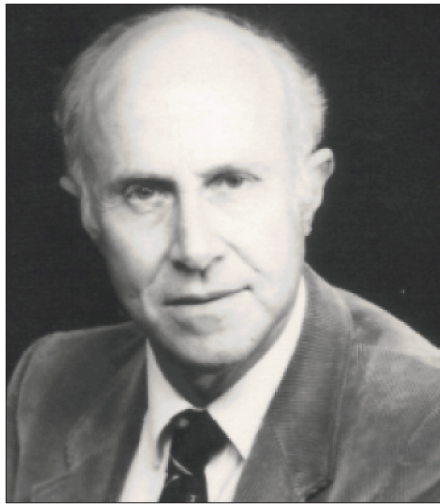


## Prof. Arderne Forder, aged 90 years: Microbiologist *par excellence*



In Arderne's office hung a prominent portrait of Louis Pasteur, the founder of bacteriology. What a hero to emulate – one acknowledged to be 'the most perfect man to have entered the kingdom of Science!' In turn, many of those taught by Arderne must have viewed him in a similar light.

Arderne knew from childhood that microbiology would be his chosen path of study, duty, and playtime! Much to the dismay of his teachers later on, who had earmarked him for a clinical specialty. But they were not to be disappointed, for he brought microbiology into the wards by revolutionising the prevention of infections – often by unconventional means. An outbreak of staphylococcal infection in the surgical units prompted a close look at the theatres, in particular the air duct system. The intrepid investigator removed a vent cover in one theatre and crawled in. Up and up he went and popped out

in the theatre above! For three decades contaminated air had been circulating between the two theatres instead of being extracted to the outside! He would often follow a load of waste from its origin in a ward to its destination. Unseen, he trailed the unsuspecting carrier on his journey, which might include deviations into sterile areas for a chat, a smoke or a cup of tea! Then, firmly but kindly, he would explain why such habits must cease.

The most important lesson to be learnt from the Arderne era is that work can always be fun. His first love was teaching, be it teaching undergraduates, technologists or postgraduates. He was pure theatre, at times a mixture of Mr Bean and Monty Python, with the latest escapades of his family – Erica, Belinda, Justin, Genevieve and the current pet – thrown in for good measure. But always inspiring and unforgettable. No wonder that this Distinguished Teacher received a standing ovation at his final lecture before retirement. 'Good humour', said Thackeray, 'is one of the best articles of dress one can wear in society.' Arderne's humour is legendary, and he can cut through pomposity with one laugh – and what a laugh. He often makes himself the butt of his stories, but space does not permit further telling.

Becoming Head of Department at the University of Cape Town was Arderne's hardest decision. He was the man for the job, and knew that there would be no early homecoming. But what an extraordinary leader he proved to be.

Lastly, what lies under the patina of the man I have known and admired for 70 years? I will stress three features: strength of character, a deep faith, and a boundless love for others. I had the honour to give a speech at his retirement, and ended by saying, 'Our wish for you is that you can turn to Erica, and in the words of Robert Browning, say "Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be."' And so it has come to pass.

**Vincent Harrison**

3 Hurley Road, Mowbray, Cape Town  
vincentcostelloharrison@gmail.com