

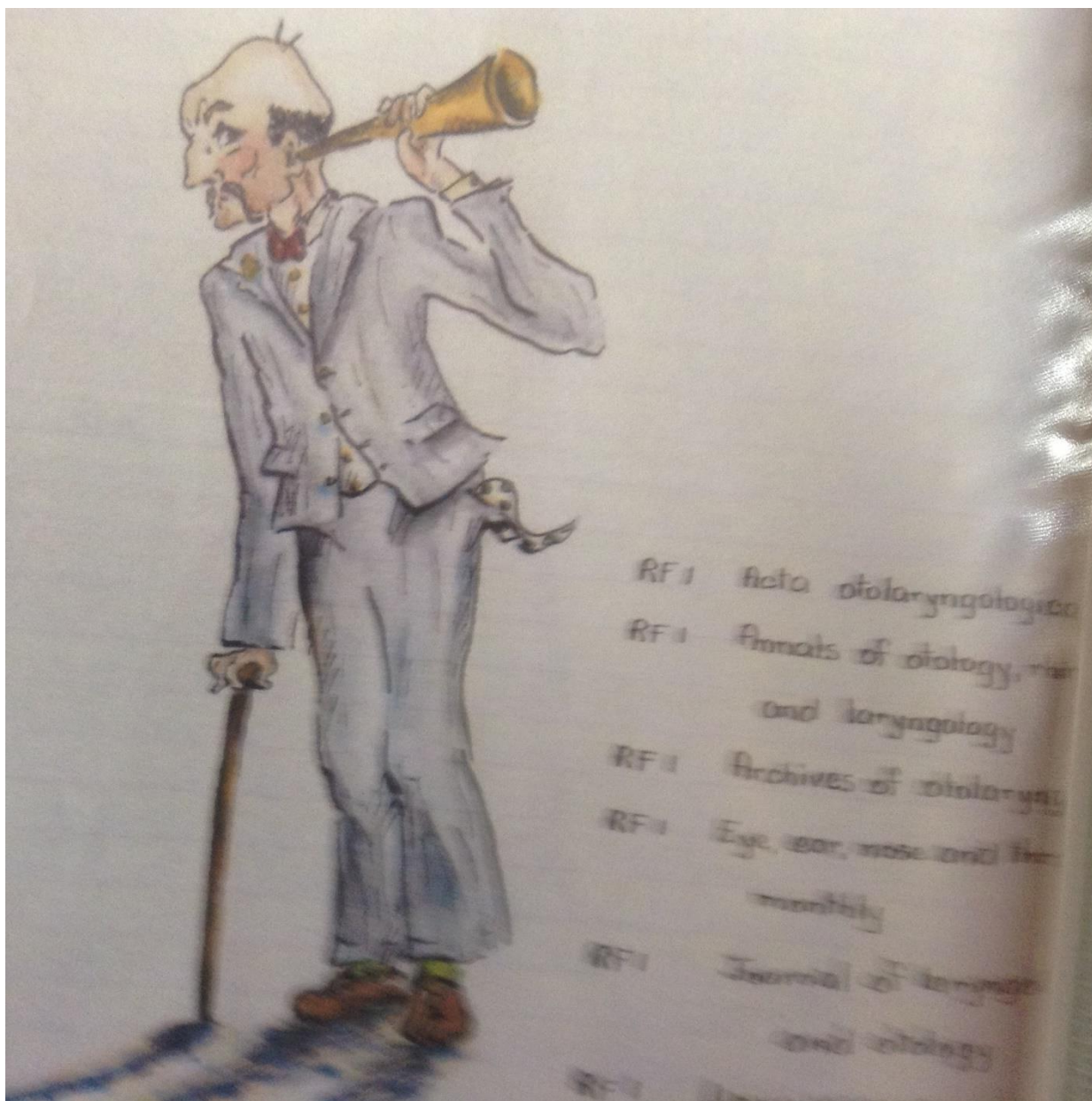
**WITS UNIVERSITY MEDICAL SCHOOL
GRADUATING CLASS OF 1960**

