



The Society of Radiographers of South Africa pays tribute to Professor Marita Horak

On 19 October 2003 the Society of Radiographers of South Africa lost a very special member when Marita Horak died. Marita represented the Port Elizabeth Branch on National Council for more than 25 years. She was elected national president twice and was chairperson of the education committee for many years. Marita gave all to the profession and her sterling efforts were acknowledged by the Society as she was presented with a merit award; the highest award to be bestowed on a member.

Apart from the 1st national congress, which she did not attend, Marita played a pivotal role in the other 15 national congresses. Marita always presented papers that were never dull as she challenged the profession, radiographers, and students to expand horizons. Not many people know that she was one of a small group of radiographers, who at their own costs, travelled to Durban in the mid 1970s to develop a three year national diploma in radiography. This was done all for the love of the profession.

Marita was an active member of the editorial board of *The South African Radiographer*. For many years she was responsible for writing 'In Focus', the editorial comment of the journal. Apart from her editorial duties she was totally committed to the journal thus despite her postgraduate qualifications she chose to submit articles for publication in the journal instead of looking elsewhere. Indeed a rare attribute as most professionals aim to publish in accredited professional journals. She believed in the journal; one of her dreams was that the journal would achieve accreditation status.

Marita represented the Society at meetings held with various national ministers of health and also with other state departments. Most important of all her achievements is that of successfully fighting a long battle to achieve private practice rights for radiographers in April 1993.

Marita will be sadly missed by members and the profession. Sympathy to her Johan, Jeanne, Anton, and their families. The Society appreciates that her nearest and dearest unselfishly shared Marita with all.

Fozy Peer: National President
Leonie Munro: Editor

February 2004

PORT ELIZABETH BRANCH: MEMORIES OF MARITA

It was with great sadness that the Port Elizabeth Branch said farewell to Marita in October 2003 after a very long illness. Her renal failure was diagnosed in 1996 and she handled her disease with dignity, never allowing it to interfere with her professional life.

Marita was instrumental in re-establishing our branch of the Society of Radiographers in 1974. She spent the next 29 years serving on the committee in one capacity or another. She was our National Council representative for many years. She attended every branch AGM and she organized several workshops and seminars in Port Elizabeth.

Marita was elected to Council in 1977 and had been on Council continually until a year before her death. She was the longest standing member on Council and served two terms as President of the Society. She represented the Society at several national and international forums. Apart from the first national congress in Durban, Marita attended all the national congresses organized by the Society of Radiographers of South Africa and as far as we can remember, presented a paper at each of these congresses.

Marita worked tirelessly on *The South African Radiographer*. She was a member of the editorial panel and was the author of 'In Focus' for many years.

With her vast experience of the Society, the Professional Board for Radiography, and radiography education, people, ranging from student supplementary radiographers to the Minister of Health were continually consulting her. She always made time to answer the multitude of questions that came her way.

The Branch is proud to have been associated with Marita. May she rest in peace.

PE Branch Committee

PE TECHNIKON: MEMORIES OF A COLOURFUL PROFESSOR

Marita joined the Faculty of Applied Science at the PE Technikon in January 1988 at the time when radiography education was in the process of being transferred from the hospitals to the technikons. She was soon promoted to senior lecturer and in 1993 was appointed Head of Department. In her very professional way she started to build the radiography department from "scratch", firm in the belief that radiography students should be part of the Technikon and should enjoy all the benefits and facilities it offered.

Her professional standing, leadership, and achievements were recognized when, in 1996, she was made Professor. This was a first for radiography in South Africa, and unless I am mistaken her achievement still stands unchallenged.

She played an instrumental role in convincing Zambia health department to send its B Tech students to the PE Technikon. This initiative had far reaching consequences as it later extended to other health professions and other SADC countries.

A more controversial initiative was the course to train unqualified people in the Eastern Cape to supplementary diagnostic radiography level. Perhaps even more contentious were the courses for training chest X-ray operators working on the mines. In both these projects she had an unwavering belief that this was the right thing to do for the needs of the country. In the process she encountered much resistance and even animosity from those who considered that a lower grade worker signified lowering professional standards.

She officially retired at the end of 2000, but continued to teach parttime for the first half of 2001.

