



Wits Review

The magazine for ALUMNI and friends
of the University of the Witwatersrand

October edition 2020, Volume 44



Cyclone slayers

The Wits JM Busha Sailing Team embarked on the **Cape2Rio Yacht Race** in January and finished in third place, winning the Class One Handicap and Class One Line Honours. The team was also awarded the First Youth Prize and managed to sail through Cyclone Kurumi, a tropical storm they encountered during their race. Tawanda Chikasha, Emma Clark, Jonathan Ham (not a Wits student), Hearn Johnson, Ryan Robinson and Michaela Robinson were the crew members.

Image: Daniel Teanby



IN THIS ISSUE

REGULARS

EDITOR'S NOTE..... 05
 RESEARCH..... 08
 NEWS..... 18
 REUNIONS..... 21
 WEBINARS..... 22
 WITSIES WITH THE EDGE
 30
 INTERNATIONAL WITSIES
 48
 BOOKS..... 66
 IN MEMORIAM..... 78



ON THE COVER

'AND YET I SMILE'
 LEBOHANG MOTAUNG

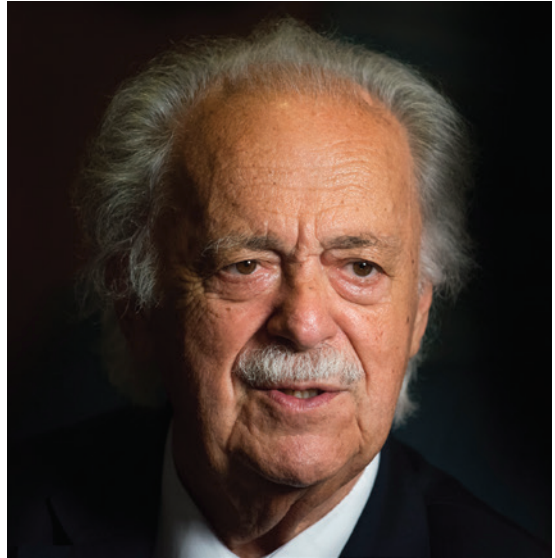
Courtesy of The Lockdown
 Collection and Bates Family
 Private Collection

**THE LOCKDOWN
 COLLECTION,**
 PAGES 40-47

IN MEMORIAM

78

George Bizos



WE BID FAREWELL TO SA'S MOST ESTEEMED HUMAN
 RIGHTS ACTIVIST / Image: Brett Eloff



FEATURE

24

Meet the new
 VC-designate

PROF ZBLON VILAKAZI
 TAKES THE REINS AT WITS
 IN JANUARY 2021

INTERNATIONAL WITSIES

58

Lambo Kanagaratnam

HE HAS MADE SYDNEY HIS
 HOME SINCE 2015



NEWS

18

Wits, COVID-19



HOW WELL IS WITS ADJUSTING TO THE
 CHALLENGES CAUSED BY THE PANDEMIC?

RESEARCH

16

Bow and arrow technology

THE EASTERN CAPE YIELDS EXCITING FIND

WITSIES WITH THE EDGE

30

Saaleha Idrees Bamjee

WINNER OF THE 2020 INGRID JONKER PRIZE FOR ENGLISH POETRY

Image: Saaleha Bamjee



FEATURE

40

The Lockdown Collection



BOOKS

71

Nechama Brodie

AUTHOR AND RESEARCHER RELEASES TWO BOOKS IN ONE YEAR AND WINS A GRANT



UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG



Wits Review

MAGAZINE

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WITS REVIEW Magazine, Volume 44, October edition 2020





RANKED **1st** IN AFRICA



WITS
UNIVERSITY

Wits University tops the rankings as **best university in Africa** in the **2020 Academic Ranking of World Universities** where it has been placed in the 200 – 300 band. Wits has also been ranked in the 201 – 250 band in the **Times Higher Education's World University Rankings 2021**. There are approximately 25 000 universities in the world in contention for the global university rankings.

A TIME OF SADNESS AND SOLIDARITY

WHEN WE PUBLISHED our last issue, a deadly pandemic was bearing down on us and worldwide lockdowns, curfews and quarantines were a shocking new reality. Panic buying now seems a distant memory but COVID-19 continues to dominate our lives.

After more than seven months, many of us are feeling a profound sense of loss. Loss of human contact and freedom of movement, loss of economic activity and livelihoods, and most tragically, the loss of life.

The most painful experience of the past few months has been the surge of messages sent to me about alumni who have passed away. As our 19-page obituary section in this issue testifies, we have lost many elderly and beloved alumni, whether to COVID-19-related illness or to old age. Unfortunately, we ran out of space in the magazine to include all the obituaries we received but you can read all of them on our website.

Beyond concerns for our physical wellbeing, the pandemic exacts a heavy toll on our emotional and mental wellbeing. While scientists develop modelling projections of the pandemic, we cannot predict who will be infected or what their outcome will be. We do not know with any certainty how this pandemic will continue to unfold. The indefinite and long-term nature of a pandemic makes it very different to the trauma suffered in a “conventional” disaster such as an earthquake or hurricane. Instead, we experience a prolonged state of heightened caution and ongoing disruption. We live with the daily stress and anxiety about contracting the illness and we worry about the impact the pandemic will have on society and livelihoods. For some, there is the terrible grief of loved ones lost.



We can however take comfort in knowing that society is resilient. Times of crisis are often catalysts for new breakthroughs and better ways of doing things. This crisis has seen revolutionary new methods and techniques for vaccine development and in this issue we look at the innovative ways in which the University has coped with the pandemic. There are good reasons to suggest that universities, such as Wits, that are able to adapt will emerge stronger. The pandemic may provide the impetus for a leap forward in virtual learning environments, teaching methodologies and pedagogies that will benefit students and increase our impact and reach.

One of the harshest aspects of the pandemic is the isolation of social distancing and lockdowns that deny us much of the pleasure and consolation that human contact provides. While we miss seeing alumni in person at campus events, the lockdown has been an opportunity to invite alumni around the world to online events. There is some reassurance in knowing that wherever we are in the world, we can connect with each other in solidarity.

Our thoughts are with you.

Peter Maher, Director: Alumni Relations

FENCING ≈

AYANDA TUKU, RANKED 13TH IN AFRICA, PARTICIPATED IN THE 2020 JUNIOR AFRICAN CHAMPIONSHIPS IN ACCRA, GHANA IN FEBRUARY.



HOCKEY »

FIVE WITS HOCKEY PLAYERS: LEZAAN JANSEN VAN VUREN, NOMNIKELO VETO, CHAD FUTCHER, CODY VAN WYK AND RUSTEN ABRAHAMS (PICTURED) WERE SELECTED INTO THE OLYMPIC GAMES SQUAD FOR THE 2020 OLYMPIC GAMES IN TOKYO, JAPAN – THE GAMES HAVE BEEN POSTPONED TO JULY 2021.

NOMNIKELO VETO IN ACTION

Image: © Christiaan Kotze/SASPA



Image: © Dominic Barnards / Varsity Sports

« RUGBY

THE FNB WITS RUGBY TEAM REMAIN UNBEATEN IN THE 2020 VARSITY CUP TOURNAMENT. THEY PLAYED SIX ROUNDS, WON FIVE GAMES AND DREW ONE GAME. THE REMAINING FIXTURES WERE CANCELLED AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC. DANIEL KASENDE SIGNED HIS FIRST PRO CONTRACT WITH GRIQUAS RUGBY UNION. SIX WITS SENIOR PLAYERS FORM PART OF THE LIONS (2019/2020 SEASON) SUPER RUGBY TEAM AND 22 JUNIOR PLAYERS WERE INCLUDED IN THE LIONS (2019/2020 SEASON) U/21 CURRIE CUP TEAM. JULIA VENTER FROM THE WITS WOMEN'S 7S RUGBY TEAM WAS INCLUDED IN THE LIONS WOMEN'S 15S TEAM.

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL «

WITS WOMEN'S FOOTBALL QUALIFIED FOR THE 2020 VARSITY FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT.

SHAKEERAH JACOBS ≍ REPRESENTED SA U/20 WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TEAM AT THE 2020 WORLD-CUP QUALIFIERS IN ZAMBIA, IN FEBRUARY THIS YEAR.



Image: Jerbes De Bruyn



WINNING "TEAM OF THE YEAR" AT THE 2019 USSA FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT HELD AT WITS IN DECEMBER LAST YEAR.

Images: Wits Sport



Image: James Eades, Unsplash

Fight for pristine wilderness

ANTARCTICA HAS SEEN accelerated human activity over the past few years. The impact of this has been quantified for the first time by a team of researchers led by Monash University, including **Dr Bernard Coetzee** from the Global Change Institute at Wits. Using a data set of 2.7 million human activity records, the team showed just how extensive human use of Antarctica has been over the past 200 years. The research was published in the journal *Nature*. “We mapped 2.7 million human activity records from 1819 to 2018 across the Antarctic continent to assess the extent of wilderness areas remaining and its overlap with the continent’s biodiversity,” says Coetzee, who is based in Skukuza in the Kruger National Park. He helped conceptualise the study and collated a spatial database from multiple sources to map the extent of human activity in Antarctica. High human impact areas, for example some areas where people build research stations or visit for tourism, often overlap with areas important for biodiversity. Further the study found that only 16% of the continent’s Important Bird Areas fall within its Specially Protected Area network. The work, delivered by a transdisciplinary team of researchers from Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and South Africa, will be crucial in informing measures to secure Antarctica’s wilderness.



LOVE at sunset

MALARIA AFFECTS OVER 228 million people annually causing over 400 000 deaths, predominantly in Africa and mainly in pregnant women and children under five.

The findings from a recent study by scientists at the Wits Research Institute for Malaria (WRIM), Stockholm University (Sweden), the Institute of Ecology, Nature Research Centre (Lithuania), and the Eijkman Institute for Molecular Biology (Indonesia) published in *Nature Ecology & Evolution* have implications for controlling mosquito reproduction.

For the first time, scientists have identified male mosquito-specific pheromones (odours) that influence mating rituals. The study found that males from the malaria vector species of *Anopheles arabiensis* and *An. gambiae* release pheromones that attract individual females to the swarms and increase their mating success.

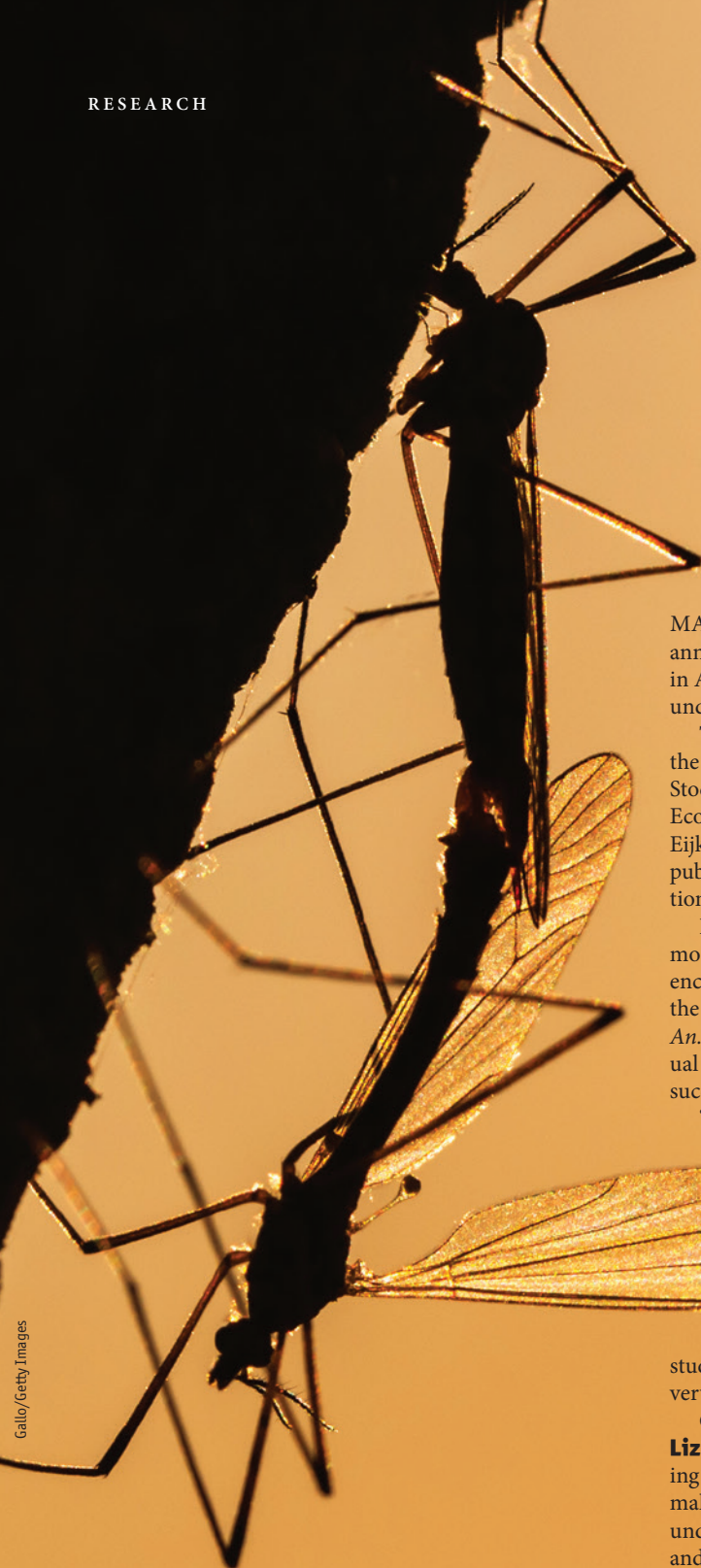
“A female mosquito mates only once in her lifetime.

This mating takes place with the males in a mating swarm.

These dancing male mosquitoes gather in large mating swarms during dusk and dawn,” says **Jacek W**

Zawada, co-author of the study and PhD candidate in the WRIM. “But we know very little about what stimulates swarm formation.”

Co-author and co-director of WRIM, Professor **Lizette Koekemoer** (PhD 1999), says manipulating such pheromones could increase the efficacy of malaria-vector control programmes. “The more we understand about how these mosquitoes reproduce and thereby increase their potential and capacity to transmit malaria, the better equipped we are to combat the disease.”



AARDVARKS (*ORYCTEROPUS AFER*) occur across most of sub-Saharan Africa and seeing them is a delight for many wildlife enthusiasts. They are nocturnal, solitary animals who live in burrows and use their spade-like claws to dig up ants and termites on which they feed.

A group of researchers from the Wildlife Conservation Physiology laboratory at the University of the Witwatersrand studying aardvarks living in Tswalu, a reserve in the Kalahari, has found a shift in behaviour of this secretive animal from night-time to increased activity during the day.

Dr **Nora Weyer** (PhD 2018), who was part of the team of researchers, followed aardvarks as part of her PhD research over three years using bio loggers to record their body temperature. Assisted by satellite imaging that showed how droughts affected the vegetation, Weyer was able to connect changes in aardvark behaviour and body temperature to what was happening in the aardvarks' environment.

Weyer's research confirmed earlier findings by the team that there are times when the aardvarks switched their feeding. For the first time it showed that drought caused a change in behaviour. The results were published in *Frontiers in Physiology*.

"Aardvarks have coped with the Kalahari's harsh environment in the past, but it is getting hotter and drier, and the current and future changes to our climate might be too much for the aardvarks to bear," says Weyer.

By shifting their activity from the cold nights to the warm days during dry winter months, aardvarks can save some of the energy needed to keep their body temperatures up. But those energy savings were not enough to see the aardvarks through a particularly bad drought in which many aardvarks died.

Disappearance of aardvarks from the Kalahari would be devastating for many other animals in this ecosystem. The large burrows which aardvarks build provide important shelters for many other species that cannot dig their own burrows, earning the aardvark the title of "ecosystem engineer".

Eco-engineers in danger



Gallo/Getty Images

AN AARDVARK (*ORYCTEROPUS AFER*) WALKS THROUGH GRASS IN THE KALAHARI DESERT



Oldest bed rocked

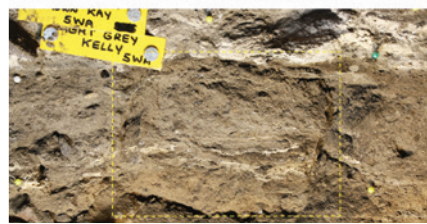
WHILE EXCAVATING IN the Border Cave, in the Lebombo Mountains of KwaZulu-Natal near Eswatini, alumna Professor **Lyn Wadley** (PhD 1987) and her team discovered remnants of what they believe to be prehistoric bedding used by the inhabitants of the cave nearly 200 000 years ago. The findings were announced in the journal *Science* in August. The cave is a deep gash in the cliff face, sheltered from the elements, and has preserved plant material that proved invaluable to researchers.

Professor Wadley says she noticed white flecks in the brown earth of the sediment she was digging and realised they were plant traces. She removed the small chunks of sediment and stabilised them in little “jackets” of gypsum plaster. She identified the plant matter under the microscope as belonging to the Panicoideae family of grasses that grow the area. The amount of grass found suggests people brought it into the cave intentionally.

“We speculate that laying grass bedding on ash was a deliberate strategy, not only to create a dirt-free, insulated base for the bedding, but also to repel crawling insects,” says Professor Wadley.

Several cultures have used ash as an insect repellent because insects cannot easily move through fine powder. Ash blocks insects’ breathing and biting apparatus, and eventually dehydrates them. *Tarchonanthus* (camphor bush) remains were identified on the top of the grass from the oldest bedding in the cave. This plant is still used to deter insects in rural parts of East Africa. Professor Wadley says repeated layers of ash and plant material suggest humans deliberately laid bedding over ash.

The researchers found two teeth in the same soil layer as the bedding remnants. They dated the teeth to 200 000 years ago and surmised the bedding was from the same period. The researchers speculate these remnants may be the oldest bedding ever found. The previous record was 77 000-year-old plant bedding found in 2010 in the Sibudu Cave in KwaZulu-Natal.



PROFESSOR LYN WADLEY MAKING MICROMORPHOLOGICAL BLOCKS OF BEDDING FOR THIN SECTIONS

Image: Dominic Stratford and Lyn Wadley

ACCESS TO BORDER CAVE IN THE LEBOMBO MOUNTAINS. Image: Christine Sievers

Hunt for the best shot

Image: Wits University



PROFESSOR
SHABIR MADHI

RESEARCHERS AROUND THE world are racing to develop a vaccine against COVID-19, with more than 170 candidate vaccines now tracked by the World Health Organization. What normally takes years to produce, scientists are hoping to develop within 12 to 18 months. Wits alumni are central to three international trials of vaccine candidates in South Africa.

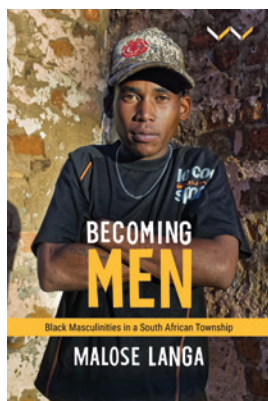
Professor **Shabir Madhi** (MBBCh 1990, MMed 1999, PhD 2004), Professor in Vaccinology and Dean of Wits Faculty of Health Sciences from 2021, is the lead researcher in the Oxford Vaccine (ChAdOx1-Cov19) trial launched in June in collaboration with the Jenner Institute at Oxford University. The vaccine is made from a weakened and non-replicating version of a common cold virus (adenovirus). It has been engineered to express the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein. The study enrolled 1970 adult volunteers aged 18-65 as well as 50 people living with HIV. The random grouping of participants received either the vaccine or the placebo. The trial will help researchers understand participants' response to the vaccine, its safety, and whether the vaccine protects against COVID-19. This is a double-blind study, meaning neither participants nor investigators will know until the end of the trial whether the participants received the vaccine or the control. Oxford entered an agreement with AstraZeneca, a biopharmaceutical company, for further clinical development and future manufacturing.

Professor Madhi is also leading the way with the

Novavax vaccine candidate called NVX-CoV2373, which was announced in August and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It is engineered from the genetic sequence of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 disease.

This is a Phase 2 study which involves up to 2094 volunteers aged 18-64 to evaluate the vaccine's safety, immunogenicity and efficacy. This trial uses technology that has successfully been used to develop vaccines against influenza and experimental Ebola and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). This is a randomised, observer-blinded, placebo-controlled trial.

Professor **Glenda Gray** (MBBCh 1986), president and CEO of the South African Medical Research Council, is principal investigator with Professor Linda-Gail Bekker, the COO of the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation, on a product called Johnson & Johnson Ad26.COVID-2-S. It is the first Phase 3 trial conducted in South Africa and started in September. As with the Oxford and the Novavax trial it will determine the efficacy of this vaccine candidate, made from the adenovirus. Professor Gray says 60 000 people are expected to be enrolled in the Johnson & Johnson trial in the United States, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Peru. Research from the pre-clinical studies, published in the journal *Nature* on 30 July, showed a single dose of the vaccine protected non-human primates against the COVID-19 virus.



Reshape the man box

Over a period of 11 years, **Dr Malose Langa**, Associate Professor at the Department of Psychology at Wits, tracked a group of 32 boys from Alexandra, one of Johannesburg's largest townships, at a crucial time when they were negotiating adolescence and manhood. Although studies about black men are not new, many tend to associate young black men with gangs, crime and violence. Dr Langa's study found evidence which runs counter to this. His research, also published in a book *Becoming Men* (Wits University Press), reveals stories of ambition, aspiration to achieve and career goals to break out of the cycle of poverty. It provides rich personal stories of how some young black men are living out alternative versions of masculinity. The research is essential reading for those working with adolescents and suggests services and interventions to support them.

Stop the bulge before pregnancy

TWO THIRDS OF South African women are overweight or obese. One in four adults die prematurely (before the age of 70) from cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer or chronic respiratory disease. Among women living in Soweto, one in 10 will be diagnosed with gestational diabetes during pregnancy. Half of them will go on to develop diabetes within the next 10 years. Their babies are three times more likely to become obese themselves.

But little is known about how diet during pregnancy influences growth in the womb, particularly in communities where obesity rates are high. Dr **Stephanie Wrottesley** (PhD 2018), a postdoctoral researcher at the Wits Developmental Pathways for Health Research Unit, conducted a study of women with Professor Pedro Pisa and Professor **Shane Norris** (BSc Hons 1997) and recorded their dietary patterns during pregnancy.

The researchers found that there were positive effects from an improved diet during pregnancy. But these benefits were most obvious in women whose weight was normal at the start of their pregnancies. This suggests that improvements made to the diets of overweight and obese women once they are pregnant may have a limited impact on their health – and that of their babies.





Image: SA Tourism

Bone arrowhead shows big thinking

BOW AND ARROW technology gives hunters a unique advantage over their prey. It allows them to hunt from a distance, and from a concealed position.

This kind of technology requires a high degree of cognitive flexibility.

Until now, evidence for bow hunting technology using bone and dating back more than 60 000 years has only been reported from South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal region. Now an in-depth study of a bone arrowhead found in the Eastern Cape extends the known distribution of this technology farther south – and slightly earlier than previously thought. The study, published in *Quaternary Science Reviews*, focused on a long, thin, delicately made, pointed bone artefact. It was conducted by Dr Justine Bradfield, a senior lecturer at the University of Johannesburg, Dr **Jerome Reynard** (MSc 2012, PhD 2016), lecturer

in Osteoarchaeology at Wits, Professor **Sarah Wurz** from the School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Studies at Wits, and Professor Marlize Lombard from the Palaeo-Research Institute at the University of Johannesburg.

The bone artefact was found at the Klasies River main site, along the Eastern Cape coast, which comes from deposits dated to more than 60 000 years ago. It closely resembles thousands of bone arrowheads used by the indigenous San hunter-gatherers from the 18th to the 20th centuries.

The study shows that the pointed bone artefact from Klasies River was hafted, maybe dipped in poison, and used in a manner similar to identical bone points from more recent contexts. It fits in with what is known of ancient people's cognition and abilities in southern Africa.

בילד און פאמיליע



און איר פאמיליע

A + FOR RESILIENCE

HOW WELL IS WITS ADJUSTING TO THE CHALLENGES CAUSED BY THE PANDEMIC?

BY UFRIEDA HO

To move a behemoth such as Wits University in a hurry is no easy task. The test of its agility began when the initial COVID-19 lockdown was extended from a temporary disruption to a “new normal” that – at the time of writing – has remained in place.

The main challenge was how to develop and implement an online academic programme and have it in place between the time of lockdown at the end of March and the time classes were scheduled to start on 20 April.

Shirona Patel, Wits Head of Communications, says, “We had about two or three weeks during recess to re-purpose academic content for online teaching. It was a steep learning curve, getting lecturers to be ‘super stars’ on the technology and coaching them to teach to a camera, rather than a classroom, and to record their lessons remotely. We also had students who didn’t have devices, software or data.”

Wits’ e-learning teams went into high gear, putting key content onto existing online learning management platforms Sakai and Moodle. They helped lecturers record lessons and shape dynamic content that would have impact online.

More behind-the-scenes work included raising funds and donations to buy 5000 laptops for students who didn’t have devices. An additional challenge was that many of these students had already left Gauteng for their home province or country.

The Motsepe Foundation donated R3 million towards buying devices and the Post Office successfully made door-to-door deliveries of the devices via their courier service. “The Post Office did a great job – not a single computer went missing or got damaged on the way. The students took photos of themselves receiving their laptops. We received many notes and messages from students expressing their thanks and telling us how the laptops helped,” Patel says.

The university also pushed for the main cellular networks to zero rate educational content so that students could access their learning material without racking up data costs. The university negotiated a 30 GB monthly allowance for all its students and this agreement remains.

A trickier task was to find a data solution for the University’s 3000 international students spread across 100 countries. Options such as reimbursements or allowances have been negotiated for these students.

5 000

LAPTOPS

were bought for students who did not have devices, from funds and donations raised



LEFT: ILLUSTRATION CREATED BY SAMUEL RODRIGUEZ. SUBMITTED FOR UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL CALL OUT TO CREATIVES - **HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF COVID-19.** “THIS PIECE IS ABOUT TURNING A NEGATIVE INTO POSITIVE. IT IS ABOUT BEING PRODUCTIVE, INSPIRED, AND COLLABORATIVE WHILE MAINTAINING A PHYSICAL DISTANCE FROM OTHERS. IT IS ABOUT SELF INITIATING PROJECTS THAT INSPIRE OTHERS TO CREATE. FINALLY, IT IS ABOUT USING YOUR TALENT FOR VIRTUAL COLLABORATION TO UPLIFT OUR CURRENT SITUATION.”



WITS UNIVERSITY HAS HAD TO ADJUST TO A NEW MODEL OF LEARNING THAT INVOLVES ONLINE AS WELL AS LIMITED FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT

Image: Shivan Parusnath

By May, Wits started bringing some students and staff back to its campuses. Government regulations allowed for a third of Wits' 37 000 students to return during relaxed lockdown restrictions. Wits started with 500 final year medical students.

By June this number was extended to 5000 students on a rotational basis and mostly those who needed to be back for clinical training or those who needed to be on campus to complete laboratory experiments. Many clinical students also volunteered to be at the coalface of hospitals and clinics that needed assistance with COVID-19 screening and testing.

A small number of 1500 res students were also allowed back. They were assigned their own rooms and issued food packs at mealtimes to avoid congregating in dining halls.

The University has to be routinely "deep cleaned" with screening and testing systems in place. Wits' molecular biology students manufactured high-alcohol content hand sanitisers and printed face shields for University personnel. Everyone has also been issued with two reusable and washable face masks and personal protective equipment was issued for cleaning staff and others at high risk.

