
Obituary

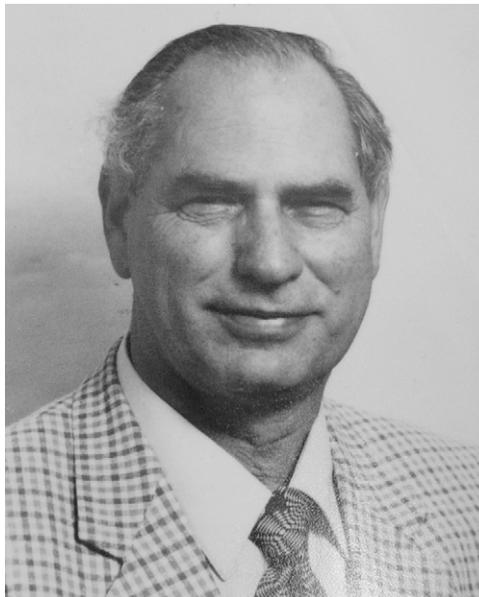
Herwil Johan Reyneke Dürr (23 May 1921 – 11 August 2009)

Professor H.J.R. Dürr, former Professor of Entomology at the University of Stellenbosch, died of a heart attack on the 11th of August 2009 in the Stellenbosch Medi-Clinic. He was 88 years old and enjoyed reasonably good health until the end.

Dürr was the second of three children. He attended school in Stellenbosch at the Hoër Jongenskool (later named the Paul Roos Gimnasium) at the time when the legendary Paul Roos was the principal. He matriculated in 1938 and then briefly joined *Die Suiderstem* as cartoonist, as he was good at drawing. (In later life he made pencil drawings of his colleagues and also took up painting as a hobby.) He entered the University of Stellenbosch and in 1941 obtained a B.Sc. with Zoology and Chemistry as majors. He decided to specialize in Zoology/Entomology and three years later received an M.Sc. for a thesis on the morphology and biology of the snail *Theba pisana*. His father died when he was six and his mother an invalid, so the young Dürr had very limited financial resources and he showed great stamina and endurance in completing his studies.

In May 1944 he was appointed Assistant professional officer by the Department of Agriculture at the Entomological and Plant Quarantine Station at Rosebank. Here he gained considerable experience in the control of household pests and conducted some of the first research in South Africa regarding the use of DDT. He also studied wood-boring insects and in 1951 was awarded a D.Sc. by the University of Stellenbosch for a thesis on the morphology, biology and control of the European house-borer *Hylotrupes bajulus*. This work was published in two sections, as *Bulletin* 337 in the Entomology Series of the Department of Agriculture and as *Entomology Memoir* 4 of the same department. He was then transferred as Professional officer to the Fruit Research Station (currently ARC-Infruitec) at Stellenbosch where he did extensive work on the biology and control of the Argentine ant.

In 1954 Dürr joined the University of Stellenbosch as senior lecturer in Entomology and in 1961 he succeeded Prof. J.T.R. Potgieter as Professor of



Entomology and Head of Department of Entomology. He lectured mostly on insect physiology, pesticides and pest control. This was at a time when lecturers were expected to produce elaborate notes on the subjects they taught and dictate them to students. He was particularly enthusiastic about insect physiology where his background in chemistry came in very useful.

While lecturing and departmental administration were his main responsibility, he also studied the histology of the alimentary canal of several Lepidoptera species and became a specialist in the taxonomy of the Aphididae. In 1957 he spent three months working with V.F. Eastop, the famous aphidologist, in the Natural History Museum, London. He published several papers on the morphology and flight patterns of certain aphid species, such as *Myzus persicae*. He retired from the University in 1986.

He was president of the Western Cape Branch of the Entomological Society in 1976/77.

Professor Dürr made an important contribution in civil society. He served for many years as a