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On a personal level her many colleagues and past students have very special and fond memories. Amongst the many messages I received when writing this obituary the following stand out:

- “Mrs Horak was not only a wonderful and compassionate teacher, she was an inspiration to all of us and she will be sorely missed”.
- “...what I will always remember of Marita is her seemingly unlimited wealth of inner wisdom, strength and compassion. And no matter what situation anyone found themselves in, it was as if she brought a sort of quietness, perspective and peace to everyone and everything around her. She was a special person.”

Derek Sharwood, the Dean of Applied Science recalls not only her passion for her profession, her deep insight and wisdom but also her excellent ability to delegate upwards - he often found himself taking the lead from her! He also remembers how fond she was of pulling his leg - to the point that he never knew when to take her seriously.

She had a very keen, if not wicked sense of humour and her ability to mimic people would have us in stitches of laughter. I often told her that she had missed her vocation and should have been on the stage.

Marita had a breadth of knowledge that extended far wider than the narrow limits of radiography. Certainly her knowledge of radiography was encyclopedic but she also displayed a great love and knowledge of literature, poetry in particular, art and music. She would often quote poetry or Shakespeare.

We missed you when you retired Marita, we now bid you farewell as our friend, colleague, boss and lecturer. Rest in peace, you will always be in our memories.

Iona, Brenda, Lynn, Maureen and past students.
February 2004

A TRIBUTE FROM LIVINGSTONE HOSPITAL

Marita Horak came to Port Elizabeth as head of the x-ray department at Livingstone Hospital in the early 1960s. She was an excellent scholar, educationist and champion of the radiographer. She succeeded in elevating the status, improving working conditions and obtaining parity in salaries for the profession.

When she arrived she found our department in disarray. Due to a lack of staff, the quality of our work was poor. Within months she had a full compliment of staff and taught us to be proud of our work. At the same time she personally continued her education, obtaining a degree before leaving for Cape Town.

One of the best memories of her that I hold very dear is the way she moved the color-coded cups on the tea tray so that there was no distinction in which a person drank out of a certain cup for racial reasons. She also took down the “white only” signs from washroom and tearoom doors thereby restoring our self-worth and confidence. Such was the stuff she was made of and the profession is the poorer for her passing. Rest in peace Marita. We will remember you with fondness and respect.

Salma Lagardien

MARITA : COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND

It was the year 1963. I was a first-year student at the University of Pretoria. My fellow students and I were apprehensively waiting in the x-ray department for our introduction to clinical radiography when I walked Ms Marita Smit, our clinical tutor. She was to introduce us to the various radiographic examinations. We were soon to learn that she was an outstanding tutor imparting knowledge while she was performing the demonstrations.

I can still recall that first encounter with her and my impressions of her. I knew instinctively that I was in the presence of a very special person. Even in those days with our little knowledge of radiography and the profession, Ms Smit exerted a big influence on our lives through her practical abilities and no-nonsense attitude. She taught us the importance of dedication to one's work.

Our paths separated when she was seconded to Bloemfontein and went on to Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and back to Port Elizabeth. She met and married her radiologist husband, Dr Johan Horak in 1967 and gave birth to two children Jeanne and Anton thereby starting a small family that became the greatest source of joy and blessing to her and which, like nothing else sustained her for the rest of her life.

I was attending my first congress in Durban as lecturer in 1976 and was having a cup of tea when somebody said ‘Hallo, have you now joined the ranks of lecturers?’ It was Marita and I was surprised that she recognised the first-year student of thirteen years ago. But I was to learn that a sharp memory was one of Marita's assets.

We were drawn to each other immediately into what would be the beginning of a life-long friendship and collegial cooperation. She was a mentor to me in so many ways - radiography, introducing me to the Society of Radiographers of South Africa, the Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA], never hesitating to share her knowledge and experience.

We marked scripts together and moderated examination papers, attended meetings, did inspections, and no matter what her handicap might have been she was always there in front - keen, enthusiastic, knowledgeable. Often our conversations into the wee small hours of the morning gave birth to concepts such as the strategy to give radiographers the right to private practice. She was the mastermind behind this. We worked together on projects, for instance establishing a fee structure for diagnostic radiographers who ventured into private practice and running the examinations for supplementary diagnostic radiographers on behalf of the HPCSA, which engendered a profitable income for the Society of Radiographers of South Africa.

Her keen sense of humour and her ability to turn an ordinary anecdote into a comedy will remain one of the highlights in my memories of her. Even when she was already very ill, she never succumbed to despondency, never was a heavy presence - still making one collapse with laughter. I shall also always remember the matter-of-fact way in which she travelled with her dialyses bags, setting them up casually while chatting away and then settling in with a crossword puzzle until the process was finished.

