

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF DR. STUART SAUNDERS



Stuart John Saunders was born in Cape Town, South Africa, on 28th August 1931. After graduating MBChB with honours in 1953 at the University of Cape Town, he did post-graduate research at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School at Hammersmith in London and at Harvard University. He received the degree of Doctor of Medicine in 1965 (University of Cape Town). He began his administrative career as the University of Cape Town's Head of the Department of Medicine (1971-1980) and was co-founder of the university's Liver Clinic & Liver Research Unit (a field in which he wrote some two hundred articles and co-authored a study that has become a classical reference). He was Vice-Chancellor from January 1981 to August 1996.

Dr. Saunders is the recipient of many an honorary degree, among them Doctorates from the universities of Aberdeen, Sheffield, Rhodes, Princeton, Toronto and Cape Town. He is Fellow of the College of Physicians of South Africa, the Royal Society of South Africa and of the Royal College of Physicians London.

He is a trustee of the Claude Leon Foundation, the Fox Foundation and the Webb Trust. He is a past trustee and chair of the Friends of Valkenburg (the psychiatry teaching hospital of the University of Cape Town), a trustee of the University of Cape Town Trust in the United Kingdom and a past Fulbright Commissioner (Chair 2000). He was president of Convocation (University of Cape Town, 1998-2011). He was a founder and chairman of TENET (Tertiary Education Network) until 2007, a not-for-profit company which pioneered higher education digital connectivity. He served on the National Working Group established by the Minister of Education to look at the restructuring of Higher Education (2001), on the Advisory Council for National Orders (2002–2005) and on the Council for Higher Education (2002–2010, deputy chair 2008–2010). He is a Senior Advisor to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (New York).

He is credited for putting an end to the racially segregated training of medical registrars and for admitting students of all races to the University of Cape Town's residences; for refusing to bend to the will of the apartheid State; for initiating fund raising among South African universities so as to ensure their academic freedom and meaningful service to science and to the "rainbow nation".

His steering of the medical profession and of his University under apartheid has been recounted in his autobiography, *Vice-Chancellor on a tightrope*.¹ He famously resigned from the South African Medical Association as they failed to take action against the district surgeons responsible for treating Steve Biko at the time of his capture and murder by apartheid operatives.

The Order of the Baobab (Grand Counsellor, Silver Class), a prestigious South African non-military honour, was bestowed upon him in 2002.



¹ Stuart Saunders, *Vice-Chancellor on a tightrope: A personal account of climatic years in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2000).