All these arrangements have come at a price tag of R10 million for the months between March and June.

"Contact learning, is of course, still the best option, but we must also have blended learning options. We had planned to introduce online teaching platforms by 2023 or 2024 but in the end we had to get this done within a few weeks," Patel says.

Patel says current student numbers have remained in line with the same period last year. "We haven't seen any significant deregistering and we've actually had an increase in people applying to do post graduate studies."

There has been a drop-off, however, in international student registration numbers – largely because there wasn't clarity on when borders would reopen.

On a broader public health front, Wits experts have been at the coalface in fighting the pandemic.

Wits doctors and clinicians as well as medical student volunteers have stepped up to the plate to relieve the burden on overworked healthcare professionals.

Wits is the lead institution in South Africa collaborating in three international vaccine trials (see page 14). The first, known as the South African OxCov-19 Vaccine VIDA-Trial, started in June and is a collaboration with the University of Oxford and the Oxford Jenner Institute. The second, started in August, is a Phase 2 trial to evaluate if the nanoparticle S-protein in the vaccine known as NVX-CoV2373 offers protection against COVID-19. The third, a Johnson & Johnson product called Ad26.COV2-S, which will be the first Phase 3, trial started in September.

Numerous Wits researchers and academics across disciplines have also been key experts advising government, engaging with the media and the public, sharing crucial research.

Patel acknowledges that the university is adapting, tweaking and learning as the pandemic runs its course. Most positive perhaps is that Witsies have chosen to be part of the solution in the battle against COVID-19.

Wits Dental School Class of 1970 50th Anniversary Reunion

GOLDEN SMILES ACROSS SIX CONTINENTS

THE WITS DENTAL School class of 1970 celebrated their 50th anniversary virtually on 5 July after original travel plans to meet in Stellenbosch, South Africa were scuppered by the COVID-19 pandemic. **Colin Richman** (BDS 1970) convened the programme from Perio, Atlanta in the US while golden graduates updated each other on career and family developments.

A message of congratulations came from distinguished alumnus **Stanley Bergman** (BCom 1972, CTA 1973, DCom honoris causa 2016), Board Chair of the Wits Fund and CEO of Henry Schein: "As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote:

"To leave the world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition, to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived: This is to have succeeded!..."

"While not occurring in person, your convening during these unprecedented times is a testament to your collective bond. Assuredly our time at Wits was and is special, and I congratulate you on coming together to honor and celebrate the importance of your school's years upon your lives."

The event culminated in celebratory toasts and alumni in attendance were **Alan Barnett**

(Philadelphia, US); **Joseph Berlin** (Israel); **Spiers Breitz** (Germany); **Patrick Daly** (SA); **David Garber** (Atlanta, US); **Terence Gordon** (California, US); **Mervyn Hurwitz** (Boca Raton, US); **Leslie Joffe** (London, UK); **Sheldon Jones** (SA); **Gerald Kaplan** (SA); **David Karon** (SA); **Issac Kesler** (SA); **Neil Kramer** (London, UK); **Leslie Lang** (SA); **Tony McCullum** (SA); **Vince Phillips** (SA); **Victor Press** (San Antonio, US); **Colin Richman** (Perio, US); **Michael Rudolph** (SA); **Jack Shapiro** (Sydney, Australia); **Louis Smit** (London, UK); **Fred van Gelder** (Holland); **Anthony Widmonte** (SA).

- For images and a PDF of this event go to: <https://www.wits.ac.za/alumni/alumni-events/past-events/>

Wits Medical School Class of 1960 60th Anniversary Reunion

SEARCH FOR MORE DIAMONDS

AS A FITTING celebration of their Diamond Jubilee, the Medical School Class of 1960 launched a website (https://wits_medical_alumni_1960.mailchimpsites.com/) dedicated to autobiographical sketches, news as well as obituaries from the class. While re-connecting and celebrating their achievements, they also aim to bolster financial support for current Wits medical students through the Phillip V Tobias Bursary Fund and have set a goal of R400 000. This project was initiated by **Chaim M Rosenberg**, based in Chicago, with the support of present Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Professor Martin Veller, and the

US Alumni Representative, Nooshin Erfani-Ghadimi. They hope to track down as many classmates as possible. A Golden Jubilee committee has also been established, which includes **Ronald Auerbach, Gary Katz, Anthony Crosley, Anthony Meyers, Leonard Kahn** and **Avroy Fanaroff**. The response has been overwhelmingly positive with newsletters documenting activity and attracting new readership. For example, the third newsletter featured 10 matriculants of 1954 from Highlands North High School, Johannesburg who were accepted to Wits Medical School. The fourth

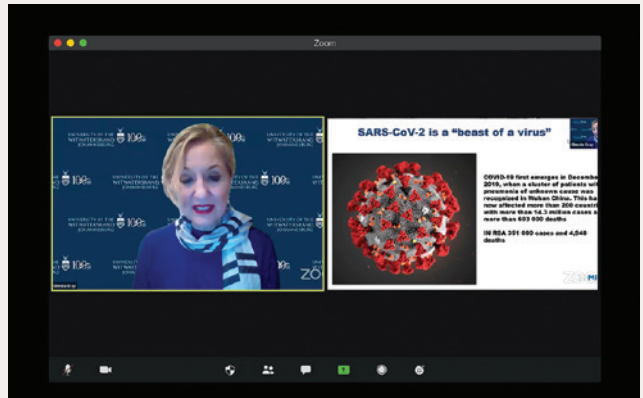
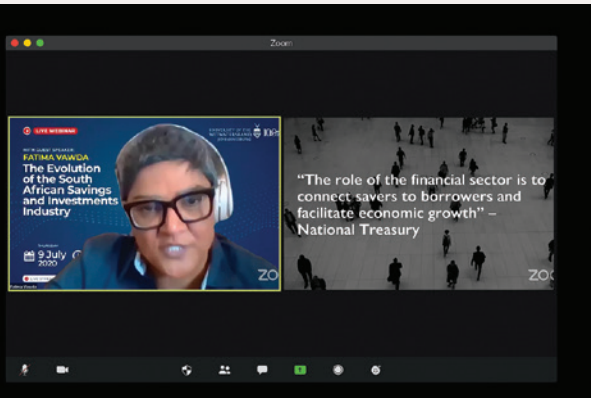


LAURENCE GEFFEN



CLIVE ROSENDORFF

newsletter featured classmates who became deans of medical schools: **Clive Rosendorff** (Wits), **Arthur Rubenstein** (Mount Sinai, NY and University of Pennsylvania) and **Laurence Geffen** (Adelaide and Brisbane Medical Schools).



From the comfort of their homes and offices, alumni connected virtually through a series of webinars, drawing on the depth of expertise from a range of leaders in their fields.



FATIMA VAWDA
The Evolution of the South African Savings and Investments Industry

About 250 Wits alumni and guests tuned in to listen to Wits alumna **Fatima Vawda** (BSc 1993, BSc Hon 1994, MSc 1995, HdipCompSc 1997) on 9 July 2020. Vawda, founder and Managing Director of 27four Investment Managers, said although independent asset management firms have emerged, the historically dominant players remain entrenched.

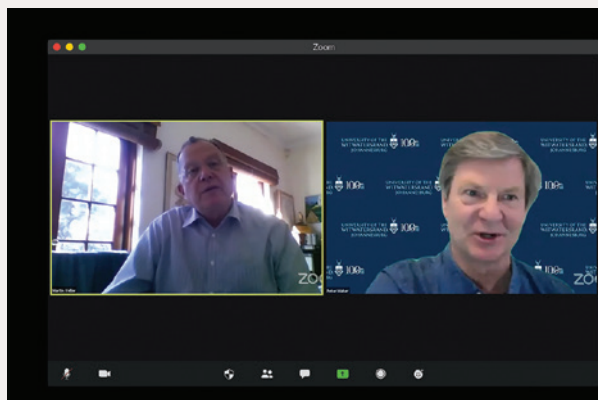
Increasingly companies were turning to alternative sources of capital to grow and expand their businesses. An emerging trend globally is the rise of private equity and the private market. “It can play a phenomenal role in an emerging and developing economy such as South Africa. It can be used to successfully provide economic growth and good developmental outcomes.”



PROF GLENDA GRAY
SA's escalating COVID-19 pandemic

On 19 July Professor **Glenda Gray** (MBBCh 1986) gave insights into the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. In this much-anticipated webinar, Professor Gray took alumni on a journey covering the seven-month-old COVID-19 pandemic, which was part historical, part biological and part medical. Within the first 10 minutes, the webinar reached its 500-person capacity and additional participants were able to view the event live on the alumni YouTube page.

Her message was clear that non-pharmaceutical interventions such as wearing masks, social distancing and washing hands remain our main line of defence to prevent its propagation “until the coronavirus circulates out in two or three seasons’ time”. “Normal vaccine development pathways take between 10-15 years. There is a hope that we can get one in 12 to 18 months. But you can see how challenging this is given that it took us 60 years to find a vaccine for polio, 15 for Ebola, and still nothing for MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) six years later. It’s a very ambitious project and a race against time.”



GLOBAL REUNION

Vice-Chancellor Professor **Adam Habib** introduced Vice-Chancellor designate Professor **Zebulon Vilakazi** to the global alumni community at the first global reunion on 31 July. More than 800 alumni from over 20 countries connected over two sessions to accommodate time zone differences. Many alumni shared their good wishes and posed challenging questions to the professors.

Professor Habib urged alumni to back the VC designate: “I’ve had an incredible seven years. There have been some difficult years. I would not have managed that without the incredible support of alumni, from many parts of the world. I want to thank each one of you for that, but I want to urge you to provide that same support to Zebulon Vilakazi because he will be leading this institution of ours under very difficult conditions. He can only succeed through the support he gets from every one of us.”

Alumni comments:

- Thanks so very much for organising this incredible event, greatly appreciated. – **Dr Les Glassman**, Jerusalem, Israel (Wits Alumni Representative)
- Huge thanks and appreciation to the Wits leadership under Prof Habib for the great vision and strength. Warm greetings from Glasgow. **Rhian Touyz**
- Hi all. Proud to be a Wits alumnus. **Gareth Zimmerman**, Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK
- Congratulations, Prof Vilakazi! I live and work in Chicago and also grew up in Katshehong. – **Lusanda Mayikana**
- I’m delighted to be with you all. – **Dr David Nathanson** in Detroit, Michigan US. Lovely to hear how strong the Wits folks are – good luck!
- Proud to be a Wits and Wits Business School Alumni. – **Anna Zanghi** from Brussels
- Well done Prof Habib. Glad to have attained my Doctorate degree five years ago during your tenure. Your leadership was remarkable. I wish you all the best. Welcome Prof Vilakazi. I wish you nothing but the best. Thank you Wits. Proud WITS alumnus. – **Alex Kasembeli**, Nairobi, Kenya
- Congratulations Prof Vilakazi! Wishing you all of the very best in your tenure and we as alumni are here to support you fully as you lead our treasured alma mater. – **S’onqoba Vuba**, Johannesburg, SA



PROF MARTIN VELLER

**COVID-19,
All your
questions
answered**

On 24 August Professor **Martin Veller** (MBBCh 1979, MMed 1990), Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences and professor in the University’s Department of Surgery, shared his insights from the coalface of the pandemic. He reflected on Wits’ response to the pandemic, how the health sciences faculty was navigating medical training and shared personal observations. Professor Veller said the Faculty ranked 77th out of 25 000 for clinical and preclinical disciplines in the Times Higher Education Ranking of Universities in the World.

“I have been in the position to interact with a remarkable faculty – also within the University – with amazing people. One feels pride, as a member of the University, to see the impact it is making even during a difficult time.”



TIME TO RECALL

"WE NEED TO ACHIEVE THE DREAM OF TRANSFORMING GREATER BRAAMFONTEIN AND BEYOND INTO AN INNOVATION HUB WITH WITS AT ITS CENTRE."

FEATURE: PROFESSOR ZEBLON VILAKAZI

MEET THE NEW VICE- CHANCELLOR DESIGNATE

BY HEATHER DUGMORE

CELEBRATE



Images: Shivan Parusnath
(Professor Vilakazi)
Tembinkosi Sikupela,
Unsplash (Braamfontein),

FROM A TO Z, FROM ADAM TO ZEBLON IS THE TAGLINE BEING USED TO REFER TO THE SUCCESSION FROM PROFESSOR ADAM HABIB TO **PROFESSOR ZEBLON VILAKAZI**, WHO WILL TAKE UP HIS APPOINTMENT AS WITS' 15TH VICE-CHANCELLOR IN JANUARY 2021.

A to Z applies to Prof Vilakazi in more than one way. As a nuclear physicist, it's in the nature of his research to understand life from the smallest particle to the cosmos. His cultural perspective is equally expansive as he is able to communicate in six languages: isiZulu, Sesotho, English, Afrikaans, French and German. He can read Cyrillic script and one of his favourite books is Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*.

Should you catch him at home on a Sunday, you'll hear Bach or jazz floating through the kitchen as he prepares roast lamb for his wife **Mary Seemane** (BCom Hons 2000) and their children.

It's a brief respite from the parallel universe in which we are living during COVID-19. "We are faced with the anguish of this pandemic and at the same time we are dealing with a whole lot of other challenges including the technological exponential that is rapidly transforming our lives in unprecedented ways," Vilakazi explains. "At the same time we are dealing with climate change, unemployment, inequality, biodiversity loss, freshwater shortages, food insecurity ... the list is long.

"What we have to do is recalibrate our society to respond to these challenges without borders. As universities we need to focus on research and innovation without borders. It's an imperative and at the same time it is hugely exciting because it's a catalyst for new and expanded opportunities for the academy and society."

Big ideas befit him and his stated ambition as VC designate is to create the MIT equivalent on the African

continent at Wits: "I have been told that we cannot replicate MIT because we are an African university but why should this stop us? Wits and MIT both share a commitment to research rigour, creativity, innovation and imagination towards solving the hardest local and global challenges. Wits has done this since its outset when the university responded to the discovery of gold on the reef by doing deep-level mining research that put South Africa ahead of most countries in the world.

"We need to be bold, brave and build on our fantastic legacy – we'll be 100 in 2022. All our faculties need to see themselves making Nobel-winning discoveries. We need to place ourselves on the next level of driving South Africa and Africa in the 4IR. As that English phrase goes 'necessity is the mother of invention'. If we look at MIT's history, it was established out of necessity in the 1860s during the American Civil War and in the wake of the industrial revolution that was sweeping through America.

"MIT's founder, natural scientist William Barton, said a new form of higher education was required to address the challenges posed by rapid advances in science and technology in the mid-19th century, for which the traditional higher education institutions were ill-prepared as they were stuck with outdated curricula.

"Likewise, we are facing very difficult times, the fourth industrial revolution and rapid advances in science, technology and in every one of our disciplines," Vilakazi elaborates. "What we have going for us is that Wits is a dynamic African research-intensive university situated in the continent's most cosmopolitan city with a



“Time spent on campus is not about learning the basics that can be learnt online, it’s about students from diverse backgrounds coming together to interact, to discover and to experiment with possibility.”

PROFESSOR ZEBLON VILAKAZI

significant youth dividend. We need to turn this to our advantage, and take our University into the next century. We need to achieve the dream of transforming greater Braamfontein and beyond into an innovation hub with Wits at its centre.”

To advance Wits’ aspirations, it has entered into partnerships with MIT and other leading international universities, that include postgraduate exchanges. “Having a strong international research profile gives us access to the big table and we need to leverage this. In the same way we need our alumni to support and champion us wherever they are in the world and to let us know when they feel we are doing things right and wrong as they are the guardians of our reputation.”

As part of the fast-track trajectory he envisages, Vilakazi says teaching and learning at Wits must respond to the technological, creative and entrepreneurship requirements of the 4IR, including quantum computing and technologies, the Sustainable Development Goals, transdisciplinary curricula, and latterly, the shift to online, hastened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

He emphasises that digital and hybrid learning is now a necessary component of education. “Time spent on campus is not about learning the basics that can be learnt online, it’s about students from diverse backgrounds coming together to interact, to discover and to experiment with possibility.”

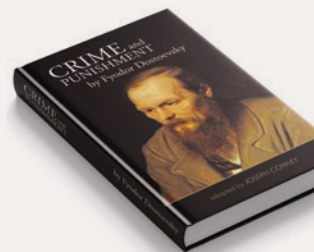
Vilakazi would like his legacy as VC to be the creation of an environment for innovation and imagination that offers young people in all disciplines the opportunity to pursue their highest potential and ambitions, which, he says, is what got him to where he is today.

Born and raised in Katlehong, a large township east of Johannesburg, he was the second youngest of eight. His mother was a housewife and his father ran a small shop in the community.

“There were difficult times in our community in the 1980s, but it was also when my interest in science was



Images: Shivan Parusnath



Fun facts

Can communicate in six languages:

isiZulu, Sesotho, English, Afrikaans, French and German

Can read Cyrillic script

One of his favourite books:

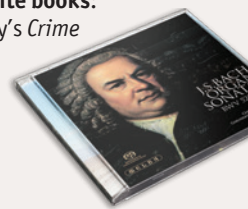
Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*

Favourite music:

Bach and jazz

Favourite food:

Roast lamb



100 1922 2022

“We need to be bold and brave and build on our fantastic legacy of 100 years in 2022. All our faculties need to see themselves making Nobel-winning discoveries. We need to place ourselves on the next level of driving South Africa and Africa in the 4IR.”

PROFESSOR ZBLON VILAKAZI

Career Highlights

- 1998 + Graduated with a PhD
- Awarded a National Research Foundation postdoctoral fellowship at the European Centre for Nuclear Research, or CERN, in Geneva
- 2002 + Visiting Scientist; Commission for Atomic & Alternative Energy, France
- 2008 + Honorary Professor of Physics; University of Pretoria
- 2010 + World Economic Forum Young Global Leader
- 2011 + Initiated the planning phase of the Rare Isotope Beam facility – the only one in the Southern Hemisphere
- Group Executive (Research & Development); South African Nuclear Energy Corporation
- Honorary Professor of Physics; Stellenbosch University
- 2012 + Honorary Professor of Physics; University of Cape Town
- 2013 + Director of iThemba LABS – the largest research cyclotron facility in Africa and the Southern Hemisphere
- 2014 + Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research and Postgraduate Affairs & Professor of Physics
- 2018 + Oversaw Wits becoming the first African university to join the Harvard/MIT edX MOOC platform which places it at the frontier of online/blended learning
- 2019 + Played a key role in the establishment of the R750m IBM research laboratory (one of only 13 in the world) at the Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct
- 2020 + Vice-Principal
- 2020 + Vice-Chancellor designate

triggered,” he says. He explains that as a 12-year-old boy he was playing football outside a general store when he looked through the window and saw a black and white TV screening the launch of Columbia STS-1’s orbital flight from NASA’s space station in Florida on April 12 1981, which heralded a new era in space travel. “I was glued to it,” he says. He watched for an hour-and-a-half as the rocket shot into space and eventually all he could see was a tiny dot that disappeared from sight. A few weeks later he visited the planetarium at Wits. He was hooked.

In later years, he says, a combination of good fortune and opportunity came his way, with people guiding him along his physics path and advising about scholarships such as for CERN – the European Organisation for Nuclear Research.

Vilakazi has been part of the Wits management team for several years, and is attuned to the complexity of engaging a large population of students and staff. He was part of the university management during the 2015 #FeesMustFall protests, which, he says, in some ways was handled well and in others could have been better.

“We responded to the situation as best we could. You learn from all these experiences as our sector, being a microcosm of society, is facing a multiplicity of problems. Gender-based violence, sexual harassment and exclusion are major problems in our country and the world, and even one incident on campus is one incident too many. We need to deal with this through education and appropriate management intervention.”

Transformation is another pressing issue he will lead on: “Over the past few years we have made great strides in creating an enabling environment for a diverse student and staff profile. This is reflected in the university’s demographic, which is among the most diverse in the country, both in terms of race and gender, and, increasingly, of a more international flavour. We will continue to address the challenges that still remain, such as the historically underrepresented groups, namely women and black Africans, in the higher echelons of academia, more specifically in the STEM disciplines.”

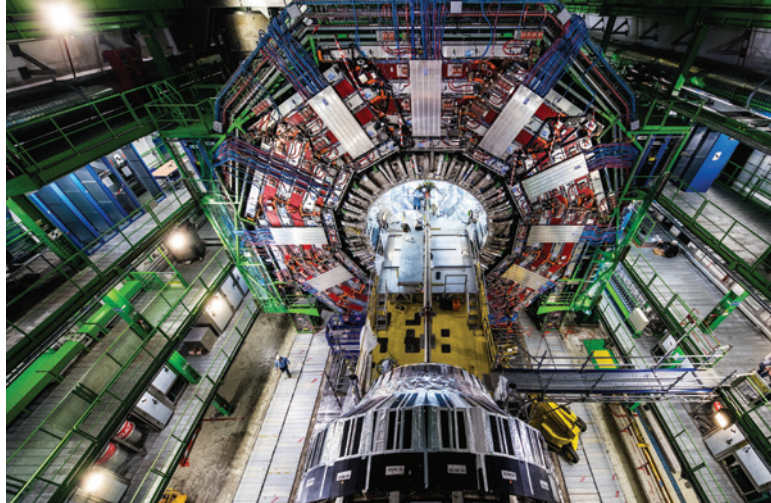
Vilakazi emphasizes that “at all levels the university transformation process needs to keep on creating an environment of diversity and inclusion, and to keep on creating conditions for the broader cross-section of every constituent of the university community to see themselves having a major role to play in this big and bold experiment we are embarking on”.

“As universities we need to focus on research and innovation without borders. It’s an imperative and at the same time it is hugely exciting because it’s a catalyst for new and expanded opportunities for the academy and society.”

PROFESSOR ZEBLON VILAKAZI



TSHIMOLOGONG PRECINCT



LARGE HADRON COLLIDER, (CERN), GENEVA

Image: CERN

From Wits PhD to VC

Prof **Zebon Vilakazi** graduated with a PhD from Wits in 1998. The mind of the man is reflected in his research interests: heavy-ion collisions at ultra-relativistic energies, and computational physics in relation to GRID computing.

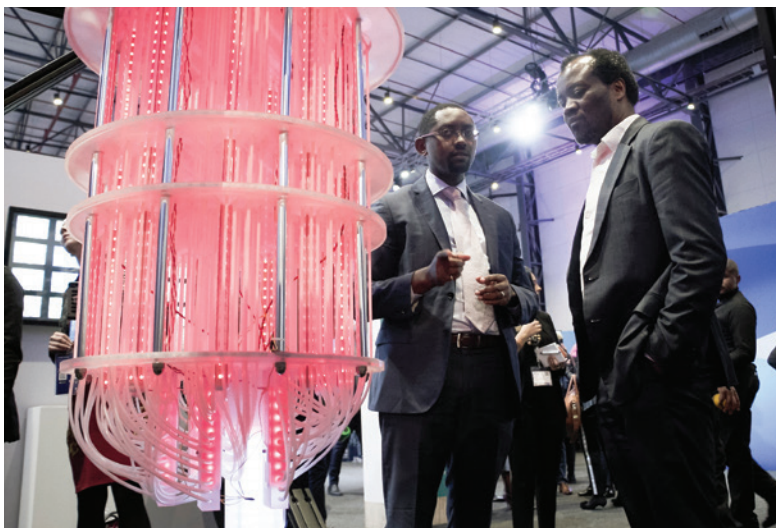
After his PhD he was awarded a National Research Foundation postdoctoral fellowship at CERN in Geneva. This was followed by an academic position at the University of Cape Town where he was instrumental in creating SA-CERN – South Africa’s first programme based on the CERN Large Hadron Collider Project.

He became Vice-Principal in April this year and was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research and

Postgraduate Affairs since 2014. During this time he was instrumental in creating an enabling environment for a research-intensive and postgraduate-oriented university.

Prof Vilakazi chairs South Africa’s National Quantum Computing Working Committee, which seeks to develop a framework for quantum computing and quantum technology-driven research and innovation in South Africa.

He was instrumental in Wits becoming the first African partner on the IBM Q Network earlier this year and will be chairing the Department of Science and Innovation’s National Working Committee to develop a framework for quantum computing and quantum technology-driven research and innovation in South Africa.



LEFT: PROFESSOR ZEBLON VILAKAZI WITH DR SOLOMON ASSEFA (IBM RESEARCH) WITH A 3D PRINTED MODEL OF THE QUANTUM COMPUTER.
BELOW: ONE OF PROF VILAKAZI'S RESEARCH INTERESTS IS IN HEAVY-ION COLLISIONS

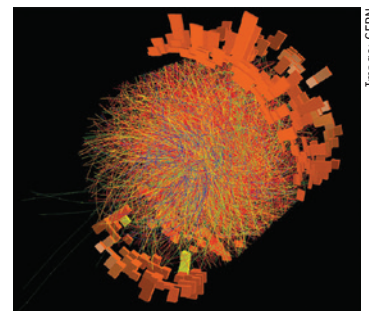


Image: CERN



“Zikr is a remembrance; it is a repetition or devotion. It is an awareness of something bigger than you, an awareness of the divine and even if you don’t believe, it is just an awareness.”

SAALEHA IDREES BAMJEE



[BA Hons 2005]

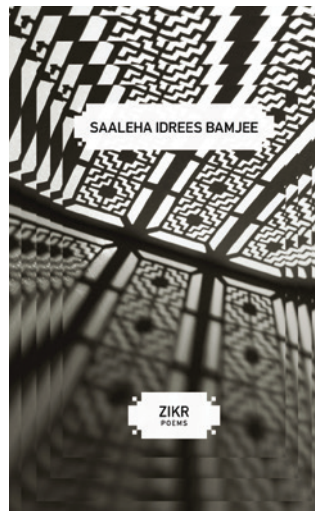
Saaleha Idrees Bamjee

Winner of the **2020 Ingrid Jonker Prize for English Poetry** for her collection *Zikr* (uHlanga Press)

The prize is awarded in every alternate year to the best debut in English. It was instituted after the death of the respected South African poet in 1965.

Multi-talented Witsie **Saaleha Idrees Bamjee** grew up in Azaadville, on the West Rand of Johannesburg. She has a MA in Creative Writing from Rhodes University and won the Writivism Short Story Prize in 2014. She is an accomplished photographer and food blogger who has worked as a journalist and graphic designer. She says "*Zikr* is a remembrance; it is a repetition or devotion. It is an awareness of something bigger than you, an awareness of the divine and even if you don't believe, it is just an awareness."

Her poems are honest, poignant and humorous about what it means to be independent in a world of traditions. In *The Good Life* she writes: "Good girls clean chickens/ love their grannies/marry well/cry in cupboards/dust under dressers/don't visit empty-handed." In *Women on Beaches* she writes: "The first bathing suit was a wooden house wheeled into the sea. They used to sew weights into hemlines. Drowning was a kind of modesty."



Images: Saaleha Bamjee



Winners of four 2020 'hackathons' for the **Guardian Health app**: NEMISA/Unisa's 4IR hack (March); ITWeb's #BidDataHack (March); MTN's Ayoba hack (May); Capitec's Life 2.0 (July)

Dynamic duo **Tsitsi Marote** and **Darlington (Tino) Manhema** saw the need for a digital filing system to help patients access their own data and set up virtual consultations. These data scientists created the Guardian Health app. It was also among 10 startups selected by the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business to join its 12-week Venture Exploitation Programme.

The app couldn't be a timelier solution to limit the risk of going into overcrowded hospital spaces. Marote says: "COVID-19 came at a time when the world, including South Africa, was not making the most of digital platforms. We've learned that we need to change how we do things to meet such challenges. We're actively looking for health professionals and patients that can test our systems and give us feedback. This will be an iterative process where we fix and develop new features as we go."

