

# OBITUARIES

## R B K (Ron) Tucker (1929 - 2014)



With Ron Tucker's passing, South Africa has lost one of her most distinguished physicians. Ron matriculated at Germiston High School in 1946 and, passionate about medicine but lacking the means to go straight to medical

school, trained as a medical technologist at the South African Institute for Medical Research. He went to work on the Copperbelt in what was then Northern Rhodesia, and after four years had saved enough to enrol at the University of the Witwatersrand, where he graduated in 1959. He stood out as a student, serving on the Students' Medical Council and the Rag Committee, playing both tennis and squash for the University, and being awarded the Cottrill Prize for academic achievement and service to the student body. Ron and I played tennis and squash together, and were in the same group throughout our clinical years. I realised that, whether on the courts or at the bedside, he had an extraordinary ability to be in the right place and to make the right decisions. One great decision was to woo and win Barbara Louw. They married in 1957 and were blessed with three sons and a daughter – all professionals now.

Ron specialised in internal medicine and quickly achieved the Fellowship of the College of Physicians, after which he super-specialised in cardiology. He remained in the Cardiac Unit at Johannesburg General Hospital until 1968, becoming increasingly involved in both the Johannesburg and national cardiac societies. He was one of the pioneers of coronary angiography in South Africa.

In 1968 Ron started a private practice, and soon attracted the 'who's who' of Johannesburg as patients. I knew some of them, all of whom attested to the thoroughness of his clinical approach and his unfailingly caring attitude. In addition to his busy practice, he advised life insurance companies and was Chairman of the International Medical Advisory Panel of the Asbestos International Association for 12 years.

Ron was soon co-opted to the Council of the College of Medicine, which he served faithfully for 34 years. He was active on many of its committees and as an examiner, was Mace Bearer, served as Vice-President for two terms, and was elected President in 1992. He received honorary fellowships from colleges and associations in America, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, London and Ireland. In 1997 he was awarded the Gold Medal of the University of the Witwatersrand on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the Medical School.

If a person's life is to be measured by his contributions to society and the positive effects he had on the people with whom he came into contact, Ron's was a life supremely well lived.

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