

Maryna Ras Ferreira

17 September 1925 - 23 December 2015

The well known Prof Maryna Ferreira passed away on 23 December 2015. Maryna was born on 17 September 1925 on an apple farm in the Langkloof, Eastern Cape. She completed a BSc in Physiology and Zoology at the University of Stellenbosch in 1945, and a Masters degree in Zoology at the same University in 1947.

In 1952 she was one of the first groups of dental graduates (and the only female) at the University of Pretoria. She immediately joined the staff, and became a world authority in Dental Materials. In 1976 she obtained a Masters degree in Dental Sciences at the University of Pretoria. She taught hundreds of students about dental materials and restorative dentistry over the years, and her lively, enthusiastic and humorous lecture style not only became very popular with students, but also with qualified colleagues at Refresher Courses.

In 1982 she became the first female Full Professor in Dentistry in South Africa, and in 1996 she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Medunsa (now Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University). Maryna published more than 120 scientific articles and abstracts, and presented about 100 scientific lectures in various countries. She received a number of research awards (amongst others the prestigious Middleton-Shaw Award in 1976) and also an Honorary Achievement Award (Deans Award) from the University of Pretoria (1988).



Maryna Ras Ferreira

Apart from her own distinguished career, Maryna was known for her selfless helping of undergraduate and post-graduate students with their research projects and dissertations. She was always available to help, guide, and assist, and she spent many hours of her own time (even over weekends) to assist her colleagues.

She was a strict mentor, who did not tolerate any “sloppy” research. She was meticulous when it came to scientific writing and many young academics had their manuscripts or dissertations sent back numerous times for corrections. Perfection! Excellence! Accuracy! Honesty! were some of her buzz words. The role she played in the stimulation and improvement of dental research at UP cannot be overestimated.

Maryna was a dedicated, hard worker, who spent the largest part of her life on her career and her job as a lecturer/researcher. She delivered scientific papers at about 30 IADR Congresses, and at the time of her death she was still a Life Member of the IADR. The Dental Materials Group of the SA Division of IADR honoured her by naming one of their research awards after her. She was a reviewer of manuscripts for the SADA Journal for many years, and rendered a valuable service – often improving the original manuscript to such an extent that the authors rarely recognised their publications. She served on the SABS Committee for the Specification/ Registration of Dental Materials for more than 20 years.

Maryna retired in 1998, but for a number of years after that she still rendered valuable inputs at the University of Pretoria and Medunsa. This remarkable woman will always be remembered for all the valuable inputs she had into the dental field.

She had a streak of rebellion in her, and did not hesitate to challenge out-dated research/teaching techniques, and also out-dated gender stereotypes. She was fond of quoting Oscar Wilde who said: “Rules are for the guidance of wise people and for fools to follow”. Some called her eccentric, but most called her brilliant, an icon and a legend.

She leaves behind a son, Jonathan, who resides in Australia, a daughter-in-law, Alet, and three grandchildren.

Maryna - we will always remember you! Small in posture, but a giant in your field.

Prof Francois De Wet