

## OBITUARY

### **Arnold Waldemar Wiid, MB ChB (1950 - 2013)**

Arnold Wiid, who had the talent and ability to become a fine surgeon, has died. He came from a rich background. His father's family was Afrikaans (the Danish name went back generations). Daniel Wiid was a geologist of considerable ability who played a role in the developing the copper mines of Springbok and Nababeep. Working in the Gulf, he met Flora Kalisz – a Polish refugee via Russia – and married her. The union also resulted in two daughters before Daniel died when Arnold was 12, a loss that never left him. The family moved to Somerset West, where he attended Hottentots Holland High School before graduating in medicine at the University of Cape Town after 1974.

Arnold decided to specialise in surgery at Tygerberg Hospital, as did two friends, Brian Warren and Richard Muller. At this stage the demons that were to haunt him for the rest of his life intervened. He lost his sister, his marriage ended and he left the training scheme. For the rest of his career, he worked

in the Cape Town day hospitals – where his surgical skills were highly appreciated – and did locums. His work was interspersed with a long, courageous but ultimately futile battle against depression, alcoholism and other gremlins. After many absences, he had to stand down.

During this time, he was supported by his children Dane and Lara, his sister Ingrid and her family, his wife Margie and her son David. He was very close to his mother, who died not long before him. The last five years, when his mental and physical faculties waned, were more taxing than anyone would care to imagine.

Arnold died peacefully in December 2013.

As a doctor, Arnold hid his sensitivity beneath a brusque exterior. This did not deter patients, who admired his compassion and skill. As a father, husband, brother, friend and companion, he was one of the best. Problems notwithstanding, his caring, loyalty and gentle humour were evident to everybody; most of all, there was a sense of dignity that never left him.

Arnold's failure to achieve his potential in his chosen career is a tocsin call. A sensitive person, he never liked adornment and would probably have disapproved of anything as public as this obituary. But no one can argue with its message. We need to recognise the costs that many pay for doing medicine – far more than we care to admit. Starting at medical school and running through careers until retirement, it is too easy to forget those among us who falter and fall aside. There is much rhetoric, but little more than token attempts to deal with the problem. A very decent and fine human being has paid the penalty. Let us ensure that everything possible is done to prevent more casualties.

If we don't, no one else will. This is the best memorial we can give Arnold Wiid.

#### **Robert M Kaplan**

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*Robert Kaplan (MB ChB UCT 1973) was at school and university with Arnold Wiid.*