CELEBRATING WORLD VETERINARY DAY 2016 (30 APRIL 2016)

**Nominee**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOMINEE</th>
<th>NOMINATOR</th>
<th>MOTIVATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dr Piet Botha | Dr Francois van Niekerk | Piet Botha graduated from Onderstepoort in 1955 with 11 classmates. 3 of the original 15 in his class finished later.  
Drs Daan Verwoerd, Andrew Pettigrew and Peter Masters were other members of this class.  
Piet worked for a year in Benoni for Harry Botha and Charles Howell. Piet remembers Harry Botha as a very practical vet with good people skills. He encouraged Piet to remember every owner’s name and if possible, the dog’s name as well.  
A spay cost three guineas in those days.  
A severe outbreak of lumpy skin disease caused the bankruptcy of many dairy farmers on the East Rand.  
In 1957 he returned to his father’s farm at Golden Valley near Somerset East. |
At that stage the following vets were practising in the Eastern Cape.

Kayzer van der Walt and John Dovey in Port Elizabeth, Andries du Plessis in Cradock [Chris Marlow later bought his practice] and Malherbe van Heerden.

Piet had a small Friesian herd [about 20 cows] and also farmed with Merino sheep and Angora goats.

As with most rural vets, Piet's wife, Marlene, acted as receptionist, secretary, bookkeeper and theatre assistant if necessary.

On one occasion Piet had had a very quiet veterinary week and was on his way to town [Somerset East] on the Saturday morning when the phone rang three times in quick succession. A dairy farmer from Alice [Ballantyne] had a cow with a prolapsed uterus, Cecil Michau in Cradock with a dystocia, and Henry Nash at Jansenville had a horse case. Piet got home at midnight!

On another occasion when John Bowker was working as an assistant for Piet, Piet had a routine call at Alice [again a Ballantyne] and another at Komga [David Hart]. John had left that morning on holiday at Gonubie, so Piet detoured a little on the way home and had a beer [or beers?] with John at Gonubie and got home much later. Besides John Bowker, Rick Mapham and Jean van Niekerk also worked with Piet.

The Rift Valley Fever outbreak of the 1970’s barely affected the Golden Valley area.

A severe outbreak of Three day-stiffness caused many deaths in the area in about 1995.

The Veterinary laboratories which Piet used, were Grahamstown [which produced a ball 3 heartwater vaccine] and Onderstepoort.

On one occasion Piet had been pregnancy testing beef cows at Swaershoek in the mountains between Somerset East and Cradock. The manager’s name was Ken. Back at home, at about midnight that night, Piet was wakened by the shrill ringing of the party-line telephone – “Ken here, I have a calving” said the voice. Piet jumped up and headed back to Swaershoek [at least an hour’s drive]. All was quiet and in darkness when he knocked on the door and was told by the surprised manager “I did not phone”. Only then did Piet realize it was Ken Ross, a Friesian stud breeder from the Cowie Valley in the mountains north east of Bedford and two hour’s drive away, who had phoned. He duly backtracked and delivered the calf.
Piet did many foetotomies, especially in his early years in practice because farmers delayed calling or damaged the foetus with their own attempts.

Piet's normal practise area encompassed the Smaldeel [the districts of Somerset East, Bedford, Adelaide and Fort Beaufort and Alice, but he occasionally also had calls as far afield as Dordrecht, Komga, Peddie, Alexandria and Queenstown].

He was the consulting vet to famous Friesland studs such as Cavers [Colin Ross] and Brakfontein [Van Niekerk Brothers].

In 1982 Piet was nearly blinded in both eyes by thorns on the branch of a mimosa [Acacia Karoo] when thorns on the branch penetrated both eyes simultaneously. Fortunately Piet recovered and was able to continue practising.

Although now retired Piet remains a legend amongst the farmers and townspeople he served. Humble, very practical and always willing to help.

Additional overgrazed and eroded ground was added to the original family farm and Piet being a conservationist and nature lover at heart, has over the years tackled the challenge of improving the grass cover and carrying capacity of his veld.

SOME STORIES / COMMENTS ABOUT PIET

From Jean van Niekerk
Your article reminds me of the time Piet Botha [our mentor] was trying to collect semen from his cousin's [Piet Sweetie] Guernsey bull.

