

Prof. Nicolas J. Beukes (1945-2023)

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I received a message on the 2nd February 23 from Dr Abhijit Basu, USA, informing me that on 9th Jan. 2023 Dr. Nicolas Beukes, Professor of Geology at the University of Johannesburg, passed away. Prof Nicolas Beukes was an internationally acclaimed sedimentologist and an inspirational geoscientist who has authored / co-authored number of papers that are published in internationally reputed journals like the “Nature”. One of his most cited papers was on “BIFs and the great oxidation event” and Atmospheric oxygenation. Prof. Beukes was the Director of Paleoproterozoic Mineralization Research Group (PMR) at the University of Johannesburg, SA. I had an opportunity of working with Prof. Beukes in the field and in his lab for a month, under a collaborative programme between his Institution and SDM College of Engg and Tech. (SDMCET), Dharwad, in the year 2010. Later, Prof. Beukes visited SDMCET and worked at my Lab for a month under CV Raman visiting Fellowship offered by FICCI.

Nicolas Beukes was a field geologist with special interest on carbonates and iron formation of Neoproterozoic to Proterozoic period. His research provided a deep understanding of the nature of the Earth’s early atmosphere and history of atmospheric oxygen and climate during Mesoarchaean to Proterozoic. Prof. Nicolas Beukes was rated A-1 scientist by the National Research Foundation. He was a recipient of the Jubilee Medal and Draper Award, the highest awards of the Geological Society of South Africa.

Prof. Beukes was an Honorary Fellow of the Geological Society of India and visited the Office of the Geological Society in Bengaluru and delivered a lecture. Later, Prof. Beukes and I together met Dr. B.P. Radhakrishna (2011) at his residence. Nicolas Beukes was affectionately known as “Prof. Nic” among his colleagues and students. He was a great humanitarian, kind at heart and generous. In 2021, Prof. Beukes was the first person from South Africa to be elected as a Member of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America.

Prof. Beukes’ sad demise has left a deep void in the lives of many a sedimentologists and admirers of his scientific acumen. Everyone of us whose lives he touched and influenced, miss him, but his scientific works will continue to inspire geoscientists world over. Beukes and I did joint sampling of BIFs and carbonates of Chitradurga and Gadag schist belts, for carrying out palaeomagnetic and geochronological studies. The studies remain incomplete. Personally, I miss him for the rest of my life. We had family level interaction. Beukes had met the members of my family both at Sirsi (my native place) and Dharwad (my work place). I too had visited his family at Johannesburg in 2010. My family and I would long cherish the sweet memories of his visit to India. On behalf of the Geological Society’s Dharwad Chapter I convey our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Prof. Nicolas Beukes.