



Obituary

Peter Hearn

27 February 1932 – 14 May 2024

LEST WE FORGET

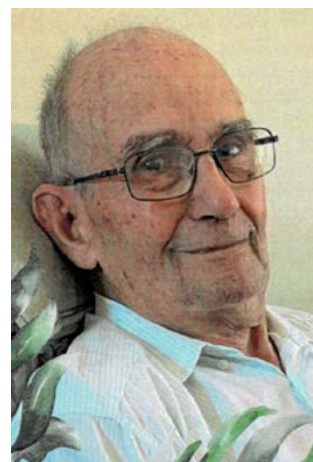
Our late colleague, Peter Hearn, was born in Cape Town, moved first to Port Shepstone to attend primary school, and then to Pietermaritzburg the year before he enrolled at Maritzburg College. He reached the pinnacle of his career when he was appointed Director of Pharmaceutical Services in the National Department of Health, Pretoria in 1989.

After matriculating from the Maritzburg College in 1948, Peter embarked on his career in pharmacy by doing his apprenticeship in the Pietermaritzburg pharmacy owned by Archie Allen. He obtained his Diploma in Pharmacy after completing the academic course at the Durban Pharmacy School in 1953.

He returned to Pietermaritzburg where he managed Stephenson's Pharmacy until he opened his own pharmacy, Hearn's Pharmacy, in Oribi Road, a few years later. In 1968, he sold this pharmacy but continued as its managing director until 1971, when he commenced work as a pharmacist at Edendale Hospital, a State Health hospital at that time. He was promoted to Senior Pharmacist in 1973 and in 1976 he was promoted to Principal Pharmacist in the same hospital. In 1981, Peter was transferred to the Department of Health's Head Office in Pretoria where he was appointed as Deputy Director of Pharmaceutical Services in 1983. In 1989, he was promoted to Director. On his retirement towards the turn of the century, he and his wife returned to their hometown of Pietermaritzburg, where he continued his professional life for several more years, as a part-time pharmacist at a veterinary supplies wholesale establishment.

There was much more to Peter's life than being a successful pharmacist. He was a committed member of the South African Association of Hospital and Institutional Pharmacists (SAAHIP). When the Inaugural Meeting of the KwaZulu-Natal Branch of SAAHIP took place in Pietermaritzburg on 18 October 1979, Peter was elected as its first chairman. He remained chairman until he left Pietermaritzburg in 1981, having been transferred to Pretoria. On 8 November 1980, at SAAHIP's Annual General Meeting (AGM), he was elected as the Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee and at the AGM held in 1982, he was elected President, an office he held for three successive years. He was also honoured by being elected a Fellow of the Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa in 1984. In addition, Peter was also a member of the South African Pharmacy Council from August 1986 to December 1993, for which service he was awarded a certificate for his loyal and unselfish service.

He probably experienced the highlight of his career on 30 March 1995, when he attended a conference on board Her Majesty's Yacht Britannia, berthed in Cape Town. He was one of 120 guests who were invited by British Means Business, a trade initiative backed by the United Kingdom Department of Trade & Industry and Foreign & Commonwealth Office. The guests comprised prominent persons active in the field of healthcare, such as doctors, both private and employed in hospitals, specialists in the various medical fields, university professors, and members of the pharmaceutical industry. Peter Hearn attended in his capacity as Director of Pharmaceutical Services.



Peter was in the South Africa Police Reserve for many years, where, as a pharmacist, he helped educate the force in the nature of the then developing illegal drug trade, and in the identification of many different kinds and forms of narcotics and other illegal stimulants.

Peter dedicated many years to his beloved Scoutholm, the 3rd Maritzburg scout troop, where he helped to develop and nurture hundreds of young men. The troop became the largest and most successful troop in South Africa for many years, and a measure of its success and meaning for those young men is the fact that Peter persuaded sixty to seventy of them over the years to attend the meetings every Friday night.

Peter had many interests in life, besides pharmacy. He enjoyed being busy in his workshop, where he tackled any job, such as taking apart the gearbox of his truck, building a crib for his children, and doing French polishing, a pursuit requiring many hours of dedication and patience to get right. He also won Springbok colours for his aeromodelling and he represented South Africa in Sweden at the world championships.

Peter was also keen on sports and the outdoors, and he spent many hours hiking in the mountains with his family. He played and refereed rugby, played badminton, water polo, he wrestled, golfed, loved body surfing, water-skied, and was a keen powerboat racer. With the help

of a couple of close friends and his brother-in-law, he built his boat "Water Witch" and at one time he was the commodore of the power-boat club.

Peter also had a keen interest in wildlife, and at one time bred puff adders in captivity. He and a friend collected the venom and supplied the South African Institute of Medical Research (later known as the National Health Laboratory Service) with this venom that was used to produce antivenom. This project was abandoned after a few years, because his wife considered the snake pit hazardous to the safety of their young, inquisitive children. The reptiles were then donated to the now closed Fitzsimons Snake Park in Durban.

When Peter celebrated his 90th birthday in 2022, the past chairmen of the KwaZulu-Natal Inland branch of SAAHIP, and the current committee members, arranged a surprise birthday party in his honour. The event was enjoyed by all present, and, besides being a birthday celebration, it provided the younger pharmacists an opportunity to meet a stalwart of the organisation, as well as those pharmacists who had previously served the organisation.

Foremost, Peter was a devoted husband, father and grandfather. He is survived by his wife, Cherry, to whom he was happily married for sixty-seven years, a son, two daughters, and three grandchildren.

Susan Buekes