**TRIBUTES FOR HERBERT MAURICE JOHN PRINS (born 28 April 1927 died 15 April 2020 ) Tributes April2020**

**Herbert M J Prins photo by Liz Kirsten**

**JAMES BALL**

James Ball [<mailto:jamesball01@gmail.com>]

( James is the editor and founder of the Heritage Portal)

I recall that  I interviewed  Herbert Prins was researching my dissertation on Markhams (2010) . I remember Herbert scheduling an hour and then spending about four with me! He was so generous with his time. Definitely one of the characters who inspired me to stay in the heritage world after my studies!

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**KEVIN BINGHAM**

Kevin Bingham [<mailto:kgbingham@gmail.com>]

(Kevin is the current president of the South African Institute of Architects (SAIA). He is a director of FGG Architects in Durban.)

In life there are those whom we meet that stand out from the rest, through their influence, care, kindness, wisdom, guidance, and impact on one.

There are also those that you may continually hear of being referenced by others, that stand head and shoulders above the rest through their meaningful deeds and contributions.

Herbert Prins was a man who gave of himself. He shared his being with all he met, and he did this in abundance.

His contribution to Architecture and the many that followed in his footsteps will live on forever. As an academic, an architect, and as a leader in these communities, he served with dedication and aplomb.

I was especially proud to present Herbert with his SAIA Life Membership award at my SAIA presidency inauguration on 24 November 2016, in Durban. Achieving this award is no easy task, and I was amazed during the voting process for this honour by members of the SAIA Board that year, how many of the 17 SAIA nominees, who I considered to be exemplary, never made the grade. Of course, Herbert rose to the top, and his award was exceptionally well deserved.

Herbert Prins will be remembered, and we will continue to learn of the impact he made on so many lives.

RIP

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**FLO BIRD**

Flo Bird in letters about Herbert ( 3 separate letters )

Flo Bird [flo@joburgheritage.co.za](mailto:flo@joburgheritage.co.za)

( Flo is the founder of the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation and also a Wits Gold medal holder)

I think Herbert meant a great deal to all of us who were interested in conservation. I first met him when we fought the great battle for Markham’s. I know he regarded us (the Parktown Association at that stage) as a tinpot sort of organisation . I didn’t mind. The architects were fighting on one battlefield, but we held our ground on another – as  ratepayers - and our appeal  to Obie Oberholzer succeeded in the end!

But we fought side by side for many other buildings and usually lost. In fact I think we only started to win when I was on the National Monuments Council and had a brilliant team on the Transvaal Plans Committee which included Dennis Radford and later William and Herbert. He was splendid and often persuaded applicants to amend their plans. It was a very happy committee and we explored far and wide, but I don’t think Herbert ever saw anything new to him. He was so knowledgeable   - an immensely valuable asset. He also knew and understood the legislation which was another boon to those of us who couldn’t bear to read the legislation. There were a few points on which we always disagreed. I saw no point in a National organisation. We had tried that and it didn’t work. To be fair that was in the days of Habitat and before e-mail.

But he taught me to enjoy Art Deco and Modern Movement  buildings when I was still all in favour of rather cute arts and crafts.  For widening my horizons I shall always be grateful.  And we were happy running two similar organisations side-by-side. I gather in later years he thought I had pinched the blue plaques from him, but the truth was that Den Adams who ran the blue plaques project and worked with all of us on the  Anglo Boer War series got bored with a committee that wasn’t forging ahead and started making them for PWHT.  Den was after all Vice Chair and treasurer of PWHT, so it was understandable.

Herbert was for many years my touchstone and very rarely did I differ from him.  So as my mentor in many matters I was very fond of him. People often suggested we unite the two organisations, but we had discussed it and I fully agreed with him that when we were writing letters to politicians etc, it was great that there were at least two voices. He supported me on the disgusting walls around the Market Square and brought Dame Jane Drew ( a British expert with an international reputation) to give evidence at the rezoning hearing. But he couldn’t persuade his own Institute to have the guts to stand up against the pissoirs. Odd since it would have meant supporting Pancho’s plan against Willie Meyer’s exclusion zones.

I have very happy memories of dinner parties in his flat which was a joy to visit. Herbert was a wonderful host so dinner parties are my favourite memories though we met countless times at sites and in meetings. I know the food was always excellent and all so beautifully served but I think of him as a raconteur and deeply regret we never tried to record his memories. He had lots of treasures, some from the Colosseum fight, and the long entrance lined with orchids.  When I sought his advice on Rand Steam he came gallantly using his walker to cross a building site. We were in perfect agreement the brick colouring Impendulo was proposing was wrong! So they had to rebuild after a visit to the Country Club where William Gaul had found the perfect example- a water tower no one had got around to painting.

Herbert served voluntarily on the Preservation of Anstey’s Building Trust – we couldn’t get the Master to update the trustees –sheer indolence on their part. He was invaluable because he knew so much about sectional title rules and law. But he was also on the Rosebank Action Group, the Johannesburg Inner City Community Forum and various Institute committees and of course the SA Heritage Trust.  So his interest in heritage did not block his interest in development. It certainly enriched his vision.

So for me I will treasure the happy memories, his courage and dedication. He was the doyenne of conservationists.

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**RANDALL BIRD**

Randall Bird [randybird1@gmail.com](mailto:randybird1@gmail.com)

( Randall lived in Johannesburg for 7 years and was a professor of Architecture in the Wits School of Architecture – he now lives in Boston)

I am sorry about the sad news of Herbert’s passing. I am thinking of you as you are dealing with this personal loss. As you recall, I grew to know Herbert through you at social occasions in your home. I enjoyed my conversations with him and admired his intelligence, curiosity, and willingness to keep going. We have such fond memories of Michael, Herbert, Clive and Paul’s company at our celebration two years ago.

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**LINDSAY BREMNER**

Lindsay Bremner [L.Bremner@westminster.ac.uk](mailto:L.Bremner@westminster.ac.uk)

(Professor of Architecture in the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment at the University of Westminster and Director of Architectural Research (2012-2017). Former

Chair of Architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg (1998 - 2004)

Johannesburg heritage has lost a true and irreplaceable titan with the passing of Herbert Prins. His loss will be deeply felt by the entire heritage community.

But I would like to pay tribute to other sides of Herbert, which I got to know and value, firstly during my time in politics between 1993 and 1997, and then as a co-teacher at the University of the Witwatersrand from 1998 to 2004.

Despite teaching at the University with Herbert during the Pancho years, it was only when I entered metropolitan government in 1993 that I got to know him. He used to sit patiently through endless, at times monotonous Inner City Committee and ANC branch meetings at the time, making contributions where he deemed it necessary, but usually just quietly listening. I found it puzzling that a man of his background was prepared to do so, and then I realized that he, like I, was trying to figure out what his role was in the changing socio-political landscape around us. I realized that Herbert had integrity and a commitment to change that few others of his generation did. He was prepared to abandon the distance that his privilege could have afforded him and engage in the nitty, gritty of inner city politics as an ordinary citizen, to fight for the things he cared about. It seemed to empower him. I realized that he was driven by a deep sense of social and historical justice, as well as a love of architecture. It was his combination of modesty, integrity, as well as stubbornness when needed, that made his contribution unthreatening and won him many small victories and many friends.

When I returned to the university, he and I co-taught the thesis year for a number of years. His practical, no nonsense balanced my political and theoretical approaches to architecture. I got to know him as a patient, generous, supportive teacher, prepared to spend hours assisting students through what is often a daunting experience of trying to define architecture for themselves for the first time. I like to think that it was the complementarity of our approaches that opened a space for students to explore ideas and design the remarkable, socially driven architectural experiments that they came up with.

I last saw Herbert in 2011 when we had lunch together under the oaks at the Johannesburg Country Club. It was an ordinary, wintery Johannesburg day in the sunshine. I thought at the time how ageless Herbert seemed to be. He was the kind of person who would go on forever; but of course, that is not so. He will be sadly missed by all of us whose lives he impacted through his quiet compassion and resolute strength.

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**CAYDE BRICKNELL**

[**Kim@zimstone.co.za**](mailto:Kim@zimstone.co.za)

(Cayde is 12 years old and a member of the Munro/ Bricknell family, personal friends of Herbert Prins.)

At almost every occasion at my grandparents’ house, Herbert was there. He always said yes to an invite and always made an effort to come even though he was really, really old. He was a dear friend of our family with many interesting conversation topics and stories about his life. He took a long time to say them, but I knew that listening to the end would be worthwhile. Herbert loved eating, which I think is one of the reasons he got a membership to the country club. At our family Christmas functions or parties he often had second helpings and especially loved the pudding. He also loved wine. Herbert was always the guest of honour as he had a reserved parking place at the bottom of my grandparent’s very steep tiled driveway. I think this is because his walker’s brakes would not have coped with the 45 degree angle on a slippery surface. I was told to move skateboards and bikes whenever he was on his way.

With an 80 year age gap between us he was like my ever present great-grandfather. We will certainly miss Herbert but never forget him.

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**EDWIN CAMERON**

Edwin Cameron [cameron.edwin@gmail.com](mailto:cameron.edwin@gmail.com)

(Edwin – a friend of Herbert Prins, and former Judge of the Constitutional Court, he was Herbert’s Lawyer in the matter of the Coliseum libel case against the Prudential )

Though this has long been expected, the news brings a sharp pang this morning, to both Nhlanhla and me. We extend our truest thoughts and condolences to you, and to all who cared for, admired, and sustained Herbert. He was a complex, interesting, mysterious and sometimes demanding friend. We last saw him at Christmas, when we took him to lunch at Sandton Square, which produced a very funny photo of Herbert, hugely enjoying being whizzed along by Nhlanhla.

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**CLIVE CHIPKIN**

Clive Chipkin <chipkin@mweb.co.za

(Clive- friend, architect , colleague, and architectural historian of Johannesburg, Honorary PhD from the University of the Witwatersrand . Author of Seminal book on Johannesburg “Johannesburg Style”)

Loss of Herbert-like a fatal casualty in a war-how do you replace the doyen 0f the profession-permanently in this thought zone since, when should I say, the 70’s;sometimes obscured  by others but hidden or not there was Herbert Prins, with those formidable initials HMJ Prins-authoritative ,stubborn, nicely humorous too.

I have known Herbert from varsity days, but not well. Then something happened, let us say 1994 that annus mirabilis. We met for lunch @ the Country Club, Auckland Park & found-hang on a second, we have much more in common than not. So began a long fruitful engagement of shared & un-shared values with endless luncheons & good Cape dop. Gosh I will miss Herbert; friend, colleague & someone special. As someone has said-legendry.

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[**CLARA DA CRUZ ALMEIDA**](https://www.facebook.com/claracruzalmeida?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk4MjMzODExMTQ4MA%3D%3D)

(via the Facebook post on page of Brian McKechnie)’

The one man I most enjoyed arguing with... every assertion was questioned and pulled apart. The only ever [Heritage Specialist](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/heritagespecialist?hc_location=ufi) that started every consultation with “What do you want to do?” And then proceeded to advise on Heritage in accordance with the legislation.

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**THORSTEN DECKLER**

( via the Facebook page of Heather Dodd):

(Graduate of Wits Architecture Department. Practices in Johannesburg 26’10 Architects)

Very sad news. Herbert Maurice John Prins played a big role for me and I learned so much from him. Respect.

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**LIZ DELMONT**

**Liz at Lancaster Guest House** [**info@lizatlancaster.co.za**](mailto:info@lizatlancaster.co.za)

(Liz friend, colleague, formerly heritage educator at Wits, now owner of a guest house and tour guide in Johannesburg

Herbert (one doesn’t even need to use his surname and we all know who we are talking about) - wise, measured, kind, knowledgeable, generous, gentle but oh so determined, always a grateful man, with the most wonderful wry sense of humour. Anybody in the architectural, educational, or heritage world knew Herbert by reputation. But I first saw Herbert in “action” when I represented the Wits School of Arts on the Constitution Hill Project Board 2001-2003 and then worked as part of the Con Hill Heritage, Education and Training Project team from 2002-2003. After leaving Wits in 2005 I had the privilege of working with Herbert on several heritage projects – and what a privilege it was. I remember once driving to Soweto with him and so much of that trip sums up Herbert. He insisted on driving even though at that stage he tended to wander very alarmingly across the highway traffic lanes. As always he was deeply interested in my life and ‘reality’; he shared his sensitive insights about wider issues; he spoke about the ethical contradictions of various heritage projects; and every now and again gave that warm infectious utterly delightful and emotionally seductive chuckle of his. Then we got stopped in a routine roadblock. Ever courteous and respectful he produced his driving licence. The Officer looked wide-eyed at it and then disbelievingly at Herbert and said “Nineteen TWENTY SEVEN? Eish! Mdala!” Herbert retrieved his card with dignity of course but was certainly more than a bit ruffled by the Officer’s observation and drove off clearly not wanting to dwell on it!  That was our Herbert. I shall miss him so. We have all lost a giant of a man.

