

MY LIFE IN THE PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

By Susan Jacobs

Apprehension, anxiety...a few words describing my feelings as I walked in through the door of the department of Physics for the first time in July 2006. Being a fresh graduate and newly appointed in our reputable institution and in a country far away from home, it was only natural to be feeling the way I did. My mind was quickly put to ease as I was warmly welcomed by the HOD, Prof Strydom and all other members of staff of the department. Prof Prinsloo was the only other female member of academic staff then and she was always willing to provide help and advice and has played many roles in my life: that of a colleague, friend, mother and now supervisor for doctoral study. The department has since grown remarkably and more women Physicists have also joined the department.

Physics is wrongly perceived by many as a difficult subject. What one does not realize is that Physics is just the answers to all the "How's" and "Why's" of everything around us. Imagine a world with no Physics, a world where even the most common things like rainbows and mirages cannot be explained- rather bleak I would say! The beauty of Physics is only truly unfolded as one delves deeper into it through research. Each day of a Physics researcher holds new and thought provoking findings. Astrophysics, High Energy Physics, High Pressure Physics, Magnetism and Nuclear Physics are the main areas in Physics that interest the masterminds of our department.

Physics has a lot in stock especially for women. Organizations like WiPiSA (Women in Physics in South Africa) are striving to bring more women into the realm of Physics. There are also conferences held every year exclusively for women such as ICWIP (International Conference on Women In Physics) where women Physicists from all over the world come together to share their ideas, inspire and motivate each other.

The career choice of a woman is greatly affected by the other roles in life that she has to play: that of a wife, mother etc. Sometimes finding the perfect balance between work and home can be

exhausting. After joining UJ, my role in life also went through a transition from wife to mother. During that phase of my life, my appreciation for the Physics department at UJ increased many fold. Support from the Head Of Department and colleagues in terms of covering for me while on maternity leave, lower lecture load for the first semester after my leave and above all the genuine care and concern that each and every member of staff showed helped me to quickly readjust to my new lifestyle and refocus on my career. Access to the department and all laboratories on weekends and holidays allows working mothers such as myself to "catch up" and justly divide time at home and at work.



Susan Jacobs working on her PhD in the well established laboratories in the Physics Department at UJ. She is currently registered for a study on the magnetic properties of materials and is married with one son aged three.

The Physics department at UJ is undoubtedly the best place to work and study. Our department is blessed with world renowned scientists, wise professors, young researchers and students all passionate about Physics and working towards bringing the department and UJ to the forefront in all areas including that of research, education and social upliftment of the community.

The department also sets a good example of "**unity among diversity**"- diversity in area of research, colour, gender and nationality.

Viva Physics @UJ!!!!