The idea was sparked during Marote's Master's research to figure out if expectant mothers could detect foetal abnormalities earlier in their pregnancy. The app helps assess the risk of foetal abnormalities (such as slowed heart rate) and also gathers data such as a mother's blood pressure, heart condition and age to predict the likelihood of her needing a C-section delivery.

[BSc 2018, BSc Hons 2019]

Tsitsi Marote



[BSc 2018, BSc Hons 2020]

Tino Manhema



"This is a data-driven system," says Manhema. "Our models were deployed on Google Cloud. We wanted to come up with a solution that would use existing data so we can offer this to health institutions and exchange their data for our insights. Guardian Health empowers health-care professionals, helping them find out the risks of a pregnancy much earlier and without needing to see the patient's health records."

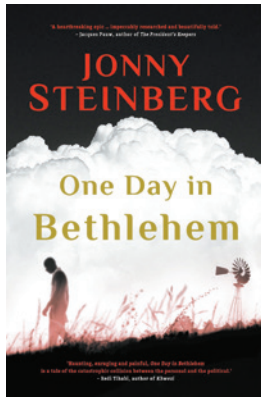
What started out as a focus on maternal health has been expanded into other areas.

Marote, who is also passionate about education, tutors maths and was voted as one of the 'Top 15 young geeks of South Africa' for this year by Geekulcha.



Image: Veronique Susman

Winner of the
**non-fiction 2020
 Recht Malan Prize**
 for One Day in
 Bethlehem
 (Jonathan Ball)



[BA 1992, BA Hons 1993, MA 1996]

Jonny Steinberg

Academic, award-winning author and visiting professor at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research Professor **Jonny Steinberg's** book is an excavation of the life of Fusi Mofokeng, a man unjustly imprisoned for 19 years and later freed into Bohlakong, a township in the Free State. (The Wits Justice Project received a letter from Mofokeng in 2009 and began an initiative to have him released along with Tshokolo Joseph Mokoena.)

Over four years, Professor Steinberg documents Mofokeng's journey. Despite his dysfunctional surroundings, Mofokeng flourishes after his incarceration. Professor Steinberg suggests what is central is Mofokeng's memory of events. "He turned out to be a fundamentally decent, functional, good person precisely because his memory was unreliable. He had the freedom to reconstruct who he was, what had happened. It is an incredibly counterintuitive thing to think. It was interesting to discover this man's past and what it did to his relationship to the present." He says: "It's about human adaptation, creativity and resilience."

Professor Steinberg is twice winner of the *Sunday Times* Alan Paton Award for *Midlands* (2002) and *The Number* (2004) and the inaugural winner of the Windham–Campbell Prize in Literature, first awarded by Yale University in 2013. He teaches at Oxford University's African Studies Centre and is a columnist for *Business Day*. His other books are *Three-Letter Plague* (2008), *Little Liberia* (2011) and *A Man of Good Hope* (2015). Professor Steinberg says those who read his books should be better equipped with the ability to look at themselves from a distance. "It is an incredibly humbling experience and important. It is realising in this country I am actually quite small. I can step outside of myself and see I am one of many in a complicated place."

[BSc 1993, BSc Hons 1998]

Roseanne Harris



Nominated **President of the International Actuarial Association (IAA)**

Professor **Roseanne Harris** is Head of Regulator Policy Affairs at Discovery Health and Adjunct Professor in Actuarial Science at Wits. She is a health actuary with over 22 years of experience in the South African healthcare and employee benefits field. She was nominated from a pool of 60 000 actuaries from around the world who are part of 106 bodies. The position will be confirmed in November and will entail heading up the association over a period of three years. One year will be spent as president elect, the next as president and one year as past president. As president of the IAA she will lead the profession's engagement with organisations such as the WHO, OECD and World Bank, among others, to drive the development of the profession internationally. With the COVID-19 crisis, the actuarial profession has an important role to play in understanding risk and using modelling to develop

strategies for navigating a dynamically changing environment. She says: "There is a clear need for scientific rigour to underpin how we model and analyse risk and the actuarial profession has a great deal to contribute to global issues such as the implications of the COVID-19 crisis, climate change risk and social security sustainability. I look forward to contributing to these important discussions and demonstrating the value actuaries can add."

[MBA 1997]

Maurice Radebe

Appointed as **Head and Director of Wits Business School** from January 2021 for a five-year term

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced tertiary institutions around the world to adjust the way they function – this includes business schools. It takes some courage to face the prospect of an executive education programme functioning entirely online, with huge operating budget cuts and in an environment in which there's the possibility of many companies going out of business. **Maurice Radebe** has welcomed this challenge.

"It's an exciting time to be involved. SA will never go back to the old way of life, so as a school, we have a unique opportunity to reset and redesign the way we operate. It's like having a blank canvas."

Radebe was the Executive Vice-President of the Energy Business at Sasol Oil Ltd till September 2020, and has previously served as the Group Executive: Corporate Affairs, Stakeholder Relations and Enterprise Development as well as Managing Director. He is an alumnus of Wits Business School, graduating with two qualifications – the Management Advanced Programme and an MBA. Besides this, Radebe also has a BSc in applied mathematics and physics.

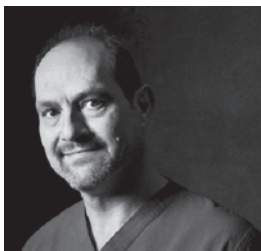




[MBBCh 1983]

Dr Frank Phillips

Performed the **first augmented reality minimal invasive spine surgery** 15 June 2020



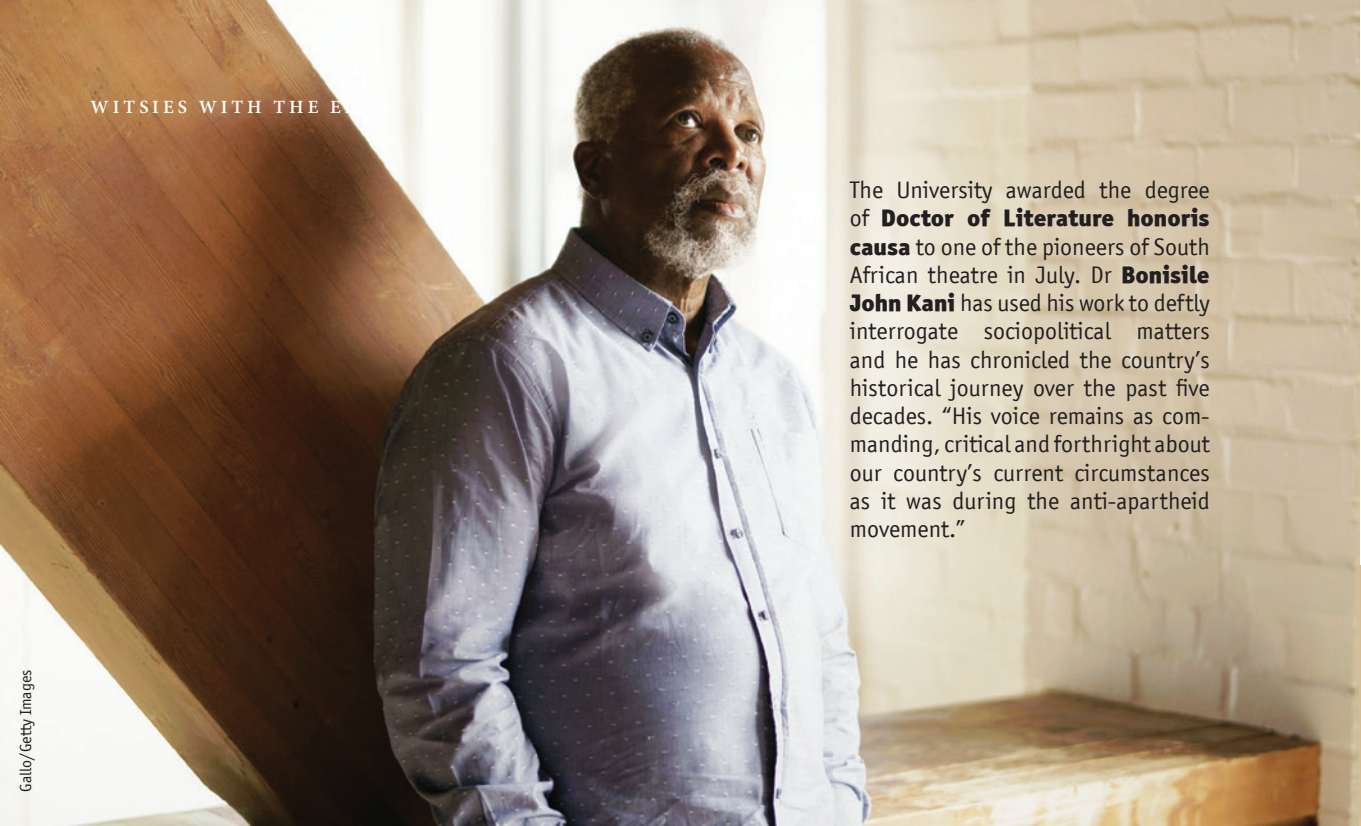
Dr **Frank Phillips** is Professor and Director of the Division of Spine Surgery at Rush University Medical Center and undertook this break-through surgery at Rush University's Midwest Orthopaedics in Chicago. He has had a distinguished career as an innovative spine surgeon.

Dr Phillips partnered with start-up Augmedics six years ago, and developed xvision, which is a novel "spine visioning" technology. Another Wits alumnus, **Stuart Wolf** (BSc Eng 1988), is the company's chief technology officer. Xvision consists of a transparent near-eye-display headset. It accurately determines the position of surgical tools, in real time, and a virtual trajectory is then superimposed on the patient's CT data. The 3D navigation is then projected onto the surgeon's retina using the headset, allowing him to simultaneously look at the patient and

see the navigation data without averting his or her eyes to a remote screen during the procedure. The surgical instruments were placed through a 5mm incision.

"Being able to place minimally invasive spinal instrumentation extremely accurately and efficiently, reducing surgical time and complication risk, is critical to improving outcomes for spinal surgery," says Dr Phillips, who reports the patient experienced severe back pain and limited mobility before the operation.

Dr Phillips emigrated to Chicago in 1987. He was named among the top 28 spine surgeons by his peers in *Orthopedics this Week* and listed in *Becker's Orthopedic & Spine Review* as one of the top spine surgeons and specialists in the US.



The University awarded the degree of **Doctor of Literature honoris causa** to one of the pioneers of South African theatre in July. Dr **Bonisile John Kani** has used his work to deftly interrogate sociopolitical matters and he has chronicled the country's historical journey over the past five decades. "His voice remains as commanding, critical and forthright about our country's current circumstances as it was during the anti-apartheid movement."

[LLB 2011]

Nozizwe Ncayiyana

Nominated as **Young Law Professional of the Year for 2019/2020** by the South African Professional Services Awards

Nozizwe Ncayiyana is the Pro Bono Co-ordinator at ENSafrica and runs the company's CSI portfolio. Acknowledging her contribution to the community of Alexandra, the judges say: "Nozizwe is a young pillar of the community given her passion for social justice and human rights... She is the glue between the partnership and the people ensuring that the vast talent pool is utilised to benefit the underprivileged."

As a young girl born in Botswana where her father was in exile, Ncayiyana says talk around the dinner table was often on social justice and this led her to pursue a law degree. "My work has helped me realise the importance of giving back and serving communities through the skills we possess. It is from my experience in both the public and private sectors that I believe communities stand a greater chance of sustained development when strong links are forged through private-public partnerships.

"I am filled with gratitude for the recognition. It reminds me that my efforts do not go by unnoticed and

propels me to do better. I am grateful for the influence of my parents and the foundations they laid. I encourage others to use whatever skill or influence they have to lift those within their reach."

• Other Wits alumni honoured were **John Truter** (BSc Eng 1975, MSc 1989), who posthumously received the Lifetime Achievement Award, **Aaron Mthimunya** (BCom 1995), Accounting Professional of the Year and **Siphosethu Plata** (BSc URP 2009), Construction Young Professional of the Year.



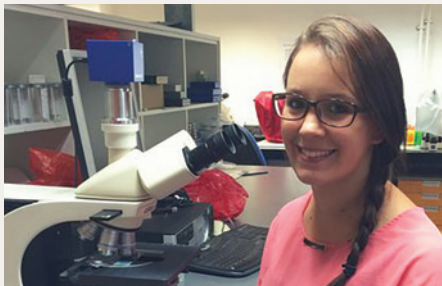
Alumni achievers

Professor **Isidor Segal** (BSc Hons 1948, MBCh 1962) was awarded a degree of **Doctor of Science in Medicine, honoris causa**. Professor Segal started his career as a general practitioner in Soweto and established South Africa's first Gastroenterology Unit in 1975 at the then Baragwanath Hospital. He has led teaching and training of gastroenterology specialists on the continent and his academic unit models have been used globally. The Faculty of Health Sciences presented him with an exceptional service medal in 1998. In 2009 he was named a Master of the World Gastroenterology Organisation, the highest honour bestowed on a member. The doctorate honours his outstanding dedication not only to scholarly research and teaching, but also to service to the community at large.



Professor **Michèle Ramsay** (PhD 1987), Director of the Sydney Brenner Institute for Molecular Bioscience at Wits, won the **Lifetime Achievement Award** for pioneering genomic medicine approaches in Africa and leading the transcontinental study on factors that contribute to African diseases at the 2020 National Science and Technology Forum awards. Professor **Mark Collinson** (MSc Med 2007) is Co-Director with Professor Kobus Herbst of the South African Population Research Infrastructure Network. He received the **Data for Research Award** for conceiving, developing and implementing a database that harmonised data from all three of South Africa's Health and Demographic Surveillance Systems.

Professor **Shane Norris** (BSc Hons 1997), Director of Science and Innovation at the NRF Centre of Excellence in Human Development at Wits, has been elected as **Fellow of the African Academy of Sciences** for his work on developmental origins of health and disease.



Jennifer Fitchett (BSc Hons 2012, MSc 2013, PhD 2015) is a climate change expert and Associate Professor in the School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Studies. She has been selected as a **member of the South African Young Academy of Science**. Members are leaders in their fields. She has demonstrated research excellence in explaining increased severe weather threats in the form of cyclones and torrential rainfall in the Indian Ocean. Most recently she was able to discuss the role of climate in COVID-19 transmission.

*See more Witsie honours: <https://www.wits.ac.za/news/sources/alumni-news/>



COMMUNITY

SIMON SIZWE MAYSON SAYS WE NEED NOT BE SO AFRAID OF AREAS OUTSIDE OUR COMFORT ZONES.

BY UFRIEDA HO

When **Simon Sizwe Mayson** (MSc DP 2014) slips between the various community projects he has helped initiate it can make him seem a little invisible.

But his light touch is actually a super power enabling him to be a “changemaker” who connects people and initiatives. He believes it gives people space to find their own leadership potential; and encourages them to take greater responsibility and ownership of projects.

It’s an approach that’s made all the difference this winter as COVID-19 lockdowns hit hard in the community Mayson has called home for the past two years. Lorentzville is one of the Johannesburg East suburbs on the slope and rise of a valley that flanks the inner city; and it’s where Mayson, a PhD candidate in the Wits School of Architecture and Urban Planning, lives.

Lockdown rapidly turned to job losses and food insecurity for many families and small business owners in these vulnerable and easily overlooked communities. Thanks to networks that Mayson helped strengthen over the past two years, however, the community was able to

respond to help themselves and each other.

Mayson managed to be part of a team that set up an emergency food response project before heading to family in Cape Town for the lower levels of lockdown. That he hasn’t been in Joburg overseeing the project the entire time speaks directly to his point that it’s not about top-heavy leadership, but more about bonds, established over time. So many people working together means expertise can be pooled to maximum effect.

These “many people” are part of Makers Valley Partners (MVP), a community from Bez Valley to Bertrams, Lorentzville, Judith’s Paarl, Troyeville and New Doornfontein. They are a collective of local artists, crafters, urban gardeners, designers, waste reclaimers, metal and wood workers as well as owners of all sizes and kinds of businesses. Knowing each other better means more opportunities for collaboration, sharing and learning. It also means buying local and using local expertise, local suppliers, creators, labour and artisans. It enhances well-being and raises the economic status of more people.

The MVP network kicked in as hunger and



CATALYST

SIMON MAYSON USES AN IMMERSIVE APPROACH TO HIS RESEARCH AMONG THE ARTISTS, GARDENERS, CRAFTERS, WASTE RECLAIMERS AND BUSINESS OWNERS THAT MAKE UP THE MAKERS VALLEY PARTNERS

desperation started to mark lockdown in South Africa. Their first initiative was to support local spaza shops, not large supermarket chains, to source supplies for food parcels. Volunteers collected data on families in need and food parcels were then issued via an SMS alert system to these households. The second initiative was a soup kitchen serving at three locations in the valley. The third initiative was to distribute COVID-19 information and personal protective equipment to locals.

There was also an additional project helping people start their own food gardens and to look after existing pavement food gardens.

Mayson says these initiatives are about immersive participant observation, forging community-driven solutions that are flexible, resilient and which ultimately focus on upending structural inequalities.

These interacting elements are what drives Mayson and informs his immersive approach to research. He is after all the researcher who moved into a flat-share in Yeoville to better understand migrant life in inner-city Joburg as he worked on the Yeoville Studio project – a two-year community-oriented research teaching initiative that the Wits School of Architecture and Planning and civil society organisations collaborated on between

2010 and 2012.

He ended up taking up the balcony space in the flat and subletting his room for the period he lived there. This is typical of high-density living and a survival strategy of many who try to establish themselves in the city.

Mayson has used real-life experience and insights to focus on finding locally appropriate solutions that build on a community's existing networks.

He went on to work for the Johannesburg Development Agency focused on their inner-city projects before returning to his research work.

"I want to see and explore and to keep working within the overarching framework of wellbeing – of people and planet before profit, pushing the idea that we don't have to be so afraid in areas outside our comfort zones. I think when more wealthier South Africans focus on wellbeing beyond ourselves or our family and friends, we will actually make more impact and be happier for it," he says.

Mayson's next project with MVP will interlink early childhood development projects. It is to keep evolving and strengthening the web of community – one Mayson is threaded through in his non-attached, but not detached way – showing that a light touch can also be powerful and make an impact.

FEATURE: ART



GORDON FROUD, *COVID 19, 2020*

A COLLABORATION OF ARTISTS SET OUT TO CAPTURE THIS PIVOTAL TIME IN HISTORY AND IN SO DOING USED THEIR WORK TO BENEFIT OTHERS.

SUSAN WOOLF, *The Future We Choose*



21

21 DAYS. 21 ARTISTS.
LASTING IMPACT.

THE LOCKDOWN COLLECTION

MARCO CIANFANELLI, *Breath*



BY UFRIEDA HO



“Candle smoke is a fragile and volatile medium that I have employed over the past 15 or so years. The symbol of the *Ouroboros*, that of the snake or scaled dragon, biting its own tail, is an image found as early as 1200 BCE in China and has been absorbed and incorporated into the mythologies of many other cultures around the world. The pangolin, which rolls itself up into a defensive ball to look similar to the *Ouroboros*, is one of the world’s most heavily poached and trafficked animals. They have been linked to the outbreak of the interspecies viral pandemic of COVID-19, which started in Wuhan, China and is the reason for the current lockdown in our country. I feel that as a society obsessed with its own image and the consumption of its image, as well as in the consumption of the world’s natural resources at an alarming rate, we become our own *Ouroboros* and eat ourselves and all that surrounds us.” – Diane Victor



SUSAN WOOLF, *X - Pathways of Taxi Hand Signs*

One day when COVID-19 is a memory and the trauma and loss that took so much from us is finally in softer focus, there will be a time to consider its impact and lessons learned.

Entrepreneur and businessman Carl Bates reflected on this as he cradled his one-year-old son, listening to President Cyril Ramaphosa's speech announcing the imminent

lockdown in late March this year. Bates, who was in South Africa at the time (he splits his time between New Zealand and South Africa), recognised the announcement signalled an important moment in history. He also knew the story of this period would have to be recorded for future generations. Though Bates is not connected to the art world he believed art would uniquely be able to capture the depth of human

experience during a hard lockdown.

Bates contacted his Witsie friends in South Africa, marketer **Lauren Woolf** (BA 1992) and artist and art professor **Kim Berman** (BA FA 1982, PhD 2009). Together the trio shaped an idea of establishing a fund that would capture a record of the pandemic through art; be a sustainable support net for artists who would inevitably lose income due to lockdowns; and support ≈

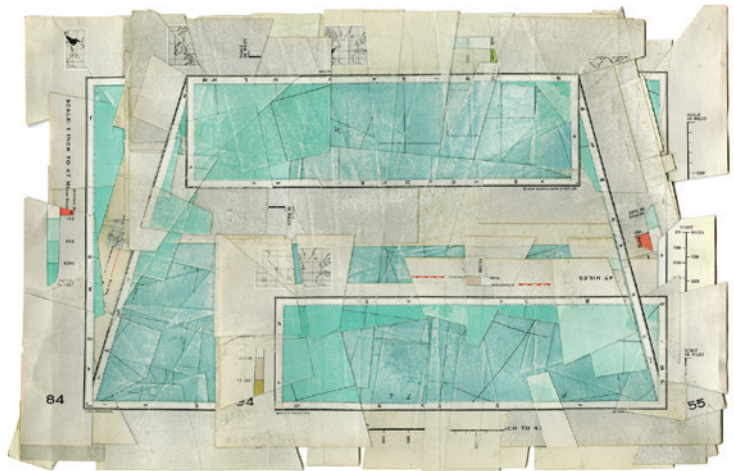
In *Pale Blue Dot* (the title comes from the Carl Sagan book) below, Kim Lieberman mixes two mediums, thread and money, that she has worked with separately for years. They are both antique mediums; both use the human hand over and over. The *Pale Blue Dot* series comes under the artist's broader body of work called Territories. In these works, she uses paper currency as a device that is a mapping of sorts. The works refer to different kinds of territories – those that exist on maps (political, geographic, economic) as well as the internal territories of emotion, wisdom, and sense. Territories are a human construct, says Lieberman. They imply an edge, a space where you cross a border to get into another space. The money is also associated with geography but takes on a different format of references when the actual currencies of different countries are placed into a small space, into an artwork.



KIM LIEBERMAN, *Pale Blue Dot*



KIM BERMAN, *State of Disaster*



GERHARD MARX, *Depths in Feet*

In this work *Depths in Feet*, Gerhard Marx returns to the theme of visual distance and sets himself the task of exploring the possibilities of describing depths, volumes, and distances. The concept of distance becomes all the more relevant during this peculiar time of enforced social distancing. As Marx says: "This is a time of great uncertainty and vulnerability. It is a time in which the virtual flourishes to bring a sense of togetherness, desperate to breach 'across'. But it is also a rare time where there is a sudden emphasis on the physical, and specifically on the value of spaces between, an emphasis on the special distribution (and the possibility thereof). It is a strange time where we look after each other, but not at each other. Where we paradoxically care for each other, not through intimacy, but through distance. In this time distance is a thick, tangible presence. It does not slip away, instead, distance is 'kept'. Distance has perhaps never been so close."

Source: The Lockdown Collection / www.thelockdowncollection.com



WILLIAM KENTRIDGE, *Where Shall We Place Our Hope?*

artists wanting to make a positive contribution to ease the impact of the pandemic.

And so The Lockdown Collection (TLC) was born.

“It was concept to creation in 48 hours. We did everything through WhatsApp messages and voice notes and had to get everything in place between the time the lockdown was announced and when the lockdown came into effect,” says Woolf.

We decided the collection would include the work of 21 artists for the 21 days of lockdown level 5. The artworks would go up for auction at the end of the 21 days with the money raised for each piece sold split between the featured artists, a TLC Vulnerable Visual Artists Fund and the national Solidarity Fund.

They made a kick-start when Berman approached one of South Africa’s most celebrated artists, **William Kentridge** (BA 1997, DLitt honoris causa 2004), for an artwork to sell. Kentridge was on board immediately. He donated his drawing

Where Shall We Place Our Hope?

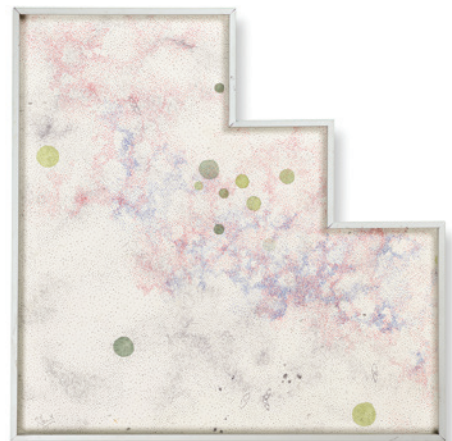
It became the “runway piece”. The drawing was snapped up and sold for R500 000, creating the seed money to get the ball rolling.

Other works featured over the 21 days of level 5 lockdown included many renowned Witsie artists: **Diane Victor** (BA FA 1987), **Richard Penn** (BA FA 1999, MA), **Kim Lieberman** (MA 2002), **Gerhard Marx** (MA 2004), **Gordon Froud** (BA FA 1987, PDip 1987) as well as Penny Siopis, Sam Nhlengethwa, Willem Boshoff, Lucas Nkgweng, Thenjiwe Nkosi and Bambo Sibiyi.

All but three of the works were created specifically for the collection and all had some resonance to the impact, emotion and response to the pandemic. This included the frailties and fault lines the lockdown surfaced in an unequal society, but also the resilience and compassion of human beings. Each day of lockdown one of the artists and their work was profiled on the TLC social media platform. At the end of lockdown



PAUL EMMANUEL, *Platform Number 5*



RICHARD PENN, *Manifold xiii*



MICHAEL
MEYERSFELD,
Veiled





CARL BATES



LAUREN WOOLF

level 5 the pieces were auctioned off in a virtual auction. An astounding R2 million was raised.

“We held an online Zoom auction with Aspire Art Auctions. It was a live auction and we also had a lot for closed bids. It was a first-ever auction of its kind and it worked amazingly,” says Woolf.

The success of the first auction prompted TLC to extend the collection with a new round of artists’ work called the Extension Collection. Wits alumni who participated in this include **Penn, Marx, Marco Cianfanelli** (BA 1993), **Susan Woolf** (PhD 2014), **Michael Meyersfeld** (BA 2018) and **Paul Emmanuel** (BA Fine Art 1994). Later also a TLC Student Collection focused on the work of emerging artists.

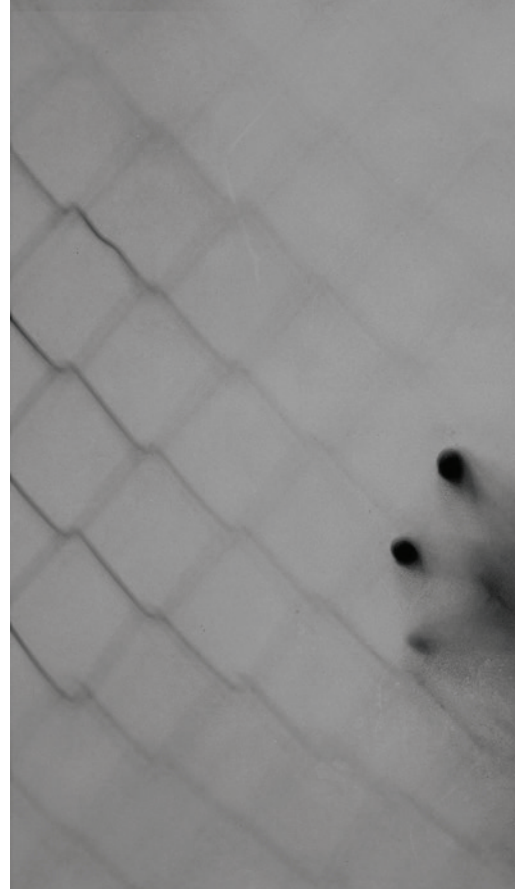
For artist Emmanuel lockdown came with the trauma of an abandoned exhibition that had been up at Wits Art Museum. “*Men and Monuments* had opened for two weeks when we went into lockdown and everything just shut down. It

was very traumatic for me. I had no information and no idea of how it was all going to pan out,” he says.