Up to her last working days, she was there to give advice, to help solving a problem, to encourage. Marita as a friend and mentor to me and many others, especially radiographers, will be missed but will be remembered with love and admiration for the way she lived her life to the full, the first and only Professor in Radiography in South Africa. She was a prime example of how adverse circumstances into could be turned into positive opportunities.

Annarie Hugo - February 2004

Radiographers around the country were saddened to hear that Professor Marita Horak had passed away in October 2003.

Marita's commitment to radiography and radiographers made her one of the best known and well respected radiographers in South Africa.

Martia was deeply involved in all aspects of the profession. Education was however a special love and she spent many years as a tutor radiographer and many radiographers passed through her hands. She served as examiner and moderator for the national diploma in radiography as well the university diplomas and degrees; many of the radiographers in the country will know her in this capacity. At a national level she was a leading figure in the development of the diploma training and degree at technikon.

She was totally involved with the Society of Radiographers. She held numerous positions over a period of some thirty years from committee member and Chairman of the Port Elizabeth Branch to National Council member, ISRR representative and President of the Society.

She served on the Professional Board for Radiographers for nearly twenty years, and was elected Chairman for three terms.

Those who worked with her would know of her amazing capacity for work and her willingness to work for radiography. It was not only the every day business as a lecturer; it was also the attention to all the matters that were dealt with for the Society and the Board at a national level. If ever there were documents to prepare or to review Marita was usually called upon and was willing to do the work. She had an enormous influence on the developments in radiography over the last thirty years and her opinion was sought from all quarters and levels in the health and education sectors.

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Marita was however not only a dedicated radiographer as she had very wide interests. She enjoyed the people she met and the places she visited in the course of her radiographic travels. She frequently said that many of her friends were made through radiography and she valued those friendships. Her colleagues will recall the happy gatherings after meetings where those friendships were developed. It was here that we heard about her husband Johan and her children Jeanne and Anton. It was like an extended family one followed their the school and university careers and the marriages of both children. They supported her throughout her career. The family were happy to "share" Marita with radiography because her career took her away from home on many occasions. The Horaks were also happy to share their home with visiting radiographers and it was wonderful to be able to complete meeting homework whilst watching the mongoose family frolicking on the lawn of their property on Walmer, Port Elizabeth.

Marita bore her illness with great courage and continued to participate in various meetings. Johan was always there to support Marita, and she acknowledged that she would not have coped with her illness and been able to continue with her radiography without him.

Marita was proud to be a radiographer. We are proud of what she achieved and of the recognition that she received but most of all one is proud to have been a friend.

Sincere sympathies are extended to Johan, Jeanne and Anton and their families.

Joan Anthony

February 2004

I am pleased to have been asked to write a few words about Marita Horak after her sad death last year. I met Marita in 1967 as a tutor in the School of Radiography at Groote Schuur Hospital, Cape Town and it seemed like we might work together amicably for a while. However Dr Johan Horak, the radiologist, was lurking in the background and Marita soon married him and went to live in Port Elizabeth. Although Jeanne and Anton, her two children, soon followed, Marita quickly became involved in Society of Radiography of South Africa work and the broader issues of radiography in South Africa.

She was academic by nature which helped her over the years with her lecturing, and in her work at regional and national levels for the Society and during her period as national president. She also served as the Chairperson of the Professional Board for Radiography for some years.

For the Department of Education she acted as examiner, moderator and, perhaps almost more important of all, as a translator for the National Diploma in Radiography examination papers as her bilingualism was, I think, of the highest order. All these commitments she carried out with distinction.

All this time she was proving to be a first rate wife and mother and I am sure her family will agree that they lacked for nothing due to her professional pursuits. I was able to observe her family life as I was privileged to join then for some lovely Easter holidays at Plettenberg Bay, of which I have many happy memories.

The radiography profession has lost one of its most important members in her sad death after a long illness very bravely borne. All our sympathy will go out to Johan, Jeanne, and Anton

Evelyn Tyrer

2 January 2004

Professor Marita Horak, formerly of the Port Elizabeth Technikon, passed away on Sunday 19 October 2003. With her passing, not only has her family lost their wife, mother and friend, but the PE Technikon has lost one of its pioneering staff members and the profession of radiography, one of its brightest stars. As some of those who knew her may be aware, Marita was a keen crossword fan, so it is only fitting that a tribute to her should start with a clue: one word encapsulating the way Marita lived her life. As she was raised in an Afrikaans home, it is also fitting that the answer to the clue should be an Afrikaans word: a word that cannot be properly translated into English. Not determination, not endurance, but "deursettingsvermoë".

