

OBITUARY



Philippe Emile Agnes Schuermans (1943 - 2014)

Philippe was born in Ghent, Belgium, on 8 July 1943. His father was a stockbroker and private banker in that city. However, his grandfather and ancestors prior to his grandfather's generation had been general practitioners, and he was determined to follow

the same profession, but in Africa. Schooled at the Jesuit St Barbara College in Ghent, he completed a classical education of mostly Latin and Greek in 1962 and then enrolled at the Free University of Gent in the faculty of medicine, from which he graduated with distinction in 1969. In his final year of studies he was granted permission to also study for a diploma in Tropical Medicine at the Tropical Institute of Antwerp. Following his marriage in that same year he commenced his career at a Catholic mission hospital in Rwanda, where he had existing family ties through an uncle who was a missionary priest in that country. In Rwanda Philippe enjoyed seven years of very fruitful and rewarding work in three different mission hospitals. He was also the founding member of the NGO BUFMAR (Bureau des Formations Medicales Agréées du Rwanda), which was founded in 1975 and is still operational today. BUFMAR serves as a central depot for medicines and medical equipment and also manufactures some basic products such as rehydration drips, ointments, and antimalaria and deworming tablets.

Because of the lack of schooling facilities for his children, Philippe moved back to Belgium in 1976, where he started a private practice in the village of Gierle near Antwerp. However, his calling to work in Africa never left him, and it prompted him to take up a post as a contract doctor in Zaire. That soon thereafter led him to continue his career in South Africa. He arrived in South Africa in 1983 and was joined by his wife and five children shortly thereafter. The next 25 years were filled with service at various hospitals throughout KwaZulu-Natal. Most were in rural areas, where his calling to help the most needy was best fulfilled. One of these hospitals was Mbongolwane Hospital. There Philippe played a key role in the creation of an orphanage that today provides a home for approximately 40 children.

He passed away peacefully on 27 May 2014 at the Zululand Homes for the Aged after a brief battle with cancer.

Jean Schuermans

*Pietermaritzburg, South Africa
jean.schuermans@gmail.com*