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**CHRISTOS DASKALAKOS**

[Christos.Daskalakos@wits.ac.za](mailto:Christos.Daskalakos@wits.ac.za)

(academic at Wits in School of Architecture and Planning)

The lessons he taught me in First year stayed with me throughout my life - he touched the lives of so many - he will always live on

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**LUCILLE DAVIE**

Lucille Davie [lucilledavie@gmail.com](mailto:lucilledavie@gmail.com)

(Lucille is a journalist and specialist in Johannesburg heritage, and now a Johannesburg tour guide)

A gentle soul has left us, and left a wonderful legacy and special memories for many. As a journalist writing on Johannesburg's history and heritage, I would occasionally phone Herbert for quotes. He always took my calls, and gave thoughtful responses to my questions. He would speak slowly and deliberately, gathering his thoughts to provide a considered answer. Later I joined James Ball of the Heritage Portal, architect Brian McKechnie and others for a year or more, at Herbert's exquisite flat in Killarney. Our task, besides wonder at his selection of decor and collectibles around us, was to assess the heritage ratings of Joburg's old buildings. I looked forward to those weekly meetings with delight, to listen to Herbert's wisdom and memories. A full life, well-lived

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[**HEATHER DODD**](https://www.facebook.com/heather.dodd3?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk4MTk3MzExNjQ4MA%3D%3D)

Heather Dodd [heather@savagedodd.co.za](mailto:heather@savagedodd.co.za)

(Heather is an architect and partner in the practice Savage + Dodd Architects, former student of Herbert, passionate about Johannesburg heritage )

A giant tree has fallen

I was 16 or 17 when I first met Herbert. A friend’s mother had arranged for her and I to go to the Department for a day to see what Architecture was all about. I had decided to do my school art essay on "columns" in buildings and he kindly took the time to sit with me and talk about this project. I also remember about 10 years ago being terrified after he called me aside to talk about how I hadn't applied correctly to get heritage permits on a project and how I might end up in jail. Herbert could be truly terrifying.

Liz Kirsten said that Herbert seemed invincible. It seemed that Herbert would always be there.

He was such a solid presence through the Pancho years at Wits. He helped me out with supplementing my student fee account with money from the Institute, I hope that in my career I’ve paid that forward. So, I would say that Herbert played a big part in getting me to be an Architect.

If I could use the analogy of a tree - I feel that a giant tree has fallen with his passing.

The canopy of the tree has shaded us and the roots have nurtured our growth.

Losing someone of Herbert’s stature whose architectural life spans from the era of modernity in Johannesburg uproots us with a living link to that past. Herbert had a huge knowledge base and was always generous with advice on heritage matters – a huge resource has gone.

Herbert was the epitome of what is means to serve - with his commitment to the profession and to his city. We need to remember this.

If I can take a lesson from the longevity of his career over more than 70 years - it would that of consistency yet also of re-inventing oneself from time to time.

And whilst the tree has gone it is now up to the younger trees to grow taller and take their place continuing to build a knowledge network in our profession.

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**GRAHAM DOMINY**

Graham Dominy [graham@msunguli.co.za\](mailto:graham@msunguli.co.za\)

Beautiful tributes

Richly deserved by Herbert. As the old African saying goes: when an old man dies the community has lost a library. As they said of Sir Christopher Wren: "If you seek his monument, look around you"

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**NNAMDI ELLEH**

[<mailto:nnamdi.elleh@wits.ac.za>] Professor Nnamdi Elleh, Wits School of Architecture and Planning

(Nnamdi is an architect and head of the Wits School of Architecture and Planning )

On behalf of the School of Architecture and Planning, please accept our condolences for the passing of our colleague, great architect,  friend, and conservator of our heritage, Herbert Prins.

Do share our condolences to his friends and family and keep us posted.  We realize that this is a very difficult time for you.  Please know that you are not alone. We are thinking of you.

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**MIRA FASSLER KAMSTRA**

Mira Kamstra [mirafk@mweb.co.za](mailto:mirafk@mweb.co.za)

(Mira is an architect, friend of Herbert and Graduate of the Wits Architecture Department. Former President of Transvaal Institute of Architects and received the Gold Medal for Architecture)

I first met Herbert shortly after my 17th birthday while doing a 6-week before-varsity stint in Norman Hanson’s office arranged by my father John Fassler. As a fairly useless addition to the office, I remembered being rather bored by trying to master lettering with a pen! Doug Rodd was then senior architect with a rather shy blue-eyed Herbert in a just-as-blue linen smock, the next in-charge.

At the time Herbert was living in Aiton Court - a Modernist building designed by Bernard Cooke. Several suppers with close friends of his became the introduction to one of my most enduring friendships. After Doug Rodd left to set up his own practice, Herbert became Hanson’s right-hand-man and was involved in all of the firm’s important buildings thereafter. When the practice closed, Herbert joined the Department of Architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand

Through my years of study, marriage and child-bearing, our connection remained one of friendship. After my father’s death and during the recession in 1977, Pancho Guedes invited me to teach first years under Herbert along with several other gifted young architects, among them Tony Mallows, Ivan Kadey, Wilhelm Hahn and Floris Smith. It was a special two years in which Herbert was to exercise his effortless mastery over our very diverse talents and temperaments and during which I was to meet my later partner Marcus Holmes. It is no exaggeration to say that Herbert held the Department together and allowed Pancho to be relieved of most of the tedious administration involved.

Subsequently, many were the magical evenings in which Marcus and I enjoyed in His Mentone Court flat with 3 course dinners prepared by his legendary Sophie. His flat, an Aladdin’s Cave, was filled with the most beautiful furniture, *objets,* paintings in extraordinary framesand typically Herbert-style architectural details such as the plant holders at the entrance. Most intriguing were the peep window that gave him a view of the front door from his bath and his amazing fold-out drinks cabinet that seemingly appeared magically out of the paneling, his stained-glass Macintosh-style sliding window screens, all made up by his favourite joiner Steve Sweeney. Herbert never ran out of new projects even introducing a split-level library into his study. Many of us were sorry that when he sold his flat it could not have become a John Soane-like museum instead. At the suggestion of Roger Fisher the joinery was photographed in detail for the Architectural Archive of the University of Pretoria.

Earlier on and to our amazement, Herbert had sold his fabulous collection of Cape Dutch Furniture, Art and *objets* on auction and made use of his unerring eye to start a new collection of Art Deco, Modernist and Scandinavian items from the 1950s.

In the mid-1980s after a crisis in the TIA, Herbert invited me to join the Provincial Committee. He was a formidable opponent in debate and to the annoyance of some, was a master of persuading a committee to see things his way! Under his mentorship, I eventually became the last President of the TIA.  Through those years, I served on many sub-committees and some competition adjudication panels under his meticulous and able chairmanship.

In the early 2000s, Herbert invited me to join the Egoli Heritage Committee through which we fought several Heritage battles few of which were won. Notable among them was the demolition of the buildings around the Library Gardens. Sadly this seems to have been a Pyrrhic victory, as many of the buildings are now being demolished through neglect - a matter that gave him great concern. Herbert hosted the Committee meetings in his flat at Mentone Court sharing tea and those famous Sophie-biscuits mentioned by others. He was a wonderful Chair possessing Legal knowledge, depth of experience in Architecture and Town Planning, and insight into Heritage issues. It took some persuading of Jacques Stoltz for him to take his place. It was marvellous to watch Jacques grow in confidence under Herbert’s mentorship to eventually be able to take on the chair of HASA as well.

Herbert was a wonderful friend - both being supportive of my work and interested in my family - among the few people who could share anecdotes of my father with me. He had a wonderful sense of humour and, with twinkling blue eyes, was a great tease too. We had many lively discussions in which we didn’t always agree but which always made me think.

We have been truly blessed to have had Herbert with us for all but 93 years - his determination and ever-clear mind having surmounted his evident physical difficulties towards the end.

I believe that we owe his last three years to Liz Kirsten who was so devotedly at his side since he nearly left us in his 89th year.

I will truly miss Herbert as a dear friend as will I his wisdom that so often tempered my impetuosity. *Salute* Herbert

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**LANCE FULTON**

(tribute via Facebook)

(Architect and Architectur Graduate of Wits)

Grateful that he touched my life - memories live on.

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**ROGER FISHER**

Roger Fisher [rogercfisher@gmail.com](mailto:rogercfisher@gmail.com)

(colleague, architect, former head and professor of architecture at the University of Pretoria, architectural historian)

I grieve the loss of Herbert to his friends and dear ones.

However I celebrate his life as one of commitment and an enduring contribution to his community in all its facets - educational, professional and its legacy, be that tangible or intangible.

Herbert was with me on the panel of my first external examination of design portfolio work and instinctively sensed my youthful apprehension and insecurity and helped me find my voice by actively soliciting and affirming the worth of my opinion and judgements. I served on the Education committee of the TIA at the time and we also later served together on the panel of the Northern Branch of the then NMC located in Pretoria.

His had a careful and fastidious approach, often playing devil's advocate, which was sometimes exasperating, but in his slow methodical way he would bring things to resolution with decisions that were sound, pragmatic and defensible.

I, at time sought his council, when facts needed verification and if he himself could not provide them would point me in the right direction.

Like all educators who have committed themselves to teaching, his legacy resides in those he has taught, and although not formally taught by him, I owe much by way of institutional memory and approach to having been mentored by Herbert through his example in those formative years of my professional development, particularly as critic and heritage practitioner. I salute his life and honour his memory.

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**HUGH FRASER**

( via what’s app ) [hughfraserza@gmail.com](mailto:hughfraserza@gmail.com)

(architect and former student of Herbert )

Terribly sad to hear about Herbert. I was a student of his in the mid 1980sand he remained a much loved member of the architecture community.

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**NEIL FRASER**

[neil@neilfraser.co.za](mailto:neil@neilfraser.co.za)

(colleague, founder of Johannesburg Inner City Development Forum and with Herbert on the Johannesburg Heritage Trust )

The Colosseum Award personifies the man I grew to respect over the years I was involved with Inner City regeneration.

Herbert had led the vociferous Heritage community condemnation of the Prudential’s plan to demolish the iconic Art Deco Colosseum building and replace it with office space. If I remember correctly, the Prudential claimed that Herbert had a personal (I assume financial) motive behind his opposition to the demolition. Herbert decided to take them to court for defamation. The Prudential offered to settle the matter and Herbert accepted their offer even though it was not a large sum.  Herbert then used the amount of the settlement to engage Cecil Skotnes to produce a trophy for use as an Award.  This came to be known as the Egoli Colosseum Award “to recognise outstanding contributions towards the conservation of heritage in the City of Johannesburg and satellite conurbations”.

This, for me, is a cameo that reflected Herbert’s personal integrity, dedication and commitment to heritage preservation and conservation.

His was a hugely meaningful contribution to the City of Johannesburg and the country. The Heritage community is the poorer for his going and he will be sorely missed.

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**SALLY GAULE**

Sally Gaule [Sally.Gaule@wits.ac.za](mailto:Sally.Gaule@wits.ac.za)

(colleague, documentary photographer and member of the School of Architecture and Planning, Wits University)

It was a privilege to know Herbert, and to be his colleague.  He was kind and considerate and his knowledge of heritage and Johannesburg unsurpassed.  In his latter years I  was impressed by his fortitude and wit.

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**KIM GOELLER**

Kim Goeller [kgoeller@gmail.com](mailto:kgoeller@gmail.com)

( colleague on the Simon van der Stel and Egoli Heritage Foundation )

The loss of Herbert is a loss to the city of Johannesburg and Gauteng! I worked for Herbert under the Simon van der Stel ,which became the Egoli heritage Foundation,  for many years . He oversaw the development of the “Blue Plaque “ project on many homes and buildings and we held lectures and tours of so many wonderful places! His knowledge and advice was invaluable  and he was the kindest nicest man with a lovely sense of humour ! We , and heritage matters , will miss him hugely!

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**PEDRO D'ALPOIM GUEDES**

[p.guedes@uq.edu.au](mailto:p.guedes@uq.edu.au)

(son of Pancho Guedes, former Head of Architecture University of the Witwatersrand )

Lecturer School of Architecture The University of Queensland , Brisbane Australia)

Herbert was a great friend of Pancho’s and helped him navigate the University’s hidden shoals and sandbanks. Without him, I cannot imagine he would have been able to cope.

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**ANNE GRAUPNER**

(via the Facebook page of Heather Dodd)

What an insightful kind knowledgeable principled and inspiring Mensch. I always felt privileged in his presence. R. I. P. Herbert Maurice John Prins

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**DAVE GURNEY**

[gurney@global.co.za](mailto:gurney@global.co.za)

(Wits graduate, former student of Herbert and Egoli ,architect, Heritage committee member )

Always sad to lose an amazing person like Herbert. I have known him since 1969 when he was my lecturer at Wits. His contribution to the Heritage World and especially that of Johannesburg is immeasurable. So nice that he was honored by Wits and other Institutions which recognition he must have enjoyed.

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**BRENDAN HART AND YASMIN MAYAT**

Brendan Hart [brendan@mayathart.com](mailto:brendan@mayathart.com)

(former students of Herbert, heritage architects & heritage enthusiasts and partners in Mayat and Hart Architects)

Herbert has often been on our minds lately and it was very sad to hear of his passing.  Beyond his important role in the heritage community he was a link to a pioneering era in Johannesburg architecture that has been lost.

We have very fond memories of time spent in Herbert’s apartment having tea and biscuits amongst his amazing collection of antiques, artwork and his intricately designed cabinetry that seemed to fill every corner of his home.

We remember heated discussions on particular heritage projects where Herbert would always have a measured and considered view.  We remember the many occasions that we sat with him while doing our masters, discussing heritage theory and practice, Herbert always patiently listening, giving of his time and advice despite running a busy practice.  Our fondest memories are however on the occasions that Herbert digressed from the topic at hand.  Here he would, sometimes with a look of mischief, tell us of his misadventures and explore ideas at length. He will be missed.