Newsletter #10 – Wits Medical Library

2 December, 2020



Wits Medical Library



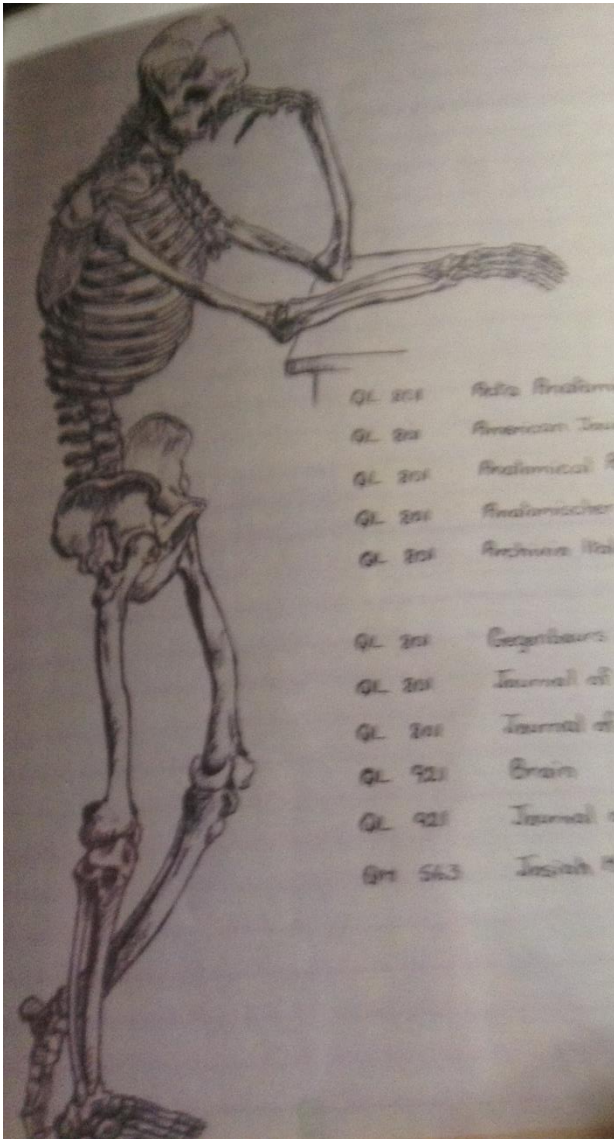
Above, Shirley's illustration for the Ear Nose and Throat Journals

Shirley Talerman (librarian at Wits Medical School (as Shirley Silkiner) from 1956 to 1961) wrote: 'Thank you so much for sending me the Class of 60 Newsletters. All the interesting stories of the medical students and teachers whom I knew so well in the Medical library. They all did so well. Credit to the fantastic doctors at Wits Medical School.'

'I have a copy of the drawings I created for the stacks at the Medical Library to indicate where the various journals were to be found. I believe the original ones have been preserved and are now hanging outside the staff room in Parktown, I would love to send my greetings to all those who were there when I worked in the library from 1956-1961. (Now I just paint flowers!)

It seems to us only fitting to connect Shirley and her delightful and amusing paintings that illuminated the journal stacks downstairs – to the students that she knew passing through the library, searching for articles that she helped to pin-point.

Background to Wits Medical Library



In March 1923 the Johannesburg Hospital Board, the Medical Journal of South Africa, and the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) Medical School, resolved to establish a central medical library. It was to be for the use of the medical profession based on the Witwatersrand; the staff of the Hospital; and the medical students of the university.

The library of the Johannesburg Hospital was duly transferred to the Medical School which had been established in 1917. It was to be amalgamated with the partial collection bequeathed by Sir Grafton Elliot Smith, to one of his students, Raymond Dart.

Elliot Smith was the renowned Australian anatomist, Egyptologist and anthropologist who revolutionised anatomy teaching in the UK as Professor of Anatomy at University College London 1919–1937. By 1938 over twenty of Elliot Smith's former staff were in chairs of anatomy around the world.

(Above) Anatomy Stacks illustration

It was he who had sent Raymond Dart, a fellow Australian, somewhat reluctantly, to take up the position of Professor of Anatomy at Wits – a position he held from 1923 - 1958). This was fortuitous for Dart, for in 1924, at a time when Asia was believed to have been the cradle of mankind, Dart's recognition of the humanlike features of the skull of the Taung child. This has been recovered in South Africa near the great Kalahari Desert, and substantiated Charles Darwin's prediction that such ancestral hominin forms would be found in Africa. From this

discovery Dart declared the skull to be a specimen of a new genus and species, *Australopithecus africanus* or 'southern ape of Africa' which lived approximately two to three million years ago, had a fully modern foot and probably strode. Dart believed that it might characterize the so-called 'missing link' between 'humans and non-human animals' (Dart was also to serve as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University for nearly 20 years, from 1925 to 1943.)

The Witwatersrand Medical Library (WML) boasting a collection of 600 books, was formally opened on 12 July 1926 by Dart who acted as the first librarian until 1928. By 1958 WML had completely outgrown the physical space to which it was assigned. It finally moved to new premises in 1964, when two symbolic books were carried by Dart and Dr I Goldblatt into the new premises. This was the same task that they had carried out some 40 years earlier, when Goldblatt had been one of two medical student 'librarians' under the supervision of Dart, then Honorary Librarian.

