

## A Tribute to Professor Myrtle Aron

Lesley Wolk, Ph.D

*Syracuse, University  
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Professor Myrtle Aron is retiring from the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology at the University of the Witwatersrand after a long and illustrious career. She has attained outstanding recognition in the fields of Speech Pathology and Audiology. Her diverse interests and areas of expertise range from childhood and adult stuttering to the broad base of Audiology. In addition to her status as a key figure in Speech Pathology and Audiology in South Africa, she has attained an international reputation as well.

I write this tribute to Professor Aron from the perspective of student, colleague and friend. I have indeed been fortunate to know Professor Aron in all of these capacities, and I have valued her contributions to me, both professional and personal, on all of these levels.

Professor Aron was an excellent teacher in the areas of Audiology and Research Methodology. She is respected deeply for her knowledge and professional integrity. It was distinctly remarkable how she was able to keep abreast of current literature and trends in the field and impart these to her students, while at the same time organize the administrative workings of her department. The clinical training in her department ranks as clearly outstanding at an international level because she encouraged students to think independently and creatively, and to develop therapeutic plans without total reliance on a clinic supervisor. Professor Aron demanded high standards for both clinical and academic work. She encouraged students to be creative, flexible and, perhaps most importantly, to value their independence and freedom to apply their knowledge and develop individual treatment regimens in order to best meet the needs of their patients.

I also had the opportunity to work with Professor Aron as a colleague at the University of the Witwatersrand. My experiences as a lecturer there were all influenced to some extent by Professor Aron's overall guidance, approach to education, and devotion to our profession. She encouraged

faculty members to work independently and take full responsibility for their lecture courses, yet was always open and available for advice and assistance. Professor Aron was a central figure in my professional training and career development.

Finally, through many years of professional association, I have considered Professor Aron a friend, and I am grateful for the warmth and friendship built over time. She has an unusual ability to show personal interest and concern, and to provide invaluable guidance and support when needed. Few teachers and administrators have exhibited the level of caring that Professor Aron has shown towards me. I deeply value her friendship at this level.

Professor Aron is respected highly in South Africa for her intellectual excellence, dedication to the profession, and the model of professionalism she provides. She has an insightful approach to problem-solving, and a deep perspective within the field. Moreover, her wide-reaching dedication has also included a commitment to the training of *both* black and white South African students and to the treatment of children and adults with speech, language and/or hearing disorders, regardless of race or ethnic background. Professor Aron has been selfless in her contribution.

Retirement may be thought of as: a time of accomplishment, a time of satisfaction, a time of reflection, a time of sadness, a time of peace, a time of relaxation, a time of closure ... a time to move on to other things...

On behalf of all the members of the South African Speech and Hearing Association – those residing in and outside South Africa – and the members of the American Speech and Hearing Association worldwide, I would like to wish Professor Aron a sense of fulfilment as she reflects on her contributions to the development of our profession in South Africa. We wish her good luck, good health, and much happiness in her future.

## Professor M.L. Aron - 'n Huldeblyk

Professor Isabel Uys  
*Departement Spraakheelkunde en Oudiologie  
 Universiteit van Pretoria*

Hoe fragmenteer 'n mens 'n kompleksiteit sonder om daaraan afbreuk te doen? Hoe kan ek praat oor iemand soos Professor Aron sonder om Chookie daarby in te sleep? 'n Multi-dimensionele, veelvlakkige mens is sy. 'n Mens met wie altyd rekening gehou moet word - dis sy. 'n Stilte van haar kant af is 'n "op julle merke"-sein vir almal om haar. En dit is een van haar grootste bates, waarvoor sy waarskynlik nog nooit genoeg erkenning gekry het nie. Sy laat nie dinge met haar gebeur nie, maar sorg dat dinge om haar gebeur - tot voordeel van almal. Dit is die boodskap van haar lewe vir ons as kollegas en vriende.