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[**MICHAEL HART**](https://www.facebook.com/michael.hart.56232?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk5MDQ3MzI2NjQ4MA%3D%3D)

(via Facebook page post on the page of Brian McKechnie)

(former student and now architect in Johannesburg.)

RIP Herbert. Remember well our first lecture with Herbert in 1982. He showed us how to write on our drawings by twisting the pencil to keep the lead sharp. Worked with him to try and save the Colosseum theatre on commissioner at, and engaged in many other heritage projects. His views of conservation left a great legacy and thought provoking theories. He will be missed.

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**MARCUS HOLMES**

[Marcus.Holmes@FKH-Architects.com](mailto:Marcus.Holmes@FKH-Architects.com)

(former student of Herbert at Wits and now architect, Johannesburg )

Marcus Holmes letter to Flo Bird

I was saddened to hear of Herbert’s passing last night.

I was equally saddened to think of how much he must have meant to you over the past 45years – an irreplaceable loss to the cause.

It is at times like these that we need every bit of friendship + support that we can get + yet his end, sadly, came whilst alone.

One can but hope that Herbert left us peacefully - however alone. He was blessed to have done so, when he did so – he chose his time – wisely.

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[**YAEL HOROWITZ**](https://www.facebook.com/yael.horowitz.94?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk4MjE4NDI1MTQ4MA%3D%3D)

(via Facebook page post on Brian McKechnie’s Facebook )

(Urbanist, and Programme Manager at University of Witwatersrand)

A true gentlemen, an esteemed expert in his field, respected and revered in all his life's work. A sad day, yet we bless his memory by remembering his awesome contributions to the field and his wry humour at the lunch table !

He will be sorely missed

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**ERIC ITZKIN**

[ERICI@joburg.org.za](mailto:ERICI@joburg.org.za)

( Head of Heritage, Johannesburg City , author and history student at Wits )

Like others who have sent in tributes to Herbert, I have good memories of the man going back many years.

Going back to the early 2000s, I was privileged to attend meetings at 90 Market Street, the historic Natal Bank Building, then the home of the Johannesburg Heritage Trust, formed by Neil Frazer, with Herbert Prins and Prof Alan Lipman as Trustees.   As a somewhat younger person trying to find my way at the time in heritage work for the City, it was a great learning experience to sit in with such senior figures.  Sadly of those three, only Neil is still with us, Alan Lipman having passed away in 2013.

Other meetings with Herbert were held at his beautifully appointed flat at Riviera Mansions.  Filled with elegant furnishings and objets d’art, the flat in Killarney epitomised Herbert’s fine taste and personal style.

Later, Herbert became the Patron and guiding force for the Colosseum Award, presented by the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) and City of Joburg.  Like the heritage equivalent of the Oscars, the Colosseum Award gave recognition to excellence in conservation work in Johannesburg.  Projects honoured  by the Colosseum Award included Turbine Square in Newtown,  Salisbury House in Belgravia, and Shandukane Centre for Reproductive Health at the old General Hospital.

Herbert gave generously of his time, knowledge and insights.  He was available to help, without charge, on the occasions when we called on him for heritage advice or quick assessments.

Herbert’s abiding presence can be felt still at many sites in Johannesburg where he left his mark.

For me, Herbert’s greatest contribution was his work at Constitution Hill, where he served as heritage architect through the formative period of its development as a heritage site.  A number of special people contributed in different ways to this rich and complex site, but still Herbert’s contribution stands out.  This is arguably our preeminent heritage site, of high national significance, which has deservedly been nominated for World Heritage status.  That also suggests something of the magnitude of Herbert’s contribution over the years.

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[**TALHA JEENA**](https://www.facebook.com/talha.jeena?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk4MjgxMzM4NjQ4MA%3D%3D)

(via Face book post of Brian McKechnie)

A great loss to the industry. I first met Mr Prins back in 2012 while working on a heritage project in Park Town. A giant for sure. He came to site with a walking stick, a hat and coat and an old car. Citroen DS, (I think it was.)..  
One consultation and one learnt so much from him. A meeting to remember...

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**IVAN KADEY**

(Ivan Kadey, a Graduate of the Department of Architecture University of the Witwatersrand, lectured at Wits, left Johannesburg for San Francisco in the late 1980s. Now practicing in Los Angeles)

Herbert - I will miss your living presence. Your memory lives on.

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**LIZ KIRSTEN**

Liz Kirsten [liz\_kirsten@hotmail.com](mailto:liz_kirsten@hotmail.com)

(friend and personal assistant of Herbert Prins, was Herbert’s right hand woman for 17 years)

When I started working with Herbert 16 years ago, he was a mere 77 years old, but to me that was way past retirement age, and so I gave the job six months - one year at the most. I was probably like most novices who, when they meet him, had not a clue about his stupendous staying power and dogged determination, or of his methods – meticulous attention to detail (some may have said maddeningly meticulous) and his insistence on keeping to the highest standards and principles of heritage conservation architecture.

I watched many a young architect, approaching Herbert for the first time with their projects, as they proceed through various stages. First there was disbelief, denial, grief, exasperation – the sigh, the rolling eye – but as the weeks went by I saw the impatience dissolve into acceptance, understanding and then deep appreciation and respect. This is why his advice was still sought and he was asked to partner on worthy and exciting projects, right up until the end.

Those who knew Herbert were absolutely confident of his abilities under any circumstances. I once visited him in the Intensive Care Unit at the Linksfield Clinic where, midst the beeping of machines, and bristling with tubes and needles, he was sitting up and poring over some large drawings while two architects stood by taking notes.

Herbert was an excellent listener offering thoughtful opinions, sometimes unexpected, from his unique perspective. He was genuinely interested and curious and, what’s more, remembered everything that was said. It was that attention to detail again, and his authenticity, that made his company so enjoyable. It is a rare thing to be truly heard.

Our relationship evolved through the years and Herbert was as close as family to me. We sailed smoothly and weathered some storms. A few years ago it seemed certain that he would not recover from a kidney infection. Friends rallied round, commiserating – in touch daily – in fact we were already mourning him. He was very confused and seemed to be in another realm, hallucinating and believing he had already died. One day he looked at me accusingly and said “Why didn’t you say anything at my funeral?”

It made me think. At his 90th birthday gathering – I invited guests to send in tributes, and strung them along the walls. There were lots of speeches and this was my opportunity.

I stood up and told Herbert all the things I’ve said in this piece, and that it was quite miraculous that he had not only survived, but had come back stronger and sharper than ever, with that gentle sense of humour and that astute mind. I told him that we, his dearly beloveds, were able to gather together to truly celebrate his life – to tell him, face to face, how much we loved, honoured and respected him.

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**PAUL KOTZE**

Paul Kotze [paul.kotze1730@gmail.com](mailto:paul.kotze1730@gmail.com)

(Prof Paul Kotze taught at the University of the Free State and the University of the Witwatersrand friend and colleague , architect and editor of Architecture SA )

It was approximately in 1979 when I first met Herbert. This did not happen directly, but in a sort of round-about manner. At the time I was working for Bannie Britz and Michael Scholes. Their offices were in a small repurposed church in Melville. On a Saturday afternoon, I was in the office preparing a design for a small addition and renovation to a house in Senekal. One of the local medical doctors there asked me to make proposals for changes to a house the he and his family owned. It was one of the few architect designed houses in that town and he thought that it, at least, warranted the intervention by another architect. While working away on this project, another colleague in the office, named Heinz, came to have a look at was I was doing. He was obviously intrigued by what he saw and we ended up having a discussion about it. Heinz, in turn was friendly with Prof Pancho Guedes, who, at the time was the Head of the School of Architecture at Wits. Heinz obviously told Pancho about this project and other pieces of work that I was doing in the office. What followed from this, was quite strange and unimaginable in today’s world – but maybe not in the world that Pancho inhabited.

Not long after this Saturday afternoon discussion with Heinz, Pancho saw me walking in Melville during lunch time. He was driving past in his black Citroen DS - very impressive and exotic for a boy from Senekal where there was precisely one of those cars! Pancho stopped abruptly, crossed the road in this car so that he was facing the on-coming traffic and proceeded to have a discussion with me about his interactions with Heinz regarding me. All the time he remained seated in the car while I was standing on the sidewalk, being totally flabbergasted by the whole event – and hardly believing that such an illustrious architect was talking to me.

What I did not know was that this discussion was a job interview of sorts! Not long afterwards, I received the appointment papers for a part-time teaching position at the Wits School of Architecture. This landed me a position to help Herbert teaching in the first-year architectural design course. When the reality of it all kicked in, panic followed for me, but not for Herbert. Thinking back about it all, I have realized that Herbert never questioned my abilities or bona fides. There was a job to be done and I was there to assist him. Maybe it was his trust in Pancho’s judgement or our shared Free State heritage that pulled it all off – I will never know. Herbert, however, guided me along many bumps and miss directions. He displayed a trust in me that, in turn, instilled some confidence for me in my own abilities. Towards the end of that year, I received an invitation from Herbert for supper at his flat in Killarney. There were quite a few people there that evening. I was dumbstruck by the treasures that he had there. It was a world totally unknown to me, and yet, I remembered that occasion vividly many years later when I visited the Sir John Soane Museum in London. Then, the recollections of seeing a bit of Herbert’s world that evening came flashing past.

Herbert’s trust and acceptance of me despite my tentative and very unsure assistance to the students of that year group, somehow remained with me. Now I know in retrospect, how it carried me, amongst many other support mechanisms, through many trials and tribulations for many years afterwards.

Our next interaction also happened in a somewhat indirect manner – but it does not make it less memorable and valuable. This time it happened at a SAIA Conference in Cape Town. Herbert was the then President of the Institute, if I remember correctly. As part of the conference, there was a social event at Great Constantia. A group of younger architects, including me, stood together in the shade of one of those magnificent trees on the estate. I cannot really remember what we were talking about, but I do remember a press photographer walking in our direction – camera at the ready. One of South Africa’s better-known architects also noticed the impending opportunity to receive exposure in the press. He quickly made his way over to the group, pushed some of us out of the way – me included, so much so that I nearly fell over, took my place, the photographer clicked away while this ‘famous’ architect achieved his goal of reaching the social page of some newspaper. This randomly formed group was stunned about they had just witnessed and experienced. Somehow, I was aware that Herbert was also one of the not too distant eye witnesses to this commotion. A discreet few moments afterwards he came to me and quietly said the following words; “Don’t worry about it – those who saw what happened will know where it came from”. Herbert was right, as so many times before and afterwards in his life. Recently, I saw a video on one of the international news websites, showing how the current American president did the same thing. In this case, he shoved some of the world’s leaders out of the way, so that he can gain centerstage for the press photo. Suddenly, I remembered this incident at Great Constantia, and so hoped that they also had a ‘Herbert’ in that group who could dispense the same words of wisdom.

Many of the others currently writing about Herbert’s contribution, have mentioned his involvement in the design and realization of the Geosciences Building at Wits. This is surely one of the best buildings on that campus filled with many other buildings and spaces of exceptional quality. I will be amiss if I do not add my own admiration of this building. Its place in the history of South African architecture is still to be re-affirmed through analysis and comparisons. There is, however, another building that I would like to mention where Herbert had a hand in the pie. It was a short strip of semi-detached houses in Melville where Herbert was the architect who prepared the design to change them into commercial spaces. This he had done with great sensitivity to the historical context. His changes to these buildings were quiet and dignified. One day, I was a passenger in a car driven by an architect who received his training at Wits when Herbert was teaching there. When we passed this building, he remarked with some measure of over-confidence as follows; “*Not bad for an old guy like Herbert!*”. Now, more than 25 years later, the words not really meant as a compliment – did become the ultimate compliment. Specifically, in the light of so called ‘old’ architects who are still making contributions of note to the world we live in. “Good work, indeed, Herbert despite the fact that the changes you have made to this building could not withstand the realities of the subsequent change inflicted by fashion and stupidity!” I would like to add in this instance.

Like all architects, even Herbert had a few architectural moments where one can rightfully ask; “*What were you thinking, Herbert*?” Yet, I have never asked him about these instances, because those moments never defined his substantial contribution.

Not too long ago, an architect friend of mine of many years, Michael Scholes, asked me to take him to Herbert for a visit. At that point, Michael was unable to move around unassisted due to his illness. So, Michael’s request became a happy duty for me to fulfill. When we arrived at Herbert’s place of residence and the conversation started to flow, I slowly started to understand the purpose of our visit. Michael simply wanted to thank Herbert for all that he had done for him over so many years. Michael was a student at Wits when Herbert was on the teaching staff, later they were teaching colleagues at Wits and thereafter they remained friends. Listening to their conversation, I realized that they were talking to each other simply as friends and human beings, not ‘burdened’ by their respective achievements and contributions to the profession and to life in general. They did not need those props, instruments of sparring, one-upmanship or power. Michael was there to thank Herbert, while Herbert received this recognition and gratitude and with grace. In a way, I thought that I should not have been there, but on the other hand, I was most grateful to have been able to witness their authentic humanity, humility and respect for each other.

