

# Professor Hugh Hill Lawson

13 January 1926 - 14 March 2019

It is with great fondness that the Department of Surgery remembers Professor HH (Buddy) Lawson, who died after a long illness on the 14th March 2019. Buddy was born in 1926, and was a graduate of Wits (BSc, 1947 and MBBCh in 1951). In 1954 he was awarded the FRCS in the UK. He returned to South Africa and obtained his MCh in 1965 and a DSc in 1970. He was an excellent academic and contributed to the understanding of peptic ulcer disease through his research and supervision of a number of higher degrees. He worked at many of the hospitals associated with the University and was appointed as Professor of Surgery and Chief Surgeon and Head of the Department of Surgery at the then Baragwanath Hospital in 1971. He remained in that position until his retirement in 1991.

During his career, he was acknowledged as a great teacher and clinician and his research resulted in his international recognition in his field. He delivered many invited lectures nationally and internationally. He supervised a number of MMed, MSc and PhD students during his career. He authored over 70 publications and contributed eight chapters to surgical books. He always had an enquiring mind and was a regular attendee at the Department of Surgery's weekly academic meeting, which he attended into his nineties.

His contribution to the uplifting of the Surgery Department at Baragwanath Hospital will be part of his legacy. Together with the next Head of Surgery at Bara, they collaborated with the biomedical industry to build what remains the premier burns unit in the country. He was a member of the South African Surgical Research Society and contributed to its activities over the years, as well as being its President from 1989–1990.

Julien Oettle remembers Buddy. *"I met Buddy 47 years ago, on my very first block of surgery as a 4th year student, and our association continued almost unbroken since then, as teacher, chief, colleague and friend. The circle was finally closed when we had the privilege of his teaching for over a decade on my firm at Helen Joseph."*

*For more than 30 years, Buddy's career was at Baragwanath. There he facilitated its steady development from little more than a vast dressing-station into a world-class*

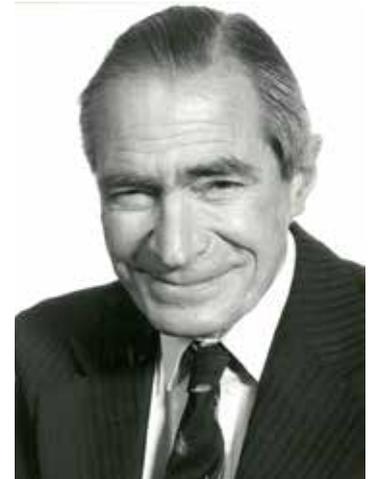
*academic institution. "Bara's" reputation, the present specialist units and the international respect in which they are held are all a tribute to his devotion to clinical practice. His extensive research output, directed primarily at peptic ulceration, was crowned when the University conferred on him a DSc in recognition of his lifetime's body of work.*

*What sort of person was he? He was a meticulous surgeon, from whom most of the older surgeons here learnt their craft in turn; hard-working, friendly, one who led by consensus and persuasion rather than domination and force. He gave a real sense of the continuity of surgical tradition, where not merely operative technique but attitudes, values and approach were all passed on through long apprenticeship.*

*Most of you will also know of his skill as a cabinetmaker of extraordinary competence, and this, at the centre of who he was, was all of a piece with his other craft, surgery. One of his sorrows as he became more frail was the gradual erosion of his ability to work in his beloved workshop.*

*Over time, our friendship matured, moving beyond the merely collegial to a deep and abiding affection. We give thanks for his long and fruitful life; grieve with Marie and his children Margaret, Richard, Douglas and Andrew; mourn his loss; and salute a great surgeon."*

Very few surgeons of that era remain with us. His passing signifies the end of a golden era of Surgery at Wits.



**MD Smith**  
**JG Oettle**  
**MG Veller**