Marita was born 5 August 1937 in Middelburg (Cape), before moving to Pretoria at an early age where her father, the late Professor JCB Smit, had taken up a lecturing post at the University. After finishing school Marita gained a Diploma in Radiography at Pretoria University in 1956 and embarked on the career that was to bring her so much personal fulfilment. She worked in a variety of hospitals around the country, eventually filling the position of Chief Radiographer. In 1967 she met and married Dr John Horak, a radiologist and stopped working to raise a family, as was expected of Doctor's wives in the late 60's. While being a stay-at-home mom, she enrolled for and obtained a Masters degree in English Literature through the (then fledgling) University of Port Elizabeth.

It was after the birth of their second child in 1974 that she received the devastating diagnosis of polycystic kidney disease. Two other words followed the diagnosis: incurable and terminal. She was told she would be lucky to see her two children reach their teens. Upon hearing such news, many people would lie down and wait for the end to come, but not Marita. She did some

research and found that with a low-protein diet, patients in her position could prolong the life of their kidneys - so she instantly became a fan of exotic salads and vegetarian platters!

She lived out her role of mother and wife to the full. She showered her children with love and affection, she sewed, she cooked and she somehow also found time in 1982 to complete a Higher Diploma in tertiary education through UNISA.

During this time Marita also remained involved in her profession and acted as external examiner and moderator for a variety of radiographic training centres. Marita also continued to play a very active role in the Society of Radiographers of South Africa, serving on the Port Elizabeth branch committee for a number of years. During the mid 1980's she was elected president of the Society of Radiographers of South Africa - the first of a number of terms of office. It was in this capacity that she was to ruffle many medical feathers with her impassioned campaign to win approval for the right of radiographers to open private practices.

After a long battle, this right was eventually granted largely due to her persistence and persuasiveness, and it has had a huge impact on the professional lives of many radiographers.

That might have been enough for most, but not Marita - that deursettingsvermoë was sitting on her shoulder telling her she had some unfinished business in her professional life. So in 1988 she took up a position at the PE Technikon as a lecturer in the applied science department, lecturing radiography. While lecturing full-time, she stayed active in her profession and campaigned for radiographic training to be moved from hospitals to technikons. When this battle was finally won, she established the Department of Radiography at the PE Technikon, one of the first of such departments in the country. In 1984 she was elected chairman of the Professional Board of Radiographers - and was re-elected for an unprecedented further two terms. In this capacity, she served

on the South African Medical & Dental Council (later the Health Professions Council of South Africa) for 12 years. These are the highest levels one can reach in the radiographic profession.

On the academic front, she continued to lecture numerous subjects at the PE Technikon, as well as acting as examiner and moderator for subjects at other technikons. She served on SERTEC, a body tasked with inspections of teaching standards at Technikons around the country. Somehow she also found time to serve on the editorial committee of the South African Radiographer and publish many articles of her own in technical journals, as well as presenting papers at many radiographic conferences. As a result she was soon promoted to senior lecturer and subsequently, head of the Department of Radiography at the PE Technikon. Despite her new seniority, she remained as accessible as ever to both colleagues and students, many of who were very devoted to her and kept up correspondence with her long after leaving her class.

However, in 1996 Marita suffered renal failure due to her lifelong medical condition. Her options were transplant, dialysis or death. She opted to go the dialysis route and immediately her daily routine changed forever. She had to have 4 peritoneal dialysis sessions a day, each lasting about 40 minutes and the logical step seemed to be to retire from her lecturing position. But the deurstellingsvermoë method was a little different: one session before work, one session at lunchtime at home, one session after work & one session before bed. So she continued driving to work every morning, home at lunchtime and back to work for the afternoon session. Despite these obstacles, her

academic career prospered and reached its zenith in 1994 when she was appointed as the first and only Professor in Radiography in South Africa.

