

A tribute to two occupational health nursing icons



The President, the Executive Committee and SASOHN members mourn the passing of two honorary life members (HLMs) this year – Pamela Harvey and Fransie Smit.

Pamela June Harvey passed away on 19 June 2017, at the age of 83 years. She is fondly remembered by colleagues as a stalwart in the field of occupational health nursing (OHN) and as an individual who participated in the growth of SASOHN to the professional society it is today. Workers from Shatterprufe and Pilkington Glass Factory in Port Elizabeth benefited from her expertise and care from 1975 until her retirement in the 1990s, an amazing 20 years' service to one company. Following her initial 'retirement', Pam, as she was known, registered as a private nurse practitioner and provided part-time OHN services to Pennypinchers and PG Bison until her final retirement in the early



Pamela Harvey in her retirement

Photograph: SASOHN Eastern Cape

2000s. Dorothy Blacklaws, another fellow HLM, recalls how, soon after Pam joined SASOHN Eastern Cape, she was serving on the regional committee. She was elected Chairperson of the region in 1982, and progressed to become a SASOHN national representative where, in 1988, she assumed the role of national treasurer. During this time, she also proudly represented

South Africa at the ICOH 1986 Conference in Scotland. By 1990 she had been elected to the South African Nursing Association Eastern Cape Board, as a private sector representative.

Amongst the numerous awards bestowed upon Pam in her illustrious career were the Bronze medal for literature by SA Druggists (1987) and the Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery Trophy (1989) for outstanding dedication and personal sacrifice in promoting the interests of SASOHN in the Eastern Cape. Her Honorary Life Membership was cordially awarded in 1995 at SASOHN AGM in Cape Town. Pam was involved in the groundwork for promoting and organising the inaugural course for occupational health nursing in the Eastern Cape through the University of Port Elizabeth, with the help of Prof. M. Mellish. She assisted with further courses at the Technikon and practical programmes until 2002, by which time she was 68. Her second Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery Trophy was in recognition of these efforts in the development of formal training programmes for OHN. Dorothy recalls that Pam was a great hiker and swimmer and, in the early years, often sailed with her two sons. Living near the beachfront was the perfect opportunity for an early morning swim in the sea before work, which she regularly did. She had a sunny personality and was always ready to assist anyone in need.

Sadly, SASOHN lost another stalwart of the profession on 31 August 2017, **Fransie Smit**, who joined SASOHN Western Cape in 1976 when the regions were still known as discussion groups. She was soon elected to the region's committee and was well known for her vigorous role in fundraising. She was part of the first group of nurses who completed the certificate in occupational health nursing through the University of Stellenbosch, with Prof. Wicht (Deacon) as their study leader. The course did not have professional recognition from the South African Nursing Council when the nurses completed it but this recognition was later conferred by the Council. Members fondly recall how Fransie would send her husband, Klaus, to stay with family while this pioneer group of nurses burnt the midnight oil – having some fun at the same time. During the course the students were privileged to go underground into a gold mine in Johannesburg, a trip arranged by Stella Coetzee, Hester le Grange and Elize Snyman. It was described as a novel experience to be underground with Fransie with her fun comments and antics. In 1982 Fransie was elected treasurer of the Western Cape region, a portfolio she managed for eight years. It was during this period that she was so actively involved in fundraising with projects such as float building and parade days. She was awarded HLM of SASOHN in recognition of her service to the organisation in 1993. Described as a very dedicated occupational health nurse with a high standard of work and a professional work ethic, she was always ready to have fun. In her later

years, Fransie provided support at old age homes in the Strand, and in the complex where she resided. She will always be remembered for her dedication to occupational health, and will be missed by all who knew her.

The assistance of the following SASOHN members is acknowledged (in alphabetical order): Dorothy Blacklaws, Claire Deacon, Louwna Pretorius, Jenny Serfontein, Linda Stokes, Annie Tattersall and Joan Visser, for their contributions to this article, and Karen Michell for her assistance in collating the information.



The Committee of the Western Cape Occupational Health Association. Taken at a seminar while Fransie was the Western Cape Treasurer. Fransie is third from the right.

Photograph: SASOHN Western Cape

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