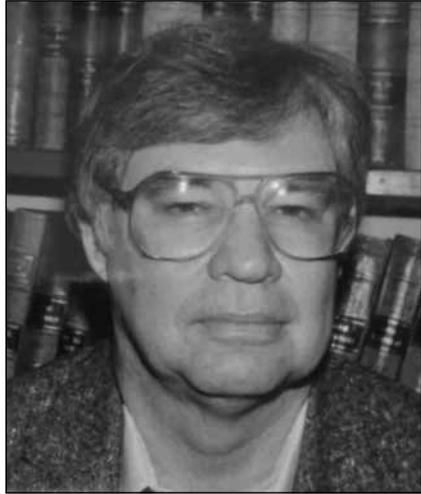


John Robert Landrey Milton (1939–2017)

JOHN Robert Landrey Milton was born in Kimberley in 1939. After schooling there, he arrived at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg. He initially registered for a BSc (Agriculture), but after a year switched to a BA and LLB where he found his niche. After a brief and, for Milton, unpleasant attempt at legal practice ('I gave it up because of debtors', he told me once), he joined the School of Law in 1965, where he was to remain until his retirement in December 2001. He completed an LLM and a PhD in property law – specifically the law of nuisance/neighbour law, but he was to make his name in criminal law. Probably his landmark publication was *South African Criminal Law and Procedure Volume III: Statutory Offences*, originally published in 1971 with several later editions.

Milton was also involved for many years in positions of academic leadership in the Law School, serving various terms as both dean and director (head of school) of the School of Law. He was not one to dominate discussion in board and school meetings, but would often dispose of tricky matters with a pithy and pertinent observation that rendered further debate unnecessary. He served also on the University Council and its executive committee.

He was a regular attender of the Society of University Teachers of Law (SUTL) conferences and always attracted a coterie of young colleagues around him. He served as both vice president and president of the SUTL, and for his contribution to the Society over the years and his contribution to



the South African legal academy, he was awarded a medal by the Society, a very rare event.

Milton was a veritable polymath, easily holding his own in conversations on a host of topics. He even wrote a critically acclaimed book in the field of South African history, on the frontier wars, entitled *The Edges of War*. He read voraciously, not only in law, but he had strong opinions about several authors of fiction that he would share with his friends. He had a wonderful sense of humour and was very accommodating of younger colleagues.

Milton also had a very strong sense of justice, as is evident in the way in which he addressed criminal law and its role in his academic works. It was particularly evident in his dissent (as an assessor) in the capital case of *McBride*, where he disagreed with the majority decision to impose the death penalty in that case.

Although a wonderful teacher, as he approached retirement Milton

would often look forward to leaving the classroom and spending more time on research, not only in criminal law but also in environmental law. He had become increasingly interested in the latter in his later years in the faculty. He was a founder member of the Environmental Law Association in the early 1990s and editor of the *South African Journal of Environmental Law and Policy* (in addition to his editorial role on the *South African Criminal Justice Journal*). Sadly, not only for Milton, but also for everyone who read

and was influenced by his scholarship, he fell ill on retirement and the anticipated additions to his academic legacy did not materialise.

Milton's wife Wendy was a great supporter of his over the years. They complemented each other so well, and she, too, became firm friends with many of his colleagues. She was a source of much comfort and care in his post-retirement illness, and her passing a few years ago was obviously a huge blow to him.

MICHAEL KIDD