

Dr Wilfred Anthony de Sousa (1927 to 2015)

Through my lens

By Dr Roque Wiseman Pinto

The Medical and Political History and commentary of Goa is incomplete without Dr Wilfred de Sousa and he excelled in both Medicine ie Surgery and politics.

Dr Willie as he was called, is a rare breed like Dr B.C Roy who was the CM of West Bengal and at present, Dr Harsh Vardhan, Former Health Minister. All these 3 leaders are doctors and politicians and have excelled in both the fields.

Dr Willie, hailing from Anjuna, was born in Uganda and did his Medical studies MBBS at Grant Medical College and Sir JJ Group of Hospitals and the Bombay University. He then went to the UK and obtained a double FRCS from England and Edinburg. He worked in UK for a few years and returned back to Goa to serve his motherland.

At that time Goa had 2 Surgeons Dr Gude and Dr Willie. Dr Gude after a few years left for Portugal, as his portuguese wife could not adjust to Goa.

Dr Willie, on the other hand, with Grace, his British wife, adjusted very well to Goa and lived happily in Goa.

Dr Willie, Goa's Top surgeon at that time with his sharp surgical skills and clinical acumen worked in Goa Medical College, Asilo Hospital, Hospicio Hospital, CMM Hospital, Altinho, Holy Cross Hospital, Mapuca and Dr Sidney Pinto do Rosario Hospital in Porvorim. He had a Gifted hand, gifted by God and many patients in Goa have been treated by him. In those days, General Surgeons like Dr Willie used to handle surgical cases, Orthopedic cases and Gynecology cases.

In 1978, I had a viral infection of the sciatic nerve and besides many doctors, I was examined by Dr Willie in my house to rule out an abscess.

Dr Willie was a Rotarian and a member of Rotary Club of Panjim and was a friend of my father, Felizardo Wiseman Pinto, an active Rotarian, and who with the other members, organised a 317 District Rotary Conference in Panjim at the Don Bosco HS grounds. At that time, I was in the 11th Standard.

Dr Willie stood for elections for the post of Rotary Governor and my father was actively campaigning for him . In fact my father and Lala Rao (Mohan Rao) owner of National Cinema took me to various cities in Karnataka and Andhra and Maharashtra in a car to support Dr Willie. Unfortunately Dr Willie lost. Mr Pandurang Mangalwade, a cement dealer from Bagalkot won and became Rotary District Governor.

Dr Willie's surgical skills and clinical acumen touched the lives of lakhs of Goan patients.

In those days to traverse Goa we had to use a ferry boat both Panjim - Betim as well as Agacaim - Cortalim. For emergencies priority was given to the doctors in the ferry boats. Dr Willie had Dr Pedro Monteiro as his main Anesthesiologist, also Dr Appa Nagarshekhar and others.

I still meet many patients who were operated By Dr Willie and they are eternally grateful to him.

Prof Dr A.P. Desai, the Former Professor and Head of Pathology Department and a neuropathologist in KEM Bombay, worked in Goa Medical College as a Demonstrator in the days of Dr Willie in GMC. Dr A P Desai came to my Department as an MD Examiner and he told me that Dr Willie had told him and other clinical Professors in GMC that he would join politics and one day become the CM of Goa. His ambition was fulfilled. It may be noted that grave injustice was done to Dr Willie by the top administration and Political masters at that timeline . So he joined politics to fight for justice.

Besides Surgery Dr Willie was also active socially and I meet him many times enjoying dinner at O Coqueiro which was run by Gines Viegas, an ardent football fan and a bachelor who went for many football World Cups, overseas. O Coqueiro was a favourite among us medicos. I also saw and met Dr Willie in Hotel Mandovi.

Dr Willie joined politics In the Benaolim bye elections in 1974. He stood against Luta Ferrao. There was a tie and the case reached the Judicial Commissioners Court. Justice Tito Menezes, the father of present HC Judge, Justice Valmiki Menezes and the husband of my first Pathology Professor, Dr Suzette Menezes delivered the judgement as a tie to be decided by draw of lots.

