

Fritz van Zyl : 02.04.1925 – 20.09.2018 : Pretoria Boys High Old Boy

25th September 2018

Dear Messrs. Kirsten and Shorney,

On behalf of the three van Zyl girls (Linda, Zona & Tanya), and Joan MacKinnon (Dad's partner for a number of years), I wish to inform you that our beloved Father, Fritz van Zyl sadly passed away on Thursday, 20th September 2018 at 11.35 a.m., at the age of 93.

Dad suffered a fall at home in May this year which resulted in him breaking his hip. He was recovering well in Hillcrest Hospital from his operation a few days later, but unfortunately choked on a piece of chicken whilst eating his dinner. The only nurse in the Ward had her back towards him as she was busy feeding a stroke patient, and by the time she realized what was going on, Dad was turning blue! She called for assistance and a passing Maxilla Facial Surgeon ended up putting his finger down Dad's throat to retrieve the offending piece of chicken, but Dad went into Cardiac Arrest. The Doctor performed CPR and Dad was rushed through to the Intensive Care Unit where he was placed on a Life Support Machine and put into an induced coma.

The family were summonsed the following day by the I.C.U. Specialists who advised us that the prognosis was not good and that we should prepare for the worst. Well Fritz van Zyl had other ideas, and confounded all the Specialists by rallying! He came out of the induced coma, recognized all of us, and all his bodily functions were working well. The one I.C.U. Specialist was amazed, saying that he had never come across anyone who had recovered so quickly from a Cardiac Arrest, let alone a man of his age!! He declared that he had the physiology of a 50 year old!! So impressed was he that he wishes to do a Case Study on our Father – this Specialist is an Academic, having published several papers already.

Dad was rather confused at times, imagining he was on a flight to London, and called the I.C.U. Specialist 'Captain', and the like, however he was determined to get out of Hospital, constantly saying that we should look for a way out of there! ☺ After approximately two weeks spent in I.C.U. and then High Care, Dad spent approximately six/seven weeks in the Rehabilitation Centre at Hillcrest Hospital, where he had Physiotherapy in the Gym, assisting him to walk again as of course he had missed out on much of this after his hip op. Dad had also over the past year experienced the odd episode of choking when eating – this we all put down to his having always eaten too fast. A legacy from his years at Boarding School where he told us it was a case of 'survival of the fittest' – the sooner you finished the sooner you could line up for a second helping! ☺ The Specialists discovered that Dad had some 'folds' in his throat which tended from time to time, to 'catch' bits of food and thereby causing the choking. The problem was too that bits of food would sometimes end up in the lungs which was a problem, and so Dad had to only eat pureed food and everything he drank had to be thickened with thickening powder, as everything had to be of a certain consistency.

Finally Dad was released from Hospital on 18.07.18 and was making very good progress at home, walking with his Walker which previously he had only used on occasion, otherwise preferring to walk on his own or whilst holding onto someone. Two nursing sisters assisted with Dad during the day seven days a week, and one night sister was employed to keep an eye on him during the night. Then on the 01.09.18 Dad was admitted to Hospital with suspected Pneumonia and a Urinary Tract Infection. Immediately Dad responded to the anti-biotics, which against astounded the Specialists, proclaiming what a remarkable man he was, with the most amazing positive demeanour they had ever come across in a man. Four days later he was discharged again, though this episode set him back somewhat. He was however thrilled to be at home and was talking enthusiastically about us

all having a braai together, he wanted to get out of bed and walk, he was laughing and joking around.

Friday, 14th September Dad stopped talking, and unfortunately could not eat or drink anything without choking, which naturally left him feeling drained! It was heart breaking to watch him getting weaker, though he was peaceful. He did have several episodes of terrible coughing in the last week, and he had to be suctioned – a build-up of fluid. In the end he passed away peacefully. Dad often quipped when he informed us of someone's death, and we would enquire what the cause of death had been and he would say impatiently 'Oh darling, probably a shortage of breath!' Well that is how it was for Dad in the end.

Attached herewith please find three photos which I took featuring our Father :

2732 : taken on Father's Day in June 2014

4927 : Taken in July 2018 in the Rehabilitation Centre at Hillcrest Hospital

See below the Death Notice which appeared in our local papers, which you might or might not have seen. Please be so kind and inform the other members of the Pretoria Boys High School Old Boys association. Our Father was a very proud Old Boy.

Kind regards,

Zona Svacina

**VAN ZYL
FREDERIK
JACOBUS
(Fritz)**

02.04.1925

20.09.2018

Died peacefully after a
life lived with
enthusiasm, integrity,
humour and a great
sense of adventure.

Remembered by many
as a raconteur of note,
and as an astute leader.
He was also the devoted

husband
of the late Eileen and
latterly partner of Joan
MacKinnon. Loving
Father of Linda, Zola and
Tanya, father-in-law
to Otto, Hilton and the
late Casper, Grandfather
and Great-Grandfather.

He was an inspiration
and a fine example to all.

A Memorial Service to
celebrate his life will be
held on THURSDAY,
27.09.18 at 09.30 a.m. at
Sandown Village
Centre, Harvey Road,
Pinetown.