

## OBITUARY

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### G A G Decker

**MB ChB, FRCS (Eng), Emeritus Professor of Surgery, University of the Witwatersrand**  
**16 June 1931 - 15 January 2013**

George Decker was born and grew up in Mossel Bay. After obtaining his MB ChB at the University of Cape Town, he trained in Leicester, Cape Town and London before he began his lifetime association with Wits with his appointment as a consultant at Baragwanath in 1966. In 1977 he was made head of surgery at J G Strijdom Hospital, the job that defined his clinical and academic career. Here most of his 55 papers were written; here he was promoted to Professor; and here he edited and largely re-wrote the new edition of *Surgical Anatomy*, still an international best-seller. In 1989, when the University withdrew from the hospital, he moved to Hillbrow Hospital as clinical head. After his official retirement in 1996 he returned to Baragwanath to continue his teaching and clinical activities. George had a clear calling, and was driven by it all his life – to help those in need through the exercise of his craft. This was typified by his move at the age of 72 ('I felt I needed a new challenge'), and at considerable personal sacrifice, to Tshepong Hospital in Klerksdorp where he was instrumental in transforming

a floundering department into a thriving satellite of Wits, providing outstanding service to the people of North West Province.

He was a founder member of the Surgical Research and Transplantation societies, and long-time Assistant Editor of the SAJS. He spent his 1970 Miller Fellowship in Montreal working on shock models, and received the ASSA Distinguished Service Award in 2004.

George was famous for his intolerance of anything but the highest standards and principles of patient care, and is remembered with respect and affection for this reason. He was a sought-after teacher for undergraduates and registrars, and mentored many during formative periods of their careers.

He is survived by his beloved wife Margaret, and children Anton and Nicola.

**G J Oettle**

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