When in life, Michael often said to me that I must remember that we all have feet of clay, and yet, that day, like so many times before and like so many other colleagues alike, I lifted him again onto a marble pedestal. Michael and I had lunch together after our visit to Herbert. It was a day as beautiful as only Johannesburg could have. In our discussion during lunch I could sense how Michael, in turn, placed Herbert on another marble pedestal, when he recalled many of the positive interactions that they had in their long and enduring friendship.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the idea of biographies. This time to the biographies of architects, specifically. It is maybe on the pages of these biographies on the lives of those architects of influence who create much of our built environment, influence our thinking and architectural expressions where the real story of architecture lies. The more in-depth these biographies are researched and the more the author is detached from the architect they are writing about, the more authentic and believable the story becomes. These biographies are far more trustworthy and ‘real’ than the ‘glossies’, the many current websites on architecture which are not much different than dating sites as well as the many treatises on the history and theory of architecture and urbanism. These biographies tell stories that are mostly ‘messy’ and contradictory. It also portrays the interactions of many different personalities and circumstances. Often the architect who is the focus of such biographies is rightfully portrayed as only one of the many actors within the complex web of actors in the making of the built environment. Their status as people on pedestals or with feet of clay alternate just as rapidly. Their influence is mostly measured in hindsight and under varied circumstances and outcomes. In these biographies on architects there are usually many voices telling parts of the story from many different perspectives. But, above all, there is a story line that is revealed, and there is ultimately some direction and cohesiveness to it all.

The story of Herbert Prins, the world that he inhabited and the influence that he yielded will not be different. It spans many spheres of influence, huge changes in the architectural profession and the forms and methods of architectural expression in South Africa. His career, as well as the careers of many other local architects, reminded me of a thought that Prof. Roelof Uytenbogaardt expressed when we said out last goodbyes not long before he passed away. The following words came with great conviction; “We must do what we must do, and, we know what we must do when we need to do it.” Similarly, I think that this is what Herbert had done with much dedication throughout his career.

Thinking about all of this, I was also reminded recently by a colleague of the difference of the meanings of the words ‘care’ and ‘curate’ in the making of architecture and the built environment. The word ‘care’ could signify a timeless authenticity and appropriateness – a certain humbleness informed by a deep insight into the problems and potentials at hand. It speaks of acts of creation that we can return to time and again for a new understanding and inspiration. ‘Curation’ could have a more formalistic, stylistic, fashionable and maybe a more exploitative meaning as it implies some form of control. The actions of people are not fundamentally different in this regard. It could also be slipped into the spectrum of meaning between ‘care’ and ‘curation’. As mentioned before, the impacts of our professional and personal actions, when interpreted as ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ could also be viewed as the shadow image of the same thing. In other instances, the positive and negative outcomes of our actions are extremely far removed from each other and will never resemble one another.

Now, when I look back at Herbert’s way of being in this world that I have experienced under various circumstances, I would like to think that he was a person who deeply cared about the people around him as well as for the architectural profession in South Africa. His sense of caring was such that he knowingly or unknowingly wanted to neutralize the often, destructive influences stemming from the ideas of ‘curation’, control and brutal power. People who care for others and the physical world around them as deeply as Herbert had done, are usually quite vulnerable to the forces of destruction that we sometimes find ourselves in. However, their contribution to life is usually more enduring and positive over the longer term – like Herbert’s would be.

When I think back of the drawing that I have made on that Saturday afternoon that started this whole series of repercussions, experiences and influences in my life, and that have brought me in an indirect manner partially into Herbert’s world – I still wonder what Heinz really saw in it. Heinz eventually left South Africa and became a professor at a highly respected School of Architecture in Europe. At least, in my memory of the drawing it helped me to, with the therapy that comes from making a drawing slowly and carefully, to get closer to some kind of sensible response to the additions to that house in Senekal.

My professional relationship with Herbert was always somehow once removed, with me in the background and he in the foreground or me as part of a circle of friends that included both of us. However, what I’ll always be thankful for, is his acceptance of my presence as the part-timer that was foisted on him by Pancho despite my lack of experience and the way he also kindly overlooked my very obvious inabilities. In hindsight it was that initial sense of trust that he displayed towards me, coupled with many long-standing friendships like with Michael Scholes and others, that often sustained me through many storms with some sense of purpose and meaning as well as helped me to remain humbled by the few successes that I could experience.

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**KRYSTYNA & STEPHEN LE ROITH**

Stephen Le Roith [Stephen@leroith.com](mailto:Stephen@leroith.com)

(close friends of Herbert, resident in London, formerly of Johannesburg, Stephen is an architect known in Johannesburg and London, and Principal at Stephen Le Roith Architects )

I first met Herbert some forty years ago – I was introduced to him by my late mother Lilian Le Roith the then chair person of the Greening of Hillbrow Committee. She had approached the School of Architecture at Wits to see if there was some interest in a joint study with the parks department to create pedestrian precincts, road closures and general improvements in Hillbrow. Herbert stepped forward and offered to get his students involved. The Greening Committee enjoyed some success for several years until crime and grime compelled them to disband. Herbert had become a close family friend.

About 1993 the then owners of the Rosebank Mall intended to build a twelve storey hotel on a site clearly incapable of supporting such a structure where the norm in those days was three to four stories. Herbert organised the team. He assisted with raising over fifteen hundred objections, he recommended an expert traffic engineer to verify there was insufficient car parking and access. Herbert demonstrated the disparate scale of the buildings relative to the surrounding buildings and convinced the tribunal that the application was unacceptable.

Not long after, Rosebank was overrun by street traders. Office rentals were declining and the streets and pavements were littered. Office workers were fleeing north. Something had to be done. Herbert was instrumental in forming the Rosebank Acton Group. He was the first chairperson.

I used to attend the Rosebank Acton Group sporadically. At that stage it had no real authority or legal status or any significant funding. It met weekly and consisted mainly of a handful of people, a councillor or two, a couple of building owners, and a couple of trustees dedicated, to broadly speaking, the betterment of Rosebank. Herbert led this tiny yet remarkable group for several years which assisted in producing many changes in Rosebank. Places were found for the street traders, a taxi rank was formed, and the council deferred planning applications to the group as did property owners. RAG had become a powerful voice in all Rosebank matters and is now a thriving node.

Krystyna and I recall the many joyful times we spent with Herbert – he loved lunches followed by a matinee at the Hyde Park cinema where he took great pleasure in watching a movie, springing open and reclining in his seat.

Our many lunches at Woodmead where afterwards the three of us would sometimes clamber into a golf cart and trundle alongside the golf greens.

Our trip to Kimberley just a couple of years ago with Precious, Herbert’s then carer took some organising, but was immensely rewarding. On the journey down Herbert talked about his travels as a student throughout Europe with his friend Ivan Schwartz an engineer. He told how they explored many cities describing each in detail. When they reached Venice Herbert just had to have a beautiful piece of Murano glass which he carefully wrapped and kept in his rucksack. This remained with him throughout his travels and which he eventually brought back to South Africa. He also spoke of his early days in the UK, as a graduate from university and his work on Harlow New Town with the practice Frederick Gibberd,

We arrived in Kimberley armed with half a dozen guide books but found we did not need any as Herbert not only knew the historical sites, their historical backgrounds but also the directions to each. One of the interesting detours was a visit to the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature in Galeshewe just outside Kimberley, an interesting government building recently completed. The design was won through a competition, Herbert having been part of the competition brief.

Herbert had the widest appreciation of architecture and fine art. He was equally at home with modernism and the old. He was a leader in the field of conservation understanding and painstakingly restoring buildings to their original condition. His conservation battles are legendary.

He was an eclectic collector of furniture, glassware, art and his home at Mentone Court was always a pleasure to visit for the company, the food and the ambiance.

We miss him greatly. It was a privilege to have known him, a kind, gentle and courageous friend.

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**MONIKA LAUFERTS LE ROUX AND JUDITH MAVUNGANDIZE OF TSICA HERITAGE**

tsica heritage consultants [tsica.culturalheritage@gmail.com](mailto:tsica.culturalheritage@gmail.com)

(heritage architect consultants, Johannesburg)

We are both very sad to hear about Herbert's passing. He was a absolute legend in the heritage world in SA and will be dearly missed.

Please keep us informed about a memorial service once the lockdown is over.

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**HANNAH LE ROUX**

Hannah Le Roux [Hannah.LeRoux@wits.ac.za](mailto:Hannah.LeRoux@wits.ac.za)

(former student of Herbert , and associate professor of architecture, Wits University.

In memory of Herbert Prins

Herbert smuggled me into the architecture programme at Wits at late notice in 1981, well after registration had closed. My father had told me it was not an ideal career for women but Herbert reassured me that it was, and regardless of who was right, Herbert tried to prove this point over time and in the lives of many other women too. Herbert’s feminism is not something that is remembered as often as his heritage advocacy or his committee work for the profession, remarkable as those two aspects of his life were. He was responsible for the appointment of Marilyn Martin to teach History of Architecture at Wits, which she did with consummate professionalism and style, and probably was behind many of the choices that associated the department with many strong women in the 1980’s onwards.

A lot has been said about Herbert’s attentive and engaging way with people. His attention to rules, which, on the other hand, we found a bit dry in the study of Building Contracts, turned out to be a good skill too. It brought him into a strategic role in preserving inner city buildings after the fall of the apartheid city government, so avenging the wanton destruction of the Colosseum and Eskom House. Through his consideration of process we also have Herbert to thank for ensuring fair outcomes in the architectural competitions that marked that era.

My last thought of Herbert relates to the facades of the Wits Geology Building that I have walked past often over nearly 40 years, the building allegedly designed by the esteemed modernist architect Norman Hanson who was Herbert’s mentor and partner. It features low key but elegant precast window surrounds which have lasted very well over 60 years. They remind me of the trying exercise that Herbert set us as first year students: getting these six or more molded pieces to fit together without creating gaps for rain intrusion and streaks. It is now clear to me who detailed those panels. In getting us to do the same exercise under his supervision, Herbert was passing things on the old way, from craftsman to aspirant craftspeople, with responsibility for the future rather than care for immediate acclaim.

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**ERNST LOOTS**

**Vancouver, Canada Ernst Loots** [**ernst@bozyk.com**](mailto:ernst@bozyk.com)

(former student, architect Vancouver Canada )

Remembering Herbert:

I was fortunate to have enjoyed Herbert’s ever-cheerful company in October last year - we had tea and cookies at his place, together with Liz. He was in great spirit, memory and brain as sharp as ever. We spoke about old times, colleagues, Pancho naturally, had some good laughs. Discussed some buildings too of course. But I am especially thankful that I could still meet with Herbert, as the reason for my visit was to sincerely thank him for his invaluable input into my development as a student and architect.

I had Herbert as studio master and teacher for 2nd, 5th and thesis year (1975). I then sometimes felt I had too much Herbert, but I sense that his mentoring influence has had a more lasting impact in our careers than we would admit, all for the better. I, for one, am now grateful. Old-school discipline, order, clarity, honesty in Design. Exploring, discovering yourself, confidence, integrity as Designer. Herbert and Pancho were a great team - giving us direction with great energy and wit, making it fun. Those were good times indeed.

Herbert was clearly a leader in the profession. Inspiring energy and never really retiring - I like that. He was equally a leader as a teacher of architecture, patient and thorough. Firm, yet caring. When we said goodbye at the end of my visit, Herbert had tears in his eyes. We, his students, must always have felt to him like his special children. That he is proud of. And we are proud of him.

**Vancouver - April 24, 2020**

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**PETER LURIE**

Peter Lurie [peter.lurie@gmail.com](mailto:peter.lurie@gmail.com)

(architect and former student of Herbert )

Sad news. I last saw Herbert about 3 or 4 years ago as he and my mom shared a mutual friend, who herself passed away last year. He remained interested and positive, and I will remember him for his calm, humour and mentoring in those crazy student highs and lows of ours. He will be missed.

**DENIS MAAS**

Denis Maas [denis@denismaasarchitect.co.za](mailto:denis@denismaasarchitect.co.za)

(architect, former student of Herbert, graduate Wits 1980)

Herbert was a great teacher and mentor during my many years at Wits (1973 – 1980) as was dear Pancho. Together they formed my sensitivity to all forms of architectural and artistic creativity. I remember Herbert instilling in me an appreciation for outstanding old buildings that exemplify their particular era, and this love of art history was strengthened by Elizabeth Rankin. This has resulted in me and many others avidly photographing and drawing wherever we go, has had a lifelong influence on my work, and I’m sure the work of all who had the good fortune of such excellent teachers. Herbert taught a host of students (and his friends) the art of intellectual argument, the art of gentle persuasion, the art of meaningful social discourse, through his immense knowledge and love for architecture and artistic endeavor. I fondly remember his kind assistance to all of us, and his playful teasing, when presented with a feeble or patently daft argument (mainly from me). He was hugely inspirational to more than one generation, and eternal gratitude from all of us is thus his

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**ALAN MABIN**

Alan Mabin [<mailto:alan@alanmabin.org>]

(former colleague of Herbert at Wits and former Head of the School of Architecture and Planning, at Wits)

Sad to learn this morning that Herbert Prins passed away.  I well remember him holding architecture together at Wits in some really difficult times and his unfailing courteousness to me and others, as well as his extraordinary store of heritage knowledge and his efforts in the arena of conservation.  I never passed the geology building without thinking of his stories of where and with whom he worked in the early years of practice which he shared with me in the long ago common room back in the 80s.  Sympathies to all

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**JUDY MAGUIRE**

Judy Maguire [judymaguireza@gmail.com](mailto:judymaguireza@gmail.com)

(member of the Heritage Association of South Africa, scientist and academic , )

When someone as accomplished and knowledgeable as Herbert passes away, it is as if a major library has burned down: the accumulated knowledge, experience, and wisdom of a lifetime also passes. He will be missed in many ways in heritage circles, and as a friend and support. He always gave well-considered and helpful responses and advice.

