

## IN MEMORIAM

**Ramesh Chhotu Bhikha (1946 - 2010)**

Ramesh Chhotu Bhikha was born in Vavra Village, Gujerat, India, on 15 September 1946, and moved to Cape Town when he was 6 years old. He attended Battswood Primary School and South Peninsula High School before proceeding to UCT, where he graduated MB ChB in 1971.

He started his career as a family physician in Worcester in partnership with Dr Faghmi Williams before moving to Cape Town in 1984 to establish a general practice in Crawford. He was a well-loved and an old-fashioned kind of doctor, who provided extensive medical care in all fields of medicine. He took time to know his patients, their families, and their non-medical highs and lows, and was a rare breed of doctor who did house calls until just before the time of his passing.

He was a committed health professional and a competent health care leader, who assisted with the establishment of the Worcester Private Hospital and also founded and directed Gatesville Medical Centre in Cape Town. His service in the public sector included membership of the Boards of Eben Dönges Hospital in Worcester, and later Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital. He served on national bodies such as the Medical Association of South Africa and the South African Medical Association with distinction.

In the 1980s, at the time of revolt against the political regime, Ramesh provided health care to many civil unrest victims in Zwelethemba and the Worcester region through his private practice and his association with other general practitioners. In these difficult times, he was known by all as a doctor who would never turn anyone away, no matter the time or circumstances. In recognition of his role in the struggle for a just South Africa, he earned a place on the African National Congress list for the 1994 Parliamentary elections.

Throughout his life, Ramesh was a philanthropist. As a student, he generously transported classmates around the peninsula for academic and social activities; as an intern, he donated a suction machine to St Monica's Hospital; and as a member of society, he served several community organisations, including the Toevlug Rehabilitation Centre, Community Chest, Cape Hindu Cultural Society, Wonderland Pre-School, and Westerford High School, serving on its Board of Governors.

He was knowledgeable about many religions, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and the Bahai faith and loved visiting the temples of India, music, and travelling to all corners of the world. His passion for cars – especially Jaguars – took him to many international motor shows, and his interest in aeroplanes even led to a visit to the Boeing factory.

Ramesh died suddenly on 27 August 2010, and he is sorely missed by his many family members, friends, colleagues, and the thousands of patients whose lives he touched.

He is survived by his mother, Rukshmani, his wife Navleta Usha, and his daughters Priya, Reshma and Seema.

**Marian Jacobs**  
**Bryan Kies**

**John Hansen (27/12/1920 - 10/04/2011)**

Joy, Tony, Rob and Sven say goodbye to John. Husband, father, one of South Africa's great doctors and the humblest of gentlemen, John passed away on 10 April 2011. John has enlightened the many lives he has touched and devoted his career to the children of Africa. While he lives on in us and inspires so many of our lives, the world is a better place for the gift of his time with us.

John, son of Otto and Gwen Hansen, was born in Kimberley, South Africa. He studied medicine at the University of

Cape Town, graduating in 1943, and served the Allied forces in Egypt through the final years of World War II. He demobilised in England, where he discovered, firstly, paediatrics and, secondly, the value of persistence. Awarded the Cecil John Rhodes scholarship in 1950, his real work began as a Harvard Research Fellow in neonatal physiology with Clement Smith – one of many mentors and colleagues who became his lifelong friends.

John returned to South Africa in 1952, becoming one of the doyens of nutrition research, cracking the solution to curing and then preventing kwashiorkor, one of the most serious nutritional diseases. After his marriage to Joy in 1958, and the birth of Sven in 1959, he was awarded an MD in 1960 and headed off to the USA with a Rockefeller scholarship.

In the 1960s, John became Associate Professor at Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital, helping to establish academic paediatrics in South Africa. In 1971 he took Joy and the three boys to Johannesburg when he accepted the Chair of Paediatrics at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). He became an internationally recognised force in child nutrition, understanding the science and finding practical solutions to the prevention and inexpensive treatment of nutritional deficiency. He was a champion of breastfeeding, electrolyte-balanced rehydration, the prudent diet, exercise and the pivotal role of parents' love and stimulation in the treatment and raising of healthy children. Today, his ideas have been adopted into mainstream thinking in sport, parenting and public health. For this reason he was recognised with an Honorary Doctorate of Sciences by both the University of Cape Town and Wits. He retired as Professor Emeritus.

While a gentle and respectful man, John confronted the inequity of apartheid early in his career and was a champion of a free and an equitable South Africa for his entire life. Before he passed he shared his suggestions for a good life with his sons:

- value yourselves – body, mind and spirit
- value your partners and be faithful to them
- be absolutely straight in all your dealings
- be friends with your children
- be compassionate towards others
- give positive affirmation to colleagues, family and friends.

**Sven, Rob and Tony Hansen**