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Obituary

Professor Johann Dreyer
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Professor Johann Dreyer referred to himself as “Mooi Johann”. It was fun to watch peoples’ stunned reaction as he introduced himself to them for the first time. “Mooi Johan” directly translated from Afrikaans to English would equate to “Beautiful Johann”. Their confusion and disbelief probably caused by dissonance was immediately followed by laughter and lighthearted banter as the icy barrier between strangers vapourised. He made everyone feel comfortable in his presence. Students loved being around him and would often swamp him after a lecture or workshop. Teachers and academics would enjoy engaging him on any of a variety of topics. He was also a strong charismatic leader and this came to the fore when facing challenging situations. I remember a particularly tense meeting with a furious senior colleague blasting us subordinates when Mooi Johann walked in and within a minute had managed to defuse the situation and miraculously made the angry colleague start laughing. I can see why he was head boy in his matric year in Barberton.

He had a most engaging teaching style and he could unpack difficult abstract concepts into simple relatable facts, mostly by using concrete and

visual examples. His vast experience and knowledge base was grounded in his favourite subject namely Geography. He would say Geography was the mother of all disciplines. Clearly his experience as a Geography Teacher and Head of Department for a decade honed his teaching skills. His knowledge base was obtained pursuing Academic qualifications which range from a BA in History and Geography and a BA Honours in Geography from the PU for CHE, both cum laude. He then did a postgraduate HED at the University of Pretoria. Furthering his studies, he obtained a BEd in Educational Management (cum laude) from the University of Pretoria. Thereafter he completed an MEd (cum laude) and a DEd, both from UNISA.

Professor Johann Dreyer had been involved in Geography teaching in Education for the last 38 years, first as a High school teacher and then as a lecturer within Teacher Education at the University of South Africa (UNISA). He taught the Geography methodology course for 28 years. He has trained approximately 5 000 Geography student teachers in this time. He also supervised a sizable number of Masters and Doctoral students. He was actively involved in various National Education and

UNISA committees and projects.

He was well known at UNISA as he coordinated and presented a compulsory assessment course for UNISA academics. The Assessors course he facilitated drew academics from various disciplines. He could transform a negative icy atmosphere from reticent academics to positive and active engagement. He would frame a holistic overview and zoom into fine details taking his diverse audience with him on a journey akin to telling a story. His conference presentations were a feast for the eyes with a myriad colorful photos and images relevant to the title. Many conference attendees would approach him after presentations and at meals. This is how Professor Dreyer built up a web of contacts which in turn led to many joint research projects, many internationally. The following are but a few of his favourite projects:

- Collaborated with the Eco-school movement with Manchester Metropolitan University in the UK.
- Conducted collaborative research with the Malaysian Forest Research Institute for over a decade.
- Involved in international research on greening Universities with the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil.
- Participated in a collaborative development of OERs with Cambridge University
- Collaborative development of Study material for practical Teaching with the Open University in the UK and
- Collaborative research on Teacher Education with the Catholic University of Australia.

Professor Dreyer read 26 and 27 papers respectively at international and national conferences. He had 28 publications in accredited scientific journals and in peer-reviewed conference proceedings. He wrote 14 chapters in six local and three international books. He is also the Editor of the Book “The Educator as Assessor” which is used in several universities.

Professor Dreyer served on ten conference organizing committees. He was a fountain of knowledge and on one memorable occasion he took on the role of tourist guide for a bus load of conference attendees from Pretoria to Dikhololo game reserve for an Environmental Education conference. He spoke continuously for the entire trip on a range of topics from geography, geology, culture, fauna and flora. He mingled with



conference attendees striving to make them feel at home. I was struck when one of the attendees at the above-mentioned conference burst into tears when the conference ended as she said the thought of leaving the African Bush and the friends that were made to return home to a cold Europe, was too much.

If you were fortunate you were invited to join Professor Dreyer in exploring and experiencing one of South Africa's nature reserves or participating in one of his community projects. For one of these projects, he was presented with the Green Merit award from the South African National Parks for his work as an Honorary Ranger. He established a countrywide Junior Honorary Ranger Corps. This Junior Honorary Ranger Corps focussed on involving thousands of young people (the majority from previously disadvantaged communities) in conservation and Environmental Education.

Professor "Mooi Johann" Dreyer died just short of his 64th birthday due of cardiac complications. His generous huge heart just stopped. He is fondly remembered and sorely missed by his colleagues, friends, and family especially his beloved wife Franci, doting daughters Ezanda and

Vinette with their respective husbands Stephan Zandberg and Lourens Human and their precious children Phillip, Leanka and Daneska.

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