

## **Rhodes University**

### **Prof Emeritus Michael Brown**

#### **In memory of Professor Emeritus Michael Brown**

It is with sadness that we inform the Rhodes Community of the death of Professor Emeritus Mike Brown, former Professor of Physical Chemistry (1978-2003), Dean of Science (1986-1991), Acting Dean of Research (1994), renowned teacher and researcher, big-hearted academic citizen, and the first holder of an NRF A rating for research at Rhodes University.

Prof Brown passed away on the night of Friday 31 May 2019 at his home in Grahamstown surrounded by family, after a hard and brave fight with cancer.

Michael Ewart Brown was appointed to Rhodes University as a junior lecturer in 1962 having undertaken his initial studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. After completing his PhD degree in 1966 (only the 16<sup>th</sup> awarded in the Department of Chemistry), he worked for a year as a Research Officer at the SA Chamber of Mines Research Laboratories, before returning to Rhodes University as a Lecturer in Chemistry in 1967, to commence a long and dedicated intellectual career at our institution. Professor Paul Maylam recently published a scholarly history of Rhodes University, which highlights the research trajectory that Prof Brown and a handful of others put the university on decades ago, and from which we continue to benefit. It is no accident that Chemistry remains one of our top performing departments.

Prof Brown was a prolific researcher, a much-loved teacher and postgraduate supervisor, and an inspiration to all who followed in the directions that he opened up for our institution. During his working career, he was the recipient of the Mettler/NATAS International Award for Distinguished Contribution to Thermal Analysis (1996), the Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Senior Research Award (1998), and the South African Chemical Institute's Gold Medal (2000). He was a Visiting Research Fellow at Queen's University in Belfast (1971-1989), at Cavendish Laboratory at the University of Cambridge (1980), and at ICI Explosives in Scotland in (1989).

In 1998 he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa, and in 2002 became the first South African to be selected as a Fellow of the North American Thermal Analysis Society (NATAS) "in recognition of his distinguished scientific achievements as well as outstanding scholarship in the field of thermal analysis". To mark the productive collaboration which began in 1971 between Professor Brown and Dr Andrew Galway of Queen's University in Belfast, a special issue of the international journal *Thermochimica Acta* was published in 2000.

After his formal retirement in 2003, Professor Emeritus Brown continued to serve the university and the international science community as a researcher and mentor of distinction. Amongst a range of projects, he submitted a compilation of his key papers for submission at Rhodes University for a DSc degree, which was awarded in 2006, and attracted comments from examiners describing him as "an eminent scientist of international renown whose work on the international stage was of great

practical and theoretical significance". He was subsequently awarded a Distinguished Old Rhodian Award, and was made a Distinguished Fellow of Rhodes University, an award made rarely to retired staff or associates who have continued to distinguish themselves in their scholarly field well into their formal retirement.

The international scientific community continued to recognise him long after his formal retirement; as recently as last year, the International Confederation of Thermal Analysis and Calorimetry (ICTAC) bestowed on him a lifetime honorary membership, awarded on 26 August 2018 in Brasov, Romania, shortly after his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.

He is survived by his wife Cindy, his daughter Linda, grandson Brandon, son Richard, daughter-in-law Spela, and extended family. We express our heartfelt condolences to them, and to all who will miss him.

Mike will be fondly remembered for his generosity to his colleagues and students with his time, expertise and resources, his wry humour, his grace, especially in difficult situations, his enjoyment of woodwork, and his extraordinary example of scholarship and mentorship at Rhodes University.

A memorial tea will be held at the Grahamstown Bowling Club on Wednesday 5 June 2019 at 10:30 am. Friends and colleagues are invited to attend and celebrate Mike's life with his family.