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**MARILYN MARTIN**

[mmartin@mweb.co.za](mailto:mmartin@mweb.co.za)

(former colleague at Wits Architecture department, art historian and author and former head of Iziko, National gallery)

It says a great deal about Herbert’s presence and meaning in our lives that decades after some of us left the Department of Architecture as lecturers and students, and after his retirement, that we have come together like this to remember him. With the charismatic and renowned Pancho Guedes as our head, Herbert was a kind of *éminence grise* who operated behind the scenes, and who was a calm and measured influence and support. He played an important role in convincing Pancho that I was a suitable candidate to teach art and architectural history. Herbert loved the Johannesburg Country Club and I have fond memories of the occasional elegant dinner.

Important Art Deco monuments were being destroyed during the 1980s, generating activism in our Department. We marched for Eskom House (1937) and met in Northwards to save the Colosseum Theatre (1933). Herbert became a leader and representative in many ways. The ‘Save the Colosseum’ committee comprised a diverse group of architects, academics, conservationists, organisations and individuals, including an unforgettable male stripper. All to no avail in the disastrous onslaught of capitalism and apartheid policies designed to keep black people out of the city centre. I am reminded of accompanying Leon Krige with his Hasselblad to photograph the deserted former atmospheric movie palace that had been allowed to fall into a state of dilapidation.

In 2008 and in partnership with the Swiss Architecture Museum we hosted the exhibition *Pancho Guedes – an Alternative Modernist* and *Works after 25th April 1974* at the South African National Gallery. I needed to raise close to R1 million and I set up two committees, one in Cape Town and one in Johannesburg. Herbert succeeded in getting a contribution of R100,000 from a donor who wished to remain anonymous.

I am grateful to Liz, his secretary, and to Hannah le Roux for arranging a visit to Herbert in October last year – we had not seen each other for a very long time, but that did not matter as we talked and reminisced about the good and challenging days in the Department. It was a privilege to inscribe a copy of my book, *Between Dreams and Realities: A History of the South African National Gallery, 1871-2017*, for Herbert and to hear from Kathy how much he appreciated and enjoyed it. I feel blessed to have known and worked with Herbert and I will always remember him with affection.

**WILLIAM A. MARTINSON**

William Martinson [williamm2007@gmail.com](mailto:williamm2007@gmail.com)

(former student, architect and heritage practitioner and architectural historian )

I met Herbert Prins in 1981 in my first year of study for the Bachelor of Architecture degree at Wits. Herbert was responsible for the Theory and Practise of Construction course and instilled in us the correct layout of drawings, the importance of proper detailing, and much more. One project involved the regular documentation of a building under construction - from foundations through to completion. I selected a large house in Loch Avenue in Parktown on the southern sub-divided portion of Sloper's House Endstead. The contractor offered no objection to my request for a weekly visit. However, a month into the project I was confronted by the architect Carmel Back who brusquely questioned my presence there. Then, she asked what I would do if she did not permit me to continue and my innocent answer was, "I will tell Mr. Prins." To my astonishment her demeanour changed instantly. Herbert's standing in the architectural community at large was then made quite clear to me!

In 1988 Prof. Dennis Radford set up a two year part-time Master's Course in Architectural Conservation at Wits. The first enrolment included Herbert Prins, Doug Rodd, Jonathan Stone and myself. We enjoyed many a group discussion and combined project meetings at Herbert's flat in Mentone Court in Killarney and were always impressed by the finely curated collection of museum-quality Cape Dutch furniture and the exquisite art and artefacts. Herbert was then employing a talented Irish cabinet maker to construct the complex built-in solid-wood cabinetry which he had designed and detailed for the apartment.

In about 1989, Herbert took over responsibility for a private architectural draughting course at Inscape College in Johannesburg. He required qualified architects to assist with a revision of course notes and to do the required lecturing. Jonathan Stone and myself were both invited by Herbert to participate. What followed was a very interesting few years in which we compiled a robust and much improved set of course notes and engaged with persons from all walks of life and assisted them to gain competencies in Architectural draughting and detailing. I always remember - and often repeated - Herbert's advice to the students at their first lecture: "*That if they did not understand something, they must ask a question, as it was certain that no-one else would have understood either."*

The NMC's Transvaal Plans Committee in the 1990's constituted Prof.

Dennis Radford, Mrs. Flo Bird and Herbert Prins, with myself as secretary, privileged to be part of such eminent Committee. Herbert was a consummate 'Committee Man' and had a gift for dealing with applicants and in particular those who had problematic development proposals. He would begin by praising one small aspect, then proceed to lay bare the deficiencies of the balance!

The Preservation of Anstey’s Building Trust was formed in 1994 to take ownership of the lower three floors of the 1936 Art Deco Anstey’s building. Herbert was nominated by Mrs. Flo Bird as an alternate Trustee - and he was duly involved from 1998 until 2019. He made an ongoing useful, critical contribution regarding the responsibilities and duties of the Trustees and also advised in respect of moderating proposed changes to the original building fabric.

Herbert's single-minded devotion to architecture, architectural education, heritage and the conservation of the built environment will not be easily forgotten

Requiescat in pace

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**JANINA MASOJADA**

(via facebook message )

(Architect formerly partner at OMM Design Workshop, Architects of the Constitutional Court)

Ahh a life well lived and generously shared. A good man x

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[**BUHLE MATHOLE**](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100009741815458&comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk5MTc5MDA0NjQ4MA%3D%3D)

(via post on Facebook page of Brian McKechnie

We all are saddened but now in his memory... baton handed over to likes of you Brian McKechnie.

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**CHRISTINE MCDONALD**

Christine McDonald <christinem@markettheatre.co.za>

(friend, and Chief Financial Officer, The Market Theatre Foundation)

Dear Herbert

I am so sad to hear about you leaving this world. You have been such a prominent figure in the lives of so many people, including mine. For the Market Theatre you have given so much of your time and wisdom during the development of the Market Square and the Windybrow heritage house. You have assisted us in the many negotiations between the needs, regulations, budget and difficult personalities. You always had a proposal at hand to satisfy the needs of all parties. But more importantly, you had the ability to unearth talent and interesting ideas from all team members working with you.

I thoroughly enjoyed the afternoons that we visited the antique and second-hand shops sourcing light fittings, window furniture and interesting period items for the Windybrow house. Your attention to detail, passion and wealth of knowledge left me in awe. And the lunches or coffee after the shopping spree was enriching.

Then you designed modern, interesting, versatile glass and wood, practical, puzzle board room tables for the Windybrow house. We visited the craftsman a few times as you had to check the workmanship at crucial stages of the manufacturing process. The attention to detail was astonishing. A perfect two-in-one table like no other, was delivered: original, practical and beautiful.

I was privileged to pick you up for the site meetings every second week and we would have long interesting discussions in the car on many topics. You never missed a site meeting and at every meeting you stunned the professional team with your insight, creative and original ideas and experience. In between the site meetings the professional team members would consult with you to test ideas. This process ensured that the end product surpassed all of our expectations.

Nothing was too difficult for you. You insisted on climbing the stairs to the first floor with your walker and once fell down the ground floor stairs without ceremony. Nothing was impossible. All of the above was accomplished at your youthful age of 89.

Thank you, Herbert. I cherish the time that I was privileged to spend with you. You enriched my life and the buildings of the Market Theatre Foundation in so many ways. And in the dark days at the Market, I appreciated your personal message of support. Thank you very much.

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[**JOY MEGAN MCLAREN KENNEDY**](https://www.facebook.com/joy.mclarenkennedy?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk4NDU2NTU1NjQ4MA%3D%3D)

(via Facebook page post on page of Brian McKechnie.)

(architect and heritage specialist Johannesburg)

RIP lovely man - you taught me a lot and your generosity will never be forgotten – Godspeed

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**BRETT MCDOUGALL –**

Brett McDougall [brett.mcdougall@Massmart.co.za](mailto:brett.mcdougall@Massmart.co.za)

(former Chair of Johannesburg Heritage Foundation and Johannesburg heritage enthusiast)

Herbert was a giant of the Heritage community, and his influence extended well beyond Johannesburg. His intellectual prowess was legendary, and his analysis of heritage legislation second to none. He made a positive contribution to the blue plaque movement in Johannesburg through the work done by the Egoli Heritage Trust. His insight and clarity of thinking will be sorely missed.

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**BRIAN MCKECHNIE**

Brian McKechnie [brian@briankent.joburg](mailto:brian@briankent.joburg)

(former student, heritage architect practitioner , Johannesburg )

It still hasn’t hit home that Herbert is gone. He pulled through so many times before and I took for granted that we would be able to discuss his recovery over lunch once he was out of hospital.

A central pillar of the Johannesburg heritage community. From my first encounter of Herbert he generously offered his knowledge, guidance, advice, kindness and friendship and always with a dose of dry humour. I hold fond memories of his flat at 501 Mentone Court, filled with expertly curated artistic and architectural treasures. Who could forget Sophies delicious tea and homemade biscuits, served while Herbert presided over meetings spanning the varied concerns to which he devoted his time and boundless expertise.

From my first encounter of Herbert he generously offered his knowledge, guidance, advice, kindness and friendship and always with a dose of dry humour. I hold fond memories of 501 Mentone Court, filled with his expertly curated artistic and architectural treasures. Who could forget Sophies delicious tea and homemade biscuits, served while Herbert presided over meetings spanning the varied concerns to which he devoted his time and boundless expertise.

It is a tribute to Herbert’s character that so many different people have sent such heart felt remembrances of him. He made time for people and invested not only in mentoring and guiding the next generation, but in developing meaningful friendships and connections.

Herbert will be missed and fondly remembered by many.

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**MARYBETH MCTEAGUE**

(via Facebook page message )

(Former colleague Wits Department of Architecture. Now resident in London)

So very sorry to hear of Herbert’s passing.

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**CHRISTINE MEISSNER**

Christine Meissner [tine@netactive.co.za](mailto:tine@netactive.co.za)

(Architect, School of Practical Philosophy Salisbury House, Johannesburg)

The School of Practical Philosophy (SPP) would like to express their gratitude to Herbert Prins for his continuous support and warm relationship which he fostered with us to save Salisbury House (117 yrs old) in Belgravia from ruin.

I have been a longstanding member of this organization since 1979, the same year I met Herbert at Wits, when he was my first year design studio master.

Salisbury House (SH) has been the home of the SPP since 2003. We currently rent the premises from the Joburg Property Company (JPC) on a long-term lease for purposes of offering adult classes in Philosophy, Economics , Sanskrit etc. Over the past 17 years the building has been patiently restored, through many phases and challenges, to its former

dignity and it has become a fitting venue for our purposes as well as a precious historic time-capsule for the benefit of future generations.

In 2011 Salisbury House and the School of Practical Philosophy received the Colosseum Conservation award at the prestigious Halala Awards, despite the complete destruction of the east balcony from a vehicular accident in 2006. The JPC insurance claim was awaiting settlement . The balcony was finally reconstructed in 2013.

For many years we hosted regular meetings of the Simon Van Der Stel Foundation, later Egoli Heritage Foundation, at our property of St Mary’s Building (117 yrs), across the road from SH. Since 1999 this building became the home of the St James Preparatory School.

I fondly remember my last meeting with Herbert at Salisbury House in 2019. I had picked him up from his home in Sandton, with his wheel chair, to show him the fruits of our endeavours. Over a cup of tea and home-baked cake in the refectory he scanned the room and in his very measured voice he articulated with great respect how pleased he was with

the outcome. I felt united in our passion …from the same stock. On our way home we chatted about the university days and Herbert’s early years , his practice and present day issues etc. He was like a father and I was struck how steady and unwaveringly positive he was in embracing the way forward despite his age. He was amazing.

The last time I heard him speak was in a radio interview on 05th May 2019. His spirit untiringly stood up for the importance of preserving our heritage and the funding thereof. For us at the SPP we are presently most fortunate to fulfil the role of custodianship for two great Heritage Buildings in the city. Many walking-tours have come to visit both buildings. It is heartening to hear from visitors how amazed and surprized they are by the magnificence and beauty of these two buildings, quite unexpected in this area.

There is a framed calligraphy piece with an extract from the Preamble Of The Heritage Act 1999 , which was waiting to be handed over to Herbert as a token of appreciation for his generous assistance throughout these trying years. Unfortunately Covid 19 interceded, but this will not deter us from delivering it to his family after the lock down period.

There is the quite assurance that his legacy will continue through all the great efforts he made for Heritage.

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[**CAROLLYN MITCHELL**](https://www.facebook.com/carollyn.mitchell.5?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk4MzIxNjIwNjQ4MA%3D%3D)

(via Facebook Page post from Brian McKechnie’s facebook page)

Rest In Peace, Herbert. You will be sorely missed for your knowledge and passion of the heritage & history of Johannesburg and your story telling. A gentleman of great standing.

