

## TEKS – HULDEBLYK: “WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ELEPHANTS”

**Dr Sante van Vuuren**

### **Sitation // Sitasie**

It is my privilege tonight to pay tribute to Mr Jock Murray who played an integral part in the development of Occupational Therapy training and clinical services in the Free State.

I have met Jock Murray for the first time as a second year student at the University of Stellenbosch in 1973. It was a surface Anatomy class. There we were, shy and embarrassed in our black leotards, palpating and drawing the different muscles on one another. Reflecting upon the situation, I must admit that this young male lecturer handled the situation very well. Jock Murray, over the years, has developed and was known as a person who was very sensitive regarding the needs of people.

Jock Murray was appointed as Head of the Department in 1976, and has done an enormous task over a period of 32 years. From the outset of the Department, with only a few staff members, were a close unit, and the focus was not only to develop the training of the occupational therapists, but also to establish clinical services in the hospitals and the community. Under the leadership of Jock Murray the clinical training and service areas have grown from 2 (one physical and one psychiatry)

Academically, under his leadership, the conversion course were initiated to convert Occupational Therapy diplomas into degrees, as well as establishing a Masters and a Ph.D.-degree in Occupational Therapy.

Jock Murray was always the centre of Occupational Therapy in the Free State. Dorothy Russell said, and I quote: “Mr Murray always had the knowledge but never make you felt insignificant.”

In the early years of training, Jock Murray showed his true Occupational Therapy colours by being make do with the minimum facilities and equipment available. To illustrate this quality of him, I would like to share an incident during the early years. Training of splints took place on a table tennis table, because that was the biggest surface available to train all the students simultaneously. On this note, at that stage the Occupational Therapy Department at the Pelonomi Hospital was one small room at the perimeters of the hospital, and it was impossible to transport patients from certain

wards to this “facility” - so the splints has to be made at the patients bedside. I quote: “Luckily Mr Murray was there - he went to the basin in the corridor of the ward, poured some hot water in the basin, and with one eye on the patient and one on the orthoplast he started cutting the pattern for a tailor made splint”.

That was the early years of surviving and developing Occupational Therapy training. At that stage the medium of teaching was only Afrikaans, and most of the students weren't submitted to the other languages. This created some funny situations. Jock was speaking of a below-knee calliper, and all the students thought it was a Peloni calliper. Jock Murray ensured with his team of staff that the Occupational Therapy training and services grow over the next 32 years. Asking the last group of students (2007) to pay tribute to him, this is what they said:

“What can one say about a legend whose legacy basically speaks for itself? Whose name has become synonymous with an entire occupation? Who has single-handedly founded so many institutions that today is a haven for many disabled persons and a place of training for students in Occupational Therapy?

Being in the last group that had the privilege of being in the lecture room of this phenomenal individual and therapist, was indeed, a privilege. So many memories flood my mind as I think back over the short four years we spent in his lecture rooms. Every therapist that ever had the opportunity to be in Mr. Murray's class, will undoubtedly reminisce about all the expressions that were so unique to him. “Al hoe meer hy werk, al hoe meer word hy sterker...” or “As jy die sterkte van die *sperre* (spiere) meet...”.

But to me it is not the unique lectures and expressions that will stay with me when I think about this man, but his enormous heart for people. I remember standing in the passage of the Occupational Therapy Department one day during quite a difficult time in my life – and Mr. Murray was the one that took me by the arm and asked me whether I was okay. And believe me, this was not an isolated incident! I can recall several occasions where class mates were experiencing trouble at home or in clinical, where Mr Murray would literally open the door to his office and his heart in caring for the students of his beloved Department.

Words are entirely insufficient to bring honour to a man of Mr. Murray's stature. But in the hearts of every person that he has ever met, will remain a memory of a phenomenal professional and a caring human being, long after he has left the profession for a well-deserved rest.”

The one picture in the photo storey emphasis this, when visiting England 2000 many graduates made time to meet with him.

When reflecting on this tribute, I came to the conclusion that I should include something form Lollie Prinsloo, the first secretary of the Department. Lollie Prinsloo worked for Mr Murray for 26 years. His empathy and interest was one of the outstanding qualities that was special to her. He always strived to create an atmosphere of warmth and caring in the Department – he referred to the Occupational Therapy family. When emotions were flaring up he took note and assured the person that the problem will sort itself out in time. I quote Lollie: “I have the world of respect for him and he will always be “My Meneer.”

Occupational Therapy has always been a community involvement and development for Jock. During 1978 he held his first work assessment in the gardens of the APD After Orthopaedic Care Centre, which is now the centre for multi-disabled children. He took the Occupational Therapy Service further and during 1979, the Department of Occupational Therapy became the initiators to provide the first fulltime Occupational Therapy Service at the Pelonomi HOccupational Therapy road ahead.

During 1980, Jock initiated the idea that there must be an educational service for black cerebral disabled children. During 1982 he was instrumental in supplying two classes with a teacher for the children.

During 1983, the Tswelang School for the Disabled was constituted and a principal was appointed. The classes were in a pre-fab building, donated by South African Breweries, and during 1985/86 the Tswelang School moved to its present permanent premises between Joe Slovo and Namibia. At the same time Jock was briefly involved in the early work for Pholoho School for the intellectually impaired. In 1987, the pre-fab buildings of the original Tswelang School became the first home of the Kopano workshops for the disabled – where Jock was intensely involved with the establishment of the above-mentioned Tswelang School.

From all the activities it seemed very clear that Jock had an intensified passion, and still has, for the community orientated activities and development. Occupational Therapy was therefore a must for family development. As if all his involvement with the different Occupational Therapy activities wasn't enough, in 1990 he declared himself willing to work with Proff Craig Househam, Dirk Weich and Marlene Viljoen on a proposal to WK Kellogg Foundation, USA, to become involved and generate funds

from within a partnership, on a bigger scale, with the development of the disadvantaged community of Mangaung, the University of the Free State and the Service Sector with special reference to the Department of Health. The rest of the country was the competition. Sixty five proposals were submitted to Kellogg Foundation and interviews were held in Johannesburg with the various applicants. After the first round, the Kellogg Foundation decided to choose 13 which had to give another proposal after 1 year again. The University of the Free State (Medical Faculty) was one of the 13 successful applicants.

In 1991, the following year, the Kellogg Foundation of the USA, chose 7 successful community partnership projects which would be funded for 6 years. The University of the Free State, in partnership with the Mangaung community, was one of the 7 successful applicants – a project which has since been known as MUCPP – and in which Jock Murray had an exceptional share.

During 1992, Jock started a training course, at the request of Medcin du Monde, for 6 Occupational Therapy Assistants in Botshabelo. In 1993 he went to Egypt to learn about Problem Based Learning and Service Based Learning.

During the following decade (1993-2003) he was involved with many activities of the emerging MUCPP, in particular the Management and Board level, which were involved with the roll out of activities.

Jock Murray was and is a wonderful example to us as a human being, his vision, his ambition, diligence and leadership.

Your example will always be a guiding principle to us. The country will continue to develop because of your example which will live on and continue to exist. We thank you!