

Cedric Gordon Bremner

3 March 1929 – 9 July 2024

Cedric Gordon Bremner was born 3 March 1929 to James and Ida Bremner. He was the fifth of seven children and grew up in Rosebank, Johannesburg. He attended Parktown Boys High School and then University of Witwatersrand. After spending two years in teaching units of the University of the Witwatersrand he proceeded to the United Kingdom to pursue post-graduate surgical training where he trained in London (Hammersmith Hospital) and Edinburgh (St Andrews University). He met his wife of 63 years while training, and Cynthia (Sally) and he returned to South Africa after his training to begin a family and a career. He worked under the leadership of Professors DJ du Plessis and JA Myburgh and was awarded the degree of ChM in 1968 for his thesis on the pyloric muscle. He was awarded the Michael and Janie Miller Fellowship award in 1968 which enabled him to spend a year at the Mayo Clinic in the laboratory of Dr CF Code under the direction of Dr Henry Ellis, a giant in the world of oesophageal surgery. During his tenure there he worked on a novel model of gastroesophageal reflux where he proved that Barrett's oesophagus was indeed an acquired and not a congenital disease. His interest in the oesophagus continued throughout his life, and his contribution to his understanding of Barrett's oesophagus has been internationally recognised.

Professor Bremner became a pioneer surgeon in Johannesburg, performing many "firsts" in South Africa, serving South Africans at the non-white hospitals in Johannesburg at the time: Baragwanath, Coronation, and Hillbrow hospitals. He was Chief of Surgery at Coronation Hospital from 1979–1987, and Chief of Surgery at Hillbrow Hospital from 1987–1992. He started the first oesophageal motility laboratory in Johannesburg, enlisting the nursing help from his wife Sally to help run the laboratory, and later his animal research laboratory. Professor Bremner was a prolific writer and researcher, publishing more than 300 peer-reviewed manuscripts, commentaries, and book chapters and books. He served on the editorial boards of nine journals including a tenure of six years for the South African Medical Journal. He was the Editor of the South African Journal of Surgery from 1974–1992. Upon his retirement from Hillbrow Hospital at age 65, Prof Bremner then relocated to Los Angeles, where he ran the USC Oesophageal Research Unit and a Trauma and Surgical service at the Los Angeles County Hospital for the next 13



years. He was deeply patriotic, and his recognition of the contribution of South Africa to world medicine is reflected in a book he co-authored with Rochelle Keene and published at the Witwatersrand centennial: "A Century of Achievement: South African contributions to global medicine". This latter work was the result of a decade of work he pursued after his final retirement from USC.

After returning to South Africa from Southern California, he moved to the retirement community of Amber Valley in Howick, where he became known as "the guy who gives all those talks" as he continued to teach whatever he learned: topics such as "Tea", "Lichens", and "Joy in the little things". At the age of 90 he won a public speaking competition in Pietermaritzburg.

Professor Bremner was known for his humility, his exemplary teaching, and his kindness to all. Apart from being a pioneer surgeon in South Africa, his legacy of all those he taught will continue into the next era. One of his daughters perhaps summarised the essence of Cedric Bremner: "He was one of those men who always made you want to be a better person". He is survived by his wife Sally, his four children, Ross, Nicola, Bruce and Heidi, and his 10 grandchildren. He will be missed by many.

Ross Bremner