The tame old cow was in raging heat and everything was beautifully set up for a faultless collection. The bull would jump and Piet would apply the artificial vagina with great alacrity and competence. That was when matters went on the slippery downhill slope. Instead of ejaculating and producing the long-awaited sample, the bull would simply get off in disgust.
On the fifth attempt, the bull made to mount. Piet bounded forward with undiminished enthusiasm and was met by a shoulder block from the bull that sent him and his artificial vagina flying into the kraal manure. The bull then sedately mounted the cow, did his business and strolled off with head held high!

From Rick Mapham
I think Piet even went back and certified the cow in calf 6 weeks later and dined out on the story of how to properly do a bull test. Piet was one of the finest large animal veterinarians I have had the privilege to know.

From Buzz Bowker
Yes, indeed Piet Botha [Somerset East] was the best bovine diagnostian while the late Karl von Maltzhahn [Alexandria] was the best bovine obstetrian that I have ever had the privilege of knowing. These two gentlemen were legends in their time. Your stories bring two more to mind. At an East Cape Congress Hoffie had been one of the speakers and had urged delegates to dress professionally in a jacket and tie when going out on calls. Well, Piet took this advice to heart and the following week arrived at a regular dairy client to do the monthly PD’s clad in a jacket and tie. The farmer took one look at him and exclaimed: “Piet, het jy kom kuier of het jy kom werk?” Needless to say it was the last time Piet dressed up again.

Dr Glynn Catton
Dr Lesley Lunn
Regarding nominations for veterinarians who have contributed to veterinary affairs in South Africa Dr. George Gaenssler and I would like to nominate Dr. Glynn Catton. I have attached Dr. Catton’s abbreviated CV. I think that it speaks for itself and we feel that Dr. Catton has served the veterinary profession with dedication and honour.

Dr Brian Rippon
Dr Francois van Niekerk
Proctorsfontein in the Grahamstown district, the former home of our esteemed and well-loved colleague, Brian Rippon, was for decades a place of warm hospitality for veterinarians from South Africa and from all over the world. Brian farmed with beef cattle, sheep and Angora goats on Proctorsfontein and it was the base for his rural veterinary practice.

When Brian and his wife Jenny, retired to Knysna and he leased Proctorsfontein to Shamwari Game Reserve, the internal fences were removed and today large game roam freely on this beautiful farm. The historic settler homestead in its beautiful setting and in its magnificent, extensive garden with well-groomed lawns has been converted into an exclusive lodge. Proctorsfontein was a special place to the veterinary fraternity and especially to those in the Eastern Cape. An era in Eastern Cape veterinary history ended with Brian’s move to Knysna.

Brian is a very special person, always humble, loved by his colleagues and his clients. He has a puckish sense of humour and is the first to tell a joke against himself, such as the following which caused him great amusement. He was seeing a sick Afghan in his surgery and commented to the longhaired, longfaced owner (a legal friend); “funny how dogs and owners look alike”, to which the quick-witted attorney parried: “have you not just acquired a bulldog?”
Always a great talker and raconteur and a great character, the stories about Brian himself are numerous and legendary.

In his younger days he was renowned for the speed at which he roared up and down country roads on his rounds - farm labourers compared the sound of his passing bakkie with that of a Boeing passing overhead. He once hit an ox at night at such speed that it flew over the cab and landed up on the load body of his bakkie.

TB testing in his early days in practice involved accreditation schemes where every bovine on the farm had to be accounted for from test to test. This involved hours of office work and on one occasion Brian worked till 3am balancing the TB registers, realized that he had an early TB test near Port Alfred and drove straight there instead of going to bed. The farmer was rather surprised to find the veterinarian sleeping in his bakkie at the cattle crush in time for the test the next morning!

He would spend hours giving free advice to farmers, not a few of whom abused his kindness without making use of his professional services. This advice was given freely telephonically at all hours, in the cattle crush, and possibly most characteristically while he was seated in his bakkie, engine running and arm out of the window. The latter habit was endearing and simultaneously infuriating – endearing to those who were getting a free consultation and infuriating to those who were waiting for him to keep an appointment! Because Brian kept Eastern Cape time, not Greenwich time, he became universally known (in the Albany, Alexandria and Bathurst districts at any rate) as the late Dr Rippon. Because of this reputation, a competition developed amongst his many farmer clients as to who could delay Brian in characteristic pose with his engine running and his arm out of the window for the longest. The record is said to be 20 minutes! (Brian of course denies this - he claims it was 10 minutes!)