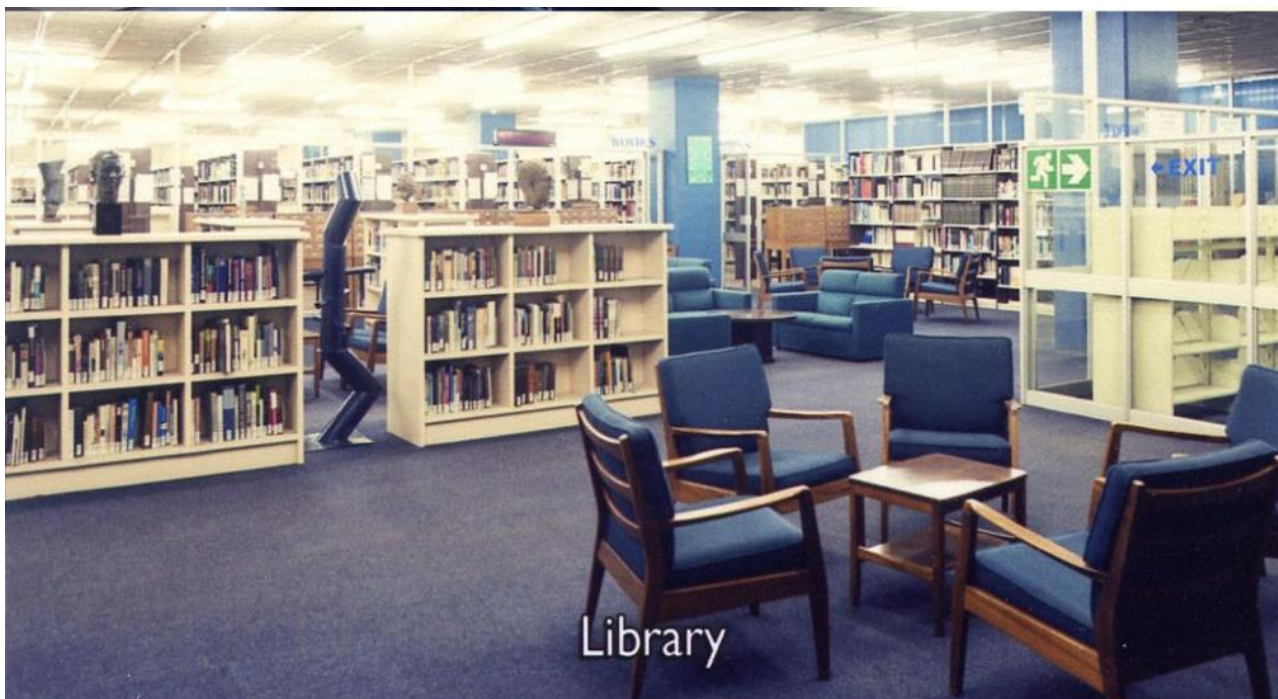


Above we see the library journal stacks downstairs with Shirley's paintings at the end of each stack. This is how the library was from 1923 to 1964. Shirley's paintings went up around 1958

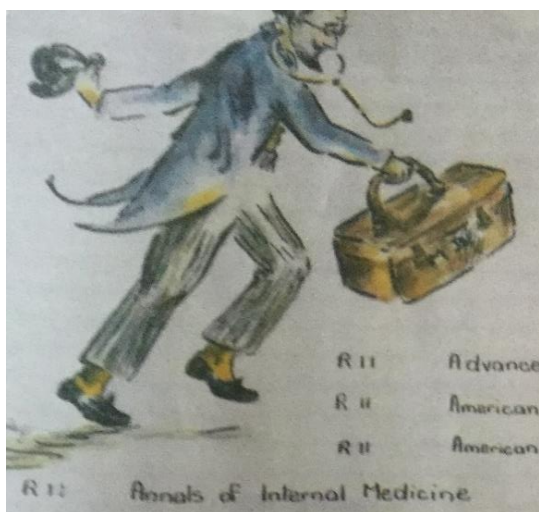
In 1982 WML along with the Faculty it served, moved to new premises in Parktown, adjacent to the new Johannesburg Hospital (now the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital) on one of Johannesburg's many 'white water ridges', which gave rise to the name 'Witwatersrand'.

The name of WML was changed in 1995 to Witwatersrand Health Sciences Library (WHSL) when the University's Dental Library was incorporated, reflecting the formal amalgamation of the Faculties of Dentistry and Medicine.

The advent of digitisation and electronic resources has enabled WHSL to downsize its initial main library plus four physical branch libraries at various academic hospitals, to the main physical library and print-based collections at Parktown, with only one small physical branch remaining at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital. Although WHSL closely resembles a traditional print-based library, it began offering its decentralized clients' access to e-journals as early as 2000.



(Above)The Wits medical School Library Parktown 1982 - 2013



former short loan collection). In 2014 another complete revamp of the library took place

