and Production Group of SAVA where he was responsible for the improvement of animal disease surveillance throughout South Africa. For his contributions, Dr Malan received the Chancellor's Award of the University of Pretoria in 2014 and he was inducted into the Agriculture Hall of Fame in 2023.



The famous Lida, Sybrand van den Berg's clever dog



The Hi-Way Hotel was situated on Lavendar Road, 3 km from Old Res. (Google Earth)



The old 'watering hole' of the OP Boys – the erstwhile Hi-Way Hotel is a mere ruin today. (Google Earth)



Nappy parade 1965 - the new arrivals at Church Square, with the seniors, Olie [Pieter] Fourie and Leon Loots, giving the orders.

Prof Gareth Bath remembers the rag float of Huis Onderstepoort.



Prof Gareth Bath

Time has always been in short supply for university students, and the list of activities and demands made on them is very long. This is especially true of students at The Veterinary Faculty – Onderstepoort where there seems to be a never-ending series of dreary lectures, compulsory practicals and lengthy swotting far into the night, interspersed with interminable tests and finally ending with terrifying examinations. All this has to somehow be fitted into the far more important activities of boozing, loafing about, playing sports and chasing potential partners. Add to this all the other crucial annual activities like the boat race, the car rally, intermedics and intervarsity – and especially the University Rag Week.

In the sixties this event was always held in May, mercifully situated in a small gap between mini-tests and mid-year tests. At Onderstepoort, the newbie second years just marched along in the parade with whatever took their fancy, and in 1966 a bunch of us (Arthur, Glynn, Angus and me) somehow persuaded Jan le Roux to loan us a mobile mounted horse skeleton from Anatomy, on which we put an OP saddle blanket, saddle and bridle; we dragged it through the streets of Pretoria, how the little castor wheels survived the punishment was miraculous. Every year the third-year class was given the task of building the OP float for the Rag Procession. The float always had to be based on a theme chosen by some far-away rag committee. In 1965 it had been “Cinema Film Titles” and that year the OP float consisted of a huge Brahman bull approached from the rear by a white-coated vet brandishing a huge Burdizzo, ready to do the foul deed. The title? “Dr, No!!!” (The James Bond movie, if you don’t get it). Then in 1966, the theme was “Folk songs”. Our lot decided to capitalise on a recent plea by a dumb politician for the Nation to “be fruitful and multiply”. A large catapult launching a baby was built, with the caption reading “Vat jou goed en trek, Botha!”. Then came our turn. In 1967 the theme was “Radio programmes” – no TV in those days! After some discussion, the elected class float-building committee decided

on the Springbok Radio programme “No Place to Hide”, only to continue the genesiological obsession of OP, it became “No Place to Ride”, so we would work on a double meaning. The basic plot: a shack built over the lorry cab, a tiny boar charging out of the open door at the back of the shack, trying to mount the car, driven by an enormous large white sow that took up all the space – hence no place to ride. Easy to visualise, not so easy to build in one week, especially since the lorry would only be available the Thursday, with the Rag Procession on Saturday morning. So all willing hands were put to work on different tasks, starting immediately after the end of lectures and going far into the night. Crucial to success was the provision of “brown sandwiches” for the teams. Austin Markus somehow persuaded SA Breweries to supply crates enough to see us through. There were other scavenging teams sent to beg, borrow and otherwise acquire metal for the frames, chicken wire netting, stacks of newspapers, cardboard, acrylic paint, thatch, tools and other necessities.

Peet Delpoort could weld, so he became chief of construction of the sow, which was about 3 metres high. But welding went on far into the night, so he had to strike the start of the weld without the welding goggles, resulting in the most spectacular conjunctivitis ever seen. He always maintained that brown sandwiches had nothing to do with it. After piggy profiles were bent and welded, hoops to fit various levels were made. There were no small-scale models to work from, all done by eye so that often the frame had to be redone. Eventually, enough frames had been welded to take the wire netting, and another night flew by.

The next day, glue made from flour, and somebody standing inside Miss Piggy with sheets of wet newspaper which had to be pressed through the wire mesh enough to contact a glue-laden moist newspaper sheet applied from outside. Suddenly it was midnight, and how to ensure the paper dried sprung up in some minds. We got a few heaters and plugged them into Peet’s industrial strength extension cord. Others, led by Cheryl, were busy making little Master Boar, galloping like mad, with the same problems on a smaller scale. Still, others were making the frame for the shack. The next (second last) night, some more paper was added, with heaters working overtime. New ideas emerged, like how about giving Miss Piggy a long row of pert udders and pink nipples covered by scanty bikinis that just might drop off? Reluctantly we decided that this would not pass the dreaded censors at the start of the Rag procession. But we painted Miss Piggy pink and made her ears move. What about her eyes? Jacky, Mits, Cherry and others made eyeballs out of tennis balls, complete with long eyelashes, that could open and close. They were operated on a long cord from within the belly. Nev and his gang were puzzling over poor little Master Pig, and how to give him the sexuality he so obviously required. How to get this past the censors? Bruce’s brilliant solution was to make a very large red corkscrew that could be attached at the appropriate place once we had passed the censors.