For the collection Emmanuel contributed a hand-printed lithograph titled *Platform No.5*. It’s a depiction of men moving through a turnstile at Park Station. Emmanuel says it represents an almost supernatural transition between the work being left behind before COVID-19 and the unknown of what lies ahead. (Emmanuel’s exhibition will continue at WAM once the museum reopens to the public.)

Grant applicants for the Vulnerable Artists Fund meanwhile were asked to share their personal stories, art and circumstances. Successful grant recipients have been asked to give back one work to the collection to be sold with the same pricing split.

One of these artists is Lebohang Motaung, who is an alumna of the Artist Proof Studio. Motaung says she applied for a grant and didn’t hesitate to contribute a piece towards the TLC Extended Collection



MICHAEL MEYERSFELD, *Fenced*

in return.

“I just thought of what I went through and what others were going through and what others were going through.” Motaung’s piece *And Yet I Smile* (cover image) is a painting of a young woman wearing a transparent face mask. She says it represents the smiles of bravery against a world devastated by COVID-19, and the vulnerabilities that were unmasked. “Things have become a lot better and I really do believe that when we help each other we can get through this,” she says.

Sustainability is key for the TLC trio because the financial impact of COVID-19 on artists will continue for many months after the peak of



Images supplied by TLC

the crisis is over.

“We had hundreds of applications from across the country, from all walks of life. We had the aunty who sells her art at the Knysna market, through to middle-aged fathers and many young students starting out.

“We were floored by some of the stories of need. It was an exhausting process, but also a gratifying one,” says Berman. “It was also deeply humbling and rewarding to know that we could promptly channel much-needed money directly into the pockets of the people in need.”

The TLC initiative has received high praise around the world for its innovation and impact and for being

able to centre art in the story of humanity facing one of its biggest disasters. But it’s the messages and letters they’ve received from individual artists that have mattered most. They include messages such as: “Receiving the R3 000 from the Vulnerable Artist Fund helped a lot in this time – we managed to buy food, electricity, rent, gas (for winter is coming) and most importantly much needed art materials”; “April and May were hard for all artists staying home due to lockdown but through the help from VAF we managed to buy essential food and medicine for kids”; and “I was able to purchase four canvasses and already one work is complete



KIM BERMAN

“It’s confidence in knowing that even in lockdown isolation and a socially distanced world art’s significance isn’t diminished.”

KIM BERMAN

and I’m busy with another, I shall attach the painting herein”.

“One of the great lessons to be learnt from The Lockdown Collection is that it has allowed people to see their own ability to make a plan – people can, they sometimes just need a boost in confidence,” Berman reflects.

“It’s confidence in knowing that even in lockdown isolation and a socially distanced world art’s significance isn’t diminished. It’s also a reminder that artists are a wide-ranging community and that when collaboration, creativity and commitment come together for greater good it can still win the day.”

SOLO



CATHY O'DOWD
APPROACHING THE
SUMMIT OF THE HIGHEST
MOUNTAIN IN ANDORRA,
COMA PEDROSA

HEATHER DUGMORE
FOLLOWS FOUR ALUMNI
ON THEIR DIVERSE CAREER
JOURNEYS...

QUEST



How did the first woman to climb Everest from both sides cope with being in lockdown in her mountain home in Andorra?

Everest (the south side in 1996 and the north side in 1999), the Bolivian Andes, Alps, Rwenzori, Drakensberg, Kilimanjaro... extreme adventurer **Cathy O'Dowd** (BA 1992) has climbed them all.

In March this year, she went into solitary lockdown in Andorra a small, independent principality situated between France and Spain in the Pyrenees mountains, where she has lived for 18 years.

"It felt odd at first because I was ski touring in the Pyrenees on the weekend and I returned to hear we were going into lockdown 12 hours later. Fortunately, my house backs onto a forest so I'm a lot luckier than all the people who were stuck in small spaces with small children.

"I realised the only way lockdown was going to work for me was firstly through online social solidarity with my friends, chatting regularly and participating in various online groups, and, secondly, to focus on specific projects. For the first month I did an intensive Catalan language learning course online. It's the official language of Andorra, which I can speak but I wanted to improve."

For the second month she rewrote her website and set up a home studio for webinars – a substitute for her in-person motivational presentations on lessons and insights learnt from a life of expedition climbing that she gives at conferences and for corporates to earn a living and fund further expeditions.

"Being self-employed with a wildly fluctuating income, my focus is always on low expenses and high savings so I was okay financially and the



CATHY ON MAZENO RIDGE, NANGA PARBAT IN PAKISTAN

webinars have kept me going," she explains. "I speak about managing uncertainty, drawing on pioneering expeditions as the reference. When you have a goal in mind but you are not sure how to reach it, that's when you have to be both disciplined and creative."

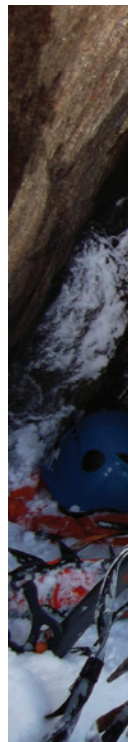
Her August expedition to Greenland had to be postponed until next year and further expeditions remain uncertain. "I'm supposed to go to Antarctica at the end of this year but I have no idea whether it will be possible as we would have to fly to Argentina which is still closed."

Cathy says she feels fortunate that Andorra managed the pandemic so well, including the compulsory wearing of masks, sanitising, social distancing, and testing the whole population twice. Andorra's lockdown ended in just over 60 days and it is once again open for tourism,

its main income. "What helped in Andorra is that it is a small, mostly middle class population and therefore testing and social distancing are far easier to handle than if you have large numbers of people living in close quarters."

When they were first allowed to walk early in the morning, she says, she found herself paying a lot more attention to the detail and beauty around her. "I watched the coming of spring day by day, closely observing the blossoms in the trees instead of rushing off to climb a big mountain in the distance."

Cathy's mountaineering and rock climbing career took shape while she was at Wits from 1987 to 1991 when she was a member of the Wits Mountain Club. "It had a group of young men who were talented rock climbers and serious about it, and I got to move through University



“After Everest,
life was never the
same again”

CATHY O'DOWD



WITSIES AROUND THE WORLD

as part of that group. The most talented included **Roger Nattrass** (MBCh 1990), who went on to become an anaesthesiologist and lives in KwaZulu-Natal. He still climbs and owns a rock climbing gym in addition to his medical career. And **Michael Cartwright** (BSc 1990), who started *Southern Rock*, a rock climbing magazine – I worked on it with him – and he’s now in New

Zealand, where he and his wife own a software company. We still climb together once a year.”

During the same period she started mountain climbing. “There was a shop in Braamfontein called Camp and Climb where we would hang out after classes. They were organising a mountaineering trip to the Rwenzori on the border of Uganda and the DRC, and in 1990 I landed up going



CATHY AND NELSON MANDELA WITH EVEREST SUMMIT PHOTO IN 1996
BELOW: IN 1999 DURING THE EVEREST NORTH CLIMB



CATHY CAMPED AT MAZENO RIDGE OF NANGA PARBAT



Climbing is not Russian roulette, it's about how to anticipate and reduce risks but you cannot eliminate them altogether no matter how hard you train or how skilled you are, it is a sport with risks.

CATHY O'DOWD

CATHY LEADING FALLEN ANGEL, 20, AT DOME



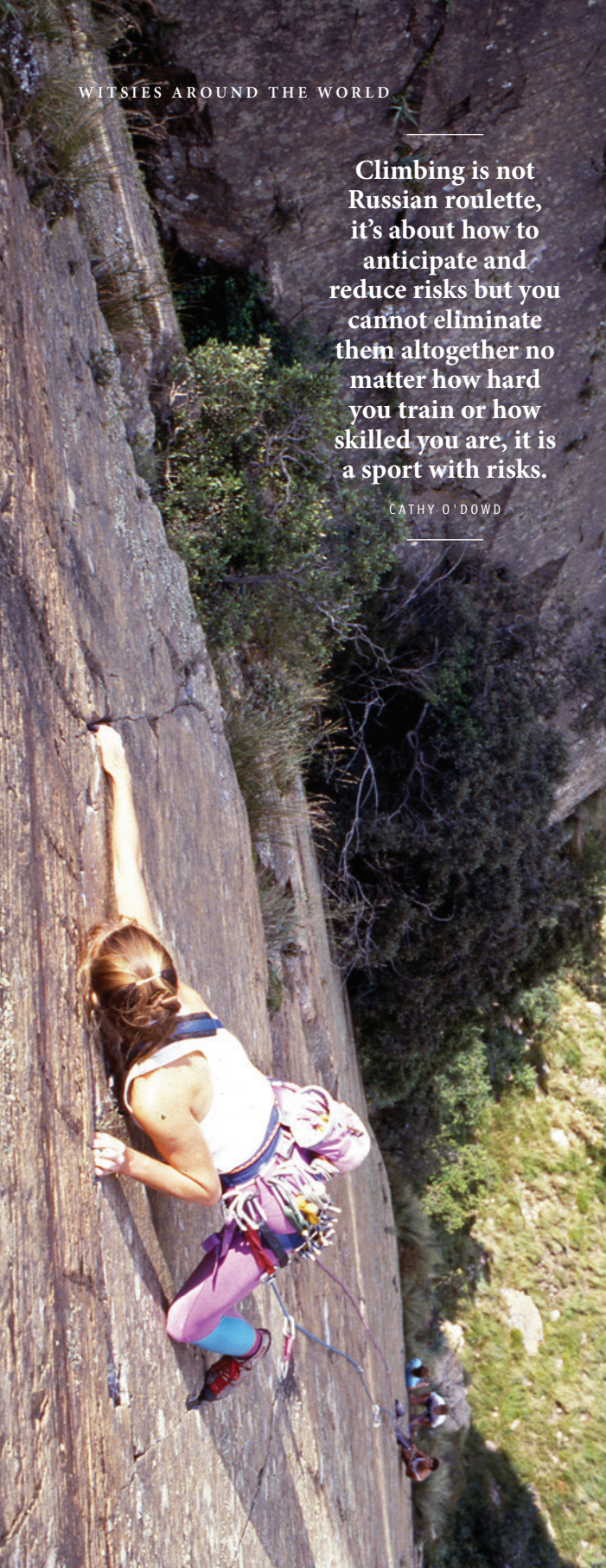
THE PYRENEES PROVIDE THE PERFECT SETTING FOR CANYONING

with Stephen Kelsey, who worked in the shop. I enjoyed the remoteness and the process of exploration and risk management associated with it.

“I was severely shaken when Stephen died while climbing in the Andes in 1993. Stephen was absolutely mad keen on climbing; it was so much about who he was. Climbing is not Russian roulette, it's about how to anticipate and reduce risks but you cannot eliminate them altogether; no matter how hard you train or how skilled you are, it is a sport with risks. I realised that climbing was so much about who I am too and I decided to keep on mountaineering. It ultimately led to me applying to be part of the first ever South African team to climb Everest, led by Ian Woodall.”

At the time Cathy was doing her Master's in journalism at Rhodes University with a view to becoming an academic, but her life and career took an altogether different path as a result of the south summit of Everest. “After Everest, life was never the same again,” she says.

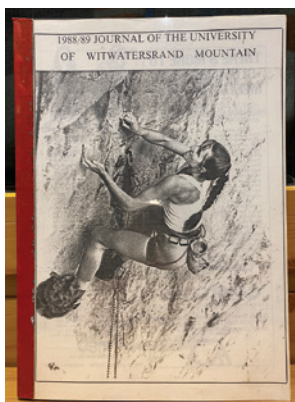
“I learnt so much even though it was a highly traumatic experience as one of our team members, photographer Bruce Herrod, died on Everest. I've spoken and written about this, but in short, we had spread out to climb at our own pace and it was only when I reached a major rock called the



Hillary Step on the way to the final summit that I knew I would get to the summit. Ian was 15 minutes ahead of me and after we planted the South African flag we started making our way down with the three Sherpas, passing Bruce on the way.

“We asked him to return with us but he said he wanted to summit and he seemed physically fine and lucid at the time. He spoke to us from the summit on the radio and talked to his girlfriend in London, and he was totally coherent, but then he vanished. He never returned that night and in the morning when we could see all the way up the south summit he was not there. We were running dangerously low on oxygen and we had to make the toughest possible decision to head down.

“It was the worst possible feeling



CATHY ON THE COVER OF 1989 WUMC JOURNAL AND SPEAKING AT INDEED UK-IRELAND SALES CONFERENCE



but you have to be pragmatic until you can get yourself to a safe place, and you have to have a good amount of emotional control. People who don't have this capacity should not be mountain climbers.”

Cathy says with hindsight what they could have done differently was to all agree from the beginning that no one goes off alone even though splitting a team is fairly common in climbing.

Following Everest, the offer to write a book and speaking engagements came pouring in, so Cathy followed this path while she carried on climbing, including the north side of Everest in 1999. “I started talking about team dynamics – looking at the failures and successes of this and other expeditions – rather than how you climb a mountain. We were also not a happy team, we were all passionate about climbing but we argued a lot and reaching consensus was difficult. I came to realise we were very predictable in terms of how teams behave and why we were an unhappy team. We would have benefited greatly from the help of team dynamics training.”

People wanted to hear what she had to say, and corporate teams and leaders started booking her from all over the world. “I realised there was a real market for it, I enjoyed it and it made money. Big mountain projects are expensive; they require personal investment and corporate sponsorships.”

Raising money for expeditions from South Africa got harder and harder as the rand kept falling. In 2000 Cathy decided to move to Europe for a few years to earn money there.

She was able to get into Andorra which suited her perfectly as it's in the mountains and close to some of the best rock climbing in the world, over the border in Spain.

From her beautifully renovated farmhouse in Andorra she flies to different European countries for a night or two for her speaking engagements, and is signed to several major European speaking agencies. “I've given paid talks in 45 countries. I never imagined that going mountain climbing would create this level of possibility,” says Cathy.

Between expeditions she lives “a fairly chilled life. I cook. Keeping up my nutrition is very important and I mostly eat vegetarian food. The choice of cheeses here is incredible and I do enjoy a roast chicken and spaghetti carbonara now and then.

“I'm happy in my own company; it's one of the reasons I like rock climbing and mountaineering,” she says. “I have a network of friends and we get together several times a year for ski mountaineering, technical rock climbing and canyoning in the great outdoor space of the Pyrenees which I regard as my backyard. I'm not unusual in my circle; a lot of my friends tend to be in a similar space.”



CATHY OPENING THE PESTIFEROUS PURPLE 19, UPPER TONQUANI 1991

Hannah Sibanda
(BSc 2013, BSc Hons
2014) was halfway
through her MBA at
Saïd Business School
when COVID-19 and
lockdown hit.



Closer to home at

**“So many people are dealing
with poverty, hunger and almost
insurmountable challenges. That’s why
I want to contribute my energies to
impact investing as well as social and
development finance on the continent.”**

HANNAH SIBANDA

“I’m currently house-sitting for a friend in London while doing my internship remotely as part of my MBA,” says Hannah, who moved to the UK from Washington DC in 2019 for the start of her MBA in September.

“The lease on my accommodation in Oxford ended at the end of July and since we were in lockdown and a friend needed a house-sitter because she went home to Albania, it worked out for me.”



Image: Sidharth Bhatia, Unsplash

Hannah's internship is with the CDC Group plc – one of the world's oldest development finance institutions, with headquarters in London. "I was fortunate they allowed me to continue with my internship remotely during lockdown. I'm focusing on debt in Africa and Southeast Asia."

She had always wanted to do a Master's and with her interest in impact investing and social and development finance, Saïd Business School was her first choice as it's a

world leader in this field. "When I applied I was working for the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in Washington DC, where I worked for three years."

DC was her first experience of living on her own. She had previously stayed in residence at Wits and then moved in with her mom when she started working for Absa Capital in Johannesburg in 2015.

With actuarial science to her name, Hannah's early career has been

filled with opportunity and in 2016 she got an incredible job offer from the IFC, where she was one of the youngest staff members in DC. She was in her mid-20s while the average age was 30-plus. "I had applied to the IFC while I was a student to do an internship in their Johannesburg office, which I didn't get, but they kept my CV on file. When an opportunity arose in DC I made the move."

She describes her first year there as an "introduction to adulthood". Her

first apartment was in an area called Friendship Heights, where she lived alone. “It wasn’t furnished and I had to go out and buy everything, including all the small things like a can opener, which I had never thought about as my mom always had one, or the right pan or an iron.

“It was very much a learning curve in my personal and career life. The first year was a hard, strange experience. Being so far away from home I couldn’t just pop in and see someone if I was having a crisis, I had to navigate this whole new world on my own.”

From her second year in DC, she loved it. “I got to travel for work and I experienced fascinating cities such as Bogotá, Mexico City, Port-au-Prince and Chicago. At work I also made some of my best friends, including the friend for whom I am house-sitting now. We call our group ‘the

little United Nations’ as we’re from all over – from Albania, India, Trinidad, Lebanon and South Africa.

“We all just click. My friends have Master’s degrees from Ivy League Schools but achievement isn’t the only focus of our lives; we care about family and friends.

“My mom’s advice has always

been to surround myself with people who make me a better person, and all of these friends do that.

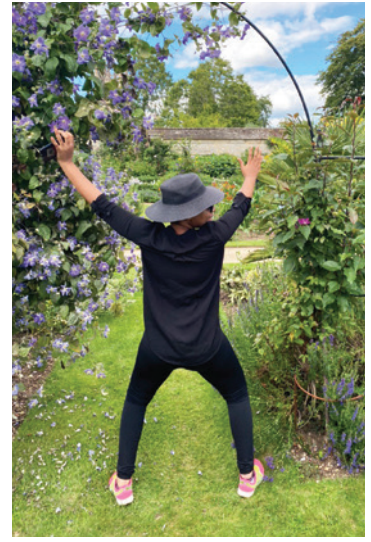
“I also had a great boss in DC who was so understanding. During my time there I had to take six weeks off to come back home for surgery as I suffer from endometriosis. He was so supportive, and he was equally



KEBLE COLLEGE DINING HALL



HANNAH RELISHED BEING AT OXFORD



ABOVE: BEFORE THE PANDEMIC HANNAH LOVED WEARING HER STYLISH AFRICAN-INSPIRED OUTFITS AND THERE WERE MANY EVENTS TO ATTEND

supportive of my MBA. He knew all along that I wanted to do an MBA and when I applied and was accepted by Said he gave me his blessing.”

Hannah found the move to Oxford easier as it is in a similar time zone to South Africa and it’s a shorter flight home. “I felt closer to home and one of my good childhood friends who did his MBA at Saïd, and who now lives in Oxford, showed me around.

“I also have a good friend in London with whom I studied actuarial science. It makes such a difference to be in contact with familiar faces so far from home. And I have regular skypes with my Witsie boyfriend, who is based in West Africa, where he’s working for an international mining company.”

While at Oxford, Hannah had accommodation at the postgraduates-only Linacre College. “My first formal dinner at Oxford for our MBA class was just ‘wow’; it was incredibly grand in this vast dining hall at Keble College, it was like something out of Harry Potter.”

She loved being at Oxford: “I rode my bicycle everywhere and

there were lots of dinners and parties and events happening on campus all the time, including really interesting seminars such as on free trade in Africa.” At every event Hannah wore ultra-stylish, African-inspired outfits. “My mom is a talented seamstress and I coerced her into making them for me.”

Then the pandemic hit and everything changed. “Our MBA class went through all the stages of grief about losing half of our MBA experience as it’s only one year. Everyone was very angry at first but it was pointless because there is no one with whom to be angry. Then sadness followed and finally acceptance.

“Our MBA student leadership and alumni have been great in terms of helping us through this time. The MBA Class of 2008 was particularly helpful as they had to navigate the global financial crisis in their year. They helped to get CVs to the right places and are available for help and advice.”

By mid-August, life in London, like many places, gradually opened up but everyone continues to wear masks, restaurants have social

distancing with plastic dividers, and most offices are partially open or remain closed with work happening from home. “Fortunately I’m fine with working from home,” says Hannah. “I’m an introvert so it suits me in many ways, and I have so much work to do that I’m constantly busy. I cook for myself, all sorts of dishes. I recently even managed to get some samp from a store in Paddington with South African goods and I made myself samp and beans!”

By October this year, when her MBA year is done, she hopes to secure a job with an organisation like the CDC Group, ideally with a portfolio focused on Africa. “I’m really praying the pandemic subsides soon in Africa. I’m praying for people’s livelihoods as the West has mechanisms for taking care of social issues and unemployment but that’s not the case in Africa. So many people are dealing with poverty, hunger and almost insurmountable challenges. That’s why I want to contribute my energies to impact investing as well as social and development finance on the continent.”

MOBILE IN SYDNEY

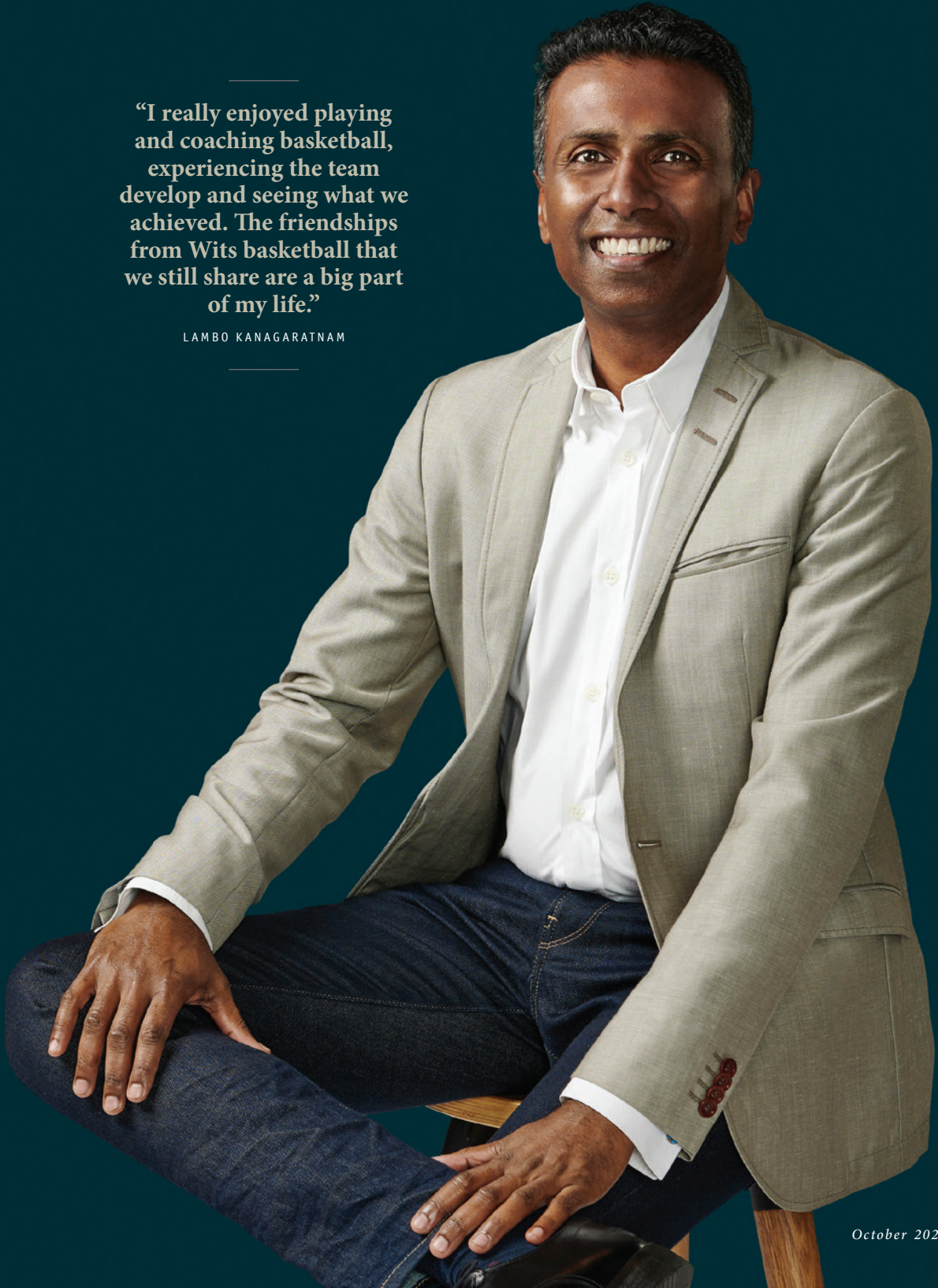
Lambo Kanagaratnam (BSc Eng 1997; MSc Eng 2000) moved with his family to Sydney without first securing a job. He was snapped up by Optus where he is now MD of Networks.

“**W**e love South Africa and Africa. There’s a distinct energy in Africa – maybe it’s the spontaneity and the fact that anything can happen. But in 2015 we felt we needed to give our two children more options for their future, and we moved to Sydney,” says Lambo. His wife, **Janaki** née **Kamalanathan** (MBBCh 2000), also wanted to be closer to her parents, who had moved to Sydney from South Africa years before.

They made a decision to leave as their visas for Australia were about to expire. It wasn’t the first time he’d been uprooted. When he was a young boy, his parents who are of Sri Lankan heritage, moved the family from Sri Lanka to Zambia in the 1970s to take up high school teaching posts. “In the 1980s when I was 12 we moved again as my parents were once again offered good high school teaching posts. This time we moved to a town called Motswedi in South Africa’s North West Province, which was a homeland at the time. My brothers and I boarded at Mmbatho High School in Mahikeng, about 80kms from Motswedi.”

“I really enjoyed playing and coaching basketball, experiencing the team develop and seeing what we achieved. The friendships from Wits basketball that we still share are a big part of my life.”

LAMBO KANAGARATNAM



Wits and the University of Cape Town were the first choices for many of their matric classmates and Lambo chose Wits, where his older brother Kanan was studying electrical engineering. "When I started at Wits in 1991 it was a very exciting time as the ANC had been unbanned and the country was in the throes of political transformation."

In his second year, Lambo was instrumental in establishing basketball as a major sport on campus with a large following. "It coincided with the '92 Barcelona Olympics and the US Dream Team with phenomenal players like Michael Jordan. We all got caught up in the hype and that's when basketball got so popular globally."

"Sport wasn't yet fully integrated on campus and I initially played for the South African Tertiary Institutions Sports Council side. We had a basketball court near the swimming pool and we all quickly got hooked; it was a huge part of the fun we had on campus."

"From 1992 we started integrating the side and during my time at Wits it was amazing to see the change on campus. I really enjoyed playing and coaching basketball, experiencing the team develop and seeing what we achieved. The friendships from Wits basketball that we still share are a big part of my life."

After graduating he worked for Eskom for three years and did his Master's part-time. In 1999 he joined MTN and two years later he married Janaki. Both their parents are of Sri Lankan heritage and they got to know each other at Wits.

He was with MTN for 15 years and during that time he was posted to Uganda (2005) and to Iran (2009/10) to develop the networks. "Uganda was a wonderful time; the people and natural environment are amazing, and we felt really safe. It's an astonishingly green country and the climate is really pleasant."

