

Walter Hift



Professor Walter Hift, DM (Oxon), PhD, FCP (SA), died on 5 July 2013. He was born in Austria on 7 November 1921.

Walter served the Department of Medicine at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) as a consultant in general medicine and

haematology for over three decades. He was loyal to the aspirations of the medical school and the university, a dedicated teacher and an expert clinician. His forte was in undergraduate teaching and formulation of teaching programmes, and he was passionate in the elicitation of physical signs at the bedside. He contributed substantially to research and to the medical literature on nutritional megaloblastic anaemia. The latter was the subject of the thesis for which he was awarded a DM from Oxford University.

He was not only interested in the science of medicine but in the classics, and he revived this great love, which had begun in Austria and London, in his retirement. He did a BA in classics at the University of Natal, went on to receive a BA Hons, and then embarked on an MA, which was converted to a PhD because of its great merit. This thesis was entitled 'Psychiatry and the plays of Euripides'. As a result of this later academic success, he was appointed Honorary Research Associate in Classics at the University of Natal.

Walter met his wife Cynthia while serving in the Royal Air Force during World War II. After the war he settled in Durban and undertook some of his postgraduate training at the metropolitan hospitals in Durban, obtaining the Fellowship of the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa.

He retired to Jeffreys Bay, joining one of his sons and his family. His charming wife Cynthia died about 3 years before him. He is survived by two sons, one of whom is Professor Richard Hift, Dean of UKZN's School of Clinical Medicine, and a daughter who lives with her family in Sweden. Walter died of coronary artery disease.

Y K Seedat

*Emeritus Professor of Medicine, Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa
seedaty1@gmail.com*