

## Obituary: D.A. Viljoen

The South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (SAIMM), together with his many friends and colleagues in the mining industry, mourn the loss of one of their most respected and well-loved personalities, Dave Viljoen, who passed away on 23rd June, 1988, in Seville, Spain.

David Alphonso Viljoen was born in Burgersdorp, Cape Province, in January 1926 and completed his secondary education at Queen's College, Queenstown. He began his university career at Rhodes in 1943, but this was interrupted when he joined the South African Air Force with the intention of training as a pilot. However, when he realized that the shorter training period for a wireless operator/air gunner would give him a better chance of seeing action, he chose this option and qualified with success.

He returned to Rhodes after the war, where he studied for his Bachelor of Commerce degree. Apart from his academic activities, Dave played first-team rugby for Rhodes and in the social field he met Elizabeth Lancefield, who was destined to feature prominently in his future.

His mining career started at the end of 1949 at Van Dyk Consolidated Mines Limited, then under the control of Union Corporation Limited. His education led him into the administrative department but, before long, his association with young metallurgical graduates in the group convinced him that a career in metallurgy would be not only more lucrative but also more challenging and exciting.

He approached the Consulting Metallurgist for Union Corporation at the time, Dr O.A.E. Jackson, and his impressive personality, a course in leather chemistry at Rhodes, and his B.Com. degree qualified him for inclusion in the metallurgical graduate-training scheme in 1954.

In November of the same year he and Elizabeth were married in her home town, Tzaneen.

From this point on, Dave's career advanced by leaps and bounds. In his progress up the ladder from Technical Assistant, through Assistant Metallurgical Manager, to Metallurgical Manager, he spent time on most of Union Corporation's gold plants. In 1961 he commissioned one of the first run-of-mine milling plants at Bracken, and finally managed Union Corporation's plant at St Helena in the Orange Free State from 1963 to 1968.

Although he had been a member of the SAIMM since early in 1961, it was during this period that he took an active part in the SAIMM. He served as Chairman of the Orange Free State Branch in 1965/1966, and his paper 'Recent Changes in Practice in the Reduction Works at St Helena Gold Mines Limited' was published in June 1966.

At the end of 1968, he left St Helena to join Gold Fields of South Africa as an Assistant Consulting Metallurgist, and in July 1974 he was promoted to Consulting Metallurgist, a position he held until his retirement from Gold Fields in 1986. Apart from routine consulting, he was actively engaged in projects at Rooiberg Tin, Zincor, Deelkraal, Black Mountain, and the original investigation into the recovery of platinum.

Once again, during this period he devoted a large pro-



Mr D.A. Viljoen

portion of his time to the SAIMM, became a member of Council in 1972, and served as President in 1979/1980. He was the SAIMM representative on the Federation of Societies of Professional Engineers from 1977 and on the South African Council for Professional Engineers from 1982.

Finally, almost immediately after his retirement from Gold Fields, he accepted a position in Rio Tinto Corporation as a resident Consulting Metallurgist on a gold-silver-copper mine, Rio Tinto Minera S A, near Seville.

Dave is survived by his wife, Elizabeth, two sons, Stephan and Richard, and two daughters, Paula and Gillian.

His professional career and record of service to the SAIMM is, to say the least, impressive, but all who worked with him or for him, all who were associated with him either socially or professionally, will remember Dave Viljoen for the man he was. He will be remembered for his remarkable personality that not only made its impact on first meeting but endured throughout the many long friendships he made. This and his impressive manner were in fact the outward expression of a sound and very strong character.

In the work place, he possessed that almost unique gift of being able to motivate his staff more by loyalty and respect than by appointed seniority or incentive remuneration, and these qualities put together made him an outstanding leader wherever he went. Many who reached equivalent professional levels in their career had the advantage of a deeper technical background than Dave, but his enthusiasm, drive, and ability to lead more than overcame any academic shortcomings he may have had.

As a final tribute to Dave, it can be said without any doubt that his ex-employees, his contemporaries, his professional and social friends and associates, are grateful for, and will long remember the outstanding example he set in professionalism and integrity throughout his career.