



Houseparents of Onderstepoort residence: 1985 to 2024

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A celebration of the past century of the Onderstepoort residence would be incomplete without a tribute to the long-suffering houseparents. For those of you who will attend the reunion and festivities on 5 and 6 April, this will be your chance to own up and ask for forgiveness. In this issue, we look back to the past forty years and the most recent houseparents.

FOR THE NEXT INSTALMENT, ANY INFORMATION OR PHOTOGRAPHS ON THE INCUMBENTS BEFORE 1985, WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED.

Alischa and Tiaan Henning – January 2018 to date



Tiaan and Alischa Henning, houseparents since 2018 with their two boys, Rudolph and Laubscher, c. 2023.

Dr Alischa Henning (née Fourie), whose father was also a veterinarian (Johan Fourie BVSc 1973 from Rustenburg), qualified at Onderstepoort in 2010. Alischa was appointed as a lecturer in Pathology in 2016 and obtained her MMedVet (Pathology) in 2018. Tiaan studied at the University of Potchefstroom (now the NWU) and qualified with a BSc (Hons) in Actuarial Science in 2008. He is employed at the South African Reserve Bank and develops strategies to manage climate-related risks for banks and insurers in South Africa. They have two children, Rudolph aged 8 and Laubscher aged 5. These two boys are born and bred Opiates.

If you were to ask them as a newlywed couple, where they would picture themselves in the future, being houseparents at OP Village would definitely not have come to mind. Now, however, they cannot imagine being anywhere else. For them, it is a privilege to have such a far-reaching influence on so many young lives and this realisation becomes greater with each passing year.

They admit that it is a tough job and most of what the position entails is continuous service without much appreciation. However, the occasional letter, email, thank you or unexpected smile makes it worth it to this couple.

When asked what will stay with them, they mentioned the TuksRes welcoming event - an event held during orientation week where all the first-year students from all the UP residences come together at the Rembrandt hall. As a VIP guest, the houseparents sit in the middle of the hall surrounded by roughly 8000 students. In their own words: *Not only the physical experience but the sheer thought of the magnitude of one's responsibility and influence left us breathless. To take a step back and see what we have managed to do in our years at OP Village is very satisfactory.*



Henning family and their dog, Norris, with the House Committee at the statue of Klippiess and Cola, in front of Old Res, c. 2023.

Henning family with the House Committee, c. 2024.



Jan and Susan Myburgh – May 2004 to December 2017



Jan and Susan Myburgh, houseparents from 2004 to 2017

The residence at Onderstepoort is a mixed residence, housing male and female students and therefore a couple is always appointed as houseparents. This is a unique situation at the University of Pretoria, dating back many decades and comes with its own set of challenges, as one can imagine. Jan and Susan were houseparents for almost 14 years. Incidentally, the Myburghs were the houseparents when Alischa Henning was a resident at Onderstepoort. She took up the baton from her own housefather.

Prof Jan Myburgh qualified in 1984 and soon afterwards (1987) obtained his BVSc (Hons) as well. In 2002, he completed his MMedVet in Bovine Medicine and in 2014, his PhD. Susan is a teacher at Danie Malan Primary School in Pretoria North. They too, raised two children on the Onderstepoort grounds, a daughter and a son.



Jan Myburgh examines a crocodile, c. 2012

These two have many hair-raising stories to tell. The Myburghs now live in Pretoria North and Jan is still at the Faculty.

He lectures Toxicology to third-year students and does research focused on toxicology and bovine medicine, as well as his other passion, crocodile health and welfare.

As is still the case, Jan had to report to TuksRes on the Hatfield campus. During their tenure, it was Prof Roelf Visser to whom he had to go and please explain (on the “red carpet”) and ask for support for this far-off campus. The Myburghs also stayed at the current houseparents’ house despite being told that it was haunted. They never met the ghost, but a friend of theirs who stayed over once (but not again!), saw the restless old man with the long beard.

It was an enormous responsibility to take care of the physical and emotional well-being of so many young men and women. One particular incident will be remembered: a female student fell off her horse and the horse fell on her. She lay at the far end of the fields where the ambulance couldn’t get to. Some Old Res boys with quad bikes came to the rescue. They lifted the ambulance inch-by-inch on a muddy two-track road to her and back to the tar road.

On a less salubrious note, the poor mascot fenced in on the circle in front of Old Res, a goat named Spyker and the ewe was targeted with beer cans from the balcony one evening. When the Dean was informed, he ordered the removal of the goat to a paddock on the Onderstepoort farm. At some point the goats were returned to the circle in front of Old Res, but early in the Hennings’ time as houseparents it was decided by the House Committee to retire the live mascots. The circle now boasts two sculptures of the erstwhile heroic mascots, baptised Klippies and Cola.