Even when she regretfully retired in 2000, fading away was the furthest thing from her mind. She started a new business buying and selling beaded African artwork and also became a keen and shrewd stock market investor - all while her health was slowly deteriorating. Despite being confined almost entirely to a wheelchair for the six months preceding her death, she was never bitter and never made an issue of her condition - she was more interested in cutting deals and keeping busy. Sadly, the disease could not be kept at bay forever and over the past year, she had countless setbacks that weakened her bit by bit. But there were always bright spots - one of the greatest joys for her was being able to see & spend time with her grandson Samuel, who she believed she would not live to see. To the end she was also fiercely proud of her two children - Anton, a stockbroker and businessman and Jeanne, an advocate who followed in Marita's footsteps to lecture law at the PE Technikon.

Marita made an immense contribution to the profession of Radiography as well as the Port Elizabeth Technikon. But her most lasting legacy is the indelible mark that she left on the lives of those she touched - her students, her family, her colleagues and her friends. The courage and good cheer with which she faced her illness and her commitment to her profession are an example to us all and will continue to serve as an inspiration to all who knew her.

Jeanne & Anton

Marita's legacy

Recalling Marita's career one realises that it is not generally known in her profession how large a role fate played in her life even from her earliest days. At the tender age of only three years she survived a horrendous car crash with her parents which, however, left her with a residual left sided facial nerve paralysis as a life long reminder of how fragile we are.

At the age of seven years yet another even greater calamity befell her with the sudden and unexpected loss of her mother, from what appears to have been a fatal cerebral haemorrhage probably due to rupture of an intracranial aneurysm which may well have been associated with underlying polycystic kidney disease although it was not considered at that stage as there was no family history to support such a diagnosis.

Marita subsequently grew to adulthood in the best of good health but then once more in her late thirties, and already a mother of two children, cruel fate struck once more but this time with dreadful and ultimately fatal consequences with the incidental discovery of what, on further investigation, proved to be autosomal positive polycystic kidney disease inherited presumably from her mother's side of the family.

This shattering discovery which had lifelong implications with no prospect of a permanent cure was completely devastating and it is the greatest tribute to her strength of character that she overcame this catastrophe. Instead of surrendering to her misfortune and bemoaning her fate, she resolved to continue with her life with manifest determination to in the first instance bring up her children to adulthood and independence, which she duly accomplished seeing them both launched into their careers and happy stable marriages.

After staying at home for approximately the next ten years, and incidentally obtaining an MA degree in English Literature to keep her head occupied, she returned to her vocation of radiography with resolute determination to make a successful career no matter how vulnerable she felt.

It is a matter of common knowledge in the radiographic world how well she succeeded over the following years to be generally recognised by all in the profession as the leader and influential spokesperson of the profession by virtue not only of her towering intellect but by her untiring efforts on behalf of all radiographers, culminating in being elected several times as President of the Society of Radiographers and subsequently chairperson of the Professional Board with a seat on the SA Medical and Dental Council (now the Health Professions Council of SA) for no fewer than three terms of four years each. From this exalted position she was able to make her greatest contribution when she overcame strong opposition, mainly from the Radiological Society, to sanction member radiographers, the right to private practice, a concession which until then appeared to be unobtainable.

Apart from her achievements on a national level, she had earlier established the School of Radiography at the PE Technikon and instigated lectures leading to the attainment of higher qualifications for senior radiographers not to speak of facilities to obtain qualifications for part-time students. She also arranged and supervised training courses for mining houses on a commercial basis, thereby earning considerable revenue for the School of Radiography. Her efforts were ultimately recognised by the PE Technikon and in 1994 she was awarded a professorship in radiography and became the first and only professor of radiography in the country.

At the zenith of her academic career she had the pleasure of experiencing the satisfaction of achieving all the goals she had set herself and fully appreciated the fruit of her endeavours through the years in spite of many difficulties along the way.

This memorable phase of her life was however not due to last long as fate again took a hand in her life and in 1996 ominous signs of deterioration of her physical condition, which had mercifully been dormant for approximately 20 years, began to manifest themselves and she went inexorably into renal failure which necessitated implementing measures and procedures of active treatment involving peritoneal dialysis which severely restricted her free movements. She however blithely overcame these tiresome restrictions and carried on with her commitments until sadly after four years she was forced to retire due to ill health.

She had the ill fortune to contract all the complications of advanced renal failure which eventually caused complete and painful loss of mobility and she became wheelchair bound. Despite all measures that were taken her condition deteriorated rapidly and sadly she passed away, mercifully in her sleep, on 19 October 2003, leaving her family and colleagues stunned and devastated, but proud to have shared her life and achievements which enriched all who knew her and which left a legacy of hope for all who suffer adversity in their own lives.

Johan Horak