A colleague tells the story of visiting Brian and accompanying him on his rounds. Suddenly Brian jammed on the brakes, jumped out of his bakkie, over the fence and proceeded to inject a sick cow he had spotted next to the road. When the colleague queried the financial wisdom of such actions, he reportedly said – “it’s old Jack’s cow and both cow and owner are poorly - I won’t charge him”. Such is the man who served his clients and local community for 46 years.

Brian graduated from Onderstepoort in 1962 and was in rural practise in the UK and Western Canada until 1965 when he returned to South Africa.

Brian has served the veterinary profession unstintingly. He served on the committee of the Eastern Cape & Karoo Branch for many years and as Chairman from 1975 to 1978. He was an elected Federal Councillor of the SAVA from 1978 to 1988. During this time he also ran his rural veterinary practice and ran his 3200ha farm.
The South African Veterinary Association Congresses were held in Grahamstown in 1977 and 1992. Brian chaired the organizing committee of the 1997 Congress and served on the organizing committee of the 1992 Congress. Brian played host on Proctorsfontein to congress attendees during both these congresses. He was awarded the Boswell Award for distinguished service to the SAVA in 1978.

Brian was not immune to personal setbacks such as experiencing a farm attack which saw him severely beaten and bound and shoved under a bed (his resourcefulness enabled him to escape and save his life), family tragedies and a vehicle accident which put an end to his veterinary practice. Through all of this he has retained his sense of humour and good-natured approach to people and life.

He is a talented artist. His beautiful paintings of South Africa and Namibia which adorn many homes attest to this. He was also known to write the odd poem such as Ode to the Angora goat (which was inspired by his exasperation at their propensity to die!)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dr Peter Rogers</th>
<th>Dr Roy Aronson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would like to nominate Dr Peter Rogers of Provet Veterinary Services in Hoedspruit. Dr Rogers has been a passionate wildlife veterinarian for over thirty years He is truly one of the great stars of our profession He has appeared on TV internationally many times and his dedication and expertise really need celebrating He was recently seriously injured by a rhino and yet this dedicated man is back at his job, barely recovered. Dedication and selflessness like this need to be rewarded by recognition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dr Jotello Festiri Soga</th>
<th>Dr Paidamwoyo Mutowembwa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would like to nominate Dr Jotello Festiri Soga of South Africa Wildlife Services in Hoedspruit. Dr Soga was born in 1865 at the Mgwali Mission in the Eastern Cape. He was the fourth son of Reverend Tiyo and Janet Soga. Dr Soga completed his matric at the Dollar Academy in Fife, Scotland and obtained his veterinary medicine degree in Scotland in 1886. Thereafter, he returned to the Cape Colony. On 09 July 1892, Dr Soga married Catherine Watson Chalmers, a Scottish woman. They had three daughters. Seven years later he was appointed a veterinary surgeon for the colonial government. He was sent to Fort Beaufort and was also responsible for veterinary services for Victoria East, Stockenström and neighbouring districts. Dr Soga was also directly responsible for the inoculation against contagious lung-sickness, which was decimating cattle in South Africa. He conducted his own inoculation experiments on lung-sickness and thereafter, his vaccinating method was accepted as standard. Dr Soga was also a lecturer to farmers whom he lectured on ways to control and treat diseases of livestock throughout the Cape Colony and the former British Bechuanaland, now Botswana. Moreover, Dr Soga conducted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
research on the effect of plants on animals, and comparative physiology. He frequently served as a judge at horse shows at the East London Agricultural Show, and was regularly invited to give lectures to farmers’ associations.

In the late 19th century, Dr Soga’s skills as a trained veterinary doctor were ideally suited and required when rinderpest and other animal diseases threatened to decimate farmers’ herds and flocks. As the first qualified South African veterinarian, Dr Soga was the first to send a warning about the dangers that rinderpest posed to the Cape Colony.

In 1905 Dr Soga became a founding member of the former Cape of Good Hope Veterinary Association, which today is known as the South African Veterinary Association (SAVA).

In veterinary circles Dr Soga was best known as the pioneer researcher in the study of toxic plants and their effect on animals. In acknowledgment of his original research work, the Jotello Soga Ethno Veterinary Garden was created at ARC-Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute next to the Veterinary Museum.

Dr Soga passed away on 06 December 1906 in Amalinda, East London.