

**Muriel Gruss (1912 – 2005)**

Dr Muriel Gruss (Mrs S Gild) passed away on 13 July 2005 in Johannesburg at the age of 93.

Born in Aberdeen, Eastern Cape, on 15 April 1912 to William, a Jewish immigrant from Austria and Esther (née Vilenski, second-generation South African) Gruss, Muriel was raised and schooled in Aberdeen and St Dominic's priory in Port Elizabeth. She was the second oldest of 5 children.

Muriel attended UCT Medical School and received her MB ChB degree in 1935. She was one of only 6 female graduates in a class of 39 students and was, to the best of the



author's knowledge, the last surviving member of her class. Following her graduation, Dr Gruss worked in Villiersdorp (Western Cape) as a *locum tenens*, after which she studied for the Diploma in Public Health (DPH) at UCT. For a number of years during the late 1930s she worked at the Free Dispensary in Woodstock. From the mid-forties she worked, on a sessional basis, for the Cape Town Department of Health at a number of primary care and antenatal clinics, including the 'old' District Six, and Chiappini Street in the Bo-

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Kaap. From the mid-70s until her retirement in 1992 (aged 80) she performed general medical sessional work at Somerset Hospital in Mouille Point.

In 1940 Dr Gruss married Solomon Gild. They had 3 children, one of whom also graduated MB ChB from UCT. Sol passed away in 1987. Muriel continued to live alone independently until moving into Sea Point Place in 1993. In late 1994 she moved in with her daughter in Johannesburg, where she passed away shortly after sustaining a fractured hip.

Until her very early 90s she remained mentally and physically active, with regular bridge games, daily walks along the Sea Point promenade, and active membership of a number of civic associations. Until she was persuaded to surrender her driver's licence in her mid-eighties, she also ferried other 'seniors' to their medical appointments.

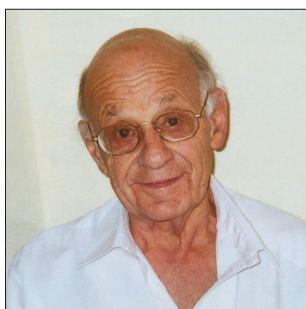
Dr Gruss was a member of the Medical Association of South Africa for many years, and looked forward to receiving and reading the *SAMJ*. The Medical Association of South Africa conferred honorary life membership on her in 1989.

Having graduated long before the advent of the antibiotic era, as well as a myriad of other medical advances, she nonetheless succeeded in keeping current with the latest medical theories and practices. Throughout her professional and private life, Muriel Gild maintained the highest standards of integrity and professionalism. To her, like many of her era, the practice of medicine was more a calling than business, and with her passing, sadly, came a diminution in the number of medical practitioners who practise the art and science of medicine for the best of motivations.

She is survived by her brother (Jose Gruss, Cape Town), daughter Hilary (Johannesburg), son Henry (Israel), son William (United States), 8 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

**William Gild**

## Walter Savage



Walter Savage died at his Cowies Hill home on 27 August 2005. He was a very loyal friend and respected colleague. He qualified at Wits in 1951, and during those student years I got to know him extremely well. I also did my midwifery session with him at Baragwanath Hospital. He was a wonderful tonic –

full of wit and quick repartee that always endeared him to his fellow students. He completed his internship at King Edward Hospital, Durban, and thereafter opened a general practice in Pinetown. At that time Pinetown was a small village on the

outskirts of Durban, with dirt roads and none of the industrial development that has since taken place. He remained in active practice over a period of 50 years, right until his death. In his latter years he became part of the team at the Pinetown Medicross, where he will be sorely missed.

Wally grew up in Jagersfontein and the family subsequently moved to Harrismith, where they opened a hotel. Wally received his education at Grey College, and although small in stature he played hooker for the first rugby team – no mean achievement when one considers the quality of rugby from that school. He remained a lover of rugby, and in fact of all sport, and had permanent seats at King's Park and Kingsmead.

Not only was he a dedicated doctor, but also an extremely accomplished one, who revelled in diagnosing rare and esoteric conditions. Mosey Suzman was his mentor and hero and Walter often said that if Mosey was here he would diagnose what to him was a puzzling case. His past few years were dogged with ill health – he had undergone two coronary bypass procedures, and went into cardiac failure with recurrent pleural effusions and eventually cardiac cachexia. He lost a tremendous amount of weight and was hardly recognisable by his friends and colleagues, but remained in active practice until his death. He showed great courage, although he could only manage working in the mornings, and rested in the afternoons.

Apart from his dedication to medicine he had many other interests, including photography and exploration of the delights of the computer world, and was also a very active radio-ham, communicating with many people throughout the world. He achieved the highest honours in freemasonry, joining the Lodge of Israel, and eventually became President of the Board of General Purposes of District Grand Lodge of Natal, and a Grand Lodge Officer. He had a wonderful sense of humour and I recall attending a lecture with him on gall bladder disease, when the lecturer said, 'that if the bag is diseased take it out', and Wally replied as quick as a flash, 'that is funny', 'my professor always told me that if the bag was diseased, you do not take her out'. Serious medical lectures were often disrupted with his humour and to his death he always had some new and entertaining story.

He joined his brother, the late Lionel Savage, in practice in Pinetown, and remained there until his death. He also became medical officer for Pinetown, among his many other achievements.

His greatest love, however, was his family. He is survived by his wife Lenore, his children Anthony, Jeremy and Phillipa and grandchildren Jami, Hannah, Zachary and Emmylou, to whom we extend our deepest sympathy and condolences. His funeral at the Jewish Cemetery in Red Hill, Durban was an extremely emotional and moving affair. I was honoured and proud to be one of his pallbearers, and will always remember him with the greatest respect and love.

**Roy O Wise**