

**VICTOR IVANOFF PAINTING AT THE MONUMENT**

**Pretoria, 24 July 2013.** A very valuable painting of the Voortrekker leader, Piet Retief has recently been donated to the Voortrekker Monument. The painting was done by the well-known artist, Victor Ivanoff and is one of a kind.

Ivanoff based his painting of Retief on the descriptions of historical writer, Gustav Preller, as well as on the faces of Retief's descendents. He painted it in 1969 and signed it: To my good friends Piet and Hester 21/11/1969. Professor Piet Hoek was associated with the University of Pretoria since 1942 and will be remembered for his vision of the concept of a business school in South Africa – which was realised at UP in 1948/49. Piet and Hester Hoek were the parents of Mrs Rina Wiese, donator of the Retief painting to the VTM. Piet Retief's brother Francois' daughter, Anna Steenkamp, was the grandmother on her mothers' side of Mrs Wiese.

The painting by Ivanoff of Retief was recently offered to the SA Academy for Science and Art (*SA Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns*). The art commission of the Academy discussed the donation and decided that the work would be better suited at the Voortrekker Monument and be a welcome addition to their already valuable collection. The painting will be exhibited in due course. The Board of Directors and management of the Monument appreciate the gesture by Mrs Wiese enormously.

Victor Ivanoff was born in Vilna, Russia, as the son of a Russian Cossack General on 11 January 1909. When the anti communist troops were driven out of Russia in 1920, the family fled to Yugoslavia where Victor registered to study architecture at the University of Zagreb. However, he did not like it and he then joined the Don Cossack choir on their tour around the world.

The group toured South Africa in 1936. The endless South African plains and the freedom of the open veldt reminded Ivanoff of the Russian steppes and he decided to stay in the country. As a self taught cartoon artist, he started at the then Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Vaderland* where he ultimately worked for 37 years. One of his first commissions was to do a series of caricatures of parliament members. His anti Smuts cartoons were so influential that the United Party blamed Ivanoff for their loss in 1948. Ivanoff was the soul of the Russian community in South Africa – he knew about 200 Russian folk songs. He had a sharp sense of humour and believed that Afrikaners and Russians had a lot in common – both held their freedom in high regard and loved animals and wide open spaces.

Although he drew more than 12 000 cartoons during his is career, his ambition was to be remembered as a serious artist and he even took lessons from JH Pierneef. He was a 'social realist' with emphasis on realism, which he viewed as the highest form of art. He worked in oils and in sepia tint and produced mainly landscapes, people and animals (especially horses). He took part in several group exhibitions and also had ten solo exhibitions in the previous Transvaal. Victor Ivanoff died at the age of 87 on 1 February 1997.

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