

Obituaries



E U Schmid

Eugen Ulrich Schmid was born on 30 July 1927, the youngest of five children of a devoted Lutheran family. After a happy childhood in South-West Africa (Namibia), he qualified as a medical doctor in Pretoria in 1952. After an extended period in private practice in Namibia, he returned to Pretoria where he obtained his Master's degree in surgery before he entered the missionary field.

He spent seven years as a surgeon at Ramoutsa in Botswana, where he was a co-founder of the Bamelete Lutheran Mission Hospital near Gaborone. He was honoured by President Sir Seretse Khama with special appreciation for his outstanding services to the people of Botswana.

In 1971 he was appointed as Professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Pretoria and chief surgeon at Kalafong Hospital, where he served with distinction until his retirement. It is a pleasure and singular honour to be called upon to pay homage to a loyal friend, highly respected colleague, renowned teacher, and caring surgeon who left an indelible impression on his patients, the nursing staff, the medical students and his peers. When he bade us farewell on his retirement from Kalafong Hospital we witnessed the great grief and sense of loss shown by the Kalafong nursing staff to a caring and sympathetic 'father' and leader of the team.

Uli Schmid was a seasoned clinician and an outstanding technical surgeon. He was a founder member of the multidisciplinary

Head and Neck Oncology Clinic in Pretoria as well as the Head and Neck Oncology Society of South Africa.

His love of nature was as intense as his love for his work. This particular interest dates back to a blissful childhood in the land of his birth where he spent many hours in the African bush. After retiring, he attended a course in sculpture at UNISA. His experience in the visual arts reached its culmination when he carved a crucifix from a log of Boekenhout wood (*Faurea saligna*) which he found in the Bushveld near Zeerust in the North West province. This sculptural masterpiece, which took him two years to complete, was admired by everyone who gathered in the Evangelic Lutheran Church in Pretoria to pay their respects when Uli was laid to rest at the foot of his creation. It will serve as an eternal memorial to the profound religious convictions that guided his life.

In 1953 Uli married Marianne Strauelli. They had five children: Rudolph, Klaus, Bärbel, Jörg and Annelore. The caring way in which Uli nursed Marianne during the final years of her incapacitating and incurable illness was a touching lesson to us all.

We will remember him.

R C Franz

Emeritus Professor of Surgery, UP

J P Pretorius

Adjunct Professor of Surgery, UP

Stephanus Vermaak (Steph) Potgieter

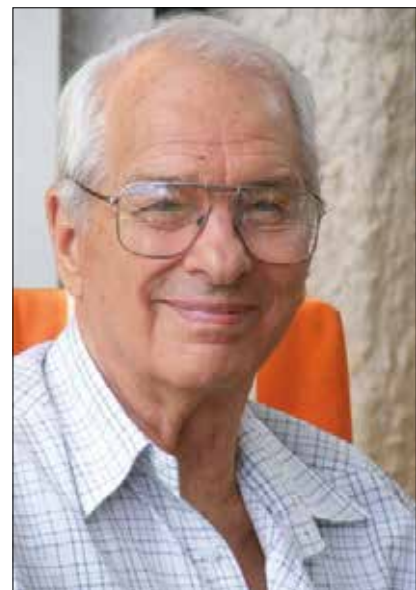
Steph Potgieter was born on 22 September 1928. He received his MB ChB in 1951 at the University of Pretoria. He did his internship in Bloemfontein and was in general practice there from 1952 to 1956. He trained in anaesthesiology at Karl Bremer Hospital and received the MMed Anaesthesiology from Stellenbosch University in 1959. He then visited several departments of anaesthesiology in Europe, including those in Stockholm (Karolinska Institute), Amsterdam, London, and Oxford, and attended a Royal College of Surgeons anaesthesia course in London. He was in private practice as an anaesthesiologist in Bloemfontein from 1960 to 1985, and thereafter to 1994 was a consultant in the Department of Anaesthesiology, University of the Free State. During his first years in

practice, he was involved in groundbreaking work in the surgery and care of patients with severe spinal deformities, working closely with Dr T B Enslin.

Steph realised that in South Africa's small community it was essential to share expertise and get solutions for problems. He was a lifelong member of the South African Medical Association, and for many years the president and secretary of the Free State branch. He arranged the first meetings for South African anaesthesiologists in Bloemfontein, bringing to the country his overseas contacts. Several of these meetings were held in Bloemfontein from 1962 to 1973, which developed into the Annual Congress of the South African Society of Anaesthesiologists (SASA). Steph was also president of SASA for several terms.

Steph published on anaesthesia-related topics, but his great interest in the history of South African medicine resulted in later publications on the history of medicine. His interest in the history of early medicine practised in Bloemfontein led him to do research overseas. Returning from a trip to Scotland, to find information on doctors who practised in the Free State, he was on the *Achille Lauro* which caught fire and sank. He assisted many to escape to a passing oil tanker.

Steph was loved for his decent, civilised manners and was known for his endless endeavours to help his fellow-man. With excellent organising abilities, and outstanding human relations, he created a pleasant work environment for the staff at



Pelonomi Hospital during the politically turbulent 1980s and early 1990s. Many from all races attended his funeral. He had a wide interest outside medicine and is known country-wide for breeding Rhodesian Ridgeback dogs and was a driving force behind the local Botanical Society.

