

TRIBUTE: DENIS NIXON

Denis was shot by intruders in his home in Constantia on the night of 20 March 2007. He was a kind, gentle person and should not have died in such harsh and violent circumstances.

I met **Denis** in the late 1980s, fittingly, while running through Kommetjie on a clockwise Redhill. We finished that race together and subsequently ran thousands of kilometres, often in the company of our good friends **John, Syd, Lindsay, Andrew** and **Mike**.

When I first met Denis, I lived near him in Constantia and we ran together in the early mornings. One of my lasting memories will be of him emerging out of the darkness on Rathfelder Avenue, always the same, always in good humour and always ready with a long story!



Denis and Gus running Red Hill 36

Denis's long stories are now legend. Particularly on our long Sunday runs, Denis would start one of these stories and it would go on interminably, often extending over two or three further runs. Interruptions were frequent but they never phased Denis. When the moment was right, sometimes a week later, the story would pick up again, exactly where he had left off. We used to laugh at this, but it really illustrates one of Denis's great attributes – he was immensely patient!

On the morning after he died, we were discussing Denis's many attributes and a good friend of his said that if you ever broke down in the middle of the Karoo, Denis would be the person you would invariably call for help. I repeated this to **Syd** that evening and he immediately recalled how he and **John** had travelled down to Bredasdorp to run the Voet

one year and contrived to lock their keys in their car at the start of the race. Of course they phoned Denis in Cape Town to ask what they should do about this and he said he would make some enquiries and get back to them. When they finished the race, he was standing at the finish line with the spare keys!

And then there were Denis's great mechanical skills. Denis could and would fix anything you asked him to but it would not happen quickly. The task would always be carefully thought and talked through (usually over a few weeks or months) and it would then wait in the queue. Purely mechanical matters, particularly those relating to motorbikes and bicycles, tended to advance up this queue faster than household maintenance items, but the job, when it was finally done, would always be a good one.

TRIBUTE: DENIS NIXON continued

Unfortunately Denis's lengthy list of maintenance items awaiting attention created some storage challenges and this was exacerbated by the fact that he was always better at acquiring than disposing. His garage and storage techniques were one of the great wonders of Constantia and the fact that there was always a space for **Hinke's** car is testimony to Denis' love for her — and her strength of character!

Alongside his easy-going, kind nature, Denis had the ability and determination to take on some tough athletic challenges. Over the years, he completed 26 Argus tours and 22 full Two Oceans marathons. This in itself is a remarkable achievement but what really sets him apart is that he never missed a year in either event — those 48 finishes were all

consecutive! I can't help wondering whether anyone else can match that record.

At the short end of the spectrum, Denis would have run his 480th VOB time trial on the 21st March and, in a wonderful gesture of solidarity with their Dad, **Ian** and **Carrie** as well as his nephew, **Fraser**, (who was with him at the time of the shooting) arrived unexpectedly to run this time trial with us.

Our thoughts are with **Hinke**, **Ian** and **Carrie** at this time. Denis was a devoted husband and father and he will leave a great void in their lives, as he will in ours.

Hinke said on the morning after Denis died that we have lost a very good friend. She is absolutely right and there are many of us.

Gus Thompson

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