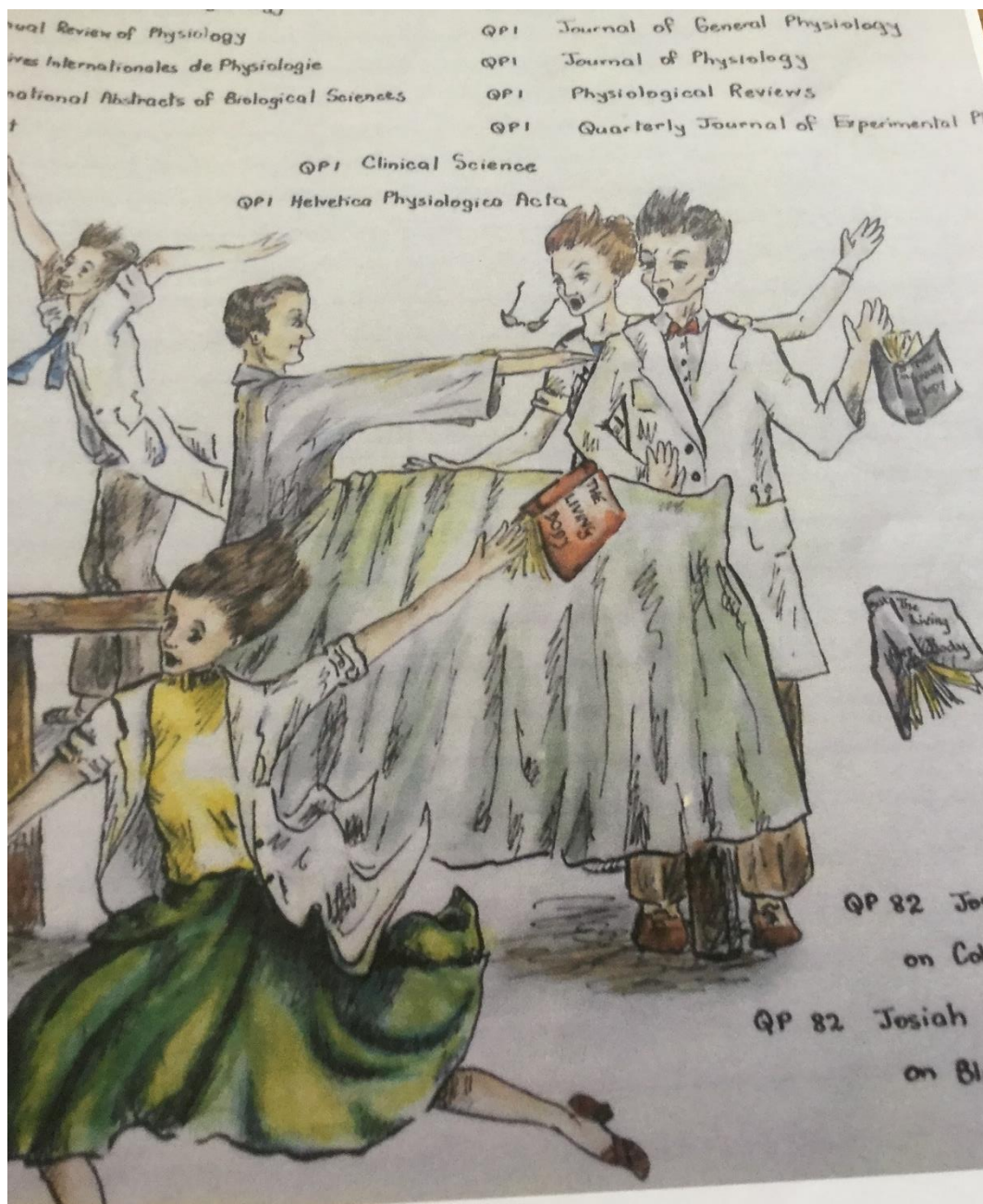
Medicine Journals illustration

A Day in the Life of a Medical Librarian at Wits Medical School

(1956-1961) by Shirley Talerman, London, 2020

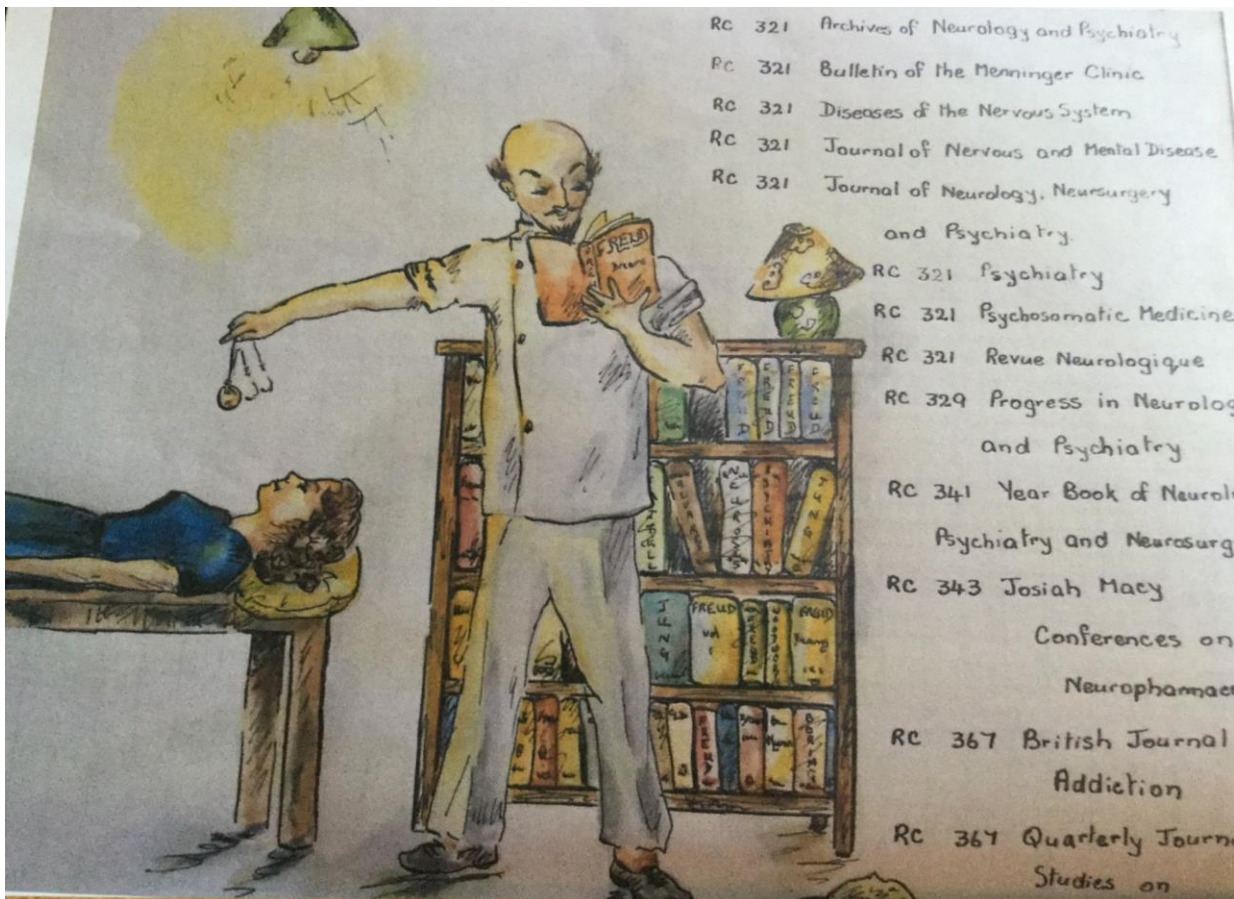
Early mornings were a rush to climb up Hospital Hill to get to the Wits Medical School Library by 8:30 am. It was situated between the South African Institute for Medical Research and the Non-European Hospital, and opposite the General Hospital. Before I even got to the door of the building, I was besieged by students calling: 'Shirley, please take my overnight books!'. These had to be returned by 9 am so as to avoid a fine, and most were very heavy - Davidson's *Medicine*, and Guyton's *Medical Physiology*, in particular.