Weeks before his death (9 April 2012), when he was already seriously ill, Steph showed international visitors the interesting and important historical places of his beloved Bloemfontein. Over the years many visitors wrote back that it had been the pinnacle of their South African visit. We will remember Steph as a man who looked you straight in the eye, kept firmly to his convictions, but was always willing to humbly provide help.

Johan Diedericks

Professor: Department of Anaesthesiology, UFS, Bloemfontein

Jacques Grobbelaar

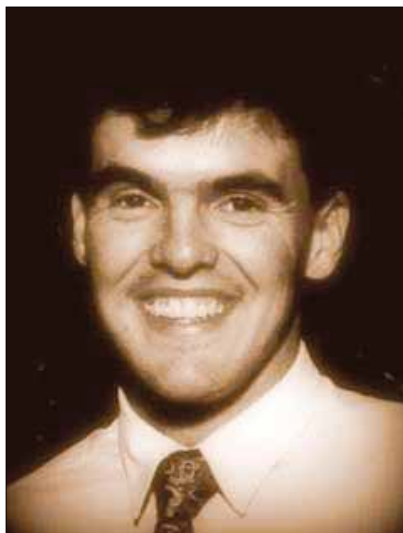
Jacques Grobbelaar was a Medical Officer at Nelspruit Hospital when he died tragically in a road accident on 22 August - 20 years ago - in 1992. On 28 June 2012 he would have been 45 years old. I write this obituary on behalf of those who lived and worked closely with Jacques.

I knew Jacques during our medical student years at the University of Pretoria from 1985 to 1990. We shared a commune with fellow-medical students and friends during our fourth to final years. Our group discovered

the harsh realities of human suffering in South Africa and the excitement of learning medicine in the wards of H F Verwoerd Hospital (now Steve Biko Hospital), Kalafong Hospital and Tembisa Hospital.

Everyone who worked with Jacques, whether as a medical student or as a junior doctor in Nelspruit, would agree that he was a highly dedicated and talented young doctor who loved what he was doing and who wanted to make a difference. He did make a difference. I witnessed Jacques' great compassion and love as we worked together closely in the children's and obstetric wards where he brought smiles to people's faces.

Jacques was energetic and he loved life, sports, the outdoors and adventure. He built



up a Land Cruiser 4x4 - his pride - and travelled off the beaten track whenever he got the chance. In our fourth year as students we shared a memorable trip to Cape Vidal near St Lucia as a group of friends.

I met Jacques only once after we had graduated, as our group was scattered over southern Africa. He enthusiastically told me how he had saved the life of a critically injured trauma victim at Nelspruit Hospital with his newly acquired ATLS trauma skills.

Jacques was on an adventure holiday in Botswana when his Land Cruiser overturned on a remote road. He suffered severe internal injuries and was taken to Francistown Hospital. His late great friend and colleague, Sakkie Zaayman, who had been in the car with him, tried in vain to save his life. Sakkie provided comfort and spiritual guidance to Jacques during his final moments. Family and friends were eternally grateful for what Sakkie had done for Jacques. Sakkie, who became an emergency physician at Unitas Hospital, also died tragically in a car accident in 2002.

Jacques will always be remembered for his passion and for the difference he made to the lives of the suffering during his short career, and for his smile.

Jacques was survived by his parents, Koos and Cathy, and by siblings Leoni, Werner and Charmain. His father died in July 2012.

May he rest in peace.

Martin Scholtz

Book review

Eloquent Body

By Dawn Garisch. Modjaji Books. 2012. ISBN: 978-1-920397-39-5.

There is a creative artist within every person and everyone has something unique to explore. Few realise and actualise it; many have no time or interest, or are overcome with the apprehension of self-revelation. It may be that doctors and scientists have a special opportunity or talent for creative art, be it music, poetry, writing or the fine arts, given their privileged insights into the human condition and the scientific method. One thinks here of Chekhov, Marie Curie, Borodin, Frida Kahlo, William Carlos Williams, A J Cronin, Conan Doyle, Somerset Maugham, Alexander Doblin,

Keats, Kathe Kollwitz and C Louis Leipoldt. Not uncommonly, patients, too, seek refuge in the creative arts.

In *Eloquent Body* Dawn Garisch examines her own creativity in a frank and carefully researched semi-autobiographical new book. She is medical practitioner, novelist, poet, walker, mother and patient herself. She sees herself as a doctor who writes, wanting to become a writer who doctors. Her conflict is not resolved. She is an accomplished writer and her life is enriched by doctoring. She draws widely on her experience with patients - their fortitude, frailties, obstinacy and quirks. She is influenced by Jung. It is as a doctor that she explores, confronts and embraces issues of truth, fear, doubt, service and trust in the creative process. She believes

in the innate self-healing capacity of the body and in the part that the arts can play in achieving that. She has discovered that it is important to relinquish the illusion of control. She maintains that in completing her book the two streams of her life converge. One is not convinced that she has at last found repose, and quite possibly that is a good thing - for her, for us her readers and, not least, for her patients.

Creative art is therapeutic, if not necessarily curative, for patient and for health practitioner alike. Dawn Garisch knows. It's there, clearly, in her book and she has written it modestly and with courage.

Peter Folb

E-mail: peterfolb@gmail.com