

Marijcke Vlieg (1943-2009)



Marijcke in her office at Massey University, Palmerston North.

Marijcke died suddenly on 28 September 2009 while at work at Massey University, Palmerston North.

Born in Zeist, The Netherlands, in 1943, Marijcke graduated from the Philips-Duphar School for Analysts in 1963 with a Diploma specialising in physiology and pharmacology. Migrating to New Zealand in 1966, Marijcke took up a technician's job at Massey University in the Department of Physiology and Anatomy and later in the Dairy Husbandry Department. In 1974 Marijcke became a research assistant in the Medical Research Laboratory at the Palmerston North Hospital. Her work in medical statistics there was the driver for her gaining a formal qualification in statistics and, after nearly ten years at the hospital, she became a student in the Department of Mathematics & Statistics at Massey University.

Having taken majors in both statistics and mathematics, Marijcke graduated with a BSc (Hons) degree in 1988. She then went on to obtain a PhD in Mathematics from Massey University, graduating in 1993 — her thesis entitled *Transformation Properties of Certain Differential Equations: Solutions and Integrability* received praise from the examiners for her depth of understanding and comprehensiveness. To achieve these high-level qualifications at that stage in her life, Marijcke was surely an inspiration to older students.

For fourteen months, in 1993 and 1994, Marijcke was a Postdoctoral Fellow and Contract Lecturer at Lincoln University, working with Dr Bruce Robson in the Centre for Computing & Biometrics on a mathematical model describing magnesium metabolism in ruminants. She greatly enjoyed this experience. Marijcke returned to Massey University in July 1994 as a temporary Mathematics Lecturer until 1997 when she took up a job as a Lecturer in Statistics at the International Pacific College in Palmerston North for three months. Following that, Marijcke was employed by Massey University as a Senior Tutor and Lecturer in Mathematics until her untimely death.

Teaching was Marijcke's forte. Her belief was that teaching was of primary importance to a university — research built upon that. For her excellence in teaching, Marijcke won an Institute of Fundamental Sciences Distinguished Teaching Award in 2001 and again in 2007. She had high expectations of students and a hot remark or two went their way if they didn't put in the effort to learn! Marijcke always made time to spend with students on a one-to-one basis. This was especially true during extramural contact courses which she loved. In 1993 she received the Massey University Extramural Students' Society Award of Merit for Outstanding Commitment to Extramural Teaching.

Versatility was Marijcke's hallmark. She was as capable of teaching statistics as much as mathematics. But she enjoyed mathematics more and over the years taught many courses in that subject. She was an expert on the use of the symbolic mathematics package *MAPLE*.

Marijcke's early research work was conducted in the Medical Research Laboratory at Palmerston North Hospital. Her main research interests at Massey University lay in the field of differential equations and symmetries. As Marijcke Vlieg-Hulstman, she wrote a number of papers in this field, on her own account or jointly with Dean Halford, Bruce van-Brunt and students Anton Selvaratnam and David Pidgeon. She was an enthusiastic co-supervisor of graduate student research. Marijcke contributed papers at many mathematics conferences and enjoyed the collegiality of those occasions. She was a very good organiser, not only of local events such as the Massey mathematics group luncheons but also as a co-organiser of Manawatu-Wellington Applied Mathematics Days.

Marijcke was a member of the NZ Mathematical Society and was for many years the Massey University (PN) correspondent to the Society's *Newsletter*. In her professional career Marijcke made many friends who are spread throughout Australia, The Netherlands, the UK and the USA, as well as New Zealand.

Whether it was stepping into a teaching gap, helping with examination marking, or providing administrative support to the Mathematics group leader and other staff, Marijcke unstintingly volunteered her skills over and beyond her own commitments. She was wonderful at home management as well as being a dedicated academic.

Marijcke will be sorely missed by family, colleagues, students and friends. Her vitality, humour and no-nonsense attitude impacted on us all. She demonstrated determination to follow one's convictions; diligence and stamina no matter how complex the job; ability to cope under stress; care for the individual; courtesy towards others; generosity of spirit, time and effort. She was affectionately regarded as the 'Mother of Massey mathematicians' in Palmerston North.

Dean Halford