Things were becoming desperate now, the truck arrived and one crew set about mounting the shack over the cab and another was getting the banners ready – on one side “NO PLACE TO RIDE”, on the other “WAS DAAR PLEK, DAN HET HY”. Frantic mixing of paints, luckily the new-fangled acrylics dried amazingly quickly. So undercoats were barely dry when the next coats were painted by exhausted teams, supported by brown sandwiches. To bed well past midnight. The final night arrived, the car, duly constructed around Miss Piggy by John and team, was nearly complete with wheels, tyres, mudguards and a Rolls-Royce grill – John thought we’d better make the intertwined RR a bit different, which I always thought was

a pity - I'd love us to have been taken to court by Rolls-Royce for copyright infringement! And on the number plate? OP 1967! Peet then had to tack the little car and Miss Piggy to the base of the truck bed, and also Master Piglet. By now Miss Piggy was no longer a large white but shocking pink. Master Piglet was supposed to be pitch black, but the painting team lost their nerve (and some black paint) and he became a pied, multiracial colour – still quite daring for the times. Miss Piggy had been given a steering wheel between her front trotters, with a very long column down to the dashboard. Someone else had given her a beautiful umbrella with the longest extension ever seen since she'd be in the fierce morning sun the next day. Would this get under the trees and powerlines and telephone lines? All this activity needed vast intakes of brown sandwiches, and by 10:30 pm we were almost at a standstill. Well, some of us were already there, sitting on the Res steps, contemplatively. A few decided that being stretched out on the pile of unused newspapers was an aid to contemplation. There was even time to make a little OP Gremlin like our later '69 mascot, to go onto the now beautifully thatched shack. Windows in the shack were made to give the driver glimpses of where he was and where to go. Finally, at 12:30, we could do no more, we had to get up at 04:30 to take the float into Pretoria. Our last action was to pull a load of newspapers over those members of the team still in deepest contemplation on the pile – it was May, after all.

We got up early enough on the Saturday, although not so bright, and last-minute adjustments were made before we moved off to the starting point, with Bert doing the driving since he had a heavy-duty licence, me on his left to see where the pavement was, others on the deck to be lookouts fore and aft. Doorsie Taljaard driving ahead and taking photos. Unfortunately, he got too far into the photography and crashed into Peet's red volksie. No damage to him but painful damage to his pride and joy DKW and Peet's courting chariot. We drove through the pitch dark without any arguments with trees or lines, thanks to our lookouts, and as we got to our destination dawn was breaking. Then into line to wait for the judges and censors. Somehow we passed. Miss Piggy's ears flapped enticingly, her eyes fluttered alluringly, and she even puffed - dry ice, not dagga. Then the long trip through town and back, with goggle-eyed crowds looking at Mr Multicolour's staggering appendage and wondering how this affront to decency and segregation was allowed, and Bert asphyxiated by the carbon monoxide fumes in the thatched cab. Finally, back to OP Res a lot faster than we went out (it didn't matter what broke now) and we all crashed for the afternoon. But we managed to make it to the all-important Rag Party where we finished off SAB's donation, which Austin refused to return.

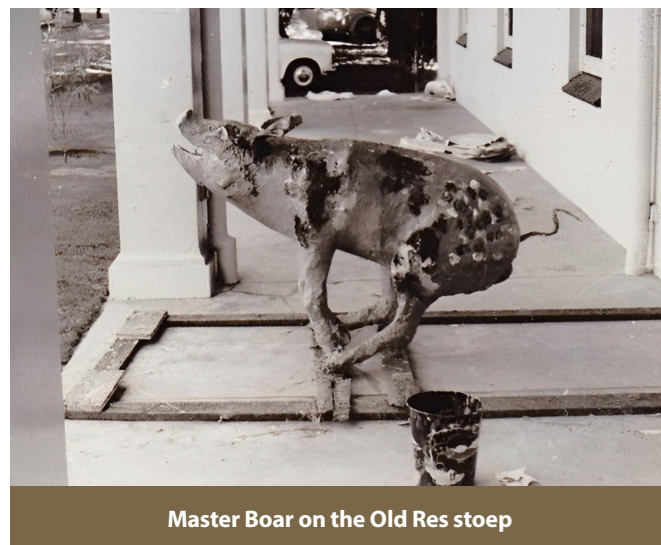
Sunday was always an anti-climax - taking things off the truck and cleaning it so that Bert could return it to its apprehensive owner, and clearing up the mountain of garbage we'd accumulated in just one week. But we did find a place of honour for Miss Piggy and her eager companion at the base of the stairs in the New Res, where they lived happily for many years, though they never (as far as is known) consummated their union. Unbelievably, on Monday it was back again to all the activities that get in the way of a happy student life.

Prof Gareth Bath qualified in 1969 and spent two years in private practice before becoming a state veterinarian at the Middelburg Cape Regional Veterinary Laboratory. In 1971, he was promoted to Veterinarian-in-Charge of the Allerton Regional Veterinary Laboratory in 1981 and 1987, Assistant Director and Veterinarian-in-Charge of the Vryheid Veterinary Laboratory in addition to his post as Veterinarian-in-Charge at Allerton. In 1988 Prof Bath joined the Faculty of Veterinary

Science as Associate Professor of Small Stock Health and Production. He was appointed as the Head of the Department of Veterinary Production and Ethology in 1999 and retired as Emeritus Professor in 2011. Prof Bath has been recognised for his sterling contribution to the veterinary profession on several occasions throughout his career, including SAVA Honorary Life Vice President (2014), the International Sheep Veterinary Association (ISVA) Lifetime Service Award (2017), The World Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Award (2020), the University of Pretoria's Chancellor's Award (2020) and the National Agriculturist of the Year Award (2021). Prof Bath is the current chair of the South African Veterinary History Society and has made valuable contributions to the preservation of the history of veterinary science in South Africa.



Miss Piggy taking shape in front of Old Res, May 1967



Master Boar on the Old Res stoep



Some helped to put the float together, others looked on or consumed 'brown sandwiches'



The number plate: OP 1967 and the RR on the grill



Collecting money from the crowds.
Blikskud!



Miss Piggy mesmerised the crowds when she puffed 'smoke',
flapped her ears and fluttered her eyes



Peet Delport's Volksee towing the float through the streets
of Pretoria during the Rag parade



"No place to ride" – Miss Piggy at the wheel and Master Boar
charging out of the shack