

Harold Spilg 1929 - 2016



Surgery in Cape Town has lost one of its most loyal servants. Harold Spilg died peacefully on 19 June 2016 in Israel.

Harold, as he was known to everyone, was born in Lithuania in 1929. His family moved to South Africa and settled in Port Elizabeth. He matriculated from Grey High School in 1946 and thereafter completed a Diploma in Pharmacy in 1954. He was awarded the PE Technical College Medal for the best Pharmacy student.

He eventually moved to Cape Town where he practised as a pharmacist. He married Bertha Marcus. Frustrated as a pharmacist, he enrolled to study medicine at the University of Cape Town and graduated with an MBChB in 1960. He decided to specialise in General Surgery and became a Fellow of the College of Surgeons of South Africa in 1970.

Harold always had leanings towards “academia”, and he undertook post graduate research between 1970 and 1972 in the JS Marais Laboratory at UCT under Professor John Terblanche, and at the University of Cambridge. He was awarded a ChM in 1972 from UCT for his thesis on Liver Perfusion/Preservation in Liver Transplantation.

He commenced private practice in Cape Town in 1972 and established a thriving practice. He was also appointed as a part-time Senior Specialist in Surgery at Groote Schuur Hospital.

In 1975, he was appointed as a part-time Senior Specialist in Surgery at the New Somerset Hospital where he continued to contribute for what seems like “forever”. His participation on ward rounds and his support of junior registrars were legendary. He was also revered as a teacher of undergraduate medical students, and regularly acted as one of the senior examiners.

Harold provided an outstanding surgical service, both to the patients in his practice and to the state patients at the Somerset Hospital. He was regarded as a “surgeon scientist” having published extensively on liver research in his early days. He was a great mentor and always willing to assist registrars at any time of day or night. It was therefore not surprising that he was awarded the Distinguished Surgeon Award from the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Cape Town in 2003.

Harold will be remembered for many things besides the surgery. His dress code was impeccable. He was also known for his running and was a regular participant in the Medical 10.

According to his daughter, Denise Azriel, “Harold made *aliyah* to Israel in 2014 and became a new immigrant again. He adapted to this challenging way of life. He spent his last years enjoying the simple pleasures of life surrounded by his family.”

Harold will be deeply missed by his numerous colleagues and friends.

**Dr David Stein
Professor Delawir Kahn**