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**TSHENOLO MOKHELE**

Trustee JHF.- tshenolo mokhele [kwakhangela@gmail.com](mailto:kwakhangela@gmail.com)

( Orlando Heritage and trustee of Johannesburg Heritage Foundation )

Tributes are Extended to this old Man of heritage it was an honour knowing Him.

Herbert showed me that Age cannot stand in the way of development he loved what he did which was the preservation of our National Estate.

l salute both Herbert Prins and implore our God to Accept his departed Souls.

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**TEBOGO MOLOKOMME**

<Tebogo.Molokomme@gauteng.gov.za>

(Statutory Bodies: Provincial Heritage Resources Authority: PHRA-G – member )

What a great and passionate heritage specialist he was. He conducted his heritage work with so much love and compiled the most well-written Heritage Impact Assessment reports. There was no small project to him as he put so much effort into research, site inspection and report compilation for all his projects.

Mr Prins was one of the greatest Council members who contributed his in-valuable skill, knowledge and experience to the PHRA-G. We have surely learned a lot from him and will proudly hold that close to our hearts as we remember him during our day-to-day work.

We already miss his captivating and professional attitude towards heritage conservation. We are certain that he loved PHRA-G and wanted it to prosper, and ours is to continue doing our best in conserving heritage resources of Gauteng Province.

Our condolences to his family and Liz whom together with Mr Prins became part of the PHRA-G family. May they find strength and comfort from God during this trying time.

May our parent’s soul rest in eternal peace!

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[**DINEO MOLOMO**](https://www.facebook.com/dineo.molomo.1?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk5MjMxMDk3NjQ4MA%3D%3D)

**(**via facebook post of Brian McKechnie)

I remember him well he was ever supportive of GIFA and ready to share his knowledge with fellow architects. Sad news, may his soul Rest In Peace.

**FANUEL MOTSEPE**

Fanuel Motsepe [motsepearch@yahoo.com](mailto:motsepearch@yahoo.com)

(Architect Fanuel JC Chaane Motsepe, Former President of GIfA (2006-2008) and SAIA (2010-12) and current President of the Africa Union of Architects (AUA) South Region.)

First my heartfelt condolences to the Prins family, relatives, friends and loved ones. May Herbert’s soul Rest In Peace.

My tribute to Herbert might need me to share a minor background to articulate my sentiments. I consider myself truly blessed to have been a student at Wits during Herbert’s years at the university, because were it not for him, I’d be unable to predict what or where my career would be today. He helped me to continue with my studies when I was in desperate need of financial aid by guiding me to successfully apply for a RIBA Bursary, which got me my BAS at Wits and B Arch at UCT. Many still ask why someone from a family that is reputed to be established even during apartheid, would need financial aid.

Well, as with many LGBTQI people, I too had loving disciplinarian parents who struggled immensely to accept my gayness and mid-2nd year B Arch exams, they terminated paying for my studies hoping to pressure me into becoming a heterosexual.

Thank The Almighty years before their passing, time had reconciled their parental instincts to overcome their socially instilled homophobia and their nine year isolation from me ended in them accepting and understanding my sexuality during their final years.

Against that background, when I approached Hebert for help, the extraordinary human in him was revealed. He did not butt an eyelid or brow at my self-outing to him, at a time when LGBTQIs were a no-no and outlawed. My sexuality did not come as a surprise to him, because I believe his intuition and insight was way above the political and social prejudices of the time. He was like a grandfather, father or uncle who was always and I mean ALWAYS ready and willing to advise and help and he continued being a guardian angel till the days I served with him at SAHRA and in establishing the PHRA-G. The lessons learnt from working with Herbert at SAHRA and PHRA-G on assessing Constitution Hill, Newtown Cultural Precinct, the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication, etc, will forever be treasured. He, like Architect Phill Mashabane and Dr Johan Bruwer was a fountain of Heritage Conservation knowledge.

To this day I credit Herbert in my HIA reports, because they are structured around his HIA’s as precedents. Visiting Herbert was a joyful experience. From the designs of his entrance door, window details, furniture and fittings, his Art Deco passion and spirit was for all to indulge in with him and being an Art Deco lover myself, I’d spend time admiring and complimenting anything that would capture my eyes during every visit. Tea and biscuits would be served by hid motherly PA, while I’m being caringly guided and tutored by him. We more than often disagreed on many things, but his spirit of Botho/uBuntu, ensured that we always heard each other out and could beautifully agree to disagree, with each parting with something to ponder on.

I will definitely miss Herbert, but I will always have him in my heart. I believe he is with my other architect hero Pancho Guedes and they must be having the times of their spiritual heavenly lives being back together again. I thank the Almighty I made it a point to always praise and thank Herbert whenever I was with him for his role in securing my career. May his soul Rest In Peace with his ancestors in the Heart and Bosom of the Almighty. May his family, relatives, friends and loved ones be blessed and comforted by the Love of The Almighty.

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**KEITH MUNRO**

[Kathy@zimstone.co.za](mailto:Kathy@zimstone.co.za)

( friend of Herbert Prins, member of Johannesburg Heritage Foundation)

I will always remember Herbert as the quintessential English gentleman who loved nothing more than a lively debate with friends around a lunch table , enjoying good food and a bottle of wine . Herbert's extensive range of friends and acquaintances both alive and dead was astounding and his anecdotes gave us great character sketches and brought these people to life. Herbert is my role model as his acute mind enabled him to work until the very end of a long and productive life , with many achievements to his name.

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**KATHY MUNRO**

[Kathy@zimstone.co.za](mailto:Kathy@zimstone.co.za)

( friend, former colleague at Wits, and Chair of Johannesburg Heritage Foundation ) .

Herbert Maurice John Prins was our friend, mentor and doyenne of heritage in Johannesburg.  Herbert was a Trustee of the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation.  He passed away at the Morningside Clinic on Wednesday evening, 15th April 2020 after a short illness .

It was Herbert who created the discipline of architectural conservation and heritage and brought respect for the built legacy of the past into a legislative framework and systematic structure and local academic study.   His  heritage impact assessments were often models of comprehensive researched information. We are fortunate that many of these Johannesburg reports have been archived at the JHF Resource centre.  Herbert always sought to find the best possible pragmatic solution to ensure protection and preservation in the face of bulldozers and developers.  He thought logically and strategically.  His life was heritage and conservation, it was his passion and his profession .

Herbert’s contributions to architecture, university education and the training of architects and to conservation in his adopted city, Johannesburg  were unparalleled.

Herbert was also the founder of the Egoli Heritage Foundation and actively involved in  Heritage South Africa (HASA) – the successor body to the Simon van der Stel Foundation.    Egoli co –existed alongside  the Parktown and Westcliff Heritage Trust and the successor  Johannesburg Heritage Foundation.   There was plenty of scope for cooperation and collaboration;  Herbert never joined the JHF but served loyally as a trustee.  We  were honoured to  have him providing wise council in matters of  principle, management and direction. He and Flo campaigned  together for Markhams and Herbert joined the protest for the Rand Steam Laundry .

I have prepared an obituary for Herbert Prins which will appear this week on the Heritage Portal.  I have also collated the tributes that have come to me in e mails  and what’s app messages and these will be retained for a complete record and an e-mail copy will be sent to all contributors and to any of our members who are interested.  Herbert mattered to many people. He was much admired, respected and also loved by his friends who became his family.

He lived a long life and his career spanned 72 years from 1948 until just a month ago in 2020.  This must surely be a record.  Writing about the life and times of Herbert  Prins is like preparing a compendium on the history of heritage in Johannesburg over the past almost 50 years of his intense, dedicated engagement .

We  extend our sympathies to Herbert’s family (his niece , Alison and nephew Robert who live abroad ) and to his close friends and to Liz Kirsten, Herbert’s loyal  Personal Assistant.

In this time of lockdown and pandemic, there will be no funeral but the Wits school of Architecture will be commemorating the life of Herbert Prins on Thursday 23rd April  at 5.45 for 6 pm. on Zoom.  Should you wish to receive an invitation and link to this event please let Eira know so that we can make arrangements with Wits.   Please  access the Heritage  Portal for the full Obituary which will appear on the day of the memorial event.

Katherine Munro, Chairperson, Johannesburg Heritage Foundation.

***And a personal tribute.***

I knew Herbert as a colleague at Wits in the 1970s and 1980s I later met up again with  Herbert at Mentone court ; that must have been about 12 or years ago when I went to see him as I was researching an article for Wits Review about  the 2nd Esselen St ,Medical school  and I knew that Herbert had been the on site architect . I learnt all about complexities of design of that building and what he was trying to accomplish. The best story he told was about  his visiting Henry Moore to  get a Henry Moore sculpture for the Wits  Med School  ( forecourt of the newbuilding in Esselen St-). Herbert thought about things like that. But Wits  management of the time turned down the idea – too expensive and too  avant garde. And Wits lost an opportunity.

During the last decade Herbert came to be close friends with Keith and myself . We enjoyed many dinners in his flat and met his friends and reconnected with people I had known in earlier days – Vyvyan Myerson and Ivan Schwartz.

Herbert told a funny story about being in London with Vyvyan and their wishing to see a special exhibition on at the British Museum –the exhibition was closed . Vyvyan was determined. The argument that won the day was “ I have here a prince from Africa “ and of course Herbert Prins was the prince! Herbert loved telling that story about himself and Vyvyan

I remember the teas provided by Sophie and my eyes darting everywhere to take in all of Herbert’s treasures, and his orchids. Herbert also enjoyed coming to our house and he loved appreciating and enjoying the collectable antiques . We loved Herbert’s stories about the past, about his relatives and his adventures and encounters in the world of architecture. I admired Herbert’s courage and his in dominatable approach to life . He met old age full on and triumphed.

I am just so sorry I did not see Herbert in the last days- the worst of the corona period is that even when you are not  ill with the virus,  there is still exclusion.  We shall miss Herbert enormously.

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**KRYNAUW NEL**

( Architect, GIfA President 2020/21

Krynauw Nel [krynauwnel@icloud.com](mailto:krynauwnel@icloud.com)

My dear Herbert

I’ve been asked to say a few words as GIfA president, an office you occupied when it was still the Transvaal Institute of Architecture and on behalf of SAIA, where you were also president, and I hope you don’t mind me addressing you personally – even if it is norm or form – to say goodbye in a physical form in this virtual Zoom departure hall.

As a tribute to you and to focus my mind, I wrote this in pen and ink on lined paper and forgive a few splotches here and there as I am – we are all – very sad to say this goodbye. I remember coming into your small office in your retirement home and there you were writing some report or advice or something to complete an undertaken task to meet another commitment – writing in pen and ink on lined paper, totally unconcerned with technology and its apparent impediments but focusing that nimble mind on something architectural – a lesson we can all learn from today.

At 92 still an architect. And through your 70+ years of this profession we can ask ourselves how you got through difficult times – there must have been some – but I am reminded of something Nadine Gordimer said once when asked how she sustained herself during “the dark times” and she said “I wrote – I am a writer so I write, like a dancer will dance” – and so you were always “architecting”

I have learnt so much from you – like the fact that gold and lifetime awards never made you haughty or unavailable. Always ready to advance architecture. And even in a leisurely lunch the spotlight in those eyes would look for any opportunity to focus on another thing architectural. The stories I’ve heard from people you have helped - way beyond the call of duty – keeps on amazing me – finding bursaries, finding employment here or overseas, admission to other universities, another report, another meeting, another call. Your hand invisible, but the map and milestones there for all to see.

I am saddened that we have lost the physicality of your Killarney apartment – I would call it an architect’s ode to architecture and of as much value as Sir John Soane house, Sir. You made the very map for conservation, how modest but sad not to include yourself!

And lastly I need to apologize if I embarrassed you as a raw *plaasjapie* in first year, when you were explaining the construction of cavity walls to us and when you said in all earnestness that we ” must always personally see to it that contractors on site keep their cavities clean” and I was on the floor with laughter and it spread quickly and after being mystified for a second, you caught on, started giggling yourself and had to leave the Dorothy Suskind hall to recompose yourself. What humorous grace.

And then. Now there only remains two words due that we will say always: THANK YOU!

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[**GABRIELLE OZYNSKI**](https://www.facebook.com/gabrielle.ozynski?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk4MTc5MjE2MTQ4MA%3D%3D)

(via the Facebook page post of Brian McKechnie)

gabrielle Ozynski [gabrielleozynski@gmail.com](mailto:gabrielleozynski@gmail.com)

A loss for Joburg and all who loved and worked with him.

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**HENRY PAINE**

Henry Paine [hjcpaine@iafrica.com](mailto:hjcpaine@iafrica.com)

(architect and professional associate of Herbert)

I met Herbert in 1972 when he was part of the evaluation committee for applicants to the Architecture Faculty of Wits University but only got to know him from around 1994 when the Transvaal Institute of Architects was transformed into the Gauteng Institute for Architecture on the wave of optimism and enthusiasm that accompanied South Africa’s transition to democracy. Herbert was amongst those who wholeheartedly supported the democratisation of our country but never lost sight of his passion for conservation, leading the Profession in this regard. *Herbert worked tirelessly as chair of the Egoli Heritage Trust and as a Board Member of the Johannesburg Heritage Trust and later for the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation.* In my thoughts of Herbert, integrity and principle are the words that most come to my mind. I think this is best illustrated by a story.