As professionele leier het sy oorgeneem na die vestiging van die kursusse en die beroep. Maar sy het gesorg vir erkenning, vir uitbouing en aanvaarding. Was daar al ooit iemand wat met soveel toewyding dag vir dag kon stry vir Spraakterapie en Oudiologie in Suid-Afrika? Sy deins nooit terug vir struikelblokke en uitdagings nie en dikwels was dit al nodig om op 'n nie so subtiele manier die bul by die horings te pak. Sy is braaf, ja. Om hierdie eensame paadjie te loop is nie altyd maklik nie, maar dit is juis omdat sy as mens vrede gemaak het met haar eie kompleksiteit wat sy daartoe in staat was. Een oomblik kan sy hoogs gesofistikeerd die koue wetenskaplike feite aanhaal, om net daarna met 'n naïwe humor sin te vertel hoe haar besonder intelligente hond die telefoon antwoord. Sodra jou aandag goed afgetrek is, sou sy bewys lewer dat jou afleibaarheid nie 'n goeie professionele eienskap is nie. Nie maklik nie, maar 'n waardevolle les.

Stres en "burn-out" het in ons beroep al mode geword. Waarom het hierdie simptome nog nooit by haar kop uitgesteek nie? Omdat haar beroep ook 'n roeping is, 'n lewens-taak wat sy met liefde, toewyding en entoesiasme uitvoer. Dit is vir haar lekker om te werk en haar entoesiasme is aansteeklik. Een van haar grootste bates in die beroep is haar vermoë om ander entoesiasies te maak en te inspireer - nie net om iets te doen nie, maar om dit na die beste van jou vermoë te doen.

Dit is ook waar die vriendin inkom. Professor Aron kan jou aan die werk kry, maar Chookie sal altyd lojaal bly, jou beskerm, help en ondersteun. Sy gee krediet waar dit toekom en tel op as jy geval het. Sy het die gawe van die spreekwoordelike ystervuis wat in watte toegerol is.

Nou het sy as departementshoof afgetree, maar soos ons al almal agtergekom het, is dit maar net een van die verantwoordelikhede wat sy verruil het vir 'n hele paar ander. Nou het die tyd gekom vir die uitlewing van al haar ander belangstellings. Gaan die oudioloog weer die spraak-terapeut toelaat om na vore te tree? Gaan die administrateur weer vir 'n rukkie plek maak vir die navorser? Wat ook al gaan gebeur, ons gaan nog daarvan moet kennis neem. Sy het nog soveel om by te dra en haar hydraes kan nie geïgnoreer word nie. Dit was my boodskap oor haar. Maar ek het ook 'n boodskap vir haar. Ons is reeds in die "op julle merke"-posisie. Ek weet sy is "gereed". Ons wag nou vir die "gaan"!

## Tribute to Professor Aron

Marcelle Norman  
*Chairman, SASLHA*

Professor Aron has been involved with the South African Speech-Language-Hearing Association (SASLHA) since her days as a student speech therapist when our organisation was still called the S A Logopedics Society. She has held most portfolios in the organisation but her function as Editor of the Journal, Chairman and in the past eight years as President, are the positions that we all best remember her in.

Her contribution to our profession has extended far beyond her role in the South African Speech-Language-Hearing Association, her position as Professor of the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology at the University of the Witwatersrand and her Chairmanship of the Professional Board for Speech Pathology and Audiology with the South African Medical and Dental Council (SAMDC). She has been involved in or responsible for every major change and advancement that has taken place within our profession.

In addition, we have had to deal with frequent and very serious threats from many overseas Speech and Hearing Associations who have attempted to have us barred from the International Association for Logopedics and Phoniatrics (IALP). Once again Professor Aron has represented us at these international meetings as well as at conferences in America and elsewhere where she has put our case and ensured our continued participation in and recognition by professional organisations around the world.

It is said that no-one is ever indispensable but as far as SASLHA is concerned, Professor Aron is indeed indispensable.

Her knowledge is encyclopaedic and her memory frightening and she is the person we turn to for the confirmation of all major decisions and for the elusive details of history that professional groups often need to draw on.

We know that Professor Aron is only retiring her position as Head of Department from the University of the Witwatersrand and that she is certainly not giving up her involvement with SASLHA and the Professional Board but we felt that this was a fitting moment to pay her a long overdue tribute.

Her commitment to SASLHA and her profession of Speech therapy and Audiology on every level has been extraordinary. There can be few similar professions that have had one person who has played such a vital and profound role over such a long and unbroken time period.

To have a permanent reminder of her role in SASLHA we have decided to dedicate this year's Journal as a commemorative issue in her honour and we wish her much happiness in her retirement.