They lived in Kampala and when

he could take time off, they would go down to Lake Victoria and the source of the Nile River, and to the national parks, including Murchison Falls National Park and the Queen Elizabeth National Park bordering the Great Lakes region.

"We liked it so much we could easily have stayed if I hadn't been offered the opportunity to open MTN Irancell in Iran," he says. "Iran was another interesting experience as the ancient Persian culture is still very much alive. The people often refer to themselves as Persians and use the Zoroastrian calendar, based on the seasons and lunar cycles. They celebrate the coming of Spring, called Nowruz, which is the Persian/Iranian New Year."

From a work perspective, Lambo says Iran was very challenging: "Few people spoke English and it's a state-run economy with a lot of state-owned companies. Being a private company we wanted to get moving but they had their own bureaucratic processes. One example is the correspondence with government agencies there had to be hand written and physically delivered."

"Another example is the state-owned mobile company at the time charged people US\$250 for a SIM card, which had to be paid upfront but customers only received it six months later because there was such demand. The only way to get it faster was on the black market for an even larger amount. When we launched we changed all that and within a year we got the price down to US\$5 for SIM cards that people got straightaway."

The company developed a local team to take over and Lambo says he was proud of what they achieved. Out of a population of approximately 83 million people, 50 million use MTN.

Lambo and his family returned to MTN South Africa in 2010 for five years and he rose from

Chief Technology Officer to Chief Enterprise Business Officer. A year later they moved to Sydney and life has been good. "We live in a very nice area called St Ives which has a lot of South Africans. It's a close-knit community but we've made friends from all over through the kids' school and we have family here."

Their daughter Anjali (16) and son Darshan (10) both love playing basketball. Darshan says: "I am almost as good as my dad." Their home is a 15-minute drive to the beach and their lifestyle is similar to the one they enjoyed in South Africa, with lots of sport, outdoor activities, and visits to beautiful natural areas. Lambo's favourite place is the Freycinet Peninsula and Cradle Mountain in Tasmania, "because they are such beautiful landscapes".

The family misses friends and family who are in South Africa and the wildlife. "We used to visit a game reserve at least once a year. You simply cannot compare koalas and kangaroos with the Big Five."

Work, as always, offers a new challenge for Lambo, who is responsible for the mobile and fibre deployment for the network across Australia. "My work involves rolling out the 4G network nationwide and now the 5G network."

He says 5G offers an incredible advance on what 2G and 3G have achieved. "It will rapidly accelerate the 4IR over the next five to 10 years and offer enterprises and consumers a much richer technology use."

"It's best known for automated vehicles but it has a wide range of applications. On factory floors, for example, instead of having cables, you'll have wireless connections. As a consumer, you'll be able to scan an item and you'll be presented with a lot of similar items so you can compare prices and products. On farms it can be used to monitor the health and growth of fruit trees, or the safety and health of livestock; it



Image: Dan Freeman, Unsplash



can monitor soil moisture, switch irrigation systems on and off. These are just a few examples.”

This year, however, life took a completely unexpected turn. As a mobile network Optus has been critical to keep things going in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic: “The impact has been huge on people’s lives and we are acutely aware of how reliant they are on the service we provide, especially for education. To help pupils from hard economic backgrounds we have a ‘donate your data’ option for people to donate data to pupils who would otherwise not have access to the internet. We have had a lot of great uptake and the

challenge is to improve and expand on our distribution to reach more.”

Children went back to school in late May but it’s not the case in Melbourne, which has seen a spike in cases. “Most people are still working from home,” says Lambo. “I go into work at our campus just outside the city every second week and we work on a 50/50 rotation across our teams. When I go into work, the journey that previously took me 35 minutes currently takes 10 minutes. A big challenge is that the two parts of your life become one and it depends on your discipline as to how you handle this; some people land up working a lot harder!”



ABOVE: SYDNEY HAS BEEN HOME TO LAMBO AND HIS FAMILY SINCE 2015. THE FREYCINET PENINSULA IN TASMANIA IS LAMBO’S FAVOURITE PLACE IN THAT PART OF THE WORLD. **BELOW:** OPTUS CENTRE MACQUARIE PARK, WHERE HE WORKS



Getty/Gallo Images

Living between Long Island and the Limpopo

Although Dr **Alan Kisner** (MBBCh 1967) has lived in New York for years, his roots in the South African bush keep drawing him back.

HUNTINGTON BEACH PIER SUNSET

“The story is all too familiar, a family shattered by the world of politics, race and religion, and spread across the diaspora. Like seeds carried on the wind you land, and by trial and tribulation you survive. We finally found a secure and wonderful home in Huntington on the north shore of Long Island New York.”

These are the words of Dr **Alan Kisner** (MBBCh 1967), cosmetic, plastic and reconstructive surgery specialist in Huntington, who has been practising for 45 years. Until recently, he was assistant professor of plastic surgery at Stony Brook University Hospital, and he has published many articles in respected medical journals.

The Kisner family story starts on a farm in Rayton near the diamond mining town of Cullinan. His grandfather, Joseph Kisner, owned the farm, a general store, petrol station and butchery. “My father **Cyril Kisner** (MMBCh 1940) was the doctor at the Cullinan Premier diamond mine and we subsequently moved to Johannesburg so that my father could train as a urologist. My father, my brother **Terence** (BDS 1972) and my brother-in-law **Gerald Kaplan** (BCom 1976, HDipAcc 1978), are all Wits graduates, as are many aunts, uncles and cousins. One of my cousins, Ken Kaplan, currently lectures in the film department.”

In the early 1960s while at Wits Medical School studying for his medical degree, Alan was the Academic Freedom Representative on the Students Medical Council. There were widespread protests against apartheid policies and numerous police invasions on campus to break up peaceful protests. “I became acutely aware that I would have to make a decision whether to become progressively more active politically or eventually emigrate,” he explains.

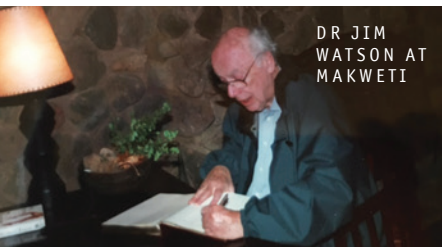
After completing his compulsory military training he reluctantly decided to leave South Africa for the United Kingdom, where he spent a short time before heading to New York. There he completed a general surgery and plastic surgery residency at Mount Sinai Hospital. Founded in 1852, it is one of the oldest and largest teaching hospitals in the United States.



DR ALAN AND DAWN KISNER



KISNER GRANDCHILDREN ON SAFARI



DR JIM
WATSON AT
MAKWETI



WELGEVONDEN GAME RESERVE, WATERBERG

“Owing to the dedicated mentors and role models at Wits I felt confident to apply to and later participate in major hospitals and academic institutions internationally,” says Alan, who spent six intensive years at Mount Sinai. His South African wife, Dawn Arrowsmith, was with him. She had trained with the Royal Academy of Dance in South Africa and her career was in ballet and Spanish dance. She participated in the New School and Alvin Ailey dance programmes in New York. Alan and Dawn met in Pietersburg in Limpopo, where Alan was doing his military training and Dawn was performing with the Mercedes Molina Dance Company.

Following his Mount Sinai residency, Alan was made Chief of Plastic Surgery at Stony Brook University Hospital and subsequently Chief of Plastic Surgery at Huntington Hospital, where he has remained till the present.

“We established a home on the sublime north shore of Long Island in the town of Huntington, midway between Manhattan and the Hamptons. It’s a great place to raise a family and earn a living. Our two children are now grown up. Paul is in finance and Lauren in computer science. We are fortunate to have our children and grandchildren living close by.”

Alan is a long-time member of

the Explorers Club in New York City. Founded in 1904, it supports the scientific exploration of land, sea, air and space. “The club is a meeting place for explorers and scientists and offers excellent lectures. Interestingly, **Faanya Rose**, a South African explorer and Wits alumna, was its first female president.”

Alan’s adventures include climbing Mt Kilimanjaro and rafting down the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon. He describes both experiences as “exhilarating”. “The park is pristine and spectacular. You are required to remove everything you bring in, including body fluids! **Denis Benjamin** (BSc 1965, MBCh 1968), a noted mycologist and author and his wife Vivienne, accompanied us. We have also sailed the Caribbean and Virgin Islands together.”

Through his interest in genetics and science, Alan has been involved with the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Association for many years. “The laboratory is a leader in molecular biology and my involvement has led to friendships with scientists Jim Watson – Nobel laureate, and Bruce Stillman – director of the laboratory. Jim and other scientists have visited our safari lodge in South Africa, Makweti, which Dawn and I built in South Africa’s majestic Waterberg.”

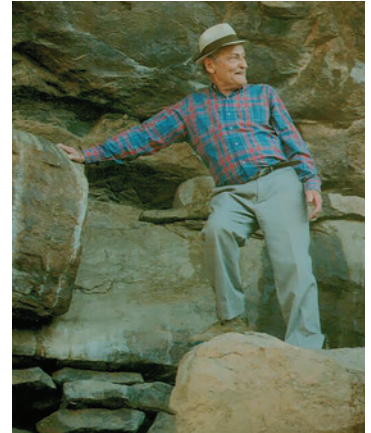
Makweti Safari Lodge came about

when the Kisners first returned to South Africa after Nelson Mandela was released to visit family and friends, and for Alan to lecture to plastic surgeons at Wits. “We wanted to contribute to conservation in South Africa and my father helped us look for land. He found a site in the Big Five Welgevonden Game Reserve in the Waterberg, Limpopo Province in a UNESCO natural heritage site.

“We bought the land, and, with much travelling back and forth from New York, we built Makweti. Our mission was to leave the land as untouched as possible and we did not disturb a single tree during the building process. We built with

natural stone and thatch. We are fortunate to have Jessica Brown, who studied game lodge management at what is now Nelson Mandela University, and Wits graduate **Neil Davison** (MSc 1989) guiding and managing for us.

“Over the past 25 years we have hosted and shared tales with many Witsies and international friends including the late Professor Phillip Tobias. Our friends from the United States and around the world regard Makweti as their home in South Africa. With our deep involvement here, we feel that we never really left South Africa and hope to return very soon.”



PROF PHILLIP TOBIAS AT METROGLYPHS WELGEVONDEN RESERVE

Living in the time of COVID

“We lived through the anxious and fearful time of facing the epicentre of the pandemic in New York,” Alan explains. “Huntington Hospital converted to a COVID-19 medical centre. My centre was closed except for emergencies and I sent my anaesthesia machines and equipment to be used as ventilators. Fortunately, owing to strict adherence to scientific advice and state and community cooperation we have been able to partially return to a somewhat normal life.

“At the same time we are continuing to experience the concerns of the pandemic with family and friends in South Africa, the United Kingdom and other countries. We are in daily contact and intimately involved in the medical care threats in South Africa, where my mother-in-law sadly passed away alone.

“Our safari lodge in South Africa, Makweti, like all safari and tourist operations, was closed to guests during the lockdown restrictions but we look forward to receiving guests again when allowed, with all the safety precautions in place.

“Restaurants are slowly opening according to strict protocols in New York with mostly outside dining. Eric Ripert’s Le Bernardin – our favourite restaurant – should soon be open. His tasting menu is the stuff of dreams. Another of our favourites in New York is the Greek restaurant Avra. In South Africa our favourite place to eat is, of course, Makweti Safari Lodge, which is a member of the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs.”



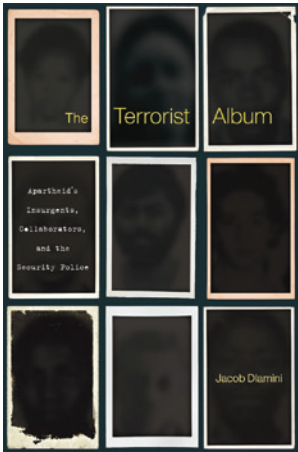
KISNER FAMILY IN HUNTINGTON, NEW YORK



ALAN KISNER AND VETERINARIAN ERWIN LEIBNITZ ATTEND TO A WOUNDED LIONESS

THE TERRORIST ALBUM:
 APARTHEID INSURGENTS, COLLABORATORS AND THE
 SECURITY POLICE
 BY JACOB DLAMINI

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2020



Award-winning journalist, historian and author, **Jacob Dlamini** (BA 2002, BA Hons 2003) is currently an Assistant Professor of History at Princeton University. His books *Native Nostalgia* (2009) and *Askari* (2014) were both best sellers and the latter won the 2015 Alan Paton Award. He was also a researcher at the University of Barcelona a Ruth First fellow at Wits and received a doctorate from Yale University.

Dlamini had access to one of three surviving copies of a catalogue of photographs of apartheid's enemies kept by South Africa's security police and counterinsurgency units from 1960s until the early 1990s. This forms the basis for his *The Terrorist Album: Apartheid Insurgents, Collaborators and the Security Police*. Into its pages went anybody deemed a threat to apartheid, from novelists (such as Bessie Head), to trained combatants (such as Odirile Maponya), journalists (such as Eric Abraham) and academics (such as **Ruth First** BA 1946): disparate individuals united by their opposition to the regime. Once identified as a terrorist, their photographs were indexed by factors including apartheid's system of

racial classification and placed in a 12 x 9-inch book, copies of which circulated covertly within corridors of the security police. Most who appeared in the album were targeted for surveillance, some were murdered.

The book is an index of photographs and profiles which survived the purge of almost 7000 "albums" ordered when apartheid's collapse began. Dlamini investigates the story behind these images – how they were used, the lives they changed. "Right up to the end of apartheid in the early 1990s, the album was constantly in production. It was 'continually in the making' as mug shots were added and subtracted, apartheid opponents arrested and killed."

He writes: "By using a small object to tell a big story about South Africa between 1960 and 1994, I intend to cut apartheid down to analytical, moral, and political size, thereby challenging the myths that continue to surround popular understandings of apartheid. We give the apartheid state too much credit, however, by assuming that it was efficient. It was not. This did not make it less brutal. But efficient it was not. It could not always tell its friends from its enemies, its Indians from

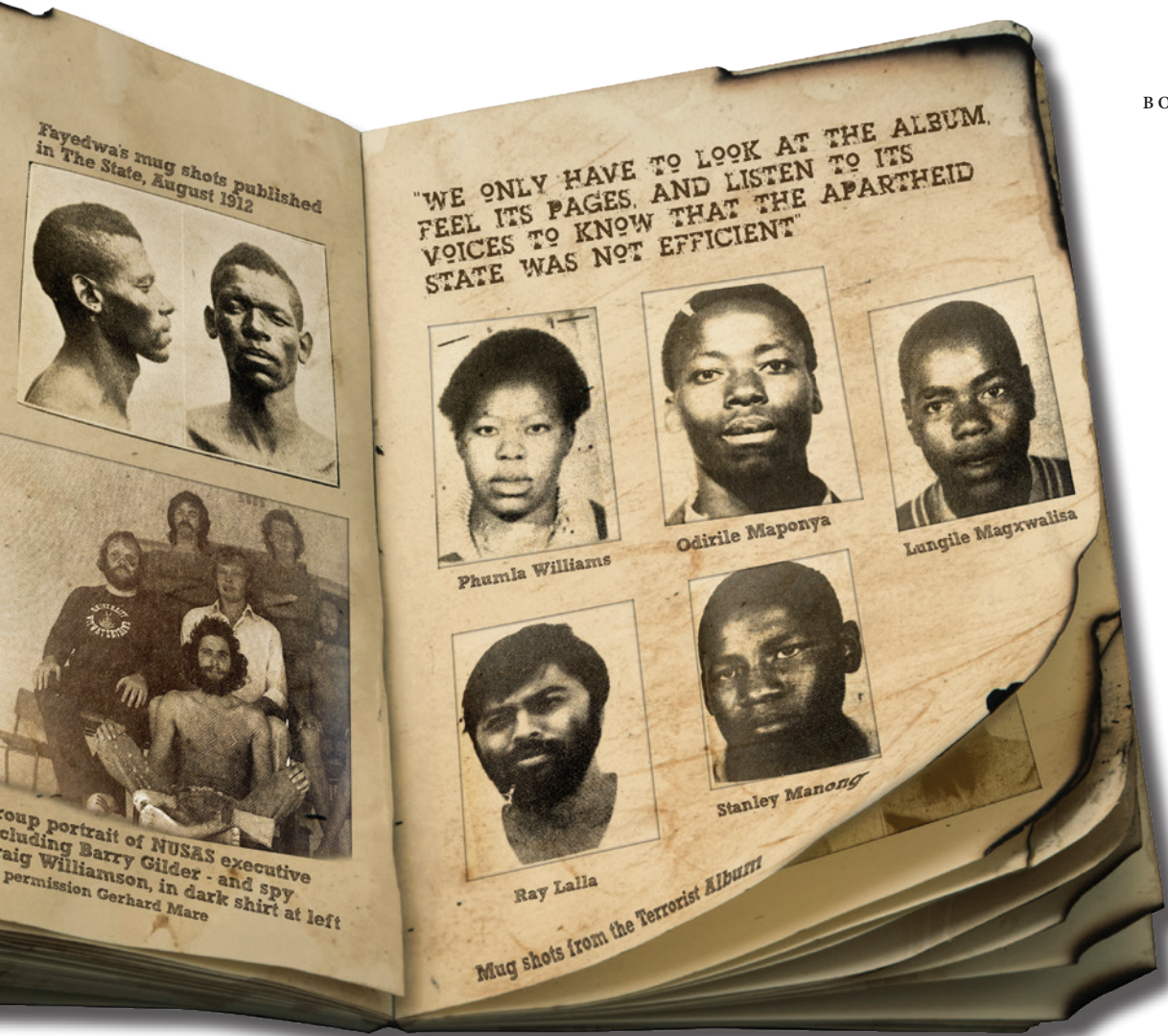


its whites. We only have to look at the album, feel its pages, and listen to its voices to know that."

One of these inefficiencies is demonstrated by the density of what Dlamini has produced. He asked a former brigadier why a decision was made to destroy the archive. There was much regret and anger in the response. "The greatest form of terrorism was to destroy our documents. Today we need these things, because so many guys come and say 'I was a freedom fighter'. And he wasn't!...Now we can't prove it," the brigadier



JACOB DLAMINI



said. It is also a regret at the loss of advantage in South Africa's wars over its unsettled history. Dlamini says of the brigadier's anger: "It helped me realise that the album that frames this study is important not simply for what it was (its materiality, if you will) but also for what the police made it do and expected of it during the most violent period in the history of modern South Africa."

Another theme which builds on his previous work *Askari* is the individuals

who collaborated with the state, also drawing on the extensive archive that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission built. It points to the unfinished work of the TRC, which did not near comprehensively enough unmask those "tainted by our authoritarian past". This failure, Dlamini writes, continues to contaminate the public sphere with lies.

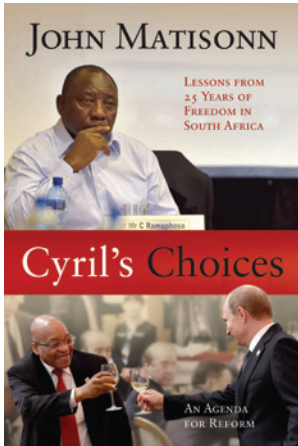
This book is ambitious in its scale and complexity. It stretches as far back as the 1800s. "The object that came to be called the

Terrorist Album," Dlamini says, "did not spring fully formed into the world". Several histories are entwined in its emergence as a "tool of state power and surveillance." In tracing the origins of the album, Dlamini chronicles the early history of photography in colonial South Africa, from German anthropologist Gustav Fritsch's images of Xhosa leaders imprisoned on Robben Island in the late 1850s to the gradual adoption of mug shots by the police.

ABOVE: THESE IMAGES APPEAR IN DLAMINI'S LATEST BOOK. HE REMINDS US THAT WE CAN'T CONFIGURE THE RICH LIFE OF A PERSON FROM A THIN ARCHIVAL RECORD LIKE MUG SHOTS FROM THE 'TERRORIST ALBUM'

**CYRIL'S CHOICES:
LESSONS FROM 25 YEARS OF FREEDOM IN SOUTH AFRICA
BY JOHN MATISONN**

MISSING LINK, 2020



“There are things you can do that don’t require a lot of money, but do require political will... There are certain sectors where we can get real growth.”

JOHN MATISONN

In 1991 **John Matisonn** (BA 1996), veteran journalist and commentator, took a year off to study how countries succeeded. He discovered an Asia expert, Professor Chalmers Johnson, who figured out how Japan achieved rapid economic growth after losing World War II. The key to rapid growth depends on getting the relationship between business and government right.

In his latest book *Cyril’s Choices* Matisonn writes that it’s the collaboration of rough equals that holds the key. It requires high expertise in government. The state has an important role to play in identifying the sectors that will bring jobs.

Matisonn argues every country that pulled most of its citizens out of poverty into the middle class in a few generations did so in the same way – by rejecting the simple formula popular in the 1990s, fiscal restraint, free trade and a bit of privatisation. This formula can produce stability and slow growth, but never the rapid growth achieved by the Asian tigers, the Marshall Plan for Japan and Germany, the rise of the United States or the rise of England before the Industrial Revolution, or even the Italian city states so successful during the

Renaissance.

The book offers a history of South Africa after 25 years of freedom, detailing that 10 of those involved state capture. South Africa missed two great global economic trends: the information boom of the 1990s and the resource boom driven by China in the 2000s.

He offers possible solutions if the country’s economic malaise is to be confronted.

“There are things you can do that don’t require a lot of money, but do require political will,” Matisonn says. “There are certain sectors where we can get real growth. For example, the information economy. This does not mean the fourth industrial revolution. It is digital migration.” He suggests fixing political interference in digital migration regulation and strengthening independent regulators. “It will bring down data costs and speed up data provision.”

The second solution lies in the green economy. “South Africa currently has signed international treaties promising carbon reduction, but these are not aligned with industrial policy – they are in different departments. Aligning them offers huge potential.”



JOHN MATISONN

Matisonn cut his professional teeth at the *Rand Daily Mail* from 1974. He spent time in jail for refusing to reveal the source of his reports on the Muldergate scandal. He’s worked in Washington and returned to South Africa as a correspondent for America’s National Public Radio. He’s also the author of *God, Spies and Lies* (2015), which is in its fourth reprint. He has served as a councillor of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, where he chaired the committee that produced the country’s broadcasting policy, as well as serving on the interim board of the SABC.

**POWER AND LOSS IN SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNALISM
NEWS IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA
BY GLENDA DANIELS**

WITS UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2020



DR GLENDA DANIELS



Dr **Glenda Daniels** (BA 1989, BA Hons 1999, MA 2006, PhD 2011) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Media Studies at Wits and author of *Fight for Democracy* (2014). Her latest offering *Power and Loss in South African Journalism* is a timely book which analyses the crisis and chaos of South African journalism at a period when the media and its role is frequently at the centre of public debate.

It is an environment “where the spread of news via social media platforms has given rise to political propaganda, fake news and a flattening of news to banality and gossip. Media companies continue to shrink newsrooms, experienced journalists are replaced with ‘content producers’”, writes the publisher. Dr Daniels offers both a valuable introduction for journalism students, as well as insight for media professionals about the importance of diversity of voices, social media, the role of government, the state of newsrooms, regaining trust and re-imagining the media for the 21st century.

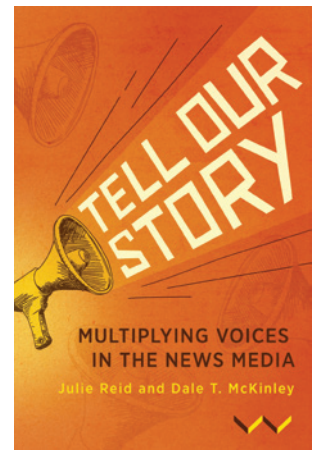
**TELL OUR STORY
MULTIPLYING VOICES IN THE NEWS MEDIA
BY JULIE REID AND DALE T MCKINLEY**

WITS UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2020

The dominant news media is often accused of reflecting an “elite bias” and privileging the interests of a small segment of society while ignoring the narratives of the majority. Wits alumna **Julie Reid** (BA 2006, BA Hons 2007, MA 2007), who is Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of South Africa, along with Dale T McKinley, use *Tell Our Story* to investigate this and give examples of more nuanced forms of journalism and research.

By focusing their attention on three different South African communities, namely the Glebelands hostel complex in Durban where more than 100 residents have been killed in politically motivated violence in the past few years; the Xolobeni community on the Wild Coast, which has been resisting the building of a new toll road and a dune mining venture; and Thembelihle, a settlement southwest of Johannesburg that has been resisting removal for many years, they offer practical examples to improve journalism.

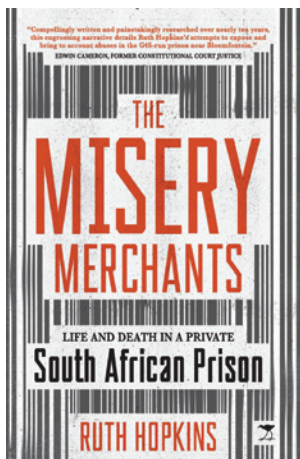
Reviewers praise this book for its detailed empirical approach and as critique of mainstream media.



JULIE REID

**THE MISERY MERCHANTS:
LIFE AND DEATH IN A PRIVATE SOUTH AFRICAN PRISON
BY RUTH HOPKINS**

JACANA MEDIA, 2020



RUTH HOPKINS

I've never met **Ruth Hopkins** (MA 2020). After reading her riveting exposé, *The Misery Merchants*, there's an indelible bond. She champions the underdog without judgement, be they murderers, rapists or robbers. Inside Mangaung Prison in Bloemfontein lurks a toxic cocktail of violence and lies choreographed by the global Goliath that is G4S, the security firm that runs prisons in the United States, United Kingdom and South Africa.

Hopkins is a seasoned investigative journalist who has covered the facility from 2012 till 2020 while attached to the Wits Justice Project, which investigates human rights abuses and miscarriages of justice related to South Africa's criminal justice system.

Hopkins skilfully draws her reader into the menacing prison she visits, describing with great detail the dark cells where people are brutally beaten to death, the characters she meets, their tattoos, body language, facial expressions and broken looks. Hopkins is not simply telling their story. She is also laying herself bare in this journey.

Her vulnerabilities are not hidden each time she drives her 1985 Mercedes

to Bloemfontein to investigate a system that cares little for the people whose well-being depends on it.

The Department of Correctional Services (DCS) is not absolved from blame. It seems to have abdicated duty or care regarding the woeful treatment of inmates. Yet one prisoner after another complained about brutality in vain. Their dockets inevitably disappeared.

Prisoners are medicated against their will, in certain instances sedated after a heavy beating. The medical doctors who treated the prisoners also seemed to have little regard for the oath they took.

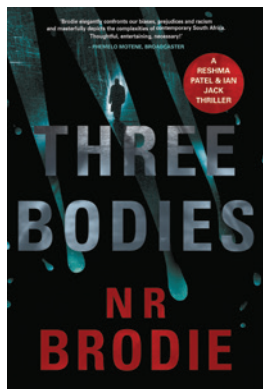
Hopkins manages to weave a complex story of how jailors and prisoners worked together against G4S.

The alleged murder of Isaac Nelani in Mangaung, which warders made look like a suicide, affected her. "I am traumatised, emotionally drained, I still hear the last screaming of Nelani from the video," she says. Nelani's last minutes were apparently captured on CCTV footage. Colleagues at the project say she played the video for them. They also hear Nelani's screams. His death formed part of a DCS investigation that shockingly yielded nothing.

In the world she probes, accountability is an empty word. Former National Commissioner Zach Modise, against whom there are also allegations of impropriety, yielded nothing. Towards the close of his tenure, Modise texted Hopkins until he realised he was engaging the wrong person when asked about a van-load of evidence that had gone missing.

