

Free State Bar

Contributed by **Amelia Swanepoel**

FREE STATE BAR 2025 YEAR-END FUNCTION

On 28 November 2025, the FS Bar had its annual end-of-year function. It was an auspicious occasion that afforded members the opportunity to enjoy an evening of good food and good company. Various “awards” were given to members, but one stood out. It was the lifetime achievement award given to one of the FS Bar’s most well-known, well-liked and well-loved members, Stanley Reinders. Congratulations Stanley, it is well deserved.



Inga Macakati and Suzanne Boonzaaier.



Cobus Buys, Gerhard Steenkamp, André Verhoef en Stanley Reinders.



Mamello Nteo, Nontseni Phakama, Felicia Mashiya, Ilze Strydom, Triston Cantor and Zimbini Nyezi.

MEMBERS SERVING ON THE BENCH

During the last term of 2025, a number of members of the Free State Bar served on the bench. The honour of acting was bestowed on Neil Snellenburg SC, Stefan Grobler SC, Willem van Aswegen, Suzanne Boonzaaier and Dustin Thompson.



Neil Snellenburg SC



Stefan Grobler SC



Willem van Aswegen



Suzanne Boonzaaier



Dustin Thompson



NEW PUPILS

This year the FS Bar has seven pupils. The pupillage programme commenced in earnest and they are enthusiastically participating in the curriculum and life at the Bar.

Just a word to the wise: A year of pupillage may sound extremely long, but in reality, the year passes in the blink of an eye and very soon the mock and bar exams will be upon you. So, stay diligent in your preparation!

The FS Bar wishes its pupils the very best of luck.

Front left to right Mantibile Mohale, Dineo Cwangae, Thembuluwo Rasivhaga and Nevé Steenbeek.

Back left to right Louis Radley, Luyolo Thyindyi and Maxhobandile Sontshi.

REMEMBERING A GROUND-BREAKING MEMBER OF THE FS BAR

Honourable Justice Leonora van den Heever, passed away on 20 November 2025 at the age of 99. In the media release by the judiciary on the passing of retired Justice van den Heever, Chief Justice Mandisa Maya aptly summarized the trailblazing role of Justice van den Heever, as follows:

“She shattered a formidable glass ceiling at a time when the bench was the exclusive preserve for male judges. Later, in 1991, she became the first woman to serve permanently at the Appellate Division which became the Supreme Court of Appeal. Her pioneering presence opened doors for women in the judiciary, and her legacy lives on in the many who follow in her footsteps.”

The FS Bar is honoured that Justice van den Heever was one of its members for a period of 17 years, between 1952 and 1969. She was the first woman to apply for silk status which was conferred on her in 1968.

In 1969, shortly after she had been conferred silk, she became the first woman to be appointed as a judge.



Subsequently, Justice van den Heever was also the first woman to serve permanently at the Appellate Division. After her retirement from the bench, she continued her service to the judiciary, by serving in an acting capacity at the Cape Provincial Division of the High Court and also as an appeal court judge in Lesotho.

Above are only a few highlights of the long and esteemed career of Justice van den Heever. She was passionate about her profession and matters affecting it, which is evident from a speech she made in 1995 at a FS Bar Function. In the speech she, amongst others, discussed the poor administration of courts, specialisation and language. Language was near to her heart. Justice van den Heever was of the view that language could be a serious barrier in the achievement of access to justice. She stated, amongst other things that anyone who wants to be a lawyer, advocate or judge in any country must be able to communicate. Communication means language and it should be compulsory for everyone involved in law and the administration of justice to buy a new dictionary every now and then as language lives and is not static.

May the life and legacy of Justice Leonora van den Heever remain an inspiration to all.

• See page 57 of this edition of Advocate.

LIFE OUTSIDE THE BAR

The FS Bar is an active participant in the lawn bowls business leagues in Bloemfontein. The team consisting of Neil Snellenburg SC, Cobus Buys, Stian Janse van Rensburg and Gerhard Steenkamp has once again done us proud by winning the Orangia Business League Trophy. Congratulations gentlemen and well done!



VALENTINE'S DAY AT THE BAR

On 13 February 2026, the women members and staff, received an early Valentine's Day surprise. They were

treated by an “anonymous member” with soft serve cones. Thank you for the “out of the box” gesture! **A**