



## Madalein Suzette Gericke

December 28, 1947 - February 27, 2025

Madalein Suzette Gericke, an extraordinary woman of wit, resilience, and artistic brilliance, passed away on February 27, 2025, in Greenville, SC, at the age of 77. Born in Pretoria, South Africa, on December 28, 1947, she lived a life marked by character, humor, intelligence, and an unshakable determination to leave the world a more colorful and interesting place.

A gifted storyteller with a razor-sharp sense of humor, Madalein was a writer, artist, and provocateur until the very end. She had a flair for the dramatic, often invoking the Oracle of Delphi for wisdom, and had a collection of sayings that shaped the lives of those around her. She taught her daughters, Lizette Cloete and Carla Gericke, to be strong, independent women who forged their own futures as immigrants to America.

Madalein received an B. Honors in German in 1968 from the University of Pretoria. She married Dawid Gericke on August 16, 1969, and they started their family the next year before moving to New York City from Pretoria. As a diplomat's wife, she was always an impeccable host, cook, and entertainer, living in the US, Bophuhatswana, Sweden, and Brazil over the course of Dawid's career.

In Mafikeng, she ran an after-school art program, teaching students to see the “Big Picture” before focusing on the details—wisdom she applied to life itself.

She devoured books, published newsletters for the International Women's Club, navigated global exchange rates in her head faster than a calculator, and edited the speeches and letters her husband, Dawid, wrote.

Her mantra, "Mind over matter, mind over matter," carried her through her greatest challenge: a debilitating stroke at the age of 42. Forced to relearn how to walk, talk, and even write with her left hand, she met adversity with humor, determination, and an artist's stubborn refusal to be anything less than whole. Though she never played Rachmaninoff again, she painted, wrote, and created with fierce passion. Even when her right hand curled into a claw, she still insisted on using it for eyeliner, proving that true resilience is found in life's smallest acts of defiance.

Madalein was a Master Scrabble player who knew every two-letter word in the dictionary—a skill that made her a formidable opponent and occasional source of frustration for anyone foolish enough to challenge her. She had a bookshelf overflowing with African Violet plants, each one lovingly tended with the same care she gave to her art and family.

She was a painter, creating beautiful watercolors and oils even after her stroke forced her to switch dominant hands. Her passion for porcelain painting led her to own her own kiln, which, together with her grand piano, was shipped wherever Dawid was stationed. Never content with just one medium, in her earlier days, she also crafted miniature furniture, each piece a testament to her precision, patience, and boundless creativity.

Madalein was a master of practical jokes, often with a wicked edge. From pretending her eye had fallen out (sending her daughter Lizette into a near-faint) to "fixing" an aching finger by slamming it on the table, she kept those around her on their toes. "Put it on the table, and I'll fix it for you!" became a family catchphrase, a lasting tribute to her mischievous spirit.

She worked as a press liaison for the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs in the 1980s, sometimes flying to undisclosed locations on confidential missions. Pik Botha was on speed dial. There was always a heightened sense of tension when the phone rang at odd hours—an unspoken knowledge that history was being made in real-time.

After her stroke, she often spoke fondly of her near-death experience, recalling a tunnel of light and the call of God. It is comforting to believe that she was welcomed into that light once more.

Madalein is survived by her devoted husband, Dawid Gericke, her daughters, Lizette Cloete (Louis Cloete) and Carla Gericke (Louis Calitz), and two granddaughters, Suzette Figura (Caleb Figura) and Estelle Cloete. She also leaves numerous family members and friends across the world bereft who have been touched by her bright light.

Her family finds solace in knowing that somewhere, Madalein is still laughing, still creating, still challenging the universe with her indomitable spirit.

A memorial service will be held 3:00 p.m. Saturday, May 17, 2025, at Covenant Community OPC, 418 E. Main Street, Taylors, SC 29687. The service will be livestreamed to accommodate family in Australia, South Africa, the USA and Canada.

