

Johannesburg Bar celebrates Fanie Cilliers SC's half-century in practice

AS 2014 drew to a close, the Johannesburg Bar Council, with Piet Louw SC at its helm, threw a splendid dinner to honour Fanie Cilliers SC for 50 glowing years as a practising member.

It was held at the Bryanston Country Club on a November evening last year, and was attended by an exclusive guest list including all those close to the honourend. It was a fitting tribute to a giant in our profession, who has been an example and a mentor to many.

A wide range of people were invited and friends travelled from as far afield as Cape Town, Hermanus and Durban to attend the occasion. They included those whom he wished to thank for their contributions to his day-to-day life.

Among the many speeches made in honour of him were by two of his well-

nigh lifelong friends, client Sol Kerzner and attorney Michael Katz.

Colleague Michael Kuper SC entertained the guests with a humorous tale about Fanie not getting to the point in an imaginary matter – surely sacrilege to a man steeped in principle.

Fanie's wife Melanie entertained guests with a picture of Fanie not sedimented in the Law Reports. We no longer have a common room, but what was said in the common room that evening, will stay in that common room.

Mike van der Nest SC contributed by highlighting the dangers of being Fanie's junior, one being insolvency.

Then it was Fanie's turn.

Guests knew that they had accepted the invitation at their peril. Once again, he had out-thought and out-worked his

'opponents' (who thought that they were invited as friends). Fanie took turns to mention where the guests at each table fitted into his life. This he did mostly by telling embarrassing incidents from the past, and fondly so.

The evening reached a fitting conclusion with Dali Mpofu SC, the present chairman, relating how Fanie's door was always open to him when he started at the Bar.

Many know it is still the case. His door is still open to all. He gives of his time freely and easily.

May Fanie practise for many more years. He has mentored many of us, but most of all is a friend held dearly by many of us.

His greatest legacy may be that he has lived and practised according to strong moral principles.

With due respect to the work on the life of Prof. JC de Wet, a fitting heading to this contribution too would have been "celebrating 50 years with a man of principle". **A**



Fanie Cilliers SC on a half-century in practice.