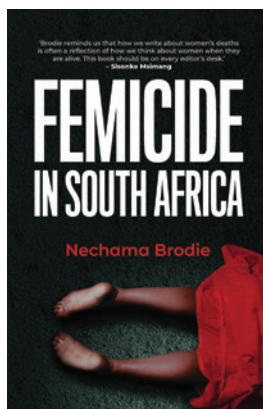
Bitter. Sweet. Certainly morbid. Sometimes funny. One feels a sense of connection with people interviewed particularly when they are victims of injustice. One feels for the prisoners. And for Hopkins, too. The rapists, murderers and robbers are fighting for survival inside prison, receiving the same pain as they may have inflicted outside, if not worse. Hopkins cares – that's a precious commodity in journalism today.

Reviewed by Edwin Naidu, a journalist based at the Wits Justice Project



THREE BODIES
BY NECHAMA
BRODIE

PAN MACMILLAN SA,
2020



**FEMICIDE IN
SOUTH AFRICA**
BY NECHAMA
BRODIE

KWELA, 2020

In May Dr **Nechama Brodie** (BA DA 2000, PhD 2019) released *Three Bodies*, as a follow-up to her 2018 fiction debut, *Knucklebone*. It is worthy of a high-octane Hollywood drama, tackling crime syndicates and human trafficking across Gauteng and into the North West, from the Vaal to the Hartebeesport Dam.

Dr Brodie is also a journalist, part-time folk musician and avid martial arts enthusiast living in Johannesburg who specialises in researching violent crime. She released *Femicide in South Africa* in August, which evolved from her doctoral thesis, which started eight years ago. Drawing from police, public health and media data, she explores violence against women over the past 40 years. She used to be a professional fact-checker and has an interest in magic and superstition, sci-fi and myths, finding a definite link between the tools of her fiction writing and research: "My academic work is about trying to get to grips with the 'why' by understanding the 'how'. My novels use the 'how' as a metaphor for the 'why'. I definitely think with *Three Bodies* and *Knucklebone* there is an aspect of wish fulfilment, where I wish it was possible to resolve the mess, to defeat evil, with a little supernatural help. It's not, but it feels better being able to get the upper hand in my made-up crime worlds." *Three Bodies* allows her to hint at the

possibilities of why social inequality, racism and the harsh lives so many South Africans lead make the country such a violent place.

With the heightened attention around gender-based violence, Dr Brodie says her most-relevant book is a contribution to understanding femicide as a systemic problem. It has been happening over a long period of time. It is a call to see the bigger picture and challenges the state and public to identify and support longer term solutions: "We have this mistaken idea of what femicide looks like because fewer than 20% of the murders make it into the news. And of those we get to read or hear about, they don't represent the reality of how femicide works. When we protest and hashtag, we

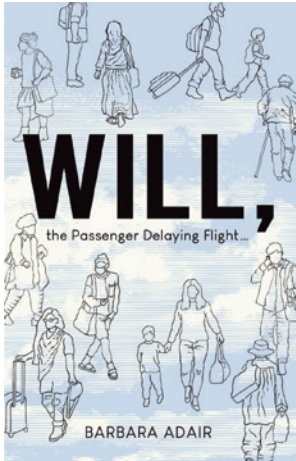
ask for solutions based on the myth of femicide rather than the reality of it... I think that for real change to happen, we need knowledge – and then we need to make decisions based on knowledge, not on public emotion."

Dr Brodie has also been awarded a SAGE Ocean Concept grant to develop a Homicide Media Tracker. This will be a tool to track homicide using news archives, to study violence in society and the role of the media in shaping public opinion. "Media data about crime can be useful for social research but only if you know how to collect, curate, and interrogate it. I knew that with the right tools, I could scale up my research to cover more homicide types reported in media over a greater time period."

DR NECHAMA
BRODIE



WILL, THE PASSENGER DELAYING FLIGHT
BY BARBARA ADAIR
MODJAJI BOOKS, 2020



Will, The Passenger Delaying Flight, is a gripping dystopian novel by Wits alumna and prize-winning author **Barbara Adair** (BA 1984, BA Hons 1985, LLB 1989). The novel seems prescient, as it deals with characters travelling, yet stuck in an airport terminal. Adair was about to launch the book when lockdown struck and she commiserates in a recent interview about the imposed state of limbo. “I was unhappy. It would have been fun, a celebration, a way to get the book out, all the things that launches are. But then I figured well, the lockdown does not affect me as it does

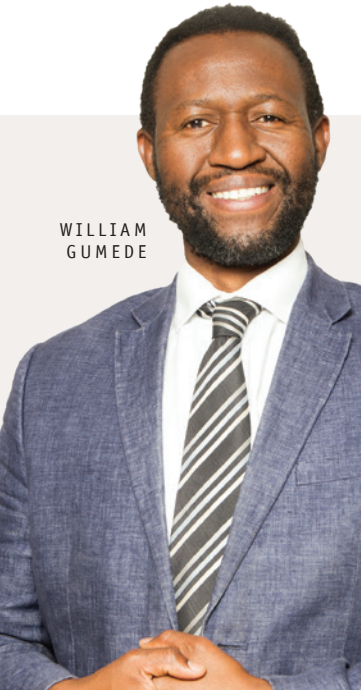
others, I am not hungry, I don’t live in one room with seven others, so get over it. I can make the book happen another time, and in the meanwhile try to get the word about it out. It is an apposite book for now for it is about travel, moving from one space and into another, which now we cannot do,” she says.

Volker, the main character acts, as a tour guide travelling from Frankfurt for Windhoek. He is delayed and forced to stop in Charles de Gaulle airport.



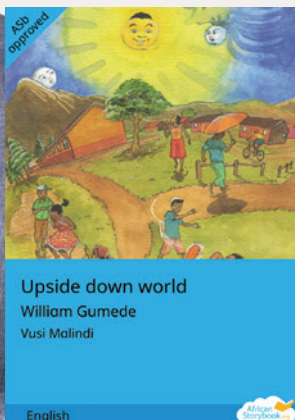
BARBARA ADAIR

The text is in stream of consciousness of his thoughts and the people he encounters over a 24-hour period. “There is a trans woman, a person with dwarfism, a pornographer, a child trafficker, a murderer, etc. The characters move into and out of Volker’s life, as they do the reader’s, so the message is – don’t invest in any of these people for they move into your life »



WILLIAM GUMEDE

UPSIDE DOWN WORLD
BY WILLIAM GUMEDE
AFRICAN STORY BOOK PROJECT, 2020



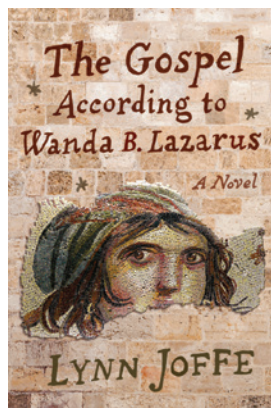
Respected economist, political scientist and Associate Professor at the Wits School of Governance **William Gumedde** (MA 2003) recently released a children’s book *Upside Down World* under the auspices of the African Story Book Project, which gives books free across the continent to encourage literacy. “I have been interested in children’s writing to encourage a love of reading. In black communities where I grew up, one of the big changes in my life was the moment I discovered books through mobile libraries. It changed my life and horizons.” *Upside Down World* tells the story about the sun, as a little boy, who refuses to go to bed and events spiral out of control. It seems a poignant read for our time when the world seems so out of sync.



and move out of it as quickly as the people who walk or run past you in an airport.”

Adair is known for her novel *In Tangier We Killed the Blue Parrot* (2015), which was shortlisted for the *Sunday Times* Fiction Award in 2005. It was published in Spanish in April this year.

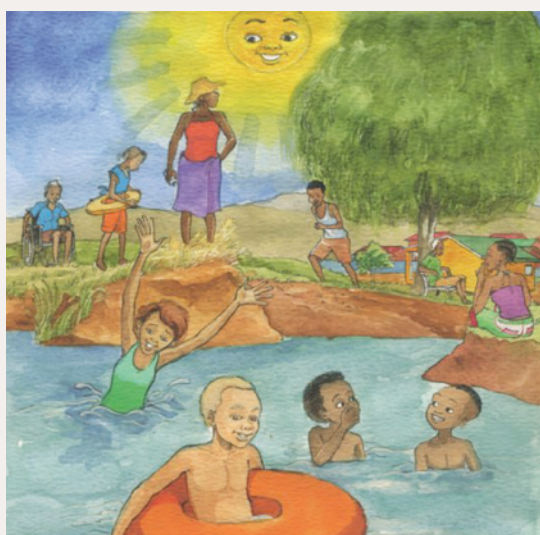
She previously practised as an attorney litigating on human rights issues and taught constitutional law at Wits. She works part time at the Wits University Writing Centre and is registered as a PhD student at the University of Pretoria.



**THE GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO
WANDA B LAZARUS
A NOVEL
BY LYNN JOFFE**
MODJAJI BOOKS, 2020



LYNN JOFFE



Re-imagine the ancient mythological figure of the Wandering Jew as a female. She has no choice but to keep moving, accidentally cursed with immortality. This is the inspiration for *The Gospel According to Wanda B Lazarus*, a debut novel by Wits alumna **Lynn Joffe** (MA 2017). Conceived during Joffe’s Master’s in Creative Writing, it is described by the publishers as a “bold and wild ride through two thousand years of myth and mayhem in an outrageous serio-comic work of literary fiction”.

Joffe is CEO of Creatrix, a multilingual storytelling agency. Her outrageous heroine, Wanda, embarks on a journey that criss-crosses ancient and modern worlds and slips in and out of many centuries. Wanda speaks in a voice spiced with Yiddishisms, mostly about sex, adventure and music. It is the force of her character that holds the novel together. Reviewers say it is “a unique and significant contribution to South African letters,” as well as “an antidote for the formulaic foolishness of prejudice and patriarchy”, but more importantly that “every page” brings a laugh.

**NO FINISH LINE:
LESSONS ON LIFE AND CAREER
BY MEYER FELDBERG**

COLUMBIA BUSINESS SCHOOL PUBLISHING, 2020

**NO
FINISH
LINE**

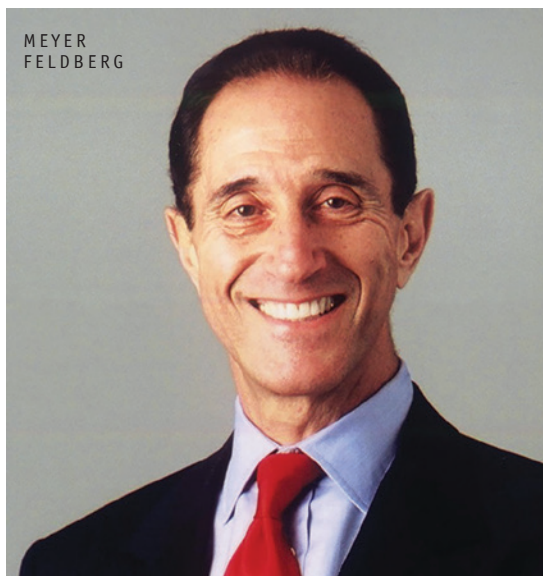
LESSONS ON LIFE
AND CAREER

**Meyer
Feldberg**

Wits alumnus **Meyer Feldberg** (BA 1963) served as dean and professor at Columbia Business School for more than 15 years, as dean emeritus and as a senior advisor in the Investment Banking Division at Morgan Stanley. At the age of 78, he has encapsulated the story of his life from having lived in eight cities on three continents in *No Finish Line: Lessons on Life and Career*.

His story is filled with vignettes of rich and unique experiences. It starts in Johannesburg as a schoolboy involved in competitive swimming and the sport provides pivotal traits that remain with him. “The intensity and demands of four hours of swimming daily, up and down, staring at the ‘black line’ at the bottom of the pool, enabled me as a young man to learn to be exceptionally focused. I carried it throughout my life.”

He received an MBA from Columbia Business School, and a PhD from the University of Cape Town. In 1972 he was appointed dean of the University of Cape Town’s Graduate School of Business. His life has been in constant motion. “It’s hard for me to be static. I am moving all



MEYER
FELDBERG

“You can’t plan your life. It’s not a race. There is no finish line. There is a lot of luck involved in how you start and all that happens along the way.”

MEYER FELDBERG

“A warm and beautifully written memoir from one of the leading business school educators of his generation.”

JOSEPH E STIGLITZ

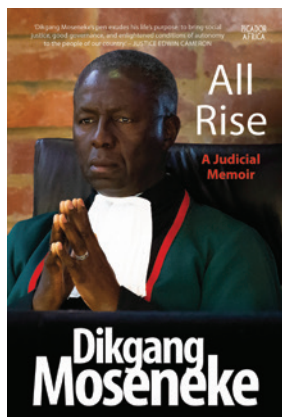
the time. I know it can be frustrating for my family.”

He has served with numerous corporations and cultural institutions and lives in New York. He writes: “You can’t plan your life. It’s not a race. There is no finish line. There is a lot of luck involved in how you start and all that happens along the way.”

This book reminds the reader of the importance of courage and decency in relationships and is endorsed by reviewers such as Nobel Prize laureate for economics in 2001, Joseph E Stiglitz: “A warm and beautifully written memoir from one of the leading business school educators of his generation.”

ALL RISE
A JUDICIAL MEMOIR
BY DIKGANG MOSENEKE

PAN MACMILLAN, 2020



Justice **Dikgang Moseneke** (LLD honoris causa 2018) admits that law was not his first career choice. As a small boy he told his aunt that he wanted to be “a traffic cop” – she challenged him to aim a bit higher. His latest memoir *All Rise* covers his years on the bench, with particular focus on his 15-year term as a judge at South Africa’s apex court, the Constitutional Court, including as the deputy chief justice.

As a member of the team that drafted the interim Constitution, Justice Moseneke was well placed to become one of the guardians of its final form. *All Rise* offers a unique, insider’s view of how the judicial system operates at its best and how it responds when it is under fire.

At a virtual book launch hosted by the Wits Faculty of Commerce and Management’s School of Law in September, the former Chancellor at Wits University said he wanted to make law more accessible and document the politics during his time of service on the bench. “It is an attempt to locate the judicial function in the middle of a transitional

democratic project. The judicial function is an overall part in a process to migrate our society from one unlit corner to a better lit place, in other words ‘to improve your neighbourhood’ significantly.”

Fellow alumna **Charmika Samaradiwakera Wijesundara** (LLB 2012, LLM 2018) praised *All Rise* for presenting events in a restrained manner that invites readers to draw their own conclusions about evidence at hand. “We may perceive this as an act of profound intellectual humility...rather than condescending, Justice Moseneke invites us as readers to recognise and employ their own intellectual faculties.”

All Rise questions what it means to be judge and whether he has met the standard of a “good judge” in a changing society. He challenges all South Africans to be more concerned with why we pursue our paths, rather than with the recognition that we hope these paths will grant us. “We read too much into positions, we are too readily seduced by titles, we infer more power and influence than position readily affords one.”

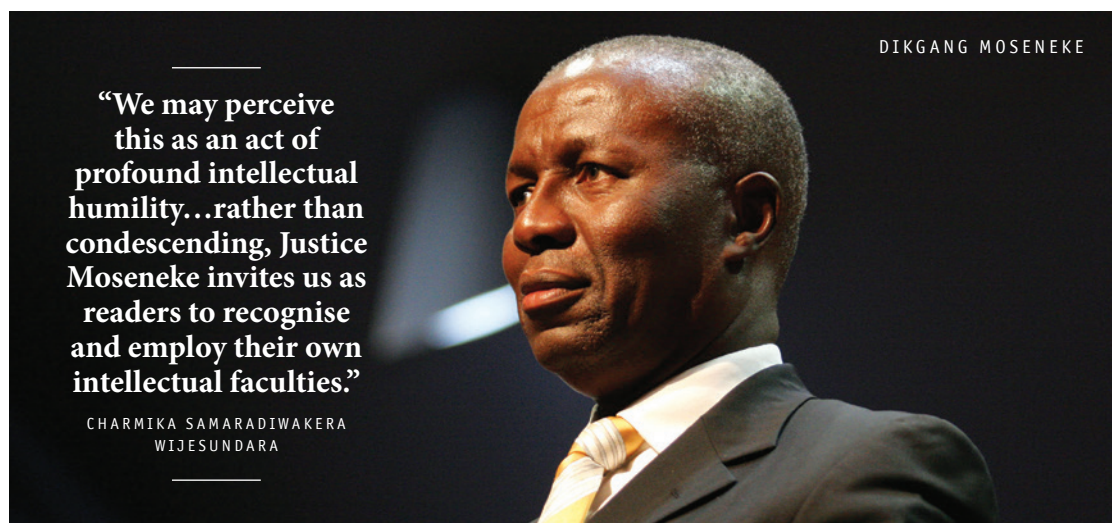
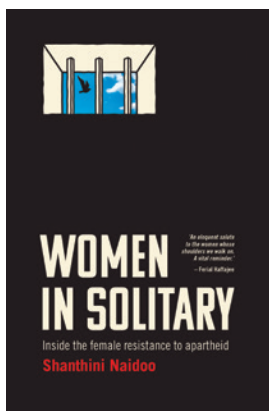


Image: Oupa Nkosi

**WOMEN IN SOLITARY:
INSIDE THE FEMALE RESISTANCE TO APARTHEID
BY SHANTHINI NAIDOO**

TAFELBERG, 2020



SHANTHINI NAIDOO

While working at the *Sunday Times* in 2018, journalist **Shanthini Naidoo** (MA 2019) was assigned to report on the life of **Winnie Madikizela-Mandela** (BA 2005) when she died on 2 April. Naidoo unearthed the forgotten “Trial of 22” in 1969 of anti-apartheid activists who continued to face harassment after the Rivonia trialists were sentenced to Robben Island in 1964. The project grew into a Master’s project at Wits and culminated in *Women in Solitary*.

Naidoo’s book focuses on four women, journalist Joyce Sikhakhane-Rankin, trade unionists Rita Ndzanga and Shanthie Naidoo, and activist Nondwe Mankahla who were on trial with Madikizela-Mandela. They were detained in solitary confinement for over a year, and tortured repeatedly in an attempt to get them to give statements against each other. They refused and the case collapsed.

Naidoo writes: “These women had families. Winnie’s death reminds us that the female narrative of the struggle against apartheid and in history is vastly different to that of the male. We are either not aware of it or do not acknowledge the extent of it.”

She offers harrowing accounts of conditions in prison, how they resumed their lives afterwards and says she hopes the book will remind readers of the strength of South African women. “It is the detail of their lives, their activism, their mental wellbeing, and how their children and grandchildren – who are our contemporaries and colleagues – were affected by their work.

“These women and those like them are the way-finders in whichever war we face today and those yet to come. They taught us to stand on the side of the good, that each of us is a force, and that together we have immeasurable strength.”



WINNIE MANDELA AT THE GATE OF HER ORLANDO HOME IN SOWETO IN 1974

Image: © Alf Kumalo

“These women had families. Winnie’s death reminds us that the female narrative of the struggle against apartheid and in history is vastly different to that of the male. We are either not aware of it or do not acknowledge the extent of it.”

SHANTHINI NAIDOO

Centenary milestone

John Michael Welchman (MBBCh 1950) was born in September 1920 and celebrated his 100th birthday with the South African Air Force Association Whale Coast branch outside the care centre where he lives in Kidbrooke, Onrus in the Western Cape.

Details of this milestone birthday were communicated through Dr Welchman's daughter, Jenty Young Welchman, who lives in the UK and was unable to celebrate with him because of travel restrictions.

Dr Welchman was born and raised in Johannesburg. He was a second-year medical student at Wits when World War II broke out. He obtained his wings a year later and was posted to North Africa in the No 40 squadron as a reconnaissance pilot, flying Hurricanes and Tomahawks. His squadron was on its way to Japan when the war ended. He returned to Wits to complete his studies and married Elizabeth (Betty) – his wife for nearly 75 years.

Dr Welchman practiced medicine in Soroti, Uganda, where he was primarily involved in treating leprosy and malaria. He later specialised in radiology before returning to work in Durban.



WORLD WAR II PILOT MICHAEL WELCHMAN CELEBRATING HIS 100TH BIRTHDAY WITH HIS WIFE BETTY / Image: Cape Times



Countdown to 100

Michael Hathorn (BSc Eng 1943, MBBCh 1950), former medical doctor, aircraft engineer, anti-apartheid activist, wrote to Alumni Relations in August this year: "My wife died in 2008. I am still in reasonably good health at the age of 98. Many fellow medical students at Wits have died, including **Maureen Dale** (BSc Hons 1945, MBBCh 1950), **Bernard Tabatznik** (BSc 1946; MBBCh 1949) and **Sidney Brenner** (BSc Hons 1946, DSc honoris causa 1972).

"After qualifying in mining engineering in 1943, I volunteered for the South African Air Force (SAAF) in World War II until 1946." He trained air mechanics for both the SAAF as well as the Royal Air Force and after the Allied victory in North Africa, he went on to service and repair SAAF planes.

On his return, Dr Hathorn completed his medical degree and married alumna **Margaret Cormack** (BSc 1946, MBBCh 1949). They both worked at the Alexandra Health Centre and University Clinic from 1951-1955 and then at the Durban Medical School until 1960.

He was arrested on 30 March 1960 under the State of Emergency declared following the Sharpeville Massacre and detained until 28 June. "We escaped from South Africa in 1961, spent four years in Ghana doing medical research, got British citizenship, and lived in the UK ever since."

Dr Hathorn took up a teaching and research post at the Royal London Hospital, where he completed his PhD in research into breathing problems in newborn infants. He worked there until he retired.



MICHAEL



MARGARET

In Memoriam

Wits University fondly remembers those who have passed away

[1927-2020]

George Bizos

One of South Africa's most esteemed human rights activists and Wits alumnus Advocate **George Bizos** (BA 1951, LLB 1954, LLD honoris causa 1999), the oldest child of Greek refugees, was born on 14 November 1927 and came to South Africa at the age of 13 via Egypt during World War II. Accompanied by his father, Antonios, he stepped onto the dock of Durban Harbour speaking no English and with little money. The pair found their way to Johannesburg, with Bizos's father taking small jobs while he worked in a café, rather than attending school. Through a chance intervention from a teacher and Wits alumna **Cecilia (Feinstein) Smulowitz** he was able to catch up his studies and started reading for his first degree at Wits in 1948.

At Wits, Bizos served three terms on the Student Representative Council. His courage to speak out against discrimination against black students attracted the wrath of the apartheid government, who would deny him citizenship – and a passport – for more than 30 years. But he also forged life-long friendships with the likes of **Nelson Mandela** (LLD honoris causa 1991), **Arthur Chaskalson** (BCom 1952, LLB 1954, LLD honoris causa 1990) and **Duma Nokwe** (LLB 1955).

Bizos graduated in 1954 and remained a committed and involved alumnus. "I was radicalised at Wits, for lack of a better word," he said. Within weeks of being admitted to the bar as an advocate Bizos was involved in political trials. His track record is long and distinguished: as junior member of the defence team in the 1963 Rivonia Trial; the Bram Fischer Trial in 1965; the first Terrorism Trial in 1967; as part of the defence team in the Delmas Treason Trial which lasted from 1985 to 1989; leading the inquests into the deaths of Steve Biko and Neil Aggett; he was counsel for Winnie Mandela and defended Albertina Sisulu and Barbara Hogan; representing the Biko, Hani, Goniwe, Calata, Mkhonto, Mhlauli, Slovo and Schoon families during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; representing the Human Rights Commission and families of slain mineworkers at the Marikana Commission of Inquiry in 2014.

Bizos was the founder member of the National Council for Human Rights in 1979 and he worked on several of South Africa's most defining documents including the Bill of Rights

and the Constitution. Mandela appointed him to the Judicial Service Commission, on which he served for 15 years. Well into his 80s, Bizos continued to work in the Constitutional Litigation Unit of the Legal Resources Centre.

Despite the intensity of his workload, Bizos cultivated a rich circle of friendships and was a devoted family man. He married his wife Rita Daflos (known as Arethe) in 1954 and had three sons, **Kimon** (BSc 1979, MBBCh 1983), **Damon** (MBBCh 1983, MMed 1997) and **Alexi** (BSc Eng 1983) – and seven grandchildren. Bizos was a keen gardener, and lovingly tended the vegetable garden his mother, Anastasia, who lived to 98, planted. In the documentary film *Here Be Dragons* (2010) he said: "As you know, I don't cross-examine from notes. As spontaneous as some of my questions might sound, they've actually been tried out on the plants – very early in the morning, sometimes in my mind, but sometimes they hear me speak about it."

The indebtedness he felt towards Smulowitz for her earlier contribution to his education led to his central role in establishing the SAHETI School more than 45 years ago as well as the George Bizos SAHETI Scholarship and Bursary fund. "I quote Aristotle 'that education is a jewel at the time of prosperity, and a refuge during difficult times'. I think we should follow Aristotle," he said.

Bizos died peacefully in his home on 9 September. "He lived so well, and with boundless energy, optimism and selflessness," read the statement from his family.

Sources: Wits, M&G and *Sunday Times* archives, *Odyssey to Freedom* (2007)

“The gales of war blew a 13-year-old Greek boy to our shores. He was to become a South African civil rights lawyer of international standing, a devastating cross-examiner of apartheid’s torturers and killers. Long before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was visualized, George Bizos pursued the truth about what was being done to those who suffered under, and had the courage to oppose, a racist regime that turned brutal tyrant. When George Bizos won a case, it was not just a professional victory, it was an imperative of a man whose deep humanity directs his life.”

NADINE GORDIMER, (DLITT HONORIS CAUSA 1984), NOBEL LAUREATE FOR LITERATURE 1991



ELIZABETH SCHOLTZ IN THE BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN

Image: Radhika Chalasani

[1921-2020]

Elizabeth Scholtz

In 1972, when **Elizabeth Scholtz** (BSc 1942) became director of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the splendid 52-acre urban garden founded in 1910, she was not only the first female director of a major botanic garden in the United States; she was also one of the few women in charge of a large New York City cultural institution. This made for some awkward collisions.

At the time, members of the Cultural Institutions Group, which included the directors of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the American Museum of Natural History, the Brooklyn Museum and the garden, met at the Century Club on West 43rd Street. To attend the meetings, Scholtz entered through the service door, so as not to upset the stodgy membership of what at the time was an all-male club.

She did so throughout her tenure, with one notable exception.

One day her arrival coincided with that of Thomas Hoving, director of the Met, and Thomas Nicholson, director of the Museum of Natural History, who linked arms with Scholtz and frog-marched her through the club's front door, causing many male jaws to drop. It did not, however, change policy at the club, which did not admit women until 1988.

Scholtz died on 22 April at her home in Brooklyn Heights, said Diane Steinberg, chair of the garden's board

of trustees. She was 98.

With a distinctive South African accent that had been sharpened by Anglican boarding school, and with a flair for brightly coloured clothes, Scholtz was a beguiling and beloved figure in the horticulture world.

"She was a rock star," said Scot Medbury, who is now executive director of the Quarryhill Botanical Garden in Sonoma Valley, California, recalling how she inspired generations of horticulturists, including himself. She was a skilful diplomat, he said — able to disarm, for example, the toughest union negotiators by inviting leaders to tea. "She made everybody happy."

Trained as a scientist in zoology and botany at Wits, Scholtz went to the US on a yearlong medical fellowship in haematology at Beth Israel Hospital (now Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center) in Boston. There she met George Avery, then the Brooklyn garden's director, who in 1960 offered her a job running the adult education programme. She took it.

In 1966, she began leading garden tours around the world; by the time she stopped, in 2008, she had led 100 tours through 46 countries.

