

Obituary

Joseph Lurie

Joseph Lurie, an honorary life Fellow of the Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy passed away on Monday 27 April 2015 at the age of 86 after his fight with cancer.

From his early childhood in Maclear in East Griqualand Jos challenged the world and showed his leadership qualities in the Scouts and through independent camping adventures. His youthful experiences are recorded in an unpublished book he wrote in the last full year of his life, entitled 'An Exciting Life', which I was privileged to proofread. This was typical of Jos recording all his activities and contributions made during his 'exciting life'.

His first employment was as a filing clerk, followed by a job as a trainee draftsman – he qualified in 1947. He progressed through his own efforts to the Department of Trigonometrical Survey in Mowbray, Cape Town, where he extended his skills to surveying and obtained distinction in the survey course, including photogrammetry. While in Cape Town his adventurous spirit prevailed, with weekly climbs of Table Mountain.

His survey excellence was built up in Zululand and the Cape and culminated in his obtaining employment in 1954 as an engineering surveyor in Kenya to set up irrigation schemes. During this 4-year period Jos learned to fly small planes and had the opportunity to climb the Kilimanjaro parasitic volcanic peak of Kibo (5890 m), the highest altitude in Africa, in 'record time', accompanied by only one other friend. He was always an adventurer!

Jos met and married Brenda, his wife of 57 years, in 1958. Brenda was an English nursing sister from Surrey, who was in the middle of a nursing contract in Kenya at that time. Their honeymoon took them on an adventure in a Land Rover through Central Africa during turbulent political times before they decided to return to SA. In Grahamstown, Jos studied geology while being supported by Brenda, and graduated BSc (Hons) with distinction in 1961.

In 1963 Jos chose the option of education as a future career and joined the staff of the Witwatersrand Technical College as lecturer in geology and surveying. This has been his life and enthusiasm ever since.

Jos was passionate about vocationally based technical engineering education in particular. He was a competent practical and theoretical geologist, gemmologist, and surveyor of the highest order. He was the Head of the School of Mines from 1980 for more than 20 years, after which in semi-retirement he continued active engagement up until 2014. He was a highly respected academic, a prolific author, and researcher whose works will no doubt continue to influence the world. He was well travelled and shared most of his travels with Brenda by his side.

Jos was an honorary Life Fellow of the SAIMM, which recognized his service to the Institute from 1980 to his 'first retirement' in 1990. He never gave up his interest in education, with courses being offered up until late 2014 when he first became ill.

During his tenure at Technikon Witwatersrand he carried out a specialist study on the Pilanesberg on rare earth deposits, culminating in a PhD award in 1974. Again, the support of Brenda was always recognized by Jos. He remained an acknowledged expert in this field throughout his life, and has left comprehensive materials to support future possible mining ventures.

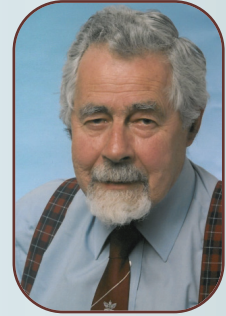
Such activities not being enough to satisfy Jos, he set to writing technical books for publication, which included:

- ◀ History of Mining and Metallurgy at Technikon Witwatersrand (1980)
- ◀ SA Geology for Mining, Metallurgical and Hydrological and Civil Engineering (1977) (11 editions)
- ◀ Technikon Witwatersrand – A History 1925–2000
- ◀ Symetrix Dynamic 3D Model Maker (2012)
- ◀ Symmetrical Polyhedra (2008)
- ◀ Lurie and Ponelet's Catalogue of Symmetrical Polyhedra (2008)
- ◀ The Pilanesburg Alkaline Complex, Geology, Geochemistry and Economic Potential (2008).

He had more than 15 published technical papers and reports as well as many conference presentations across the world, ranging from hydrology in Kenya to microscopic mineral analysis, a new football (just prior to the SA World Cup activities in 2010), and synthetic gems.

The record (unpublished) of his 'Exciting Life' will be a tribute to him and is a fitting end to not only an exciting life, but a life of contribution and success and an inspiration to those that follow him.

He is survived by his wife Brenda and their son Ross and daughter Wendy.



P. Knottenbelt