

Namibia Bar

Contributed by Retha Steinmann

A TRIBUTE TO LOUIS COENRAAD BOTES

It is never easy losing one of your own, especially not when he has been around for 35 years.

Louis was admitted as an advocate in the High Court of Namibia on 4 October 1985. He was appointed as a state prosecutor and worked in prosecution until he decided to join the Bar. He completed his pupillage under retired Judge Gerhard Maritz and signed the members' roll on 11 July 1988. Until his passing, Louis was not only our most senior member but was also the member who had been with us for the longest.

Louis never applied to be conferred silk status although he clearly deserved it. He made a conscious choice to remain a junior member, our most senior junior because for him it was not about the status. It was more about the practice of the law and being in that privileged position to be able to speak on behalf of others who would not be able to afford the services of senior counsel. For him it was a true calling to help others. He wanted to be able to continue helping, especially those living outside Windhoek, in the smaller towns who had cases in the magistrates courts and regional courts. He liked travelling to the small towns outside Windhoek to help those appearing in the lower courts who would otherwise not have the benefit of being represented by such a senior advocate. A silk practice would inevitably have made this more and more impossible.

Louis was our criminal specialist, the only remaining one who practiced mostly in the criminal courts. But you definitely underestimated him at your own peril in a civil matter. He was an



incredibly intelligent man with a vast knowledge of the law.

He was also a very good cross-examiner. He was quite something to watch – a little theatrical maybe, especially when he was busy with cross-examination, and he knew that he was slowly but surely destroying your witness. It was an art with him and truly entertaining to watch.

This was not a fluke. Louis was known to be extremely tactical – you need that to be good in cross-examination. He was also very meticulous in his preparation and, of course, his photographic memory was an added advantage.

Apart from being an excellent advocate, Louis was also an exemplary member of the Bar. He mentored three pupils and was an examiner and moderator for years for our pupillage

exams. Louis continued to contribute to the Bar by serving on Council during 2022 and 2023 at a time when he was already struggling with his health and general mobility. In 2006 he also made his contribution to the judiciary by serving as an acting judge.

Louis was a generous man. Many a client, instructing attorney, opposing counsel, as well as those who make our workspace comfortable can attest to that. He was never slow to reduce his fee when a client could not pay or throw his fees into the pot to close on a settlement where settlement was the right thing to do. He often “tipped” the general workers at his chambers for just doing their job, simply to show his appreciation for what they did to make his work-life easier. Never once did he publicise his generosity.

To Louis' family – this job of ours takes us away from our family – it steals family time. We know that our families suffer, especially our children. We thank you for your sacrifice. Your sacrifice was a gain to the profession and those who he loved serving. We know you will miss him but hope that you will be comforted by all the memories of the time you spent with him.

To Ilse, Louis' wife, we thank you for what you meant to him. Your companionship and your dedication to making sure he is comfortable and taken care of until the very end meant a lot to him.

A big tree has fallen. The shade he provided will be missed by those he had for so long served to the best of his ability.

Rest in peace, Louis.

Society of Advocates, Namibia