## Professor Aron: A Personal Message

Aura Kagan

*The Speech and Stroke Centre  
North York, Ontario, Canada*

Although we have not had any contact over the past few years, Prof. Aron and the Department have often been in my thoughts.

The first thing that I would like to mention (and I am sure that you have heard this over and over again) is the high calibre of graduates from the Wits Speech-Pathology Department. Toronto is a city of immigrants and thus one meets professionals from all over the world. The graduates of our department enjoy an excellent reputation which reflects well on the training we received. Much of this is due to Prof. Aron's dedication and enthusiasm and I think that we all owe her a personal debt of gratitude.

I think that you may be interested in some of the work that I have been doing and the unique agency in which I am involved.

The Speech & Stroke Centre – North York was started approximately 10 years ago by Pat Arato. Pat's husband suffered a stroke and after the rehabilitation phase was over, she realized that this relatively young man was not going to be able to return to work and that there were no long-term facilities available. Although she had absolutely no professional training, she started encouraging individuals with chronic aphasia to join communication groups led by volunteers. In these early days, there was some help from one or two speech-pathologists, but volunteers had to rely largely on their own resources. Pat soon realized that something wonderful was happening to the people attending the groups. They seemed to be gaining confidence in using the communication skills that they had and seemed to feel better about themselves generally. The centre grew from this small venture to the sophisticated operation that it is today. We have over 100 aphasic members with a staff of 4 speech-language pathologists (2.5 positions) and about 60 volunteers. We also have a full-time volunteer co-ordinator and clerical staff.

The philosophy of the program is what is probably of most interest. What we feel makes this centre unique is the *combination* of the following factors:

1) Focus on giving individuals with chronic aphasia an opportunity to communicate, i.e. concentrating on ways of facilitating the exchange of information so that the focus is on *what* is being communicated rather than on *how* it is communicated. In the process of doing this, we have developed expertise in training lay individuals in communication strategies that help get communication flowing within a *group* format. The idea is NOT to replace what speech-language pathologists do but rather to supplement this with what we feel is a much neglected aspect of our work with aphasic clients – using our skills to help them to forget, albeit for a short while, that they are aphasic and to concentrate on exchanging information, feelings and opinions with other individuals in a natural non-institutional atmosphere.

2) Functional approach.

3) Integration of community and professional resources (volunteers receive professional training and on-going, daily supervision).

We work in extremely overcrowded conditions and desperately need more space. Because we provide long-term support, we do not discharge members and thus, in order to cope with the rapidly expanding waiting-list, we have recently opened our first satellite centre and hope to be opening more in the future. As is the situation everywhere, there is an acute shortage of funds and this is a major problem.

Activities in which I have been involved include:

Trying to formulate what we do so that we can share it with others. This is easier said than done as many of the variables we look at are in the psycho-social realm and are extremely difficult to measure.

Establishing credibility within the professional community – at first, many professionals were wary about the concept of using volunteers, for obvious reasons. We now receive referrals from all the major hospitals in Toronto and surrounding areas. In fact, our waiting list exceeds our present membership. We are also now an official training centre for the University of Toronto and provide internships for students who are about to graduate.

Providing on-going professional education in the areas of aphasia. We have just had our 4th annual seminar and have also had numerous smaller events and open-houses inbetween. The feedback we have received has been extremely positive. Some of the topics include: Pragmatic and functional communication; the use of interactive drawing for establishing communication with expressively restricted aphasic adults; the challenge of generalization, and the art and science of aphasia therapy. Speakers have included Audrey Holland, Jon Lyon, Kevin Kearns, Marianne Simpson and Sally Byng.

Various research projects are underway, e.g. using new measures of functional communication to try and help document the type of change we see occurring in our aphasic members; developing our own measures to capture the psycho-social aspects relevant to the aphasic population and their families; investigating methods for formalizing our volunteer training so that other professionals can benefit from our experience as well as developing methods to demonstrate that a volunteer has reached a certain level of proficiency.

I am fortunate to be working with a dedicated staff, two of whom are South Africans. Lorraine Podolsky works part-time and Rochelle Cohen-Schneider almost full-time. We all send greetings to you and invite you to visit us if you are ever in Toronto.

