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It was Latin that brought Charl and me together in 1976 (46 years ago!) in our first days as law students at Pretoria University. At the time, this - now even more - ancient language was a compulsory subject, also for those who, like us, had already spent five years wrestling with its grammatical intricacies in school. In our first university class, given my German school background, I pronounced the word "laetitia" ("joy", "mirth") in a way that evoked precisely that sentiment for Charl - who had learned "his" Latin at an Afrikaans school. Inevitably, this sparked a (friendly) dispute between us on whose pronunciation was "right". Will we ever know?

I was attracted by Charl's apparent passion for exchanging arguments on any imaginable subject whenever he saw an opportunity for it. As young students, we spent hours doing just that – always with lightness and an undertone of humour, if not irony. In the process, we already pictured ourselves as the eminent lawyers we were hoping to one day become, arguing our case in front of a stern court of law – our own little moot court!

What drew me to Charl even more was his openness, optimism and groundedness. In the apartheid South Africa of the time, all "white" men with South African nationality had to do at least one year of military service or face imprisonment. I had gone to the army straight from school and had found my time there rather confusing and difficult, whereas Charl opted to follow his call to service only after university (a wise decision, generally making it a much less humiliating experience). For me, coming fresh from the military, meeting Charl in the first days of university was like a breeze of fresh air, opening up a new space of humaneness, genuineness and friendship.

Along with Charl came many others who were close to him. Once I had passed his scrutiny, he invited me home, introducing me to his parents. His mother was "an explosion of love" (as so aptly put by another friend much later), complemented by his father's benevolent aura of calmness and reassurance. Everyone who crossed the threshold into this lovely home was showered with unconditional love and made to feel part of the family. Though Charl was an only child, his parents took in other children from family and friends over long periods to help out - there were always other children or young people around.

Within a few weeks, I lost count of the number of friends Charl introduced me to. I suddenly found myself being part of a whole circle of friends – his circle of friends – that shared similar values and supported each other in the most considerate way, something I had never experienced in this form before.

During the five years that we studied together in Pretoria, we undertook multiple excursions, camps and hikes with these friends, many of whom shared a common church allegiance. In order to facilitate the transport of these larger groups of people, Charl and I set out to practise driving a large open truck on his uncle's farm, soon thereafter obtaining our truck driving licenses. The longest of the memorable group truck rides that followed was the one that took us to our five-day hike through the Fish River Canyon in Namibia (then still South West Africa) and back.

In all these undertakings, Charl's leadership qualities always stood out, in planning and implementation. He had natural authority, based on a sense of responsibility and genuine concern for others, never driven by ego and never imposing, and he was always loyal to the group and the task at hand. Also, there was always room for humour and laughter.

It is perhaps no coincidence that one of Charl's favourite authors - if not his most favourite - is P.G. Wodehouse, one of the great humourists of the 20th century. In fact, I have never seen Charl in a situation where he has not managed to come up with some humour, albeit gallows humour, which I found particularly helpful during university examination time.

From today's perspective, it seems "out of this world" that we were able to complete our BA (Law) and LLB degrees at Pretoria University without ever having used a computer, without having written a single e-mail and without ever having consulted the internet – all of these were still dreams of the future. The little study group Charl and I had formed with three fellow students to share the heavy burden of prescribed reading of court cases,

had to rely on each of us producing handwritten summaries in the library and then exchanging photocopies. I am no expert in graphology, but I have always been struck by Charl's handwriting, which, to me, suggests openness, neatness and generosity – indeed, attributes that I identify with him.

Following our final LLB exams at the end of 1980, Charl and I, together with six other friends, celebrated the occasion by touring Namibia for four weeks in a little truck we had specifically bought and converted for this purpose. It was a wonderful experience that also ushered in significant changes in our lives. Shortly after that, I left for Germany for further studies and, in the end, settled in Europe.

I have focused in the above on the five years that Charl and I studied together, as I believe that most other contributors to this edition would have met Charl at a later stage. Needless to say, those five years were the foundation of a life-long friendship. Even though we do not spend as much time together anymore, we always stay updated with things happening in our lives and we try to see each other as often as feasible, mostly with our families. I am honoured to be able to still call him my friend to this day.

At this point, I would also like to pay tribute to Stephen de la Harpe, former Dean of the Law Faculty of North-West University, with whom Charl and I formed a close triad throughout our years of study. The three of us maintained a close friendship until February 2021 when, sadly, Stephen became a casualty of Covid. We miss him dearly.

Several other fellow students of those years have also passed away, each taking with them a universe of memories, experience and knowledge. Charl has on occasion intimated to me that, if it were to be his turn now, he would not feel that he missed out on anything and instead would look back on a happy and fulfilled life. However, I am sure that I am not alone in wishing that his 65th birthday, the occasion for this Festschrift, will be but a memorable milestone in a long and happy life still to come.

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