For the Myburghs, making a difference in the students’ and their colleagues’ lives, mattered most.



We all know that OP Res is a special place!

It starts as your “home away from home” but not for very long before it becomes your “real home”...

OP is an amazing place. Enjoy it!
- Jan & Susan Myburgh House parents, Huis Onderstepoort

Japie and Estelle Venter – July 1988 to February 2004



Japie and Estelle Venter, houseparents from 1988 to 2004, at the Onderstepoort Ball in 1989.

Japie must be the only housefather who was also a student. He obtained his BVSc in 1992 whilst trying to keep his classmates in check for the duration of his studies. Dr Japie Venter was a private practitioner and then obtained his MMedVet in Small Animal Surgery in 2014. He joined the Faculty as a full-time staff member for five years from 2010 to 2016. He spent another five years as Specialist Small Animal Surgeon at James Cook University in Australia and he is now back in private practice. Prof Estelle Venter holds a doctorate in virology and worked at the Faculty of Veterinary Science of the University of Pretoria for 33 years before taking up a post at James Cook University where she is still employed. The couple lives in Townsville, Australia.

The Venters also lived in the same big old house that is still used for the purpose. Their two sons, Franco and Eduard, were born in 1992 and 1994 when Japie and Estelle were houseparents – yet another set of siblings who live to tell the tale. Estelle remembers with fondness that the House Committee who were predominantly males, dressed up like pregnant women and gave her a stork tea before Franco was born. Japie and Estelle also had to report to the main campus and had to attend regular meetings there. The houseparents of main campus residences could hardly believe that they had to manage male and female students in one residence.

For about four years from 1988 onwards, Estelle played netball and Japie cricket and tennis for the Onderstepoort teams. If not playing themselves, they enjoyed watching Onderstepoort competing against the other residences – winning, of course! They add: *Working with young people is always a privilege - to see and appreciate the different cultures and the talented athletes, artists and musicians.*

There are many stories to tell after having been houseparents for 17 years. One early Monday morning, Prof Woody Meltzer phoned to enquire if there were any parties at the hostel the previous weekend. He also confronted Estelle at work claiming that the students must have done something to his small crocodiles that were part of a very important trial. Later that Monday evening, Japie went to the hostel chairman and asked him if anybody knew anything about these crocodiles. He asked all the students who lived on the Old Res balcony as well, but nobody came forward. He gave the feedback

to Prof Woody that no res students were involved with the stress caused to the crocodiles over the weekend. Japie continues: *Prof Woody wasn't fooled like I was initially. Two weeks later, during an unrelated issue, I went to the Old Res balcony. To my utter surprise, I saw photographs on the notice board of a small crocodile (mouth taped up) being taken for a "sokkie" around the fire pit on the balcony surrounded by the joyful faces of the same students who had previously stood there with their innocent faces when I made enquiries. I had to go and sympathise with Prof Woody who had to reset his project, this time under chain and bolts.*

Another incident involved the ostriches. On a Saturday morning around 6 o'clock, Japie received a phone call – reverse charge, no less – from six students in a jail cell who were allowed to make one free call only. They were incarcerated earlier the previous evening and were charged with drunken disorderly conduct and causing unduly stress to the Faculty's ostriches. The six had, after a good few tall glasses of beer, "klippies and coke", ventured down to the Onderstepoort farm. Bull riding was not on the cards and as a good substitute, a couple of ostriches were commandeered. Under the watchful eyes of the other participants, the ostrich race commenced. Unfortunately, this also caught the attention of the OP campus security guard and the police Pretoria North squad car was sent. Upon arrival, one of the offenders put his finger in the face of the police sergeant and told him he had studied law before coming to OP and he knew his "rights". He was unceremoniously bundled into the back of the police van with his co-offenders. Japie went to negotiate with the station commander. He confirmed that the group were OP students and not outsiders trespassing. The six were released without charges.



Japie and Estelle Venter, houseparents from 1988 to 2004, with their two boys, Franco and Eduard, in 2003.



The House Committee organized a stork tea for Estelle Venter in 1992.

