

Obituaries

Clement Abbott (1914–2001)

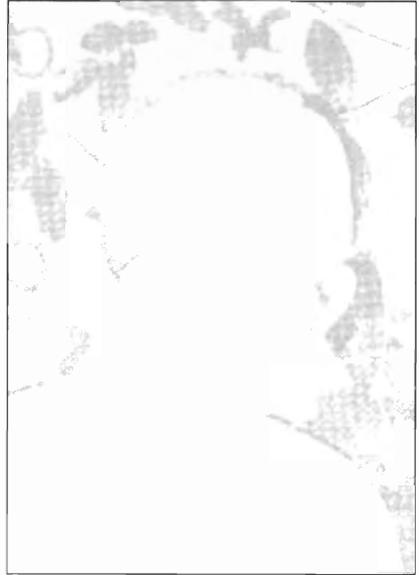
Clem Abbott was born in Cape Town and did his schooling at Rondebosch Boys' High. Upon leaving school he decided on an agricultural career and enrolled at the University of Pretoria. It was there that he met his wife Loide. After graduating they were married and were spared to enjoy 61 years of conjugal happiness, together with their two daughters, Joan and Rikki. For his doctoral studies Clem decided to go to Iowa State University in North America.

His first teaching post in Dairy Science was at Glen Agricultural College in the Eastern Cape, followed by a stint at the University of Pretoria before he accepted a lecturing post in Dairy Science (upgraded to a full professorship in 1954) at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, which he occupied for some 20 years. A few years ago he was honoured with a special award by the South African Society of Dairy Technology – a prestigious achievement and an eloquent testimony to the high esteem in which he was held by his academic colleagues.

Clem's academic career at the university ended prematurely through rationalisation but he refused to give any thought to retirement and immediately accepted a teaching post at the Cwaka College of Agriculture where he worked for a further 11 years, teaching inter alia, nature conservation.

Clem was a true academic. His considerable intellectual gifts made him an outstanding research scholar and a highly respected lecturer and supervisor of research degrees. He was punctilious in his use of language and also set high standards for his students in this regard. This ability made him an obvious choice for Editor of the Natal University Press. In retirement he edited *A Rockstewn River of Milk*, the diary of Emile Getaz, a pioneer of the dairy industry in South Africa.

He served on a number of Senate committees, most notably the Academic Ceremonial Committee responsible for the arrangements of the university graduation ceremonies. Under his efficient and watchful supervision these public occasions were conducted with a relaxed and entertaining dignity and decorum.



Clem Abbott

Clem's scholarly and scientific interest in the Eland species enabled him to do contract work for the then Natal Parks' Board at his favourite resorts of Injasuti and Cathedral Peak. Once again his outstanding contribution was acknowledged by the award of a Certificate of Merit from the KZN Game Conservation Services. To crown his notable achievements he was given a Civic Award for Environmental Excellence by the Pietermaritzburg City Council in 1994.

One of Clem's regular weekend activities was hiking. He joined the Pietermaritzburg Ramblers' Club in 1960 and by 1962 was a leader and on the committee. Apart from his absence in Empangeni – where he promptly founded a Zululand hiking club – he continued as a leader into his eighties, though leading quieter walks once he had passed that milestone. He remained a committee member until two months before his death. During his 41 years in the club he did a stint as chairman, he represented Natal on the National Hiking Federation, was on the Hiking and Mountaineering Committee of the Parks Board and right up to the Easter weekend, a week before he died, was doing honorary officer duties at Cathedral Peak. Over those 41 years many hundreds of rambles have walked and talked with Clem and will treasure their memories of this greatly respected and much loved man. They are the better for having known him.

Clem was a devout Christian and a prominent member of the Metropolitan Methodist Church in Chapel Street for many years and latterly at St Alphege's in Scottsville. Yet his religion was not merely a private affair. He was very active as a volunteer in Padmro which provided milk products for the under-nourished of the city, as well as in Nicro for the rehabilitation of criminals. He also supported the Boy Scouts, Boy's Town and the Salvation Army.

He was never happier than when out in the open, amidst the magnificent flora and fauna and the mountains and rivers of the garden province. For him nature conservation was a divine mission. Caring for the environment was as important as caring for his home and family.

Pietermaritzburg has lost one of its noblest sons and all its inhabitants, white and black, are the poorer for his passing. Here was a true gentleman who displayed par excellence the cardinal Christian virtue of compassionate love. We rejoice in a life so nobly lived and shall thank God upon every remembrance of him.

VICTOR BREDEKAMP