

## Obituary

### IN 'Solly' Marks

Solly Marks was born in Cape Town on 23 October 1926 and matriculated in Graaff Reinet in 1943. He obtained the BSc degree at UCT in 1945 and MB ChB in 1949. From 1950 to 1952 he was an intern and then a Senior House Officer at Groote Schuur Hospital. From 1953 to 1956 he was a registrar in the gastrointestinal unit at the Western Hospital in Edinburgh. There Solly and Wilfred Card did the original studies on the relationship between parietal cell mass and acid secretion. He received the Ames award and went to the Fels Research Institute and Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia from 1956 to 1959 to further his research in gastroenterology. While he was there his uncle famously questioned why Solly was wasting his time in research when he could be pursuing a more practical and lucrative career.

On his return to South Africa he established the gastrointestinal clinic at Groote Schuur Hospital and the University of Cape Town. That was no easy task as the growth of super-specialties was not encouraged at the time, but he and Val Schrire in cardiology persisted and from very small beginnings an internationally recognised centre of excellence emerged. Professor Jannie Louw gave important support and encouragement and set the scene for the very good co-operation between physicians and surgeons in the clinic. Later this became more formalised when one of us (FB) and other surgical colleagues also became active members of the Gastrointestinal Clinic. Simmy Bank joined Solly in 1961 as the

Ben May Fellow and they worked together for many years. Other talented colleagues joined the clinic and together did pioneering work in the fields of peptic ulcer disease and pancreatitis.

Solly stood down as head of the clinic in 1970 and when the 1976 riots made some colleagues seek what appeared to be greener pastures elsewhere, one of us (SJS) asked him to resume the headship in 1978. Solly moved swiftly and wisely to re-establish the clinic by attracting outstanding gastroenterologists from Peter Cotton's unit at the Middlesex Hospital and by training a new generation of South African gastroenterologists. It was a measure of his commitment that he readily agreed although he had hoped the task would be carried by others. He remained head until 1992 when he retired.

Solly was awarded *ad hominem* Associate Professorship in 1983 and was appointed to the newly created post of Professor of gastroenterology in 1986, a fitting acknowledgement of his scholarship. This was also recognised by his election as a Fellow by UCT, an honour bestowed on those whose work is original and enjoys international recognition. He was awarded the Salus Gold medal for his contributions to gastroenterology in 1993 and was elected an Emeritus Professor in 1995. He was honorary life president of the South African Gastroenterology Society which he had founded in 1962, an honorary member of the British Society of Gastroenterology, the Australian Gastroenterology Society, the Pancreatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland and the Prout Club. In 2009 he

became a Master of the World Congress of Gastroenterology in recognition of his life-long contribution to this world body.

Solly's work is reflected in over 400 publications, including 30 invited chapters. He gave 47 named postgraduate lectures and was an invited speaker or chair at many national and international meetings.

But there is much more to the man than his professional and academic achievements in medicine would suggest. There were very few topics on which he could not provide an authoritative opinion and he always gave a different and an interesting point of view. A hallmark of his intellectual prowess was his ability to think laterally and out of the box. Even the Rabbi had to acknowledge Solly's extraordinary scholarly grasp of matters both rabbinical and classical. Writing a paper with him was an experience in erudition as he was meticulous and a stickler for grammatical correctness. His other passion was gardening and his knowledge of South African flora was encyclopaedic.

Solly's wit was legendary. He and his charming wife Inge were frequent hosts at their home, entertaining colleagues from all over the world as well as members of the clinic and their many friends. Together they established an inclusive environment for young and old colleagues alike and an *esprit de corps* second to none. An oak has fallen but his legacy will endure.

**Flip Bornman**

**Jake Krige**

**Stuart Saunders**