

In Memoriam

IBJ (Sakkie) van Rensburg: 1940 - 2024



It is with sadness that it became known that Sakkie van Rensburg died of cancer recently. Having known him as a friend and colleague for more than 60 years makes the loss so much more intense; in a sense, it is like losing a part of yourself and continuing with a life that will never be the same again.

Sakkie grew up in Bela Bela (the then Warmbaths, Northern Transvaal) and after matriculating enrolled for a degree in agriculture. After he completed it, he was admitted in 1962 (as one of 38 2nd-year students) to the Faculty of Veterinary Science at Onderstepoort where he qualified as a veterinarian in 1965.

Having first completed a degree in agriculture, he was a little older than most of his fellow students. This did not detract him from fitting into the group of Onderstepoort students who became known at the Faculty for their unconventional, and sometimes, perhaps, 'questionable' conduct.

He was well-behaved and placid, and a committed student, but those who attempted to intimidate him, paid dearly as he was proficient in some of the martial arts, and he did not hesitate to use this ability to make a statement when provoked.

After qualifying as a veterinarian, he joined the Department of Pathology at the then-Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute which was at the time responsible for the training of veterinarians. He was appointed as a part-time lecturer in pathology in 1967. He remained in the Department for the duration of his career, and after obtaining the M Med Vet degree in pathology, allowing him to register as a specialist veterinary pathologist with the South African Veterinary Council, was promoted to Professor, a position in which he retired in 1994 because of medical reasons.

Except for the few recent generations of veterinary students, few veterinarians will not remember Sakkie as one of the pivotal members of the Department of Pathology, both for his commitment and approach as a teacher and diagnostician, and his involvement in research that led to the elucidation of the cause of lupinosis and of 'geel dikkop' in sheep. He was well-liked by the students because of his supportive and patient way in which he assisted them in dealing with the vast amount of information comprising the topic of pathology and the intricacies of making correct diagnoses using necropsies and histopathology, the latter particularly as part of postgraduate training.

He married Marietjie Smit following the death of Annette, his first wife. His three sons out of his first marriage reside in South Africa and between them have 2 grandchildren. Sakkie was an exemplary family man and friend. He had a good sense of humour, was consistent in his conduct, and supportive and empathic, attributes that contributed to the value of his interaction with family and friends. He will be dearly missed, and we will remember him as one of the people referred to as the 'salt of the earth'.

May he rest in peace.

Nick Kriek

We honour and remember the contributions made by our colleagues who recently passed away.

Dr Margeret Anne Hiza: 1947 – 2024

Dr Hermanus Eduard Scholtz: 1937 – 2024

We honour their contribution to our profession and society in general and pray that their families and loved ones will find the strength to carry them through these times of bereavement.