## Professor M.L. Aron: Continually in Mind ...

Brenda Jacks Lewsen

*Etobiooke, Ontario  
Canada*

Prof Aron

To mask or not to mask, what to cook for supper, to prepare data for the statistician or read a book or, better still, browse through the latest gardening catalogue which got dumped on the doorstep. The list goes on ...

Prof - you're wondering where this is all leading or what it could possibly have to do with you. Please bear with me a little longer, because although *you* are entirely unaware of the fact, you are frequently involved with many of my daily decisions.

Over the years, I suppose, we all develop our own odd ways of dealing with decisions, or matters of principle, or prickly twinges of conscience. I always find myself in a witness box facing a jury. The members of my mental juries vary depending on the nature of the problems to be solved. Here's an example - when I've been particularly unreasonable with my kids I evoke the ire of the jury which includes my mother, of course, the occasional humanist and a well known Canadian writer who feels strongly about children's rights.

When it comes to professional or audiological issues the jury box is shared by my current director, sometimes a physician and naturally you, yourself. The temptations to cut research corners, do sloppy audiometry, or to conduct corridor conferences about patients result in No-No responses of the conscience stirring variety. But rigour innovation, careful attention to detail whether at the audiometer or while supervising colleagues and my entire jury smiles benignly.

The good news for me is that there is no retirement from doing jury duty in my head.

The bad news is that it is a real pity that I am forever playing these mind games. It would be so much nicer to be able to discuss issues and kick ideas around with you, face-to-face, more often.

This is a long and public way of saying that I'm thinking of you and looking forward to seeing you.



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## Professor Aron : An Appreciation

Hanna Klein, B.A. (Speech and Hearing Therapy)  
 M.A. (Clinical Audiology) Witwatersrand. MCST  
*Co-ordinator, Department of Continuing Education  
 National Hospitals College of Speech Sciences  
 London, United Kingdom*

Miss Aron, as she then was, first appeared to me operating a strange machine at the International Fair, held at Wits, many, many years ago. Overwhelming images of careers and artifacts, which were totally new, crowded in on my adolescent, impressionable mind. Professor Aron remained a particular image – small, determined, articulate: a professional woman espousing new concepts in a scientific mode.

The image of this idealized woman remains to this day. An uncompromising figure of impeccable intellectual, political and academic integrity, Professor Aron has mothered endless streams of women into a profession that has continued to develop, change and enlarge its horizons.

Her great asset of intense loyalty and respect for all the peoples of Southern Africa has been the bedrock of my respect for her. Guilt, at having deserted her framework of commitment to the provision of the most excellent services to all those in need of them, by living abroad, is all pervasive. Is it any comfort to Professor Aron that her trainees are highly respected for the calibre of the wide range of contributions they have made to many aspects of communication disorders, in major centres all over the world?

The Department of Speech Pathology at Wits must stand as

a monument to her grit and determination that South African students would have access to facilities and training that matched any unit in the world. Her ideas and practical skills flourished, and are now deployed with great enthusiasm, by many graduates, elsewhere, away from the nest of support and encouragement.

But outside of the “Department” and in addition to her standing within the University as a whole, Professor Aron is widely acknowledged and admired for her passionate, and long standing fight to keep SASHA within the international arena of professional activity, despite some vicious orchestrations to misrepresent the position of South African speech therapists and audiologists, and their clients, within the South African context.

I am proud to be a Wits graduate. My professional development is due almost entirely to the vision, standpoint and influence of a true woman of worth. She made us believe through an outstanding training, that we could enhance the communication skills in all those deprived of them, through accurate observation, pertinent treatment, and the consideration, in the first instance, that all men, women and children were deserving of an equality of care and consideration.

## A Personal Tribute to Prof. Chookie Aron

Marion Fredman

*Haifa, Israel*

Prof. Chookie Aron had more influence on my professional career than any other individual. It may even be that her influence on me was greater than on most of the students who have been under her supervision throughout the years. In 1950 when I started studying at Wits, I could not decide which profession to choose. In my first year I took courses which would leave my options open for future study. I knew Chookie previously and met her again on the campus. When I told her about my dilemma she suggested that I come to the Speech Clinic in the third basement of the Library and discuss Speech Therapy with her. On my first visit I observed her treating a case and shortly after that my mind was made up. I qualified in 1954 and in 1958 emigrated to Israel.