Later on Dr Willie on the Congress party ticket won and brought Congress to power in Goa for the first time in 1980. At that time, Dr Willie and Babu Naik from Margao were fighting for the CM's chair. The Congress High Command selected a third politician Pratapsing Rane as the CM and the rest is history.

Dr Willie continued as MLA, Minister and Deputy CM and later on became CM of Goa 3 times between 1993 and 1998. He represented 3 different constituencies Saligao, Calangute and Benaolim.

As the CM and Health Minister he was instrumental in shifting and completing the new GMC complex in Bambolim. He also started the Mediclaim scheme in Goa. He was an able administrator, sharp, strict and a man of 'no nonsense'.

I was taken by Dr WK Belokar, the then Dean to Dr Willie's chamber in the Old Secretariat many many times for meetings regarding GMC.

I was the President of GMC Staff Society then and I learnt a lot from Dr Willie's way of functioning and administration. During those days, Dr Willie summoned the Dean to implement various decisions. No Ministers or MLAs telephoned any HOD. Now a days, the scenario has changed 360 Degrees.

I invited Dr Willie to release the Archives of Goa Medical College on World Health Day, 7th April, 1997. He liked the Archives of Goa Medical College and took the copies from me to give a national media coverage.

We also invited Dr Willie as the Chief Guest for the Traditional Medical Ball, held in Emerald Lawns, Parra. Dr Willie said he organised many Medical balls in Bombay, when he was studying in Grant Medical College.

He was the founder of the St Luke's Medical Guild in Goa and India and was the President of this Guild for many years. Dr Willie used to come for our Feasts and Blessings of the stethoscopes.

I used to see him attending the Novena Masses at 6 pm in Old Goa, Saint Francis Xavier. He was very religious and always wore a white shirt and white pant.

Dr Willie, when he was the CM, organised a Reception at the CMs bungalow during Christmas.

He also supported the Indo Portuguese Conferences in Medicine and Surgery.

He was always invited as Chief Guest for GMC College Gatherings. Amidst controversy he named the Bambolim Medical Complex as Rajiv Gandhi Medical College Complex and installed a statue of Rajiv Gandhi next to the GMC Library.

When Dr Willie was sick and needed a biopsy i was asked to do his biopsy. I did it on 2 occasions. First, FNAC of lymph node. After I did it he asked me if I had finished. He was shocked I had done the procedure with no pain. He said that I had a very good hand.

The second occasion was Dr Mahesh Sardesai and I did a CT Guided FNAC of the humerus. Both reports were benign and good.

I met Dr Willie at a wedding later and he told me that he had taken a second opinion in Manipal Bangalore and the results were the same and good.

He has contributed immensely to Goa, both as a Surgeon as well as the CM, Deputy CM and HM. He was also appointed Deputy Chairman State Planning Board.

When he became CM for the first time, as was a tradition, the High Command used to send Central Observers to elect and select the CM.

On that day, my friend and I used to have outings for dinner. That day, there was a big crowd in the Circuit House and we had gone to the circuit house canteen.

Next day we read that Dr Willie was made the CM of Goa.

Later on I was appointed on the Board of Directors of Marian Institute, and I interacted with his brother Fr Romualdo de Sousa, also a brilliant Academician, who set up XLRI in different

parts. Dr Willie's Sister, Sr Noemi who was in Nirmala Institute Altinho also came to me for medical advice.

Dr Willie had many well-wishers as well as many opponents.

He was sharp, intelligent, his decisions quick, far sighted, great surgeon and an astute politician who served Goa and Goans for many decades.

Next year 23 April, 2027 will be Dr Willie's 100 year Anniversary.



Dr Wilfred de Sousa releasing the Archives of GMC edited by Dr R.G. Wiseman Pinto Also present are Dr W K Belokar Dean ,Dr .V.G. Dhume and Dr Wiseman Pinto. This Programme was on 7 April 1997 World Health Day

Dr. Roque Wiseman Pinto, Professor of Pathology, Former Dean, Former HOD, President South Asian Academy of Cytopathology and Histopathology