

## The Nagin Parbhoo History of Anaesthesia Museum Part 2

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This paper outlines how individual collections of books and equipment donated to the University of Cape Town Department of Anaesthesia and Perioperative Medicine developed into the national asset that the Nagin Parbhoo History of Anaesthesia Museum now represents. From the humble beginnings of collections of donated books and early equipment, the article describes how the museum evolved into its present form. The contributions made by many individuals over the last hundred years to this remarkable display of historical artefacts is described.

**Keywords:** history of anaesthesia, University of Cape Town

In our previous paper,<sup>1</sup> we described the contents of the museum and highlighted the contribution that such collections make to the knowledge of our specialty. The present document records how the museum came about and something of the individuals that made this remarkable collection possible.

The first specialist and university lecturer in anaesthesia in this country was Dr George W Bampfylde Daniell who had trained in anaesthesia in the United Kingdom (UK). He had designed some of his own equipment and brought back these and other pieces of equipment from the UK when he returned to Cape Town in 1906.<sup>2</sup> In 1919 he was appointed as an honorary anaesthetist to the New Somerset Hospital (NSH). Two years later, he became the first lecturer in anaesthetics at the NSH which was the first teaching hospital of the University of Cape Town (UCT) and, indeed the first in South Africa (SA). He was later joined in that role by Dr Royden Muir who emigrated to Cape Town from New Zealand in 1921. Anaesthetists at that time, in SA and the UK, worked as honorary anaesthetists in state hospitals and received remuneration for work done in private practice. Private hospitals in SA only provided oxygen and anaesthetists had to bring their own anaesthetic including apparatus, drugs, syringes, and needles.

In the 1930s Cape Town's Royden Muir<sup>3</sup> and Eric van Hoogstraten, together with Benjamin Weinbren from Johannesburg and Harry Grant Whyte from Durban travelled to the USA, bringing back new techniques and equipment. In 1937, Groote Schuur Hospital (GSH) was opened and became the main teaching hospital for UCT.

After World War 2, enormous changes occurred in anaesthesia. Academic departments of anaesthesia, independent from surgery, were formed, and huge technical advances were made in the development of safer drugs, in monitoring the patient's physiological status and in design of anaesthesia machines and ventilators.

Dr Cecil Stanley "Buck" Jones who had trained in anaesthesia at the Mayo Clinic in the USA, returned to Cape Town and was appointed Head of Department (HoD) at UCT and GSH in 1952. He was to play a major role in the establishment of the museum.<sup>4</sup>

### The embryonic UCT anaesthetic museum

After the death of Dr Bampfylde Daniell, Dr Royden Muir donated papers and books owned by his previous partner to the South African Society of Anaesthetists (SASA). A further collection of papers belonging to Dr Daniell was presented to SASA by founder member Dr Reginald Moore-Dyke in November 1952. In 1955, the entire collection was entrusted to the UCT Medical Library with the proviso that they be returned to the Society if required at some later date.<sup>5</sup> This was acknowledged by the UCT library.<sup>6</sup> Following the death of Dr Royden Muir (1948), his partner, Dr Lindsay van der Spuy, donated Muir's valuable early anaesthetic equipment and anaesthetic books to Dr Jones as he felt they were worthy of keeping for posterity. These books became the nucleus of the historical section of the Department Library and were named the Van der Spuy Collection. Jones noted that items collected by Dr Hans Schmidt whilst researching his MMed thesis at UCT on the History of Anaesthesia in South Africa,<sup>7</sup> could be added to the collection to establish the nucleus of a quality anaesthetic museum. The collection was subsequently expanded by books belonging to Dr Jan Pretorius (who was tragically killed in a car accident) and this collection was named the Jan Pretorius Collection. Both collections became part of the future Nagin Parbhoo History of Anaesthesia Museum.

