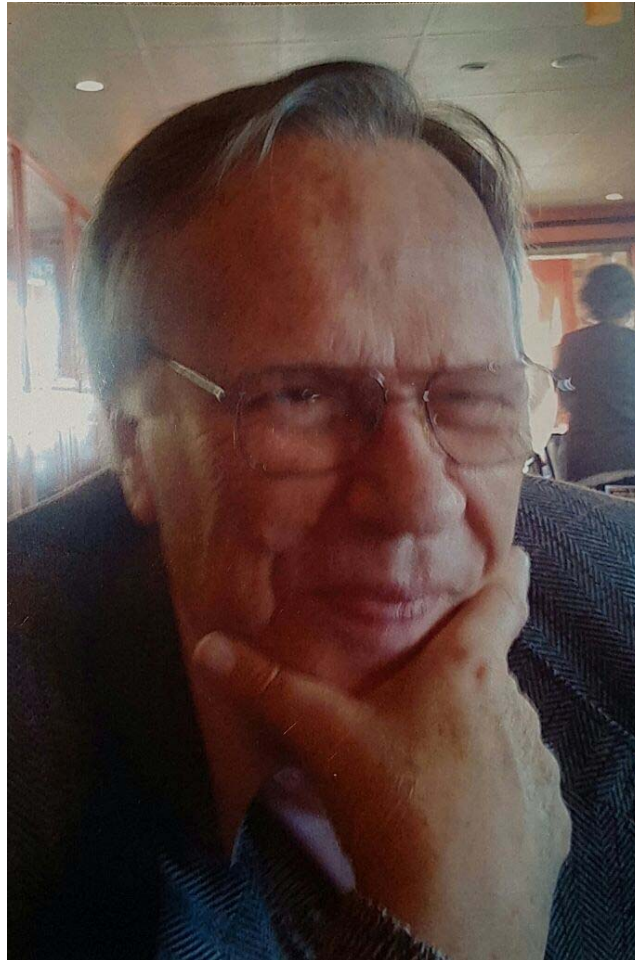


## **Johannes Heidema (28 April 1941 – 11 February 2017): Obituary**

*“What an example he set: gentle, curious, and incisive” – Samir Chopra,  
Brooklyn College of the City University of New York*



Johannes Heidema passed away unexpectedly at his home in Pretoria on 11 February 2017. He left behind his daughter, Helena, his son, Hielke, and three grandchildren whom he absolutely adored.

Johannes attended school in Potchefstroom and obtained the degrees BSc (with Mathematics, Physics and Theory of Statistics as majors), Hons BSc (in Mathematics) and MSc (in Mathematics) at the Potchefstroom University for CHE before leaving for Amsterdam where he obtained a Doctorandus in Mathematics and Logic in 1964. He returned to Potchefstroom after the untimely death in April 1964 of his famous supervisor, Prof. Evert W. Beth (highly respected in international mathematics, logic, and philosophy of science circles and one of the founding fathers of the so-called ‘semantic view’ of theory structure). Finally, Johannes also obtained the degree DSc (in Mathematics) at the Potchefstroom University for CHE in 1966 under the supervision of the late Prof. Andries P.J. van der Walt.

He held positions at the Potchefstroom University for CHE (1965 – 1966), the University of Port Elizabeth (1967 – 1969), the (then) Rand Afrikaans University (1970 – 1991) – where he was the youngest professor ever appointed in Mathematics in South Africa – and the University of South

Africa (1992 – 2006); before he obtained the status of Emeritus early in 2007. After retirement he formed various small research groups and continued with the three things he did all his life (in his own words), namely “reading, thinking and writing”.

The fields of interest in which Johannes worked, in the sense that he published work or supervised a doctoral student in them, include Mathematics, Logic, Computer science, Philosophy, Art History, and Mathematics Education. On top of that, his mastery of languages made him a superb author of (and sought after co-author in) scientific writing.

He was supervisor or joint supervisor for 10 master’s dissertations and 15 doctoral theses. The 15 doctoral students include Anne-Marie Buys, Izak Broere, Willemien (S.W.) Malan, Gert Naudé, Willem (W.A.) Labuschagne, Cornelia (C.G.) Nolte, Kinta (I.C.) Burger, Chris Brink, Emma (E.B.) Ruttkamp, Tommie (T.A.) Meyer, G.H. Stols, and E.G. Nixon.

Apart from numerous published abstracts in conference proceedings, Johannes is the author or co-author of more than 90 papers published in books and journals and at least 35 research reports. Johannes was a regular and respected speaker at national and international conferences. He was a member, council member and editorial board member of a number of scientific associations. He undoubtedly was one of South Africa’s foremost intellectuals and has left behind an academic family in whose minds he lives on eternally. As former students, and members of his academic family, we always admired his visionary leadership.

Although inherently shy, his refined sense of humor was always evident through his characteristic body language which we were so fond of, and expressed in his three kinds of laugh – dry, slightly embarrassed, and a happy loud jolly laugh like a bell ringing. His love for classical music and the arts were expressions of his kind and gentle soul. We, and we are sure everybody who had any contact with Johannes, will remember him for what he really was: A friendly, good-natured, compassionate and soft spoken person who thought deeply and in an integrated manner about many different areas of science and matters of our everyday lives, and was always kind-hearted in sharing his ideas and thoughts in a discussion towards other’s better understanding of them, but never for personal gain.

Izak Broere and Emma Ruttkamp-Bloem

Pretoria, 27 February 2017