



## LEST WE FORGET A tribute to Robin Dale

**17/06/1928 – 13/11/2019**

Robin Dale passed away recently at the age of 91. He had struggled with Parkinson's disease for many years. Robin was well known to members of the South African Association of Hospital and Institutional Pharmacists (SAAHIP), particularly to members of the two Kwazulu-Natal branches. He was born in Bloemfontein, matriculated at Grey College in the same city, and served his apprenticeship there under Mr O Galgut. Thereafter he completed his studies at the Pharmacy School in Durban.

His career began first at the Provincial Medical Supply Centre (PMSC) in Durban and then at Protea Holdings, where he spent 4-5 years, until he took up a post at Durban's King George V Hospital, a State hospital at that time. From there Robin moved to Addington Hospital briefly, and then back to PMSC until his retirement in 1992.

From 1982 until 1988, I worked closely with Robin. He ran a tight ship at PMSC. As a manager he was respected, effective, efficient, well-liked, and he got along with all the staff.

Robin became the function convenor for SAAHIP's Natal Coastal Branch. He successfully coordinated many meetings at a variety of venues, supported by a large number of pharmaceutical companies, and with a wide range of speakers.

His organising skills did not end there. In the eighties, when SAAHIP started holding annual conferences together with their annual general meetings, Robin was a member of the organising committees when it was his branch's turn to host a conference.

The April 1978 issue of FORUM, SAAHIP's official journal, carried an article entitled "A Brief History of the Natal Branch of SAAHIP" by Angus Mitchell, which stated "Robin Dale, then at King George V Hospital, was appointed in the early sixties as the Natal Liaison Officer but became so frustrated with the continuing poor communications with the Transvaal that he resigned after a short time".

In that same issue, an article by Robin described the development of computer use in Natal from 1968, focusing on the computer system for stock control and replenishment, that was eventually used at PMSC, and was linked to head office in Pietermaritzburg.

The December 1978 issue of FORUM contains a letter from Robin Dale in which he took issue with the Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa (PSSA) for objecting to any "provision exempting State and Provincial institution from laws and regulations covering the manufacture and packing of medicines". He pointed out that restriction of these activities in a government institution would have greatly increased the cost of medicines. He asked the question as to whose side the PSSA was on – health or commerce?

In 1986 Robin received the SAAHIP Natal Coastal Branch's Merit Award for his outstanding contribution to the branch.

Robin was also a dedicated family man. He and June were happily married for sixty-seven years. They had two sons and one daughter, four grandchildren, and two great grandchildren. He frequently spoke of his family with pride.

Several retired pharmacists who knew Robin well, either through having worked with him or through SAAHIP functions, met at Jill Crewe's house a few days after we had learnt of his passing. We celebrated Robin's life by recalling the years spent with him and sharing our memories of him. We know he would have approved of the jokes and laughter. Below is just one of the many tributes that poured in after he passed away.

*\* RIP Robin, and thanks a million for all you did for PMSC, an institution which was very close to your heart and which you defended with all your might from the bullies at head office. When Chiefs of Pharmaceutical Services visited PMSC to learn from you the finer details of the computerised system, I sat in awe of your incredible knowledge. Robin was not big in stature, but his heart was huge and so were his people skills. Robin had a sharp and logical mind ideally suited to become such an excellent manager of our proud depot. Our depot was voted by the WHO in Robin's time as the best run and most efficient in Africa, an accolade befitting the role he played in achieving it.*

Susan Buekes