Living Body Physiology Stack illustration (below)



The Library was situated on the ground floor, on the right-hand corner, next to the Librarians' Office. By the time I arrived, weighed down by the offloaded books, Alpheus and Daniel, our Black members of staff would already be there, putting books back on the shelves.

As soon as we arrived, Lucy (Mary Lucas), Head Librarian, Daphne Reid, Juliette Back and I (Shirley Silkiner) would grab a white coat off the back of the door, and we would each be assigned to the tasks for the day: cataloguing, research, or desk duty, which was usually hectic. In fact, everyone at Medical School had to wear a white coat. The Library would soon fill with students, and we were immediately busy issuing books, answering queries, or doing research for articles in the *Index Medicus* (precursor of computerised reference material).



Psychiatry journals stack illustration (Above)

Professor Jock Gear, Dr Daubenton, Phillip Tobias, Professor Dart and many others would drop in every day for a cup of tea and a chat. **Professor Guy Elliot**, in fact, was renowned for the great parties he held in the Library when my sister, Hilda, worked there a few years before. There were still corks stuck on the ceiling when I was there.

Phillip Tobias attended the same synagogue as I did - the Wolmarans Street Synagogue - and sat with his father every Friday night. He once dashed into the Library, passed behind me at the desk, and ran his finger down my back. I screamed. Every student sitting there looked up in shock. Phillip was most embarrassed. Once, while I was on desk duty, some years before he was world famous, **Christiaan Barnard** appeared.

From time to time, **Lee McGregor** would appear. always sporting a bow tie and leather gloves. He was a formidable character, the senior surgeon at the Johannesburg General Hospital and Lecturer in Surgery at Wits. He had written a seminal textbook: *A Synopsis of Surgical Anatomy*.

Placing his gloves on the desk, he'd ask for a particular journal from the stacks down the stairs. We would duly rush down and bring it up to him. He would stand by the desk, glance at it, and then ask us to go down and get another journal. This could go on for an hour!



RD 1 Acta Chirurgica Belgica
RD 1 Acta Chirurgica Scandinavica
RD 1 American Journal of Surgery

One day I had the temerity to ask if he would like to go down to the stacks himself. To my surprise he said he would love to! Problem solved. **(Surgical journal illustration left)**

On my first day at Medical School, noticing that I was a new young librarian, **Dov Sevel** insisted I take him to the sex books section. He claimed not to be able to see where I was pointing. He insisted that I stay beside him until he found what he was looking for. He later became Professor of Ophthalmology!

(Left) Ophthalmology Illustration

Many students were about the same age as I was, and I was often invited to parties. I'd heard they were very wild, so was too timorous to go.

There were so many students, and it was so long ago, but I remember quite a few.

Amongst others, I often saw **Louis Berman, Eugene Toker** and his brother **Cyril**, as well as **Selma Brodie**, and **Manley Smukler**, who kept coming behind the desk to get me to dance with him.

