

IN MEMORIAM

Leslie E Whitfield



Dr Leslie E Whitfield was born in Krugersdorp and matriculated from Krugersdorp High School. While waiting for admission to study at the Medical School of the University of the Witwatersrand, he spent a year following various pursuits, necessitated by the fact that places in the Medical School were reserved for servicemen returning from World War II.

After his graduation he completed his internship at Henry Elliott Hospital and Umtata Hospital, followed by

general practice locums including at Somerset East and Kearsney.

He married Cecile Groenewald in 1955. Having decided to specialise in obstetrics and gynaecology, he took up an appointment as a registrar under Professor Dirk Crichton at King Edward Hospital in Durban. His son Anthony and daughter Maree were born while he was in training. He excelled in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and after qualifying became Senior Lecturer in the Department. He commenced private practice in Pietermaritzburg in 1960. Their next two children, Michael and Karin, were born during his early years of private practice.

Leslie had a calm and an unassuming demeanour and a charming manner. He was highly principled with a strong sense of morality, and was a doting father. He had an acutely analytical brain and a ready sense of humour. He had a strong work ethic and sense of duty to his family, patients and community in general. The huge expansion of his practice bore testimony to this.

Leslie had an astute clinical acumen, was a deft surgeon, and was unfailingly polite to the nursing staff and everyone with whom he came in contact. He highly appreciated the efforts of the nursing staff in the management of his patients, and the nurses adored him.

He also had a strong sense of commitment to the community and served as the secretary of Pietermaritzburg Rotary Club for over 20 years, for which he was awarded the Paul Harris Fellowship. He served on the Branch Council of the Natal Inland Branch of the Medical Association for several years. He gave of his services unhesitatingly to people from all levels of society. Politically he was colour blind during the apartheid era, and gave of his best, in equal measure, to the indigent and the highly placed.

Before the advent of medical aids he set up a clinic for the nurses at Grey's Hospital and rendered his service to them without charge. He maintained his position as part-time consultant to Grey's and Northdale hospitals for many years, rendering an invaluable contribution in teaching junior medical staff and nurses. He was considerate to his subordinates, widely respected and held in very high regard by his medical colleagues.

Les had strong religious convictions and was a member of the Holy Trinity Church in Pietermaritzburg for many years and Secretary of its Bible College for 22 years, under Bishop Dr Warwick Cole-Edwardes.

His solo specialist practice increased over 13 years and carried with it an enormous clinical load, which led to my joining him in partnership in 1973, followed by John Parkes in 1977, and David Swan in 1985. Stavros Stavrides joined in 1990 before Les retired.

He highly prized his little leisure time and his love of the land led to part-time farming. He entered his farming endeavours with zest and immense enjoyment, first in the Karkloof area outside Howick and later in the Dargle valley. He was also a keen squash player but had to relinquish this because of deteriorating eyesight, resulting from a detached retina.

Sadly, the wearing effects of the years of clinical practice led to slow deterioration of his health, and his retirement was punctuated by setbacks, including cardiac bypass surgery, pulmonary embolism and stroke. He remained uncomplaining and strong in his faith, and stoically accepted his lot. He will be sorely missed by all who came in contact with him. Our heartfelt condolences are extended to Cecile and the family.

Dr Thomas B W Kearney