Herbert was never one to boast, or even talk about, his achievements but he once told me the story of how, in 1982, he opposed the demolition of the Colosseum Theatre, organising public demonstrations in which his students at Wits became involved. The dispute became heated and Herbert was defamed by the property developer with whom he reached an out of court settlement. The name of the Prudential Assurance Company should live in the annals of corporate infamy. Not wishing to benefit from the loss of the beautiful building, he instituted the "Colosseum Award for Conservation" with a Cecil Skotnes sculpture as the floating trophy. The award was absorbed into the City of Johannesburg Halala Awards programme which is now defunct.

The presentation of this award is now made by the Egoli Heritage Foundation. I believe that the most powerful way of memorialising Herbert’s contribution to conservation, and one that I think he would agree with, is to ensure that the Award is maintained, regularly awarded and that its prestige should be reinforced, particularly by the Gauteng architectural community.

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**REUBEN PHASHA**

[reuben@conhill.org.za](mailto:reuben@conhill.org.za)

(Heritage and Education Manager Constitution Hill)

Very Sad news. It is a great loss for heritage.

Thank you for informing us.

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[**ISABELLA PINGLE**](https://www.facebook.com/isabella.pingle?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk4MTUyODExNjQ4MA%3D%3D)

(Via the Facebook page of Brian McKechnie )

( Trustee, Johannesburg, Heritage Foundation, chair Kensington Heritage )

Condolences. An icon in our Heritage lost but never forgotten. 💟

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**CAROL ANN PODD**

Carol Ann Podd [carolannpodd@gmail.com](mailto:carolannpodd@gmail.com)

(member and secretary of Heritage Association of South Africa, heritage stalwart in Swellendam )

Such a sadness - I think it was his time. He had been very frail for a long time.

Personally I shall miss his expert objective advice & understanding

South African Heritage has lost a hero

I met  Herbert at the first symposium I attended in Port Elizabeth 2008

There was a "robust" debate in progress & he walked slowly down the aisle  towards the stage, tall & thin & dressed in black with that enormous hat & silver topped cane.

 When he turned to the delegates you could hear a pin drop - such presence - never to be forgotten.

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**LONE POULSEN**

Lone Poulsen [lone@poulsen.co.za](mailto:lone@poulsen.co.za)

(architect and former colleague, Wits University)

I first met Herbert when I joined Wits in 1991 although I had heard much about him through architectural circles in Durban where I was prior to moving to Johannesburg. He was a wonderful colleague always willing to help and engage. As Henry said he was never one to blow his own trumpet but I remember that Herbert was the unsung backbone of the School of Architecture quietly holding everything together in the background. I had the pleasure of being part of several heritage struggles that he lead around important buildings and neighbourhoods in Johannesburg. He will be sorely missed but never forgotten for his substantial contribution to heritage issues in this complex and diverse society we live in.

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**LEN RAYMOND**

dalrest [dalrest@iafrica.com](mailto:dalrest@iafrica.com)

( Heritage Association of South Africa, heritage leader stalwart in Paarl)

I met Herbert in the late 1970”s when  Cathy and  I went to visit him  in his JHB flat to record his furniture Herbert was an early collector of Cape furniture and assembled   an impressive collection including some of the best  and oldest pieces of Afrikaner as well as the best collection of early Martavaans many of which are included in  Barbara Woodward’s book on  pottery and ceramics  in South Africa from the east. Herbert’s best chairs are prime examples of the cream of their style in South Africa .

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**PETER RICH**

Peter Rich [peterrichtravel@gmail.com](mailto:peterrichtravel@gmail.com)

( architect, friend, colleague, former Chair of Parktown Association )

Herbert was both a friend and a father figure to us who taught and worked with him. I am not going to talk about the legend but rather about a caring man who had the wonderful attribute of human kindness. I got to know Herbert firstly through teaching with Pancho at Wits over a 15 year period and observed his dedication and generosity towards giving moral and friendship support to both the School of architecture and the Guedes family.

My period of Chairmanship of the Parktown association with Flo Bird as a mentor exposed me to Herbert's pro active  contribution to Heritage conservation.

Heather Savage informing me of Herbert's Passing said she felt a large tree had been felled by his departure.. Herbert made the most of a full life dedicated to Architecture, it institutions ,its Heritage , Teaching and his love of people. His wise council will be missed.

It is fitting that while in good mind and body he was honoured by his Alma Mater Wits with his recent Gold medal Award.. He died Knowing his worth and the value others bestow on his friendship  and having working with him.

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**URSULA RIGBY**

Ursula [mailto:ursula@ursularigby.co.za

(Architect, former student and Professional Heritage Practitioner, Association of Professional Heritage Practitioners)

Herbert taught me at Wits University back in the late 70’s in my early years studying Architecture . The last time I saw Herbert was in October 2016. Herbert invited

me and our mutual friend Christine McDonald (CFO of The Market Theatre Foundation) to join him and his assistant, Liz Kirsten, for lunch at the Johannesburg Country Club. We were celebrating long standing, special and supportive relationships. Herbert had not been well. He had been in hospital and was very happy to be out and about. He was frail but in good spirits. Herbert had worked with Christine on the recently refurbished Windybrow Arts Centre in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. They had also worked together, with KMH as the architects,

on the Market Square complex. It was a memorable day for us all.

I had interviewed Herbert in 2015, as part of the research for a dissertation which involved the study of the process of establishing and building the new South African Constitutional Court. Herbert had been part of the Concourt Team, representing the old National Monuments Council (NMC), and later (post 2000) the current South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA).

Herbert was a remarkable man. Always the gentleman, sharp witted and diplomatic, a gifted negotiator who had the knack of successfully mediating between parties, often with conflicting agendas. He was a very good listener, and had an exceptional memory. He was patient and polite, yet very firm and resolute when the need arose.

As a lecturer to his undergrads, he was always available, approachable and encouraging. He would offer comment with humour and a clear viewpoint – considered and convincing, egging one on to explore and do better.

Herbert and Pancho Guedes formed a remarkable team at Wits University – Herbert once wrote how Pancho cares about people. He spoke about Pancho’s guardianship over the Wits Archi School as being unique in that it fostered independence. That attitude had to have been contagious as this is what we felt, as students, in those formative exploratory years – this was a collective approach indeed, a team.

Much later, Herbert again gave much of his time to me when I interviewed him at his apartment. He met me in the lobby and escorted me into his home office. He was more than willing and able to provide input in detail then and on several other occasions when I needed to check particulars with him, via email or on the phone. A remarkable and admirable effort for a man then nearly 90 years of age.

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**STANLEY SAITOWITZ**

Stanley Saitowitz [stanley@saitowitz.com](mailto:stanley@saitowitz.com)

(architect and former colleague, San Francisco)

Herbert Prince. At great physical distance, yet close in sharing the loss of our mentor, colleague and friend.

Herbert was an anchor to a world that with him gone becomes even more precious.

From when we first met, when Herbert first joined the staff at Wits and I was in third year, he stood out as a kind man that truly cared for others, and although I never took a class with him, I always considered him with the highest regard as an exceptional model and teacher. We developed a friendship then that continued.

I learned so much from Herbert as a link to the heritage of Johannesburg’s architecture. He shared his enthusiasm and first-hand experiences of the heroic works of Hanson and others of that generation, and introduced me to the earlier great works of Baker and before. He was steeped in the history of the city and full of stories and memories.

I also learned about preservation from Herbert, especially when he bought an extra Citroen to mine for parts to keep the other going till it became totally impossible. We’d often tease about old buildings and heritage because he knew my interests focused more on the present.

In the past decades, our meetings were always years apart, but after the first few minutes together, it always strangely seemed like just yesterday, and that nothing had changed. So I came to rely on Herbert as a constant and unwavering pillar.

We always had dinner when I was in Johannesburg, and I especially remember one evening at his gracious apartment at Mentone Court. His housekeeper brought a beautifully roasted chicken to the table which Herbert proceeded to carve, slicing the breasts into perfect ¼” thick pieces and arraying them with great precision. It’s strange what you learn from people, but ever since, I have always imitated his carving.

Herbert helped others selflessly. He was kind and honorable, and driven by principles and passion for causes he held dear more than personal gain.

He had the gift of time and a long productive life, and he used it to make a difference to the world.

My last contact was August last year when I saw The Wits Review and Herbert honored with a Gold Medal. I emailed congratulations and said how happy I was for the deserving honor, but more importantly, how good he looked in the photograph. He immediately responded, saying that he was now almost 93 and asked after my mom, wondering how old she is, and our usual chatter spread over a few days of emails back and forth.

His model of generosity and caring now falls on our shoulders. He defined the idea of a gentleman.

Herbert was a Prince.

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**MARC SCHNEIDER**

(via Facebook page post of Brian McKechnie)

I met Herbert Prins over the Kliptown Development Framework and Square project. If I recall he didn't suffer fools.

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[**YONDELA SILIMELA**](https://www.facebook.com/yondela.silimela?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk4NzExODk0MTQ4MA%3D%3D)

( via Face book care of Brian McKechnie )

RIP Herbert. He invited us into his home to discuss Joburg Heritage and generously shared his knowledge and passion

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**ALLAN SCHWARZ**

(via facebookpage of Hannah Le Roux)

Fair winds Herbert Prins

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**BEVERLEY-ANN SMALL**

( Chairperson, Alberton Heritage Society and executive member of Heritage Association of South Africa)

[disprom@absamail.co.za](mailto:disprom@absamail.co.za)

Every time I think of Herbert I  think about all the answers he has given.

When it came to Heritage matters Herbert was never too busy to assist.

Herbert always had the most wonderful way of stringing his words together, and  did so with such wisdom even in the most controversial moments.

We met Herbert  in Graaff Reinet at our first Symposium.  We walked a long distance together to our tea break and I could not believe how he managed to keep up at his age with a bad hip. Dear Heritage Colleagues Herbert Prins will be sadly missed

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**DIANA STEELE**

Diana Steele [<mailto:dianasteele1@gmail.com>]

( Johannesburg Heritage Foundation, Digital project and heritage enthusiast )

I didn’t know Herbert but did see him from a distance at the odd JHF function. His reputation though was clearly of the highest standing and I know that his influence was felt across the industry.

With Michael Fleming’s and now Herbert Prins’ passing we have lost some incredible friends of the Foundation.

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**JACQUES STOLTZ**

Jacques Stoltz [jacques@placematters.co.za](mailto:jacques@placematters.co.za)

(architect, Chairperson, Heritage Association of South Africa and Chair of Egoli Heritage Foundation)

Herbert. Where to start. So much has already been said. His absolute command of subject matter – whether highbrow or mischievous gossip. His way with words, sometimes over scrupulous, always astute and eloquent. Gordon Metz referred to him as a ‘gentleman fighter’, and I can think of no better description of his doggedness when fighting for a heritage cause. When I suggested that we, as the Egoli Heritage Foundation, do a review of the implementation of the National Heritage Resources Act in Gauteng, little did I expect a 60-page document meticulously detailing the failings of our heritage system; clause by clause. His resilience in the face of poor health was truly remarkable. Rumour has it that when Herbert was in ICU at, if I’m not mistaken, Linksfield hospital he continued to help an architect with his plans! I think it was after a hip operation that he, with no qualms, joined Den Adams and me on a road trip to Richmond for the annual HASA heritage symposium. Until as recent as this year, his considered inputs to HASA affairs. What strength. When sending out email correspondence to my fellow HASA council members, the first recipient that springs to mind is Herbert. Our committee feels greatly reduced. He will be mourned for a long, long time.

Love Jacques

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**JONATHAN STONE**

[jonathanstone@mweb.co.za](mailto:jonathanstone@mweb.co.za)

(former student, colleague at Wits, architect and heritage practitioner)

I was very sad to hear recently of Herbert's death.

I first met Herbert in 1979 some 41 years ago I now realise with a bit of a shock. I had just completed two years of National Service and had decided to see if I was cut out to become an architect. The Department of Architecture at WITS, with its wonderful informality and constant injections of breath-taking ideas, was an almost heavenly portal after my stint of playing soldiers. At that time Herbert ran both major courses in first year, Theory & Practice of Design I and Theory & Practice of Construction I. Our first-year class was small - only 60 or so. I remember that the first project issued to us was to design a 300 room hotel on the Beacon Isle site and to submit the completed project in a week's time. Truly a baptism of fire. Inspired by lectures from Pancho, and encouragement from Herbert, we struggled through the exercise and pinned up our projects on the foyer wall in the John Moffat building the following Wednesday. The class had miraculously shrunk to around 30 students. I realised that this was it. Not only were things always going to be like this, but this was where I belonged.

We as students also came to know Herbert better. I suspect many of us at first thought he represented a rigid old-school conservatism. However, the more one got to know him, the more one realised that here was an extremely complex person of great professional integrity, but who was also immensely tolerant and liberal at heart and in his approach. We learned the value of ideas and Herbert's rather intriguing and somewhat unique ability to generate  alternative viewpoints - an essential tool in the design process and one I was to look forward hearing at student examinations, committee discussions and later at heritage appeal matters.

The accompanying building technology course was underpinned, so to speak, by Herbert's great practical experience. He succeeded in passing on the notion of underlying principles at work  which one could apply as inventively as one should approach the greater design.

Throughout my years as an undergraduate, Herbert was always fully involved in all aspects of the department. In our later years he began the thankless task of trying to unravel matters of professional practice and the legal obligations which awaited us.