She became the organisation's director in 1972, guiding it through the city's near bankruptcy in 1975. Not only did Scholtz refill the garden's coffers, she also managed its three satellite properties: the Kitchawan Research Station »

[1925-2020]

Solly Gerald Stoch

Solly Gerald Stoch (BSc Eng 1947), who was popularly known as Gerald, grew up in Carnarvon in the Karoo where he attended primary school. His father started off as a smous, who later became a successful sheep farmer and businessman owning a number of small businesses on the main street. His father was fondly remembered by the community of Carnarvon for his generosity during the Great Depression.

His home language was English, but as one would expect in a small Karoo town in the 1920s, his “street” language was Afrikaans. He was completely bilingual and enjoyed speaking Afrikaans whenever possible until the day he died at the age of 95.

He completed his school education at Grey High School in Port Elizabeth as a boarder. This was followed by his degree in civil engineering at Wits in 1947.

Stoch was part of a group of illustrious engineers such as Alf Abramowitz, Tony Goldstein and Philip Slotzky.

In 1948, soon after starting his career, he married Sadie Nowitz. In the early 1950s Stoch started his own practice, a basement room at home serving for his office. Sadie was his secretary and office manager. In the days before word processing his children remember Sadie retyping documents until Stoch, always a perfectionist, was happy that they were flawless.

His enquiring mind was a defining trait – reading almost exclusively about how things worked – from rotary engines to the movement of objects in the solar system.

He had a large collection of slide rules and calculators used by engineers which he donated to the School of Civil Engineering at Wits. It is housed as a special collection at

Wits, attributed to him. The collection was the subject of an article in SAICE’s *Civil Engineering* magazine of March 2008. It makes for fascinating reading especially for those of us old enough to have used slide rules.

Around 1962 Stoch sold his consulting practice to Ove Arup & Partners, joining them as a project manager. Sadie became the office manager at Ove Arup until her retirement when she returned to working with Stoch, until she died in 2003.

After a relatively short period Stoch left Arup to start Metricomp Programmes, to develop and market engineering software on a rental basis. In 1965, this was the first company in South Africa to do so.

Professionally, Stoch was still active well into his late eighties, marketing finite element software and consulting in that area. He used to present lectures to practising structural engineers, usually challenging them to draw in free hand (definitely without using a laptop) how a structure would deflect under various load conditions, a subject which is basic to structural engineers. He found great delight in catching them out!

Over 50 years ago, Stoch was president of the SA Association of Consulting Engineers (CESA today). He was a Fellow member of the SA Institute of Civil Engineers (SAICE) and CESA. He was a committee member of the Board of the Joint Structural Division between SAICE and the Institution of Structural Engineers.

Stoch is survived by his son Leonard, his daughter Hilary Janks and his partner of 16 years, Sally Thompson.

Source: Spencer Erling

and Teatown Lake Reservation, in Ossining, New York, and the Clark Botanic Garden on Long Island.

In 1980, she became director emeritus. She was a daily presence at the garden.

Scholtz was born on 29 April 1921 in Pretoria. Her mother, Vera Vogel Roux, was a nurse. Her father, Tielman Johannes Roos Scholtz, was a general surgeon who died at 45 from septicemia after accidentally puncturing his thumb with a nail brush in the operating theatre.

Scholtz and her brothers were raised by their single mother for many years until she remarried.

But she had always loved plants, having grown up spending time with her family in a bush camp near the Kruger National Park and making watercolours of

bushveld flowers.

Among the many awards Scholtz received during her long career were the Liberty Hyde Bailey Medal from the American Horticultural Society, considered the field’s highest award; the gold Veitch Memorial Medal of the Royal Horticultural Society; and the Honorary Life Member Award from the American Public Gardens Association.

When Scholtz retired in 1980, the garden embarked on what it called Operation Mum — a secret project to develop a rose in Scholtz’s honour, and in her favourite colour, yellow. It took eight years to develop the flower, a cross pollination of the hybrid tea roses Granada, Oregold and Sunblest and the grandiflora Arizona.

Source: Penelope Green, *The New York Times*

[1929-2020]

Ian Campbell McRae

The much-respected former CEO of Eskom, **Ian Campbell McRae** (BSc Eng 1954, DSc Eng honoris causa 1989), died in the early hours of 12 July 2020. He was 90 years old.

Dr McRae was born in Germiston on 24 September 1929. After school, he enrolled for an engineering degree at Wits. “For some unknown reason or maybe the influence of school friends, I applied for a BSc degree in civil engineering at the University of the Witwatersrand. Shortly after I enrolled, I changed to mechanical engineering, a decision I knew was right, and for which I am forever grateful, as it opened a door for the career that followed,” he wrote in his biography *The Test of Leadership - 50 years in the electricity supply industry of South Africa* (2006). But his parents were unable to keep him there.

Having some knowledge of his father’s employers, Dr McRae applied to the Victoria Falls Power company for an apprenticeship. He completed his first year and then applied for a bursary from Iscor, as it was the only company advertising bursaries at the time. When he submitted his application with a request for a recommendation, Eskom decided that it did not want to lose his talents and the utility started awarding bursaries. Dr McRae was one of the first recipients.

He returned to Wits and started his second year in 1951, by which time he had six months left to complete his apprenticeship and had to complete the outstanding time during his university breaks. With his degree completed in 1954, Dr McRae decided that his future would be intertwined with that of Eskom. He rose through the ranks, primarily in power stations and engineering until he was appointed as chief executive in 1985 till his retirement in 1994.

Working as an apprentice fitter and turner proved an invaluable experience. Dr McRae oversaw the construction of Eskom’s current fleet of power stations, as head of its Central Generation Undertaking from 1971 to 1977, head of operations from 1977 to 1980, head of engineering from 1980 to 1984, and chief executive from 1985 to 1994. He oversaw the construction of all the major Eskom “six-pack” coal-fired power stations (Kriel, Matla, Duvha, Tutuka, Lethabo, Matimba, Kendal and Majuba), the hydro-electric power stations (Gariiep, Vanderkloof and Cahora Bassa), the pumped storage power stations (Drakensburg and Palmiet), and the Koeberg nuclear power station in South Africa.

His only son, **Donald** (BA 1982, BA Hons 1983), a renowned journalist and author of *Under Our Skin: A*



White Family’s Journey Through South Africa’s Darkest Years, recalls his father could not escape a picture in his office at the national electricity provider: “Against a canvas of blue sky, giant cooling towers and gleaming electrical plant shimmered in the distance. And yet, curiously, an African mud hut in the corner of the photograph always caught his eye. It was a black home without electricity, and its contrast with the lavish new power station haunted him.”

Dr McRae was awarded an honorary doctorate in engineering in 1989 for his outstanding contribution to the industry. Presenting the honorary degree, Professor David Glasser, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, said that under McRae’s leadership Eskom was moving aggressively toward achieving the target of providing all South Africans with electricity. “McRae is an engineer who is continually championing new, innovative approaches to attain this end.”

After retiring he was appointed as the Chief Executive tasked to establish the National Electricity Regulator. Dr McRae received many awards, the most notable being: The Order of Meritorious Service (Gold Class) South Africa in 1993; the Servant Leadership Award (Samford University US) in 1992; and the World Energy Council 75th Anniversary Award for Global Leadership in 1998.

He lost his daughter **Heather** (BA Hons 1980) in 2018, his wife, Jess, in 2019 and is survived by his son, Donald.

Sources: Eskom archives, *Mining Weekly*, *Business Day* and *The Guardian*

[1924-2020]

William John Richard Alexander

World War II broke out in September 1939 when **William Alexander** (BSc Eng 1950) was in his second year at Durban High School. At the end of 1941 he “scraped through” the final exams and was said to have remarked that “academic prowess was never one of my priorities”.

At the beginning of 1942 he enrolled at Wits and according to his family, his heart was not in his studies. A month before his 18th birthday, Alexander wheedled his way into the army as a member of the South African Engineer Corps (SAEC). Arriving in Egypt he joined the 11th Field Company of the SAEC, receiving training in the construction of Bailey bridges. He served in this company in Italy for the rest of the war.

The second time round, Alexander took his studies more seriously. He graduated from Wits at the end of 1949, facing the prospect of a lean job market.

During the period 1950 to 1969, Alexander and his late wife, Gladys, lived like nomads, moving from one construction site to another. He was involved with several dam constructions, including Rooikrans, Leeuw Gamka, Erfenis and Floriskraal Dams. His unit moved to the Orange River for the construction of the Orange-Fish Tunnel – at that stage the longest continuous water supply tunnel in the world (now moved down the list to

fourth longest).

In 1969 he was transferred to the planning division of the Department of Irrigation (which later became the Department of Water Affairs, and is now the Department of Water and Sanitation) in Pretoria, where he undertook numerous studies on water supply schemes and was later promoted as Chief of the Division of Hydrology, where he broadened his knowledge in hydrology by attending courses at Colorado State University in the US and the University of Reading in the UK. He authored a host of publications between 1970 and 1984. In 1984 he retired and was appointed by the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Pretoria.

He retired from the University of Pretoria in 2000, but was made Professor Emeritus in the Department of Civil Engineering. According to fellow researchers, he will be remembered as “a free spirit, formidable applied statistician, self-taught programmer and an individualist who was always willing to share his views and had space to accept when he erred”.

Alexander died on 9 June, at the age of 95, after a brief illness. He will be remembered by his daughter Evelyn Stoddard, grandchildren, colleagues and friends.

Source: Evelyn Stoddard, Marco van Dijk and Fanie van Vuuren

[1929-2020]

Hertzog (Harry) Berzen

Herzog (Harry) Berzen (MBBCh 1951) was born on a farm in Slangfontein, Vereeniging as one of seven children. In 1945 he matriculated from Athlone High School in Johannesburg at the age of 16.

After obtaining his medical degree from Wits, Dr Berzen worked for three years at the Johannesburg General and Germiston hospitals. He went to England in 1955 and completed his Fellowship of the Royal Colleges of Surgeons in Edinburgh in 1956 and his Master’s in orthopaedic surgery in Liverpool in 1958. On returning to South Africa, he was the head of the Department of Orthopaedics at Wits in 1959. In 1961 he joined WT Ross and **Astor Rupert Kushlick** (MBBCh 1954) in private practice and he married his theatre scrub sister from the Brenthurst Clinic – Louisa Tyler.

Dr Berzen was knowledgeable, practical and thoroughly enjoyed teaching. He was happiest taking students on ward rounds. From 1973 Dr Michael Sara and Dr Berzen practised together for 36 years. Although he withdrew from surgery in his early 70s, he continued to work on medico-legal cases until finally retiring at 80.

His last 11 years were spent in Cape Town, building a formidable vegetable garden with his wife and family. He passed away at the age of 91. His wife followed him within 32 hours of his passing after 57 years of marriage. They are survived by children Len, Anne and Robyn and their families.

He touched many lives, had adventures and was loved for his sense of humour and witty, well-timed comments.

Source: Anne Berzen

[1927-2020]

Herbert Maurice John Prins

Herbert Maurice John Prins (BArch 1952, PGDipTP 1973, MArch 1990), distinguished architect and heritage conservationist, passed away on 15 April, 12 days short of his 93rd birthday. His was a long, rich and remarkably productive life.

Prins was a role model in his work and ongoing commitment to the heritage of Johannesburg and other parts of South Africa until a few months before his death. This lengthy professional career had many highlights and enabled Prins to become a specialist of some distinction.

His work was recognised and valued. Wits awarded him the rare distinction of a Gold Medal in 2019, the South African Institute of Architecture honoured Prins with its Gold Medal of Distinction and in 2002 the Simon Van der Stel Foundation (now Heritage South Africa) awarded Prins its Foundation Gold Medal. The Gauteng Institute for Architecture honoured Prins with its prestigious Life Membership Award and he was a lifetime member of the South African Institute of Architects.

Prins was born in Kimberley in 1927 and he was educated at St Andrew's School in Bloemfontein as well as spending part of his Junior Certificate year at St Andrew's College in Grahamstown. He earned his Bachelor of Architecture in 1952 and left for England with his lifelong friend, Ivan Schwartz, for youthful adventure and to gain overseas work experience.

After a short spell with Lanchester and Lodge, he landed a plum position with Frederick Gibberd, who was pioneering an entirely new approach to town planning and creating a new post-war English town at Harlow in Essex. Prins worked for the Harlow Development Corporation from 1952 to 1956, gaining a broad education with the best of British post-war planners and architects.

In 1956 Prins returned to South Africa because of his father's ill health. He joined the architectural firm of Hanson and Tomkin (formerly Hanson, Tomkin and Finkelstein) and became a partner in charge of the Johannesburg office in 1960, when Norman Hanson (a contemporary of Rex Martienssen) was appointed to the Chair of Architecture at Manchester University. The firm was now known as Hanson, Tomkin and Prins Architects.

Increasingly, Prins took on the design work of the practice, notably commissions for Wits, specifically the Mining and Geology Building (now the Geosciences building). During the Hanson and Tomkin years Prins was also responsible for the new Wits Medical Library and the second Medical School in Esselen Street, Hillbrow, designed and erected in the late 1960s. Prins



also completed a masterplan for the Science Campus together with a physics building for the then University of Natal's Science Campus.

His reputation as an architect of quality university buildings drew Prins closer to Wits University. In 1970 Duncan Howie invited Prins to join the Department of Architecture at Wits on a full-time basis as senior lecturer. Wits management valued his talents; for example, he handled the project to convert the School Hall that had been part of the McAuley House Convent into a theatre. This small heritage gem, The Nunnery, became part of the East Campus. Prins was also responsible for the new Annex building for the Department of Architecture in the late 1970s. Prins remained at Wits until 1996 when he retired.

Over the years he taught and influenced many students who went on to become leaders in the profession. Many recall with great fondness Prins's presence and authority during the leadership of Pancho Guedes. Prins also served as head of department between 1976 and 1978.

In the 1970s Prins became involved in the heritage cause, when at the request of **Selma Browde** (MBBCh 1959, DSc honoris causa 2003), he rallied the architecture students to protest the destruction of JM Solomon »

[1938-2020]

Ralph Hirsh Zulman

Honorable Justice **Ralph Zulman** (BCom 1959, LLB 1961, HDipTaxLaw) passed away in Johannesburg on 13 August from medical complications caused by COVID-19.

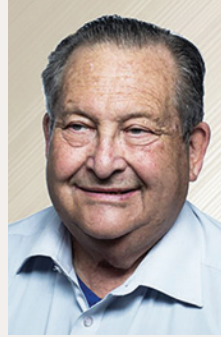
Justice Zulman was born 23 September 1938 in Durban. His parents Mosie and Annie Zulman were founding members of the Oxford Shul after they moved to Johannesburg.

As an advocate (barrister) beginning in 1962, he had a well-established practice as senior counsel at the Johannesburg Bar. Later, Justice Zulman was appointed to the Bench as a Supreme Court (now High Court) judge. In August 1996, about 24 years ago, then President Nelson Mandela appointed him to be a judge of the then Appellate Division (now Supreme Court of Appeal) in Bloemfontein.

In 2010, Zulman was invited by the Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services (JAMS) Weinstein Fellowship Foundation to present a fellowship lecture on conflict resolution in the United States.

Justice Zulman was an internationally renowned expert on cross-border insolvency matters. He represented South Africa at the forum of cross-border insolvency of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (“the Model Law”).

The South African Jewish Report wrote that a highly esteemed colleague, The Honourable Michael D Kirby AC CMG, who retired from the High Court of Australia in



2009, presented Justice Zulman with a copy of a book he had authored. In it, Kirby inscribed, “For Ralph, whose big-heartedness, generosity of spirit, good humour, and high intelligence are an example to other judges, and an inspiration.”

Justice Zulman had a long relationship with Wits, serving as SRC member, Vice-Chairman of the Wits RAG Committee and Chairman of

the Wits Constitution Committee and the Law Students Council. He continued his relationship as Honorary Professor with equality training at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies, a lecturer, member of the alumni committee as well as a Convocation member. He has held a number of positions that include Chairman of the General Council of the Bar of South Africa, Honorary Professor at the University of Connecticut in the US and New South Wales University in Australia as well as Chairman of the Supreme Court Rules Board.

Justice Zulman is survived by his wife, Lynette, whom he married in 1965, son Jeff Zulman (BA 1988), daughters Adrienne Louise Kaplan and Charlene Hilary Wingrin, and their families.

Source: Anthony Chait, *South African Jewish Report*

House when the City of Johannesburg created the Pieter Roos Park on the edge of Hillbrow. It was his first lost battle but the heritage cause gained a fighter and stalwart.

In 1990 Prins himself earned the new Wits Master’s degree in heritage conservation. He opened his own consultancy practice, H M J Prins Architect, in the new specialisation of heritage. Prins was the heritage consultant for a number of major projects: the restoration of the Reserve Bank in Pretoria; the restoration of the Pretoria Railway Station (designed by Herbert Baker) and gutted by fire in 2001; the Walter Sisulu Square of dedication in Kliptown (commemorating the 1955 Congress of the People); the Barbican building in Rissik Street; Chancellor House and the Newtown Precinct among others. Most prestigious was the redevelopment of the Johannesburg Newtown Power Station, which became the Turbine Square and the headquarters of Anglo-Gold Ashanti. Another special project was the upgrading of

Vilakazi Street in Soweto. There was the major redevelopment of the Constitutional Hill site in Johannesburg’s old fort and prison. He served as a valued member of the Building Committee of the Constitutional Court and played a key role in the design and construction of the new Constitutional Court.

Prins was a connoisseur of fine furniture, art, silverware and ceramics. His home in the Art Deco apartment block, Mentone Court, was filled with treasures informed by his knowledgeable taste that he collected throughout his life.

He was a confirmed bachelor and never married. Such was that combination of professional stature and his capacity for meaningful friendships that his close friends became his family. His personal assistant Liz Kirsten was his devoted helpmate for many years. He was much loved and respected.

Source: **Katherine Munro** (BA 1967, Honorary Associate Professor)

[1929-2020]

Solomon Elias Levin

Professor **Solomon Levin** (MBBCh 1951) passed away on 12 July 2020 at the age of 91, a mere 11 days after his wife Cynthia.

Prof, or Solly, as he was fondly referred to, was a giant of a man. He was a gentleman who influenced countless students, registrars and fellows over a career which spanned close to 70 years. His reputation was far-reaching, and he made many close friends with most of the top paediatric cardiologists around the world. He willingly imparted, simplified and brought to life the fascinating field of cardiology.

He was born in Johannesburg on 2 April 1929. After schooling at Boksburg High School, he matriculated at the meagre age of 15 years with a first-class pass. He qualified as a doctor from Wits in November 1950 at the age of 20. However, he had to wait another six months until he turned 21 before being allowed to graduate. While waiting to qualify, he joined the Department of Physiology at the Wits Medical School before commencing his internship year at Baragwanath Hospital in Medicine, Surgery and Paediatrics.

From 1953 to 1956 he studied in England, working in the Paediatric Department at Guy's and Hammersmith hospitals, as well as in the Departments of Pathology and Infectious Diseases. In 1957, Prof joined the Department of Paediatrics at Wits and completed his registrar time in 1960. Taking his studies further, Prof went on to do a Diploma in Child Health (DCH) in London in 1955 and then qualified with an MRCP in 1956 and thereafter an FRCP in 1972 (at the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh).

As a consultant he worked in the Paediatric Department at Baragwanath Hospital from 1960 and then moved across to the Transvaal Memorial Hospital for children in 1965, where he remained until 1978.

In 1968, he was awarded the Cecil John Adams Memorial Trust Travelling Fellowship, which enabled him to spend a year at the Children's Memorial Hospital and Northwestern University, Chicago as a fellow in the Department of Paediatric Cardiology. From 1970 to 1978 he was Principal Paediatrician in the Department of Paediatrics at the TMH and then at the Johannesburg Hospital from 1978 until 1992. In 1974, he was appointed an Associate Professor in the Department of Paediatrics and then in 1978, ad Hominem Professor of Paediatric Cardiology through Wits. At the age of 64 Prof went into private practice but maintained a more than active part-time academic presence at the Johannesburg General Hospital until 1998, having had an illustrious academic



career of 41 years.

Prof never really retired at all and he continued to teach students and registrars with the same enthusiasm. He maintained an ongoing interest in academic medicine and continued to contribute and present at our regular journal club meetings. He was never too old to learn new things and was always excited to hear about new cases and the new technology.

Prof's contribution to the world of academia remains legendary and he published well over 120 articles in both local and overseas journals including seven chapters in books.

In addition, he participated on the editorial board of the *Paediatric Cardiology* and *Cardiology in the Young* journals.

He received many awards during his career. In 1995, the Paediatric Cardiac Society of South Africa acknowledged his contribution to the field of paediatric cardiology. In 1998 the Johannesburg branch of the South African Heart Association also acknowledged and recognised his service in the advancement of Paediatric Cardiology in South Africa. Wits conferred on him the title of Emeritus Professor of Paediatric Cardiology in 1998 and in 2002 he received in Exceptional Service Medal from the Wits Faculty of Health Sciences.

Prof lived through the era of vectorgrams, reams of unrecognisable M-mode tracings as well as the first diagnostic cardiac catheterisations in children in South Africa. Angiograms were developed in a dark room and stockpiled to the roof in the Department. These were viewed on a temperamental projector, which only Prof knew how to control.

Prof's clinical skills and auscultatory prowess would often outshine the findings of the ultrasound in the early »

[1939-2020]

June Schneider

Dr **June Schneider** (BMus 1959, PhD 1962), much-loved wife, mother, grandmother, friend and family bedrock, died in New York on 22 July, three days after her 61st wedding anniversary at the age of 81. A composer, champion of music and dance, esteemed professor, critic and musicologist, she obtained her PhD from the University of the Witwatersrand at the age of 23 – the youngest at that point in the University’s history. She went on to teach in the University’s music faculty, as well as at Emory University and Mercer University in Atlanta, Georgia.

She developed the award-winning exhibition *Sensation* at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and was a co-founder of the Children’s Museum of Atlanta. In New York, June continued to build upon her passion for childhood education and she revamped the Children’s Museum of Manhattan where she curated many exhibitions including the life and work of artist Maira Kalman.

She was the dance critic for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and wrote frequently about dance, music and opera. June loved ballet, having studied it in her youth. She went on to serve on the board of the American Ballet Theatre and was a founding board member of Complexions Dance Company. She was often seen backstage at the Metropolitan Opera House, where she was a friend, supporter and advocate for the dancers, who



adored her.

She met the love of her life, David (LLB 1959), at an engagement party in Johannesburg. They were married before the couple for whom the engagement party was held, and they danced the night away at their wedding and on their honeymoon, and never stopped dancing together. They loved to travel and entertain; loved collecting art and supporting aspiring artists.

June was known for her warmth and hospitality, always graciously welcoming visitors from Wits to New York. “She remained a loyal Witsie throughout her life and played

an important role in setting up the University of the Witwatersrand Fund Inc. The University is extremely grateful for the enormous contribution June made to her alma mater and very proud of her remarkable achievements and illustrious career,” said Vice-Chancellor Professor Adam Habib.

June is survived by her beloved husband David, sons John (Hope Cohn) and Anthony (Caroline Levy), and her grandchildren Jack, Sophie, Harry and Max as well as her “big” brother Colin Benjamin, and about a million devoted friends. She was a collector of music, art, friends, and quotations. June was fond of quoting the Rolling Stones on any occasion, and, quoting William Blake, exhorted everyone she loved to “kiss the joy as it flies.”

days. His knowledge, energy and passion for his speciality was unmatched. The registrars used to joke that “what Prof had forgotten, we had yet to learn”.

Past registrars will fondly remember his ward rounds and teachings that would go on late into the night. Unfortunately, Prof had no sense of time and ward rounds would only end when he would get an irate phone call from his wife Cynthia telling him that he was late for dinner.

I can clearly remember him coming to do ward rounds on a Sunday morning after playing tennis and walking into the neonatal ICU with his skinny legs protruding from his buttoned up, neatly ironed white coat.

He stood for fairness and equal opportunity for all. He had strong feelings against any form of discrimination and sexism. He showed respect for everybody regardless

of their position or standing in society. He was compassionate and he also had the ability to laugh at himself with a great sense of humour.

He was a kind and wonderful husband to Cynthia, a caring and interested father to his three accomplished children, **Bethia** (BA 1977, PDE 1977), **Trevor** (MBBCh 1983) and **Haidee** (BA DA 1988) as well as a doting grandparent to numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren, of whom he was so proud.

He was a deeply religious man and actively participated in synagogue activities and was loved, admired and respected by his fellow congregants.

Although Prof Solly’s passing leaves a void in many lives, his legacy lives on in the wonderful memories of him.

Source: Dr **Jeff Harrisberg** (MBBCh 1981, DTM&H 1987)

[1972-2020]

Antoinette Murdoch

The art world lost a fiery and colourful character in **Antoinette Murdoch** (MA 2010). She was born on 8 September 1972 and succumbed to COVID-related complications on 10 July at the age of 47.

Murdoch was an exceptional student at the then Wits Technikon in Johannesburg. Her work was best known through her iconic series of wedding dresses made entirely out of tissues, embroidered, smocked and exquisitely sewn together as a statement around women and the roles they are required to play.

Her solo exhibitions at the Civic Gallery, Spark and at Circa continued these themes with a sharp and acerbic sense of humour and wit.

She was appointed as curator and manager of the Civic Gallery where she came into her own as an administrator and feisty champion of the arts within the Civic Theatre Complex. Later Murdoch took over the running of the Johannesburg Artbank – an initiative that Gordon Froud (BA Fine Art 1987, PDE 1987) had helped to get off the ground. Sadly, this again did not get the local government support that it needed and was closed down. All the while she was making her own art and raising two daughters. She showed on group exhibitions at Godart Gallery and other spaces in Johannesburg and taught at various tertiary institutions such as the LISOF Fashion Design College.

When the chief curator position opened up at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 2009, Murdoch was



Image: Boxer Ngwenya

appointed. But her days became increasingly frustrated and here her health suffered as did her state of mind. She resigned in October 2016. Despite this Murdoch graduated with her Master's in Fine Art from Wits in 2010, and could look back on a career littered with such accolades as a finalist of the "Most Influential Woman in Business and Government" for *CEO Magazine* in 2007 and being named among the top 50 "Movers and Shakers of the South African Art World" award for *ArtTimes* in 2013.

She is survived by her parents Nicolene and John, her former husband Alex Trapani, her daughters, Zoey and Mia and her sisters, Dalene, Nicolene and Carina and their families.

Sources: **Gordon Froud** (BA Fine Art 1987, PDE 1987) and **Robyn Sassen** (BA Fine Art 1992, MA 2005)

[1929-2020]

Revil John Mason



Image: The Conversation

Professor **Revil Mason** (BCom 1950) was born on 10 February 1929. After matriculating from St John's Prep in 1936 he studied at Wits and graduated with a BCom degree. He garnered several prizes, including the Alexander Aitken Medal for the best graduate in Commerce, as well as the Chamber of Industries Medal and the Dean's award.

After attending a lecture by Prof Raymond Dart he became fascinated by archaeology and proceeded to study archaeology at the University of Cape Town and obtained a doctorate at the age of 28.

Professor Mason was appointed a professor by Wits as a successor to Professor Clarence van Riet Lowe. In 1976 the university created the Archaeological Research Unit and appointed him as Director, a post he held until his rather early retirement in 1989.

Professor Mason excavated many significant sites, »

[1960-2020]

Albert (Bernard) Janse van Rensburg

Associate Professor **Albert (Bernard) Janse van Rensburg** (DTM&H 1987, PhD 2011, PGDip 2018) died on 23 April 2020 at the age of 60 after suffering a heart attack. Tributes speak of a man who earned great respect for the manner in which he committed to his many roles as “colleague, a consummate professional and leader, a mentor, a dear friend, an academic and kind humble soul”.