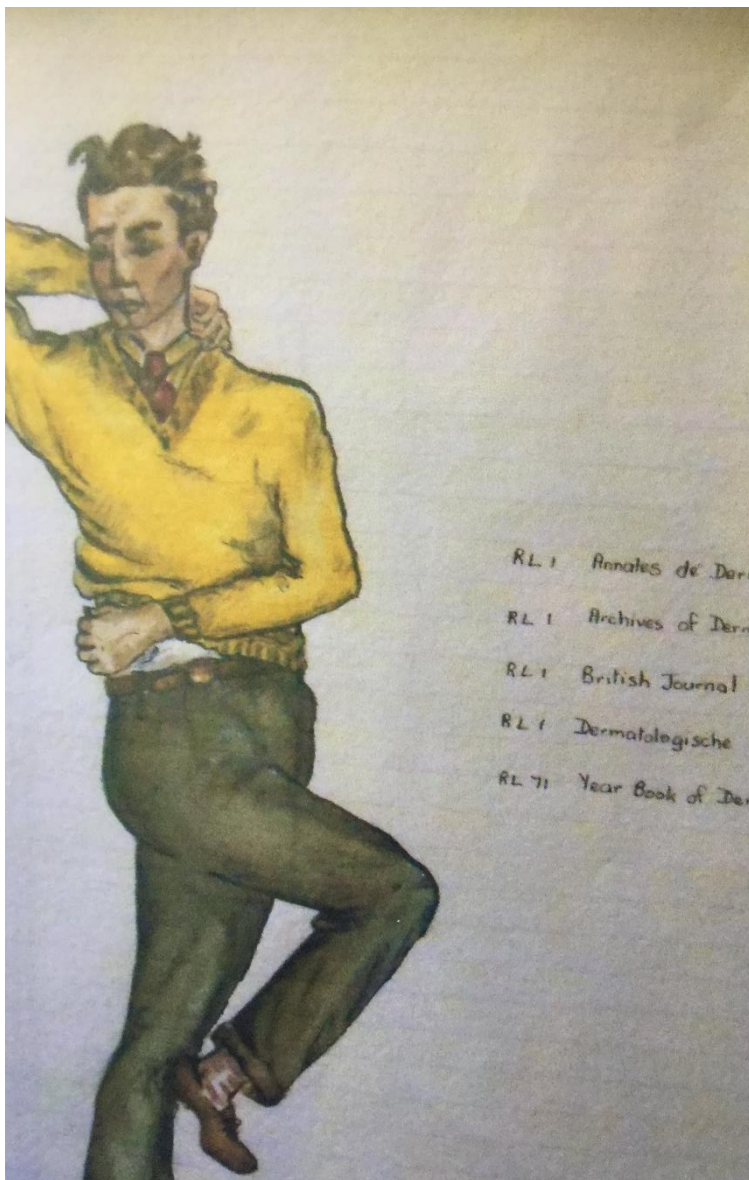


RE 1 American Journal of Ophthalmology
RE 1 Archives of Ophthalmology
RE 1 British Journal of Ophthalmology
RE 1 Revue Internationale du Trachome

Harold Talerman, notably, was banned from the Library in his first year for not having returned Gray's *Anatomy*. (Reader, I married him. And the book is still on our shelf).

I remember **Jeff Maisels** and his brother **Keith** and his cousin **Lyddon Simon**, they also went to the Wolmarans Street Synagogue and in fact my mother and I sat next to their mothers! Other students whom I remember were **Cyril Donninger**, **Adele Blankfield**, **Elliot Engelberg**, **Mike Plit**, **Gary Katz**, **Irvine Lissoos**, **Janse van Rensberg**, **Motala**, **Ian Thomson**, **Ian Chappell**, **Denise Hack**, **Arthur Rubenstein**, and **Ronnie Auerbach** - who insisted on giving me a lift home on the back of his tandem after a late duty, even though I could not ride a bike.

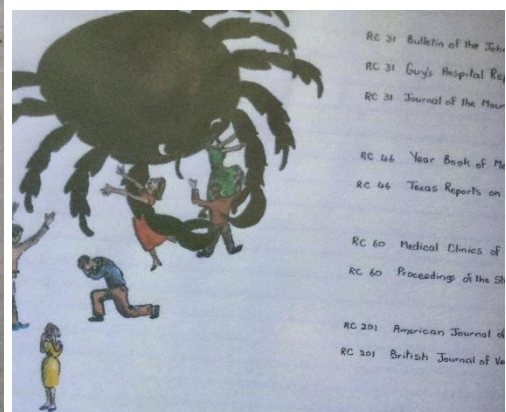
Dermatology journal illustration (below)



It was often a relief just to sit and research information in the *Index Medicus* for medico-legal cases. Sometimes, a surgeon would rush in five minutes before closing, hoping to find some urgent information for an imminent operation. And so at 5 pm, or at 6pm twice a week, the day would end – fun, rewarding, and tiring, but never boring.

Shirley Talerman, BA FSALA

Cancer Journal illustration below



Letter to Shirley Talerman from the Library in 2013

In December 2013, Shirley received a letter from Glenda Myers, Librarian at the Wits Health Sciences Library, the subject: Shirley the Artist. It said:

Dear Mrs Talerman (or can I call you Shirley?)

I feel I know you so well, because when I was appointed as Librarian of the then Medical Library in 1991, I found a box of beautifully hand-illustrated end plates (lists of journals designed to be hung at the end of the shelves as a finding tool) in a storeroom. The framing glass of some of these delightful watercolours was damaged (apparently when the Library moved from the Esselen Street Medical School to the Johannesburg Hospital premises in 1982), and the frames were old fashioned and in a dreadful condition.

