



IN MEMORIAM



Willem Vlietstra (28/10/1935 - 24/07/2008)

Wim Vlietstra came to South Africa in 1982 to start life here initially as a medical officer at Tygerberg Hospital, where he would serve in the casualty department for about 24 years. Soon he became known by the honorary name of 'Oom Wim', not only by his

staff but also by the many young colleagues in training. After retiring in 2000, he continued to work for a few years. His professional life had been dedicated to caring for and dealing with the thousands of patients brought into 'Trauma'. He was considered by those who worked for and with him to have been a legend in his lifetime.

Wim was born and educated in the Netherlands, obtaining his medical degree (Arts examen Nederland) at the University of Utrecht. He then qualified as a general surgeon, and served a number of years on the staff of the surgical department at the University Hospital in Rotterdam.

He had many talents, but was a very modest man. Apart from his care for and involvement with people as patients, he served in many roles in associations and at social gatherings, mainly in the Dutch community. One outstanding and colourful role he fulfilled for many years was that of Sint Nicolaas at the traditional Dutch festival for young and old, but he also officiated many times at cultural events.

I would venture to say that most of Wim's deeds benefited other people and only a small part served his own enjoyment, for example his painting hobby, other activities often being shared with others.

Wim had to leave his family in the Netherlands but was, in later years, able to maintain a very close relationship with his three children. Their mother died a few years before he was



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struck, in 2007, by a rare form of carcinoma. After an operation, initially with good result, he lived a fairly normal life until the beginning of this year, when metastases had spread widely. A palliative operation to relieve pain, followed by a period in a rehabilitation centre, barely enabled him to return home.

There, after his children had stayed with him for a while but had to return to the Netherlands, some very good friends took over until he died in peace and in his own bed on 24 July 2008.

It has been a privilege to know Wim as a friend and be called friends by him. Our condolences go out to his children and grandchildren in Holland.

Han and Thea Mets and South African friends