Marius Hornsveld – July 1985 to June 1988



*Marius
Hornsveld,
housefather
from 1985 to
1988, c. 2020.*

Marius picked the short straw when he was appointed as a houseparent. Before, House Onderstepoort was managed by the Faculty but when Marius and his then-wife took on the job, the residence was placed under Tuks Res like all the other residences on the main campus. The students at Onderstepoort did not appreciate the new rules, to put it mildly. No wonder then that Marius only stayed on in the post for three years. Marius reported to Dr John Williams, Director of Student Affairs at the time (and a Springbuck rugby player of the 1970s). From 1987, Marius had to cope without the help of a housemother at his side.

The big old house was in disrepair and was newly renovated just before Marius, his wife, Lilly, and their baby girl, Louise, moved in in 1985. Nuchas also came with, their dog from Namibia where Marius had worked as a state veterinarian in Outjo before joining the Faculty. Nuchas could do a neat summersault to catch a tennis ball in the air, to the amusement of the students. From 1983 until 2017, Marius lectured in Anatomy. He obtained a PhD in the anatomy of the buffalo in 2006. In the same year, he also received the prestigious Education Innovation Award from the University of Pretoria for 19 anatomy videos for undergraduates.

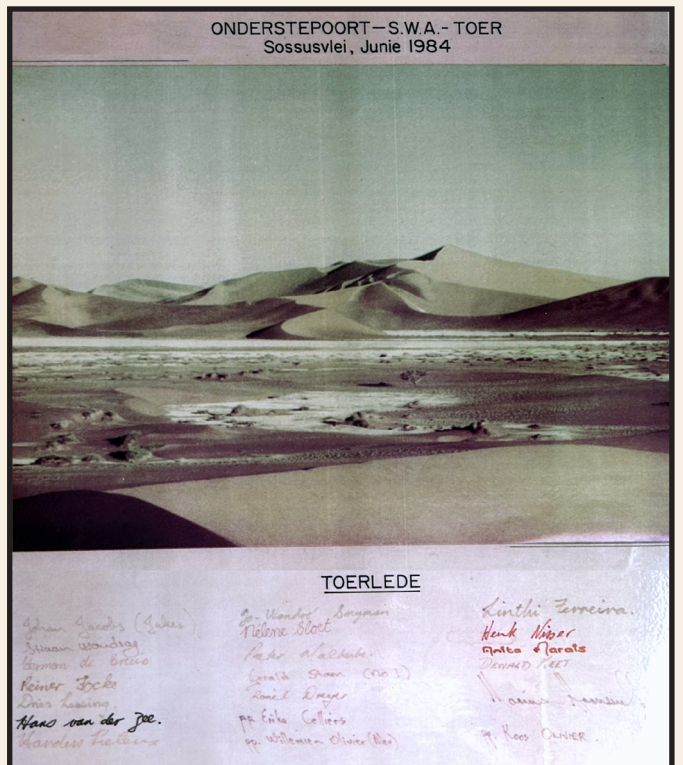
The absolute highlight of his tenure was an educational tour to South West Africa (now Namibia) in 1984. Marius recalls the help he got from Nolene Sloet and Stian Wandrag with organising the tour, as well as the contributions from Herman de Bruin, Henk Visser and Johan Jacobs. Dr Koos Olivier and his wife, Willemien, were the assistant tour guides for the three weeks in Namibia.

In 1986, the guest speaker at the Onderstepoort formal was Oom Dries Niemandt who had a prize Simmental herd and was the major of Kempton Park. He was also a well-known prankster. At the formal, he bit the ear of one student (who was specifically troublesome in res) and he also cut off the ties of many a gentleman.

Like some of the other houseparents before and after him, Marius had to police the 'spermskerm' – a makeshift division between die male and female section of the residence. It was knocked down more often than not and according to Marius, mostly from the female section's side.



Nuchas, the houseparents' dog, well-known to the students when Marius Hornsveld was house father from 1985 to 1988.



Signatures of the Onderstepoort students who participated in the tour to Namibia in 1984 with Marius Hornsveld as tour leader.

INVITATION

to all alumni of OP Village / Huis Onderstepoort to send photographs and their stories about Old Res and the other student residences at Onderstepoort to OldRes100years@gmail.com for possible inclusion in a commemorative publication and/or articles in VetNews.

We are particularly keen to receive copies of the House Photos of the following years: all the years before 1996 and the photos of 2000, 2012 and 2013.

VERSOEK vir Huisfoto's van Onderstepoort: As daar huisfoto's beskikbaar is vir die volgende jare, sal die huidige HK dit kopieer en saam met al die vorige huisfoto's in die argief uitstal: huisfotos vóór 1996 en huisfoto's vir 2000, 2012 en 2013.