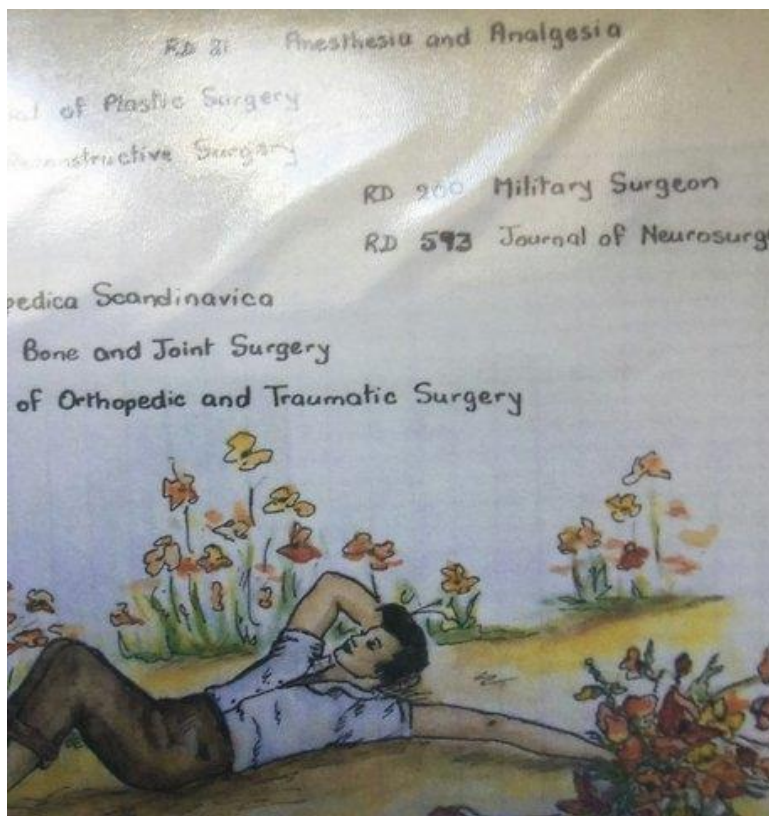
The Esselen Street Library is the one you refer to in your letter as the 'new premises', but we now refer to it as the 'Old-Old Medical Library' (the original premises in Hospital Street); the 'Old Medical Library' is what you refer to as the 'new' premises in Esselen Street; and now we occupy the 'New Medical Library', adjacent to the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital on top of the ridge in Parktown. There is never any money available, but I managed to scrape together funds and had the series of watercolours reframed and the glass repaired. There was no



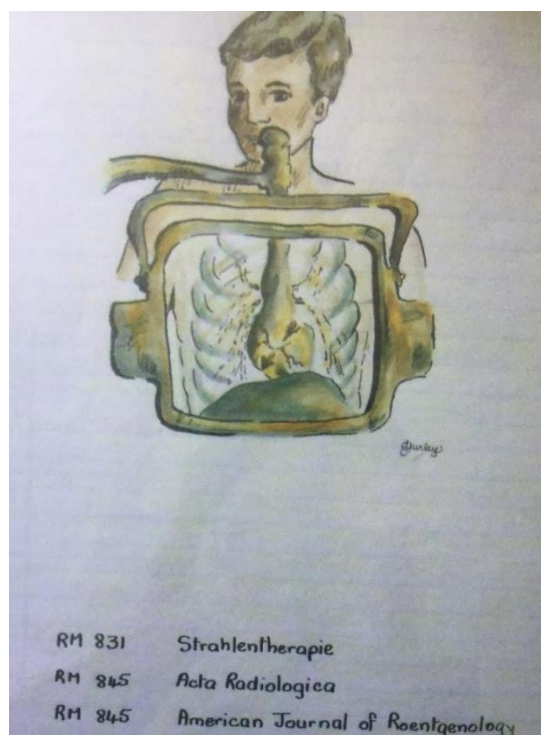
way in which I could allow such delightful illustrations to disappear, but I have always wondered who "Shirley" was. No one at Medical School seemed to know, so you have now supplied the missing link!

We were not able to rehang the water colours on the ends of the current shelves in the current library, as we no longer subscribed to many of the original journals, and also had by this time acquired many more journals which did not feature on the original lists. The library's users would have found these lists somewhat confusing, as they no longer described the contents of the current journal shelves. However, we have rehung them as a group in the corridor leading to the staff offices in the present library (now renamed the Witwatersrand Health Sciences Library, or WHSL for short, to incorporate the Dental Faculty Library when the two faculties amalgamated). I smile every time I pass by them on my way to and from my office, because whoever painted them

(and now I know this to be you) had such a wonderful sense of humour. I just love the use of poppies with a sleeping dreamer in the field to illustrate the subject of anaesthesia (below right),



And the chubby woman standing on a scale to illustrate **nutrition** (Above left) All of the pictures are wonderfully and gently humorous, but I think that my personal favourite is the very scary hypnotherapist who was used to illustrate **psychiatry** (page 6).



I am so very glad that you wrote to our Alumni Office, so that I could finally learn the identity of the artist involved! I think that this needs to be documented and placed as a note beside the water colours so that future generations can know a little bit about WHSL's history and the artist of these delightful water colours.

(Left) Radiology Journals Illustration

You would probably be delighted to know that we used an old photograph in which the original water colours can be seen in their original location (see page 3 of this Newsletter) at a conference in February this year. We presented a paper on the topic of the embedded librarian (a concept that incorporates the changes in both the physical library as well as the way in which we interact as librarians with our library users).