The museum itself began in earnest when 'Buck' Jones, together with the first archivist of the SA Society of Anaesthetists (SASA), Dr Jack Abelsohn, realised that, in addition to the books, they possessed early anaesthesia equipment worthy of preservation and display. This equipment included a rare 1917 Boyle's machine and a Shipway apparatus that had belonged to Dr Muir. At this time, the Anaesthetic Department was housed in very limited accommodation in the original GSH building. In 1952, the Departmental space was a single small room adjacent to the operating theatres on the 'B' floor. This was gradually increased to include office space for the HoD, his deputy and the departmental secretary together with a small common room for the rapidly expanding staff.<sup>4</sup> There was simply no suitable space to house a museum in what was essentially a clinical service space. In an attempt to establish a suitable venue for

the museum, Dr Jones wrote to Professor van den Ende, Dean of the UCT Medical Faculty in November 1956, informing him of the historical donations and requesting permission to accept these items. He also asked the Dean to thank the donors on behalf of the university.<sup>8</sup> The Dean responded that the University Council had agreed to accept these gifts<sup>9</sup> and the Registrar wrote to Dr van der Spuy thanking him for the donations.<sup>10</sup> The Registrar further commented that a decision as to where to house the collection should be deferred to the Medical Faculty. In subsequent correspondence, Jones wrote to the Chief Medical Librarian asking for space to be allocated within the library for the collection, but no decision was immediately forthcoming.<sup>11</sup>

In the interim, Abelsohn had plans drawn up for the display cabinet in January 1957 and Jones and Abelsohn successfully raised funds for the construction of the cabinet and obtained further historical equipment donations from various sources. The Cape Western Branch (CWB) of the SASA added their support to the establishment of the museum in the medical library and suggested that it could be included as part of an enlarged clinical museum display that would be of interest to all members of the parent society, the Medical Association of South Africa. Despite this progress, the University rejected the proposal on the grounds that this could lead to similar demands from other departments, placing an unmanageable burden on the library.<sup>12</sup>

At this point, Buck Jones emigrated to Australia and Dr Arthur Bull took over as HoD, in 1961. He was promoted *ad hominem* to associate professor in 1963. In 1965, Prof. Bull was formally appointed as the first full Professor of the Department of Anaesthesia at UCT (the 4<sup>th</sup> such appointment at various universities throughout the country). He continued work on the museum, approaching various companies and individuals for information on historically important equipment that had been donated to the museum. In 1964, a private anaesthetist from Durban, Dr Peter Maytom, and others offered a variety of pieces to the museum, which was now formally catalogued and housed in a display cabinet in the departmental space. Further donations of equipment were made by Dr B Kearns (1965) and Dr H Berelowitz (1966). The latter donation included a Connell machine (now lost) and a McKesson apparatus.

In 1975, as a result of the academic achievements of, particularly, Dr Gaisford Harrison (now promoted to Associate Professor) and Dr Julien Biebuyck, generous funding was obtained from the Anglo-American Company and also from a personal bequest from a financier Joseph Stone who had been a beneficiary of quality care from the department during a serious illness. These funds allowed the establishment of the Anglo-American laboratory and academic office space on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the Heart Disease and Organ Transplantation (HD&OT) building on the Medical Faculty campus across Anzio Road from the main hospital (now known as the Chris Barnard Building). This greatly increased departmental space allowed the museum to be housed in the professorial office but had the disadvantage of being situated well away from the main body of the department

In 1980, Bull retired, and Harrison was appointed as HoD in 1981. Harrison approached the then CEO of GSH, Dr Hannah Reeve-Saunders with a request to house the museum in the about-to-be-vacated theatre complex of the old hospital. This idea did not eventuate as it was felt that such displays should be retained within individual departments. However, eventually in 1995, the theatre space was used to house the very impressive Heart of Cape Town Museum commemorating the world's first heart transplant operation in the same space in which the original procedure was performed. Prof. Joseph Ozinsky, the anaesthetist at that momentous event,<sup>13</sup> made a major contribution to the design and display of this internationally acclaimed museum.

In 1984, Dr Nagin Parbhoo (then a registrar in the department who had shown an interest in the history of anaesthesia) requested permission from Harrison to formalise the collection into an established museum. Parbhoo was then appointed honorary curator of the museum and travelled widely around the Cape Province assembling further historical artefacts for the display. In 1987, Dr Parbhoo, who had also played a significant role in the affairs of SASA, was appointed as Honorary Archivist to the society. In 1993, to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the society Dr Parbhoo published his book '*Five Decades – The SA Society of Anaesthetists 1943–1993*'.<sup>14</sup> The book was officially launched at the jubilee congress of the society, held in Cape Town that year.