In 1965 I was offered an American Government Research grant to carry out a project on Adult Aphasics. It was a wonderful opportunity to work towards an M.A. but as yet there was no Speech Therapy Department in Israel. So I turned to Chookie and was accepted at Wits for my degree

under her supervision. During the four years that I carried out the project and wrote my thesis, I only visited South Africa once or twice so that all my supervision was by correspondence. It is only due to Chookie's endless patience and willingness to help that I graduated in 1970. Her task not only involved supervising my work but included helping me borrow books from the Wits library. This was no mean feat in the pre-computer-fax era!

Throughout the years Chookie and I have been meeting and cooperating as delegates to the I.A.L.P. congresses where each of our countries need all the support they can get. Our most recent encounter in Prague was a truly historic one. We managed to see the city together three months before the revolution which has changed the country considerably.

I wish Chookie a happy retirement. I know that she will continue to work for the benefit of the speech and hearing impaired community wherever she is needed.

## Professor Aron : A Message from a Distance

Marlene Behrmann  
Marlene Carno Jacobson  
Danielle Kaplan  
*Toronto, Canada*

It is with feelings of the utmost respect, admiration and gratitude that we write this tribute from Toronto to Professor M.L. Aron.

For us, Prof. Aron was a mentor, teacher and a sensitive, caring person. She nurtured the development and advancement of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology in the South African milieu over several decades, a singular accomplishment for one person. Her vision of our field was constantly attuned to the changing needs of the country and she was instrumental in redirecting the focus of the discipline to accommodate such changes with remarkable flexibility. Furthermore, she was able to foresee and anticipate the need for change, as manifest in her day-to-day activities and long-range plans.

On the academic front, Prof. Aron insisted that students receive a broad, rich foundation, covering all facets of com-

munication disorders, thereby enabling her graduates everywhere to succeed in diverse areas of specialty. While attending to the acute grass-roots needs of the profession and the country, Prof. still saw the importance of a post-graduate program, which could ensure our participation internationally. Her breadth extended still further: she implemented a database of tremendous scope, targeting the unique epidemiology of communication disorders in South Africa; she also ventured beyond the academic ivory tower into the unknowns of rural health-care and at the same time, managed to maintain close and personal links with her many students and colleagues.

As recipients of Prof.'s generous spirit, continued interest and hospitality, we take this opportunity to pay tribute to a woman ahead of her time. Prof. we salute you and wish you fulfilment of your many dreams and endeavours.

## Reflections on Prof. Chookie Aron

Margaret Marks Wahlhaus  
*Johannesburg*

The phrase "full circle" carries with it pleasing connotations of satisfying completeness. It is an apt description of Professor Aron's academic life and achievements.

My nearly forty year's knowledge of Chookie Aron as a friend and colleague (we were both very young at the time) gives me a privileged perspective of the circles within circles which have gone up to make the interest and world of this remarkable person. I would write at length of the way that her interest in art and in music have been honed and rounded by her educated eye and ear and her commitment to do and find the best to enjoy and appreciate, whether in pottery, photography, piano performance, architecture, or the creation of beauty in her home and in her garden.

But perhaps the full circle can best be highlighted by her involvement with the people of South Africa. From her time as a student, Chookie was concerned on an active and practical level with the people who had no voice, or muted voices - a natural care for a speech therapist. Her interest in the arts led her, through an involvement with the University of the Witwatersrand's Arts Festival (which she chaired in a frantic but fulfilled final "Logopedics" year) to work with Union Artists, a group which was established to give opportunities to Black artists and musicians and was

the inspiration of much of the artistic work enjoyed today. Her Master's dissertation, on stuttering in the Black population, has become a source work in the field.

All her interests - in the arts, in the University where she had studied and taught, in the people of this country, and particularly in those who have communication disorders, culminated in her dedicated concern which led to the establishment of a course at the University of the Witwatersrand, for the training of community workers in Speech and Hearing Therapy. Her enthusiasm and involvement have ensured attention for so many of the communicatively impaired people, particularly those in the rural and underprivileged areas of Southern Africa who would otherwise have no help.

And so the circle of her life and interest is continuing, and her retirement is just a beginning of more commitment and involvement with the principles, standards and ethics of our profession, with the community workers, and with the urgent needs of the people of our land. As the work of a teacher can never be fully measured, so the influence of a person and teacher such as Chookie Aron can never be limited. The circles grow wider ...