



South African Radio League

Amateur Radio Hall of Fame



Koos and Annie van der Merwe, ZS1AW and ZS1AZ

Inducted in 2017

Koos and Annie were licenced in 1946 in Bloemfontein as ZS4AW and ZS4AZ. They died in Cape Town in the early 1990s.

Annie became the first licenced woman in the Free State and the founding secretary of the Bloemfontein Branch of the SARL in 1946.

Koos and Annie managed aspects of the SARL's day-to-day operations in Cape Town from at least 1958 to 1989, when the League headquarters were transferred to Johannesburg.

The SARL Awards Directory is a tangible record of their involvement. The Directory started off as a large book that Koos maintained from approximately 1950 to May 1989 and is now available on the web. The concluding note that marks the handover of the book to his successor leaves no doubt that Koos took the issuing of awards very seriously and that he had worked hard to maintain their integrity. The Directory also contains an article from *Radio ZS* of January 1958 by Annie, who was the Awards Manager at the time. She announced the newly-created Worked All ZS award and described the laborious process of designing and printing the new certificate.

At least during the early 1980s, Koos and Annie handled all aspects of administration for the SARL.

They commuted by train from the Southern Suburbs into the City Bowl at their own expense and contributed their services to the League free of charge. They maintained the list of over 3 400 League members on index cards, sorted and dispatched incoming and outgoing QSL cards and manually maintained the *Radio ZS* mailing list. They compiled the weekly SARL bulletins, gathering news until Monday, then typing the bilingual bulletins and mailing them by Wednesday to reach the readers by Friday (something that the Post Office could still achieve in those days!). They also organised all the meetings, including late-night Council meetings in the boardroom.

The pair also managed the organisation of the League's AGM over a long period, helping the host branches with planning, sending out invitations to members, preparing all the paperwork and printing, attending the meetings and sometimes also taking the minutes.

In 1986, the Headquarters were relocated to new premises, making the walk from the station too strenuous for the elderly couple. After helping with the relocation, they started commuting by car and an assistant was appointed to enable them to retire. They were not very good at retirement - League members distinctly remember that they were still typically in the office around three days a week!

By 1965, both of them had received the Jack Twine merit award, although the exact dates are unknown.

Annie received the SARL's Willy Wilson Gold Badge in 1965, with Koos following suit in 1972.

They were both Honorary Life Members of the SARL until their respective deaths.