He was the immediate past-president of the South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP), the secretary of the World Psychiatric Association Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry and an honorary member of World Psychiatric Association. He was also the chair of the SAMA Academic Doctors Association. He was known as an experienced organiser and convener of accredited academic meetings, including chairing the local organising committee of the WPA International Congress in Cape Town, co-hosted by the SASOP in November 2016.

Professor Janse van Rensburg was an Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Wits and head of the psychiatric unit at the Helen Joseph Hospital. He completed his medical training in 1983 and qualified as a psychiatrist in 1996, having come to Wits as a senior registrar from Stellenbosch.

After leaving Wits for a brief stint in Mpumalanga, he returned to take up a position as a consultant within the department. Professor Janse van Rensburg had a myriad of interests in the academic arena. He obtained

a PhD from Wits in 2010 on the role of spirituality in psychiatric practice and was actively involved in projects with this theme. He was passionate about health planning and epidemiology, general and consultation liaison psychiatry, research development and governance of professional associations. He also completed a post graduate diploma in Health Sciences Education in 2018. In March 2019, Professor Janse van Rensburg was appointed as Assistant Head of School of Clinical Medicine, head of Cluster B (Psychiatry, Internal Medicine, Neurosciences and Radiation Sciences). He made a great contribution to the management of the School, where his methodical approach to problem solving was invaluable. He was the Chair of the School of Clinical Medicine 2019 Research Day Committee, which was a huge success.

A stalwart of human rights activism and public mental health, he was instrumental in championing the establishment of the National Mental Health Alliance of mental health organisations during his presidency to strengthen advocacy for mental illness. He was also vocal in his thoughts about the stance SASOP took against the Gauteng Marathon Project that led to the Life Esidimeni tragedy. It was thanks to his meticulous record keeping that SASOP was able to demonstrate all its efforts in advising government against the project.

He is survived by his wife, Associate Professor Ariane Janse van Rensburg in the Department of Architecture at Wits, his son Briard and daughters LeOui and Renate. Source: Faculty of Health Sciences

including, in 1996, a miraculously preserved, 12 000-year-old, Late Stone Age site, 150m from the N1 Allandale exit. During his career Professor Mason determined the historical significance of Melville Koppies and other areas of Johannesburg through his meticulous investigations of Stone Age and Iron Age sites. He identified prehistoric iron furnaces and Tswana villages from Lonehill to Klipriviersberg in Johannesburg. He mapped the North West and Gauteng provinces and became a champion of pre-colonial Early African Iron Age technology.



Besides being an archaeologist, Professor Mason was also a keen adventurer and an avid mountaineer.

Professor Mason, renowned for his ideas about the importance of the archaeological past, was a humble, down-to-earth man, often irreverent, with a dry sense of humour, eschewing physical comforts.

He died on 23 August at the age of 91 and is survived by two daughters, Tamar and Petra, a grandson and a granddaughter.

Source: Petra Mason



[1916-2020]

Pearl Golda Colman

Image: Jenny Jimenez

Pearl Golda Colman (BCom 1937, BA 1959; BA Hons 1960, MA 1963) passed away in New York on 21 July 2020 at the age of 104 years and three months. A true #Witsie4Life, Pearl was educated at Wits, and served on the staff at Wits (1967 to 1980) as founding director of the Student Counselling Service. She and her husband, Harry (BA 1936, LLB 1938), were the first members of both their families to go to university, and they were followed to Wits by their three siblings, their three sons, and by many nephews and nieces.

Pearl was born in Johannesburg on 23 April 1916, the eldest child of Lithuanian Jewish immigrants, Aaron and Sophie (Shear) Kessel. She had an amazing life, with wonderful experiences of family, travel, and personal achievements, punctuated by the tragic early deaths of three people very close to her – her husband of 26 years, Harry, who died suddenly at age 52 in 1966; her 16-year-old grandson, Sean, who died in an auto-accident in 1998; and her middle son, Neville, who passed away at age 57, in 2003, from cancer.

Pearl was gregarious, socially active, and committed to community-support activities throughout her life. She easily made and maintained friendships and kept a close circle of life-long friends, all of whom she outlived. She was a serious and high-achieving student at school, the 1933 Dux Scholae at Germiston High School, and displayed this temperament at Wits too. She participated in extracurricular activities and sports, playing field hockey and tennis in high school, continued with tennis and golf as an adult, and captained the women's golf section of her local club into her 40s. Before marriage, she taught at Union College, and after her marriage in 1939, she and Harry established their home in Germiston and raised

a family of three sons. In her early 40s Pearl decided to return to Wits to commence a new career in psychology – at that time a very unusual path for a married woman with a family and children in school.

After graduating and completing an internship at Tara, Pearl took her first position as a clinical psychologist at the Johannesburg Child Guidance Clinic. It was probably that full-time position which helped Pearl adjust to the sudden loss of her husband, Harry, an advocate at the Johannesburg Bar and part-time lecturer in the Faculty of Law with expertise in civil procedure and evidence.

In about 1967, Professor Ian Douglas MacCrone, who had been one of her mentors and head of psychology at Wits, was appointed Vice Chancellor and Principal of the University. He invited Pearl to join the staff and founded the first on-campus student counselling service at a South African university, modelled on similar programmes in the United States. Pearl eagerly accepted the position, and set her career course for the next decade, retiring from Wits in 1980 at the age of 65.

Post retirement she moved to the US and established her new home in Irvine, California. Lacking a PhD degree, she could not get licensed as a clinical psychologist in California, so she settled on the best alternative, as a certified child, family, and marriage counsellor. She commenced a new career working for a youth counselling service. Pearl worked full-time for the agency and collaborated with local police officers to keep young folks, who had been charged with non-felony offences, out of the juvenile detention system and jail.

She finally retired from full-time employment in 1996, at the age of 80. Pearl moved to New York to be closer to her younger grandchildren. She quickly made »

[1933-2020]

John Ferguson

Geoscientist, adventurer and avid birdwatcher **John Ferguson** (BSc 1956, PhD 1967, DSc 1975) passed away peacefully on 10 July at his home in Whiskers Hill, Carwoola, New South Wales in Australia.

Dr Ferguson was born on 16 February 1933 and educated at King Edward VII School. His exposure to geological wonders such as the Witwatersrand Basin, the Vredefort Circular Structure and the Bushveld Complex as an undergraduate at Wits from 1952 to 1955 ignited Dr Ferguson's lifelong interest in similar structures elsewhere in the world.

After he completed an MSc at McGill University, Montreal in Canada in 1958, his Scandinavian professor-supervisor invited him to join the newly created Greenland Geological Survey. This was an adventure Dr Ferguson relished, despite the requirements of carrying a 35kg rucksack daily for 10 hours, fishing for one's supper and sharing a tent for four months. He was involved in a helicopter crash in his first field season and spent a year-and-a-half in recovery before returning to Greenland.

He was back in South Africa at the Geology Department from 1962 till 1974 and then he emigrated to Australia to join the Federal Geological Survey (Bureau of Mineral Resources (BMR), now Geoscience Australia). In 1975, Wits awarded him an honorary doctorate for his outstanding sustained research. He left BMR in 1985 turning to focus on small, listed mineral exploration. This led him back to Greenland, where mining exploration was encouraged. He was named



“Greenland Prospector and Developer of the Year for 2011” by the Government of Greenland in recognition for his initiative and innovation.

During his lifetime Dr Ferguson explored Southern Africa, Canada, Chile, Mexico, Mongolia, China and Australia for diamonds, gold, platinum group elements, base metals, coal, uranium, and heavy mineral sands. He was a Reader-Professor at Wits, Chief Scientist at the BMR, Geology and Geophysics in Canberra, a National Research Council Fellow at the Canadian Geological Survey and a Life Fellow of the Geological Society of South Africa. Dr Ferguson had unique skills and extensive knowledge in mineral exploration. He was a lateral thinker who published widely and played an essential role in a number of world-class mineral discoveries.

He is survived by his sister Cynthia Makin; his first wife Gillian Ferguson; his children Miles, Sarah, Luke and Marcus and grandchildren Aidan and Elliot.

Source: John Rowntree and John Truswell

friends with whom she played bridge, exercised regularly, and volunteered at the local community centre. When asked what she did there, she answered, quite seriously, “I help feed the old people!”

By then in her late 80s and early 90s, Pearl never saw herself as old. She read voraciously, listened to music, and travelled extensively, within the US and abroad, often with her sister and brother-in-law, Rose and Syd Cohen. Up to age 96, Pearl travelled almost every year to visit family in the US, and friends and family in England, Israel, and South Africa.

Through to her late 90s, Pearl lived independently in a “granny flat”, built as an integral part of the home of her son, Robin, and daughter-in-law, Clare. In her late 90s, she began to show early signs of neuro-cognitive decline. She had a dedicated full-time caregiver, Pauline Tenn,

who took care of Pearl for the last six years of her life.

Because of COVID-19 restrictions many family members were unable to travel, and Pearl was buried in a private ceremony at Kensico Cemetery, Valhalla, New York, with her New York family and Pauline in attendance, and others able to participate remotely through an audio-video link.

Her survivors include her son, Martin, and his wife, Elinor; daughter-in-law, Glenys Lobban; son, Robin, and his wife, Clare; six grandchildren, Howard (Paula), Laurence (Alison), Stephen, Timothy (Liam Miller), Catherine (Tom Lawrie), and Jenna; and nine great grandchildren, Ryan, Olivia, Amelia, Olive, Isaac, Mya, Ella, Hannah, and Alexander.

Source: Dr **Martin Colman** (MBBCh 1964, MMed 1971)

[1925-2020]

Julien Ivor Ellis Hoffman

Professor **Julien Hoffman** (BSc 1945, BSc Hon 1946, MBBCh 1949, DSc 1970, DSc Med honoris causa 2015) died on 23 June 2020. He was born on 26 July in Salisbury (now Harare), Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1925. He received the degree of BSc Hons in 1945, graduated cum laude from the Wits Medical School in 1949 and began an internship in Internal Medicine at the Johannesburg General Hospital.

In 1952, he was an intern and then a Registrar in Internal Medicine at Central Middlesex Hospital in London. He returned to Johannesburg in 1955 to a position of Registrar in Internal Medicine at the General Hospital. His career in cardiology was initiated as a Research Fellow at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School in London in 1957. He then moved to the United States in 1959 as a Fellow in Paediatric Cardiology at the Children's Hospital, Boston, and in 1960 was a Fellow in the Cardiovascular Research Institute at the University of California, San Francisco.

He returned to Zimbabwe to practise clinical cardiology, but returned to the US in 1962 to join **Abraham Rudolph** (MBBCh 1946, MM 1951, DSc Med honoris causa 2006) in the Paediatric Cardiology Division of the Department of Pediatrics at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York.

In 1966 Rudolph and Hoffman joined the Pediatric Department at the University of California in San Francisco (UCSF) and the two were also appointed as Senior Staff of the Cardiovascular Research Institute. Although their clinical interests in paediatric cardiology were similar, Rudolph's research interests centred on foetal and neonatal cardiovascular function, whereas Hoffman was primarily interested in the physiology of coronary circulation; separate research laboratories were established.

After 32 years, he became an Emeritus Professor in 1994, but continued to actively participate in clinical care and particularly, teaching. He also continued to consult with and advise former fellows and to contribute to the literature.

During his BSc degree, Hoffman developed his first interests in research, directed to studies of spermatogenesis. He also began to appreciate the importance of statistics. While in Johannesburg, he assisted members of the faculty in statistical analysis and expanded his expertise by association with **John Kerrich** (BSc 1924, BSc Hons 1926, MSc 1928, LLD honoris causa 1972),



chief of the Statistics Department at the University of the Witwatersrand. In 1964, he introduced a course in statistics for fellows in the Cardiovascular Research Institute and taught this course for about 30 years. He was a member of the Biostatistics Group of UCSF, responsible for coordinating statistics practice and also served as a consultant in statistics for several medical journals. In 2015 he published the book *Biostatistics for Medical and Biomedical Practitioners*, which reviews the basic aspects, the applications and the reliability of statistics.

of statistics.

Early in his career in Paediatric Cardiology, Hoffman reported on the high incidence of spontaneous closure of ventricular septal defects, particularly in young children. This stimulated a continuing interest in the natural history of all congenital cardiovascular malformations. During the 50 years of practice, he pursued this interest in natural history and also assessed the effectiveness of various surgical procedures. He authored a book *The Natural and Unnatural History of Congenital Heart Disease*, published in 2009. This presents an outstanding review of the natural history of the various congenital cardiovascular anomalies and how they respond to surgical procedures. He also discussed how variations in morphology and haemodynamics of the various lesions influence outcomes.

Hoffman was a dedicated and enthusiastic teacher. He made himself readily available for comment and advice to students, residents, fellows and faculty to discuss clinical issues, research interests and to provide guidance regarding statistics. He also maintained contact with many of his former fellows, now faculty members in institutions in the US and abroad, to share in their interests and provide advice and criticism. He had a congenial personality and was frequently invited as a visiting professor and as a speaker at clinical and research conferences, because his informal presentations and lectures were always stimulating.

He served on many NIH and other boards and committees and received many awards, including Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians, many distinguished visiting professorships and invited lectureships. He was also awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Medicine from Wits in 2015. He delivered the annual UCSF Faculty Research Lecture, one of the highest honours awarded to a University of California academician, and had an endowed chair, the Julien IE Hoffman Chair in Cardiac »

[1974-2020]

Lungile Pepeta

Professor **Lungile Pepeta** (MMed 2010) was the Executive Dean in the Faculty of Health Sciences at Nelson Mandela University and had recently been appointed as Chairman of the Council for Medical Schemes when he passed away suddenly of COVID-19 related complications on 7 August 2020.

Professor Pepeta, born in Bizana in the Eastern Cape, was a respected paediatric cardiologist. He completed his MBChB at the University of the Transkei, now Walter Sisulu University, in 1997, and obtained a diploma in child healthcare in 1999. He qualified as a paediatrician in 2003 and worked in Komani in Queenstown, before returning to study at Wits and the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital to qualify as a paediatric cardiologist in 2008.

In 2009 he moved to Port Elizabeth, where he set up the first paediatric cardiology unit at the city's provincial hospital. Children who were born with congenital heart disease, a condition with an abnormally high incidence in the province, no longer had to go the Red Cross Memorial Hospital in Cape Town for open-heart surgery – instead, their heart problems could be sorted out with a two-hour procedure, often even shorter, and an overnight hospital stay. At the time of his death, Professor Pepeta was completing a PhD in paediatrics from Stellenbosch University.

In 2010 he was appointed head of the paediatrics department at Dora Nginza Hospital in PE's Zwide township.

In 2012, when severe staff shortages in Nelson Mandela Bay threatened the collapse of the public health



system in the metro, Pepeta, along with veteran cardiologist Dr Basil Brown and surgeon Dr Sats Pillay, took the department on in a press conference organised in contravention of departmental regulations. They were threatened with disciplinary charges and dismissal. Pointing at his warning letter, Pepeta laughed his trademark laugh: "Let them try," he said.

In 2014, after the hospital was flagged for its extremely high death rate among babies and children, Pepeta publicly criticised the Eastern Cape health department's failure to provide his unit with R5-million worth of life-saving equipment.

Zweli Mkhize, Minister of Health, said: "SA has lost one of her best sons — confident, knowledgeable, articulate and inspiring ... one of the top thinkers, a brilliant mind, an outstanding academic and a pioneering researcher. He was a visionary who held high hopes for our country and an innovator who always harboured dreams of a better SA and spent time figuring out strategies to take this nation to the future of his ideals."

At his funeral, many colleagues spoke of his fearless fight for a medical school for rural doctors and dreams of a better public healthcare system in the Eastern Cape. He will also be remembered for his fondness for sending messages with exclamation marks. On 28 June, in one of his last Facebook posts, he posted a picture of himself and his team in full protective gear about to perform an emergency procedure on a baby, with the caption: "We shall soldier on Covid-19 or not!!!"

Source: *Daily Maverick* / Image: Twitter

Surgery at UCSF, named in his honour.

Despite his exceptionally busy academic life, Hoffman found time to read avidly and travel extensively, to develop deep understanding of and knowledge in an amazingly diverse number of subjects, including the collection and study of minerals. Hoffman was the epitome of integrity, humility, and erudition with a brilliantly critical mind and sometimes acerbic sense of humour. He also played a great game of tennis, no doubt applying a superb understanding of mathematics and statistics to his shot

placement to offset his lack of speed.

Hoffman leaves behind his loving wife of 34 years, Dr Kathy Lewis, and two adult children, Anna, a neonatal intensive care nurse in the unit her mother formerly headed, and Daniel, a third-year surgical resident at the University of California in San Francisco.

He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Source: **Abraham M Rudolph** (MBBCh 1946, MM 1951, DSc Med honoris causa 2006)

[1937-2020]

Michael Plit

Dr **Michael Plit** (MBBCh 1960) was born in Vereeniging in 1937 to Lithuanian immigrants. He matriculated from General Smuts High School as its first head boy and started medical school at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1954. He completed his internship in 1960 and qualified as a physician in 1965.

In 1967 he married his wife Yvonne. Shortly after Dr Plit was awarded a scholarship in February 1967, the couple moved to Jerusalem where he worked at the Hadassah Hospital. In June 1967 he was appointed leader of the triage station just as the Six Day Arab-Israeli war broke out.

In November 1967 he and his wife embarked on a tour of Europe, returning to South Africa in 1968, where he opened the first private pulmonology practice in Johannesburg. He was a founding member of the SA Pulmonology Society (SAPS) now the SA Thoracic Society (SATS) in July 1968. His only daughter, Lisa, was born in 1970.

In 1980 he entered the public sector. He spent five years working at now Helen Joseph Hospital, joining the modern medical, respiratory and academic teaching unit, established by Dr **Andre van As** (MBBCh 1960, PhD 1976). In 1985 he returned to private practice.

In 1990 he was appointed personal physician to Nelson Mandela. In discussions with investigative journalist Terry Bell in 2016, his daughter, an environmental law specialist Dr **Lisa Plit** (BA 1991, LLB 1994), said her father recalled that Dr **Nthato Motlana** (MBBCh 1954, honoris causa LLD 1999) probably advised Mandela on which doctors to include on his initial medical team. Apart from Dr Plit, these were Dr **John Barlow** (MBBCh 1951, Master of Surgery 1968, honoris causa Med 1991) Dr **Michael Kew** (MBBCh 1961, DMed 1968, PhD 1974, DSc Med 1982) and Dr Louis Gecelter, with Dr **Peter Friedland** (MBBCh 1988) called in later.

Dr Plit retired officially in 2011, and was awarded the Chris Barnard certificate in recognition of “outstanding service to the medical profession and the people of South Africa”. Despite being retired, he was often summoned to Qunu, in the Eastern Cape, to attend to Mandela.

Zelda la Grange, who was Mandela’s personal assistant for many years, said she met Dr Plit in 1994. “Dr Plit would always ready himself when Madiba called. He was never too busy to see him, sometimes at the drop of a hat, and to him, Madiba was his utmost responsibility and almost his purpose in life. He was a person on whom Madiba depended greatly, trusted his judgement and always listened to. He was much more than a doctor but



ZELDA LA GRANGE WITH DR MICHAEL PLIT AND HIS WIFE YVONNE

Image: Nelson Mandela Foundation

also a close friend to Madiba, Graça Machel and myself. There goes a kind, soft-spoken professional and dedicated man who served Madiba.”

He served as National Asthma Education Programme president from 1999 to 2000, as president of SAPS from 1992 to 1993, and was awarded honorary fellowship by SAPS.

On 7 May 2020, Dr Plit passed away in the comfort of his home at the age of 83. He is survived by his wife, Yvonne, daughter Lisa, two grandsons (Adam and Ethan) and his younger brother Clive.

The Nelson Mandela Foundation issued the following statement at the time: “We have been saddened to hear of the loss of yet another person who played an important role in Nelson Mandela’s life – Dr Michael Plit, who was Madiba’s personal physician for well over two decades. We send heartfelt condolences to his family and friends.”

The foundation said although Mandela was treated by several medical practitioners, especially in his last 10 years, it was Dr Plit whom he called on the most.

“Dr Plit became more of a friend than a hired professional, more of a trusted counsellor than a physician. He was always there for Madiba, through thick and thin.”

Sources: *African Journal of Thoracic and Critical Care Medicine*, *VaalWeekblad*, Nelson Mandela Foundation

[1925–2020]

Colin Allen Carter

Colin Allen Carter (BSc Eng 1946, MSc Eng, 1948) passed away peacefully at his home in Knysna on 1 April 2020.

Carter retired as Director of Ninham Shand in 1991, but continued to work for a number of years after that. He served on the Committee of the South African Institute for Civil Engineers Water Engineering Division for many years, and as chairman in 1980. He was also a respected and active fellow of the South African Academy of Engineering. But even at the age of 95, he continued to be well informed about world events and maintained his interest in water projects, which had been his main field of engineering.

He took up tennis when he was 12 and only stopped playing in 2008. He remarkably also found the time to play the piano throughout his life.

Carter married Chris in Cape Town in August 1956. She was a keen mountain hiker, accomplished sculptor, and a superb homemaker and mother. They both enjoyed caravanning around Knysna, but mostly at Hermanus Yacht Club where he and the family enjoyed sailing. Chris passed away suddenly while hiking near Knysna in 2013.

Carter is succeeded by his four children – Juliet, Nicholas, Alison and Daniel.

One of his children wrote: “In spite of how important his engineering career was to him and all he achieved in his work, it was remarkable that he was always there to spend evenings, weekends, and holidays with the family. We all consider ourselves to be very fortunate to have had such an intelligent, kind and generous father.”

Carter was born in Cape Town and attended Tamboerskloof Junior School before moving to South African College School (SACS) in Standard 3, becoming a boarder from Standard 8, when he was just 13 years old. He matriculated from the SACS at the age of 15 and then went on to study Civil Engineering at Wits.

After graduating in 1945, he joined the South African Railways and Harbours (as it was known then) where his father worked, and served in Port Elizabeth on “boring construction work” as well as on the Cape Town harbour works, which he found more to his liking.

While still in Port Elizabeth, he was fortunate to hear Ninham Shand present his address as President of SAICE in 1946. Four years later, in Cape Town, he saw the firm’s advertisement for an engineer. He applied immediately, was called for an interview and was astonished when the company offered him the job on the spot. In 1950 he

Image: Andrew Tanner



joined the firm, which at the time had a total staff complement of 20, and so began a career that went on to his retirement 41 years later.

His first recorded project was to improve the water supply for Bredasdorp, which proved to be the beginning of his “water” journey. Many others followed. His quiet, firm manner, keen insight and technical knowledge proved valuable in milestone projects such as: the planning and construction of the Hendrik Verwoerd (Gariep) and Van der Kloof dams; hydrological studies which culminated in the Lesotho Highlands Project; the tricky canalisation of the Esieskraal River; and linking the transfer tunnel from Katse directly to the hydropower station without an intervening head pond at Sentelina. (This would provide additional head, directly from Katse to the hydro power plan at Muela and result in additional energy at the power station. Although the concept of the headrace tunnel being 48km long was unconventional, it proved technically sound.) Carter played an important role in numerous other projects and was always available to support various project teams.

When Carter retired from Ninham Shand in 1991, the MD Peter Thomson said at his retirement party:

“If you ask Colin Carter a question, more likely than not you’ll get a surprising answer.” This, perhaps, best captures Carter’s propensity for lateral thinking.

In 2011, he and his wife left Cape Town, moving to their Leisure Isle house in Knysna, fulfilling a long-held ambition. In his own memoir Carter wrote, under the heading “Lucky me”:

“I have enjoyed an exceptionally fortunate life... So here I am now... long past the standard three score and ten years, still able to get around, living extremely comfortably and enjoying the support and frequent company of my four devoted children, and other relatives and friends.”

None were so lucky as the colleagues and friends who had the privilege of knowing him.

Source: Andrew Tanner: SAICE: Civil Engineering Magazine

[1936-2020]

Marian Laserson

Marian Laserson (BArch 1975), née Spilkin, architect, town planner, champion of wetlands, and heritage campaigner, passed away on 10 July at the Morningside Clinic from COVID-19 at the age of 83.

Laserson was born on 28 September 1936, the daughter of Joseph and Rachel Spilkin. Her father was a Johannesburg civil and structural engineer, whose practice was involved in many of the buildings in the city. He retired at age 85, but he clearly sparked an interest in his daughter in engineering and building technology. From her mother, Laserson drew her social activism, as Rachel was politically active in the Progressive Party.

At the age of 80, Laserson was still a practising professional architect and activist. She was a person of considerable intellect, but her human touch, her sense of humour and her service ethic were her outstanding traits.

Laserson was an active campaigner in town planning and urban regeneration across a wide swathe of the north east of Johannesburg. Her interests were varied. Her knowledge of bylaws and routes through the inner city and how to lodge objections (which she often did on behalf of public interest groups) was vast. Her advice was concise, practical and always followed up with an e-mail to explain exactly what needed to be done to fight a heritage case.

Laserson was instrumental in saving many wetlands and green spaces at the Huddle Park golf course. Over the years she managed to block many proposed developments on this land, which could have destroyed it. It has been developed into a unique recreational facility that combines golf, cycling, walking, dog walking and acrobatics. Laserson believed in the link between wetlands, ecology, biodiversity, wild life and a green belt. She also kept a close eye on the rehabilitation of the Bruma Lake and was keenly interested in the Orange Grove Waterfall and the long-term project to restore this site.

More recently she was involved in trying to save the graveyard area in Linksfield where many patients of the Sizwe Tropical Diseases Hospital are buried. About 7000 graves from between 1895 and 1957 are concerned and Laserson defended the preservation of the medical history and the graves. The facility was previously named the Rietfontein Hospital.

While never afraid to voice a strong opinion about



planning issues, she also saw opportunities to create new green urban spaces, for example, around Paterson Park. She sought to integrate architecture, social theory and compatible property development.

Laserson grew up in Johannesburg and matriculated in 1952 at 16 from Johannesburg Girls High School (Barnato Park). She was awarded a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1975 and started her career as lecturer in the Department of Building Management at Wits.

Between 1973 and 1974, she influenced the career trajectory of Professor **Franco Frescura** (BArch 1977, MArch 1980, PhD 1986). “Marian not only got me to do enough work to pass, but, strangely enough it was thanks to her efforts that I eventually entered a life in academia. One of the courses she taught was Social Surveys, and although I had worked out the ethical implications of Pilot Surveys on my own, it was thanks to her that I realised that life as an architect could be more fun than doing window details.”

Between 1985 and 2005 she worked as a lecturer at the Technikon Witwatersrand in the departments of Architecture and Management and Quantity Surveying.

Laserson married Bob Lurie in 1960, but he died in May 1966 in a boat-related accident while on a scuba diving trip in a remote area in Mozambique. She had a 16-month-old son, Marc, and was three-months pregnant, with her second son, Keith, at the time of this tragedy. In 1980, Laserson married Jack Laserson, an optometrist, who died in 2014.

Throughout her life Laserson was “a joiner”. The many societies she joined show her breadth of interests and the depth of her curiosity about life. Laserson was even a volunteer firefighter. She was the first female Rotary chair in South Africa and a Rotarian of 23 years. It was another dimension of her commitment to community service and desire to improve the lives of people from all walks of life.

In 2019 she was given a Lifetime Achiever award by the South African Institute of Architectural Technologists for her work over the years. She was one of the founders of the institute and was the first architect who registered as a member.

Laserson is survived by her two sons, Keith and Marc, and four grandchildren.

Source: **Kathy Munro** (BA 1967, Honorary Associate Professor)



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