

# News

## Ernst-Günter Brunke

Ernst Brunke's journey with the Cape Point station began modestly in the late 1970's when he transferred from the Geological survey, where he was working at the time as a geologist in the Northern Cape. He was approached by the late Dr Eric Halliday, who is regarded as the founder of air pollution monitoring in SA, to come and work with him on a carbon monoxide measuring program at Cape Point. These measurements started in collaboration with the *Max Planck Institute* in Germany, and I'm sure Dr Halliday was also very much interested in Ernst's proficiency of the German language and protocols!

In those early days, the Cape Point program was housed in the two historical lighthouse keeper's cottages and this is where the measurements were conducted. During this time, Ernst's administrative offices were based in the Faure National Accelerator Center as part of the NRF. Over the years, the measurement program expanded (being part of the CSIR until 1997) and various instruments were added, including some crafty home-made meteorological inventions. Ernst was assisted for many years by Mr Ronnie Allan, who he fondly remembers as having to take at least three thermometers with him each time he had to take temperature readings, since Ronnie had a knack of destroying delicate instrumentation! In spite of the limited infrastructure of those early years, Ernst's problem solving abilities were legendary and he was always willing and ready to accommodate. Hans Linde recalls fondly that on one occasion, he and a delegation from NACA went for a station visit – only to be greeted with an impromptu slide show, displayed on the side of the fridge, and coffee made from the station's stock of distilled water!

During the past 35 years, the Cape Point program grew in stature and Ernst's name became synonymous with the success and fame that the facility enjoys today. Ernst's stature grew among the international scientific community when he started to present the Cape Point programme's data at numerous conferences and workshops. In 1995, two milestones were reached – largely due to his perseverance: (1) the Cape Point program was incorporated into the World Meteorological Organisation's Global Atmosphere Watch (GAW) network of global stations, at the time, the first and only such one in Africa, and (2) the inception of the new custom-build trace gas research laboratory – one of the most scenic and functional facilities of its kind within the GAW network. Shortly hereafter, in 1997, the facility also found its current home within the South African Weather Service's Climate Research division.

Since moving into the new laboratory in 1995, the GAW program has expanded and numerous international collaborative partners have joined (currently about 17 partners, from 12 institutions), but none was as influential and beneficial as the twinning partnership that Cape Point had with its German counterpart, the Fraunhofer Institute (IFU), under the auspices of the late Dr Eckhart Scheel. This international collaboration with the IFU extended far beyond just a partnership – Ernst and Dr Scheel developed a great professional



and personal relationship that lasted over two decades, and which resulted in numerous internationally peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings. An additional milestone for Ernst and the GAW program was his election to sit on the WMO GAW's Scientific Advisory Group on Greenhouse Gases, a position he has held until his retirement in 2015.

The station has had many challenges over the years, but Ernst's positive attitude of always seeing the glass as half full, has rubbed off on his colleagues as well. A popular activity for him over years was to regard the challenging task of having to cart the industrial gas cylinders up the 80m of 45o incline to the station, as "a free gym session" and always trying to motivate his colleagues in this manner. Needless to say – nobody bought into this viewpoint! Ernst's 110% dedication to his duties was further accentuated by the fact that he never left the station unattended over prolonged periods of time – even during December holidays, when he sacrificed his leave to attend to routine matters. Proof of this was the several months of accumulated leave he has accrued over time. Furthermore, he was more than willing to spend extra time at the Cape Point laboratory, quite often taking his camping equipment and tinned tuna meals along, to stay over a night or two in the laboratory when intensive repairs or calibrations were undertaken. Even now, on the start of his retirement, he has already indicated his willingness to assist the station's personnel when needed. I'm sure we haven't seen or heard the last of Ernst Brunke's melodious humming among the instrumentation racks of Cape Point!

Ernst is a long standing member of the NACA Western Cape Branch, probably from about the time that he joined the Cape Point programme. He was always willing and eager to do presentations, assist with advice, and to share his in-depth scientific knowledge with all. From the NACA family, we wish Ernst well with his retirement and call upon him to put all his energy and passion he had at work into himself and his family, and to enjoy life away from the office.

**Casper Labuschagne**

South African Weather Service Cape Point GAW