My final year (6th year in those days - 1984) thesis was centred around the Colosseum theatre in Johannesburg. Herbert of course was deeply involved in the attempt to prevent its imminent destruction. To Herbert's great disappointment my approach was not to propose an extraordinary way in which the theatre could be saved, but to understand what the circumstances were (not merely financial but also of a contextual nature) that made its imminent demolition, inevitable. As a measure of Herbert's great ability to be fair and reasonable, in spite of what he might have felt personally, he not only engaged positively with me during the year, but, after the final examination had passed, invited me to work alongside him in his splendid Killarney flat on preparing drawings for a scheme to conserve the doomed Colosseum. It was both wonderful and a great privilege to be involved in this way even though we didn't succeed. Sadly, one of many conservation battles lost over the years.

A period of great enjoyment followed for me a few years later when Professor Dennis Radford invited Herbert, Doug Rodd, William Martinson and myself to participate in the first Masters Degree course in Conservation. Quite often, we, as a class would be invited to Herbert's treasure trove flat in Mentone Court for dinner and wide-ranging discussions. These are indeed precious memories.

Over the years, Herbert's involvement in matters of conservation became more and more significant. On a number of occasions, as a member of the Appeal Committee on which I served with Trevor Bailey, we would hear Herbert presenting the case against the demolition of or significant alteration to such and such a heritage resource.  Herbert was always successful in his appeals with not a single case lost over a period of at least 2 years, nor were any of these decisions taken further.

In all the years I was fortunate to know Herbert, I was always struck by his even, well-tempered and kind tone no matter how upset he may have been with certain obvious issues.

I will fondly remember his rather quirky sense of humour and somewhat naughty smile.

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**JULIE STRIECHER**

Julie striecher [julie.streicher@gmail.com](mailto:julie.streicher@gmail.com)

( Executive committee member of the Heritage Association of South Africa, and Egoli Heritage Foundation)

My last memory of Herbert is of him at the Johannesburg Heritage *Cradle of Life* book talk of Vincent Carruthers at Northwards on 18 January. There he was in his wheelchair at the back of the room – interested and participating, it turns out, to the end. I gasped to see how remarkably well he looked and involuntarily told him so more than once, and he just flashed me his typical, bright-eyed, quizzical, deeply shy look before averting his eyes.

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[**WAYNE SUSSMAN**](https://www.facebook.com/wayne.sussman?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk4MjIwOTkzMTQ4MA%3D%3D)

(via Facebook page post on Brian McKechnie’s Facebook)

So sad. Wonderful man. It was an honour to live in the same apartment block as him. Johannesburg is poorer off without him

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[**JOSEF TALOTTA**](https://www.facebook.com/josef.talotta?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk4MTM0MjkzNjQ4MA%3D%3D)

(via Facebookpage post of Brian McKechnie )

A wonderful tribute, Brian. I’m glad you were able to absorb some of his expertise — it’s now up to you to share it with the next generation, to ensure his legacy continues. Thinking of his family, peers and friends.

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**ELAINE THORNE and**

**ISABELLA PINGLE**

Elaine Rose Thorne [<mailto:elainerosethorne@gmail.com>

( Kensington Heritage, and Kensington Residents Association leaders and Isabella is a Trustee of the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation )

Mr Herbert Prins, , had prominent stature within the architectural profession, honing in on his passion for preservation of our heritage and history. In doing, so thankfully protected much of what we are able to enjoy, to this very day.

Even though he was highly ranked within the industry, he still made time for others trying to make a difference, such as the Kensington Heritage

Isabella and myself were welcomed at many of the Egoli meetings, which gave us the direction and encouragement to be able to do all that we could to protect Kensington, one of the oldest and largest suburbs in Johannesburg.

In October 2010, we conducted an opening for the Kensington Heritage, of which we were most fortunate that Herbert attended. He graced us with his presence, and cut the ribbon as a sign of its opening. He also unveiled the plaque for the one of the  oldest clubs in Johannesburg, The Kensington Bowling Club, at the same event.

As mentioned great or small, Herbert had immense influence over all, and we are so grateful for that.

We pass our sincere condolences onto Herbert’s family, friends and colleges in the industry.

He will definitely be missed for his great knowledge and expertise, but never forgotten. His legacy shall remain steadfast in, and amongst us all.

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**ALISON YOUNG AND ROBERT TREGIDGO**

( Niece and Nephew of Herbert Prins)

Jeralus@bigpond.com ( Alison ) and The Tregidgos thetregidgos@btinternet.com ( Robert)

See tribute below under Young.

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[**ASHLEY URQUHART-WEIR**](https://www.facebook.com/ashley.urquhartweir?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk4NDA1MTUyNjQ4MA%3D%3D)

(via face book page post on Brian McKechnie’s page)

( friend )

My deepest condolences and immense respect to such a truly wonderful and inspiring man.

We will miss him my friend. Let his legacy lives

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**DANIEL VAN DER MERWE**

( via the Facebook page of Heather Dodd )

(Architect ,Graduate of Wits)

Long Life.

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[**ANDRÉ VAN GRAAN**](https://www.facebook.com/andre.vangraan.16?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDoxMDE1Nzk4MTMxNzUwNjQ4MF8xMDE1Nzk5NTEyODA1NjQ4MA%3D%3D)

( via facebook post of Brian McKechnie)

So sad to hear of his passing. I have so many happy memories of Herbert as we engaged with heritage issues at the old Transvaal Institute of Architects. Always incisive and clear-thinking. And I also have fond recollections of his flat in Mentone Court.

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**KITTY VILJOEN**

E mail - Asantesana [asantesana@jabama.co.za](mailto:asantesana@jabama.co.za)

(Pancho Guedes youngest daughter)

Herbert Prins was an enormous support to my family when we moved to South Africa and during our lives here. As well as his friendship to my father in the workplace, he had a real impact in my mother’s life and mine. I felt as if he was an Uncle to me, he showed an interest in what I thought and did, always included me in conversations, sent me Birthday and Christmas wishes every year. This carried on to my adulthood. I know my mother and I looked forward to our Monthly lunches at his apartment, which we loved and our outings to the Johannesburg Country Club, especially the Fireworks and Christmas celebrations.

He was a generous, empathetic and compassionate friend .

I last saw Herbert at the home he had moved to, after my father’s funeral and he was as calm, dignified and positive as I remembered him. I hope he realised how much he was loved and appreciated.

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**ALISON YOUNG AND ROBERT TREGIDGO**

[Jeralus@bigpond.com](mailto:Jeralus@bigpond.com) ( Alison ) and The Tregidgos [thetregidgos@btinternet.com](mailto:thetregidgos@btinternet.com) ( Robert)

( Niece and Nephew of Herbert Prins)

Although we always lived many miles apart in Zimbabwe, Australia, and the UK, our Uncle Herbert somehow managed to remain a constant and vibrant presence in our lives and those of his sister Adelaide, and even his grand nieces and nephews. He phoned Adelaide without fail to catch up on the lives of her family in Harare. He was the uncle who always remembered our birthdays, and as we got older our wedding anniversaries. We have counted well over a hundred emails from Herbert sent to us (with help from Liz) over the last decade.  When his sister, our mum, in her late 70's took the difficult and traumatic step of leaving Harare to restart her life with Alison in Perth, he supported her though two years of being alone in Zimbabwe and then skyped her every Tuesday with news and updates to keep her happy and supported. This provided a much needed anchor in her life as she dealt with the stress of such a huge change

Our childhood recollections are of many happy family visits to Mentone Court and that special peacefulness of his flat filled with objects that seemed both strange and beautiful.  The cycle repeated itself as Alison and her husband Jero stayed with him with their own small children. To this day Alison still knows his old phone number at Mentone Court. Alison recalls one visit, where he asked her children who must have been about 9 and 11 if they had anything they specially wanted,  and when they said a radio tape player they went off on an excursion for them to choose one each. There was such excitement and Herbert clearly gained much pleasure from being able to spoil them.  We remember his happiness taking his other great nephew and niece Nick and Laura (aged 5 and 3) to Macro to purchase a bright yellow telly tubby and the most fantastic boys toy The Transformer. This was so typical of Herbert's approach to his life: whether in the form of gifts or assistance he never gave half half-heartedly but sought to do it on your terms and with the maximum generosity!

His zest for architecture was infectious and no matter whether he was in Harare, Perth or London he was always striding out to explore old and new buildings.  On one excursion out with him in Oxford, all the colleges were closed because it was exam time;  "Don't worry Robert you just need to look like you belong here" and sure enough we bustled our way past the porters at various colleges to conduct our own unofficial tour.

Herbert never seemed to age mentally, and while he aged physically, he remained kind, fun loving and truly interested in your opinion. This was true whether the person he was talking to was an honoured architect or a 3 year old niece. On a visit to England, Robert’s children, now much older, remember him teasing them that he was leaving the parents behind and heading out to a night club. He met Alison's daughter-in-law, Cherise for the first time in April 2019, who returned to Perth full of admiration for such a remarkable and interesting man.

We have been overwhelmed by the many professional tributes to his long and fascinating career, and honestly astounded by the many people who our self-effacing uncle, quietly and without pomp helped and aided in their careers and lives. We are enormously proud to have been his niece and nephew. Our family will forever miss him and know that his loving presence in our lives can never be replaced.

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**WILLIE ZWIEGELAAR**

Zwiegelaar, Willie WJ [Willie.Zwiegelaar@standardbank.co.za](mailto:Willie.Zwiegelaar@standardbank.co.za)

We surely will miss him. We will always remember all the input he gave and the roles he fulfilled.

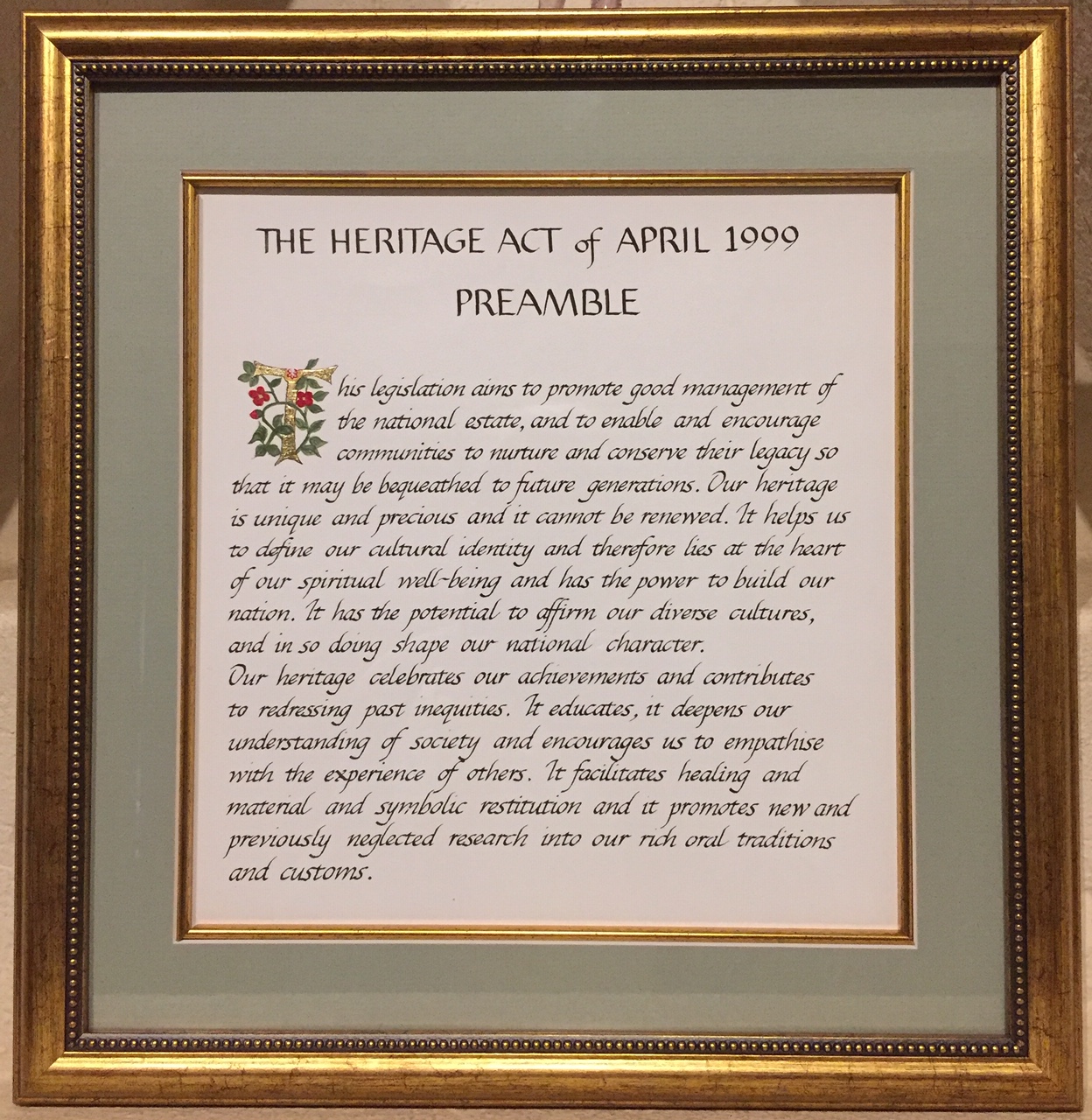
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A 2020 photo of Liz and Herbert at the Constitutional Court.



Herbert in London at the British Museum



Gift intended for Herbert from the School of Practical philosophy , Salisbury House