In 1988, Prof. Harrison retired and was succeeded by Prof. Michael James, something of an amateur historian himself. This coincided with the opening of the new GSH hospital and the transfer of the department into a much more suitable environment in area D23 of the new hospital. This new space offered accommodation for the HoD within the hospital and close to the operating theatres which was a great advantage in creating a homogenous department. As part of this move, James and Parbhoo agreed that the museum display would now be far better housed in the wide corridors of the new department and this would give far more prominence to what had become a major collection. In September 1992, James wrote to Parbhoo suggesting that he investigate the possibility of industry support for the construction of suitable display cabinets to house the museum.<sup>15</sup> Parbhoo then approached various companies associated with anaesthesia to sponsor elegant oak and glass, custom-made display cabinets. The contributors were Abbott Laboratories and Roche Pharmaceuticals who each sponsored two cabinets, and Siemens, Crest Health Care, Criti-Med and Boots Pharmaceuticals who sponsored one unit each. Thus, the department acquired eight superb display cabinets in 1993 and Dr Parbhoo (now a part-time lecturer in private practice) and Prof. James set about organising the display into something approaching its present layout. In 2000, Prof. James on behalf of the Department, honoured Dr Parbhoo for his exemplary contribution by renaming the collection "The Nagin Parbhoo Museum of Anaesthesia". Dr Parbhoo was awarded an MD degree from UCT for his thesis "The Department of Anaesthesia, UCT 1920–2000. A History".<sup>4</sup> Dr Parbhoo died in 2009 after a long

battle with cancer and was succeeded as both Honorary Curator of the museum and Honorary Archivist of the Society by Prof. Peter Gordon.

Since taking over, Assoc. Prof. Gordon expanded the collection by actively seeking old equipment from hospitals in the Eastern and Western Cape, as well as Baragwanath Hospital in Gauteng. These were displayed in silver and glass display cabinets previously used in operating theatres at Groote Schuur Hospital. These house large collections of vaporisers, ventilators, monitoring equipment, apparatus designed by South African anaesthetists, a display documenting the history of SASA and the Society's successful hosting of the 2008 World Congress of Anaesthesiology in Cape Town. Many of the artefacts, together with their provenance, were described in our previous paper and these have led to research into museum artefacts and published papers on artefacts in the museum, focusing on equipment designed by South African anaesthetists (for details see<sup>1</sup>). For several years Prof. Gordon has contributed a monthly historical quiz to the SASA Newsletter and has been elected onto the editorial board of the History of Anesthesia Journal.

The museum is housed and owned by the UCT Department of Anaesthesia and is recognised by SASA as their official museum. It has become popular with organised medical history tours from the USA, UK and Australia. In 2018 links with Australia were cemented by the gifts to the museum of a medallion from the Australian Society of Anaesthesia and an Australian designed Komesaroff Resuscitator donated by Dr Paul Luckin on behalf of the Melbourne Ambulance Service Museum that was used in mobile intensive care ambulances in Australia from 1972.

After Professor James' retirement in 2012, Professor Justiaan Swanevelder was appointed as HoD. Professor Swanevelder has provided ongoing support to the museum. At his suggestion a very successful international *History of Anaesthesia and Ethics Symposium* organised by Profs Gordon and James and supported by the Cape Western Branch of the Society and the UCT Department of Anaesthesia was hosted at the Colleges of Medicine building in Rondebosch and the museum in 2014. The keynote speaker was Dr David Wilkinson, President of the WFSA and renowned anaesthetic historian from the UK. At the meeting a facsimile of Morton's inhaler donated by Dr George Bause, the Honorary Curator of the Wood Library-Museum in Chicago, and dedicated to Professor James, was presented to the

museum by Dr Wilkinson. A major donation of early equipment including a Marey's plethysmograph manufactured by Boullite in 1860 and a Draeger E52 Iron Lung (c.1952), was made to the museum by the estate of the late Mr Joe Staats from East London in 2017, and acknowledged by Gordon.<sup>16</sup> Further large donations were made by Prof. H Rode and Dr R Martinez in 2018 and duly acknowledged.<sup>17</sup>

### Support of ancillary staff

The technical staff in the Anaesthetic Workshop at Groote Schuur Hospital and clinical technologists from Groote Schuur Hospital have played a major role in identifying condemned equipment that may be of interest and in assistance with restoring and displaying equipment. The museum is extremely lucky to have had the services of enthusiastic and competent technical staff from Groote Schuur Hospital over many years. These include Alan Gregory, Ebrahim Cassiem, Ismail Said, and Bradley Williams from the Anaesthetic Workshop at GSH, and Mr Lance Howell, a senior technologist from the GSH Department of Critical Care who has provided expert technical and other assistance for many years.

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