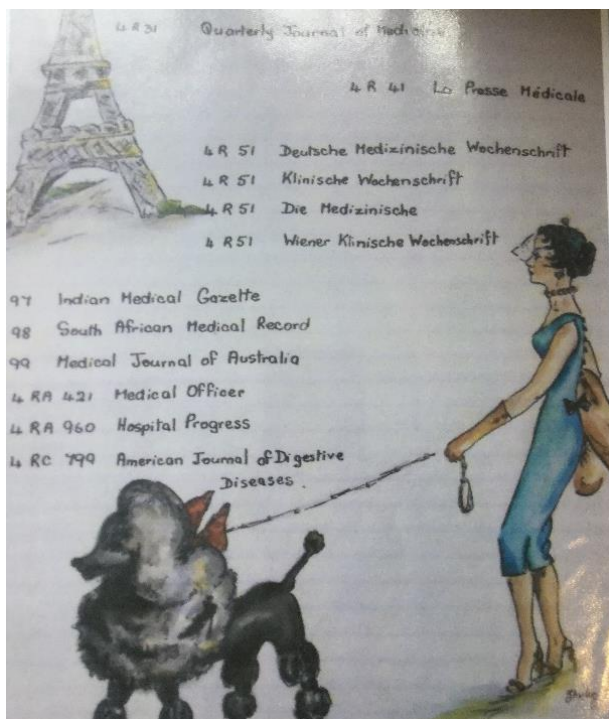
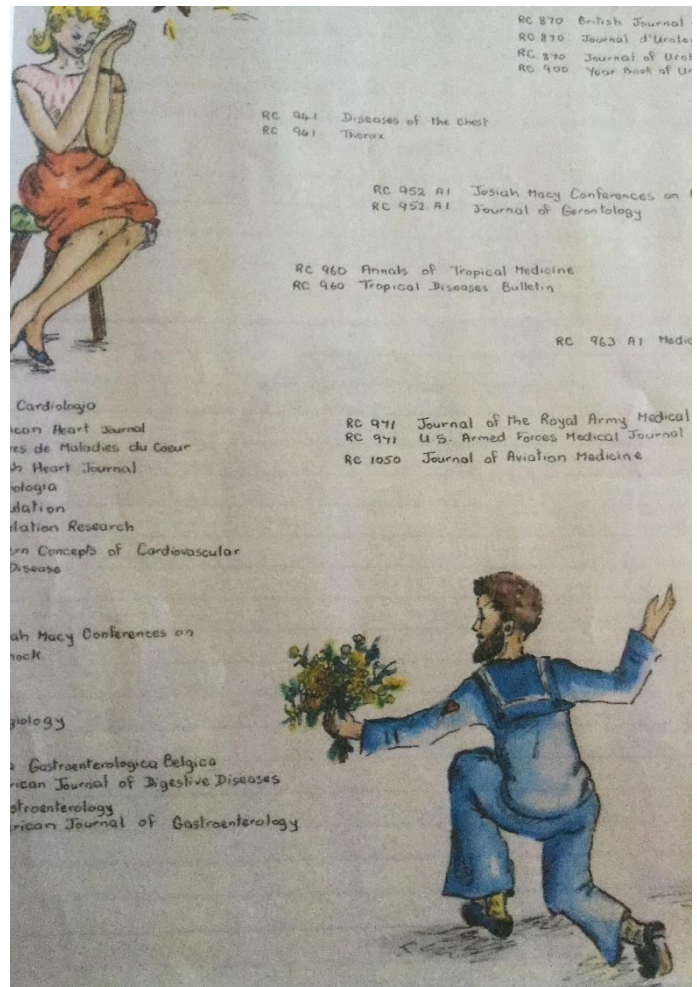
At the bottom of this abstract is a PDF copy of the Power Point presentation in which we made mention of your end plates, and there are some photographs of them in the original library.

You can also see photographs of the Esselen Street library and the current library at Medical School in this presentation. This paper can be seen on the Internet at

<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/iatul/2013/papers/34/>.

Right, Cardiology

Below, French Journals



We've come a very long way from the cramped and overcrowded premises that you would remember (and that can be seen in the photograph), but once again we are in the process of revamping the current premises to incorporate more 'teaching and learning' space. As librarian, we now do far more teaching than

we do traditional book curation, and in fact my post is one of the first at Wits to reflect this as I have a 50% academic position (because of the amount of formal teaching I do) in addition to my 50% support service position as head of WHSL.

We are currently planning a spanking new-look library for 2014 (to use the architects' words it's being 'blinged-up') to take our students and library users into the 21st century-world of electronic information, and we're hoping to incorporate some of the historical pictures we have of the old library premises into a permanent display at the reception/information desk in the new foyer area of WHSL. Please keep in touch with us, and I'll be able to send you photographs of the new areas when completed next year.

With very warm wishes, Glenda Myers D Litt et Phil, MBibl, MEd

WITWATERSRAND HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARIAN

Below **Proteas**

Painted by Shirley Talerma 2020



Right

**Shirley Talerma in her classic original
Wits Blazer London in 2017.**



Newsletter #10 – Wits Medical Library

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE from texts and pictures sent by Shirley Talerma
London, November 2020