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ASSA NEWS

DONATIONS

Council wishes to express its thanks to the following members for donations received: WA Arnold, T Budge, AJ van der Berg, and KL Bezing.

JOHANNES L. JOOSTE A LOVER OF ASTRONOMY

In July 1999 we were saddened to learn from the *AAVSO Newsletter* dated September 1999 of the decease of one of our variable star stalwarts: Oom Jannie Jooste. As no notification had been received from local sources, details were at first difficult to ascertain, but in the end contact was made with the Rev P J Fourie of Reitz and Oom Jannie's daughter's family in Queenstown, who were able to fill in the missing details. Their help is gratefully acknowledged.

Oom Jannie, who died on 5 October 1998 at the age of 84 from a lung complaint, was truly a remarkable person. At the age of 10 he exhibited great mechanical aptitude and he soon qualified as a versatile fitter and turner. He then received training as gunsmith, and during 1953–59 was chief armourer of the South African Police. He finally retired as first technician from the S.A. Bureau of Standards.

But throughout this period his greatest love was music. His favourite instrument was the flute, but he seems to have been equally proficient with violin, classical guitar, saxophone and mandolin, and gave lessons in

most if not all of these. One of his pupils later became his wife, and she is still teaching music. For fifteen years he was connected to the Permanent Force Orchestra and the S.A. Police Orchestra in Pretoria.

His interest in astronomy seems to have started around 1952, and his first variable star observations were reported in 1987. At that time he was living in Hartenbos, but later decided to move to Reitz in the Free State. Unfortunately, he did not find the climate as favourable as he had hoped it would be. His last reports were received in 1996. While his observations were not very many, he was always planning to do more, as he made clear in his very frequent letters.

But in one respect he was quite unique: he succeeded in inculcating a real interest in astronomy – and variable stars in particular – among the local school children in Reitz. As a result we received more than 50 observations from no fewer than 8 different observers.

Oom Jannie will be greatly missed.

Jan Hers