In lieu of flowers, we have started a GoFundMe Memorial, <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-us-honor-madalein-gericke-and-establish-a-scholarship?qid=bd18150de318798cd86e7c3fa38c2fba> to help with the final expenses and to seed fund a scholarship to honor Madalein Gericke, that will be administered by the South Carolina Occupational Therapy Association.

Madalein served in the capacity of administrator for SCOTA for almost a decade after emigrating to the USA in 2008. She would be honored by this scholarship.

R.I.P. Madalein Gericke. You were, as you always reminded us, truly one of a kind.

Louis and Lizette Cloete

O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

1 Chronicles 16:33-35

Online condolences may be made at [www.thewoodmortuary.com](http://www.thewoodmortuary.com).

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

MAY 17. 3:00 PM (ET)

Covenant Community Church  
418 East Main Street  
Taylors, SC 29687

# Tribute Wall

CY

“ 11 files added to the album *Carolina Fun*



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**Cynthia** - April 14, 2025 at 10:35 AM

TS

“ Aan: Dawid en Familie

*Dit was met leedwese dat ons hier in die VK verneem het van liewe Madalein se afsterwe. Dit is vir julle almal 'n ontsettende groot verlies en ek bid julle vertroosting en sterkte toe in die weke en maande wat volg. Mag wonderlike herinneringe julle onderskraag in hierdie hartseer tyd.*

*Vir ons was Madalein 'n spesiale vriendin. Die Smuts en Van Heerden families loop 'n lang pad saam. Madalein en ek was albei in dieselfde laerskool in Pretoria en die families het Sondae by die kerk gesels . Ek sal haar sprankel, humor, prettigheid, en positiewe gesindheid ten spyte van haar fisiese beperkinge, onthou. Ook haar skryftalent, Afrikaanse taalgebruik en kookvernuf was 'n genot. Ons het groot waardering gehad vir die wyse waarop Dawid en Madalein my wyle moeder in Pretoria destyds onder julle vleuels geneem het en ingesluit het by etes, uitstappies, en vakansies. Ons het talle goeie herinneringe ook van die gasvryheid en ondersteuning wat julle aan my, Malcolm, en sus Helen getoon het tydens besoeke aan Pretoria. Hierdie liefde en besorgdheid wat Madalein en Dawid aan my moeder en ons familie getoon het was 'n groot onderskraging en dit sal ons altyd bybly.*

*Ek dink aan julle in hierdie hartseer en moeilike tyd. Sterkte, en hou asb kontak.*

*Theresa en Malcolm Scoble, VK*

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**Theresa Scoble** - March 10, 2025 at 08:36 AM

LC

“ 10 files added to the album Schalk Photos



Lizette Cloete - March 08, 2025 at 09:02 PM

LC

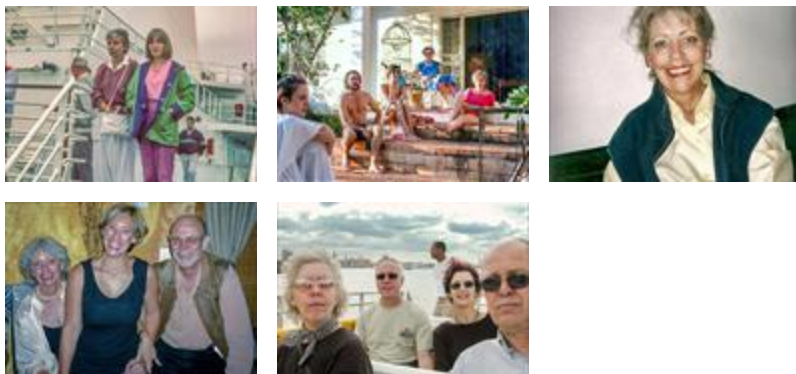
“ 1 file added to the album Schalk Photos



Lizette Cloete - March 08, 2025 at 09:01 PM

LC

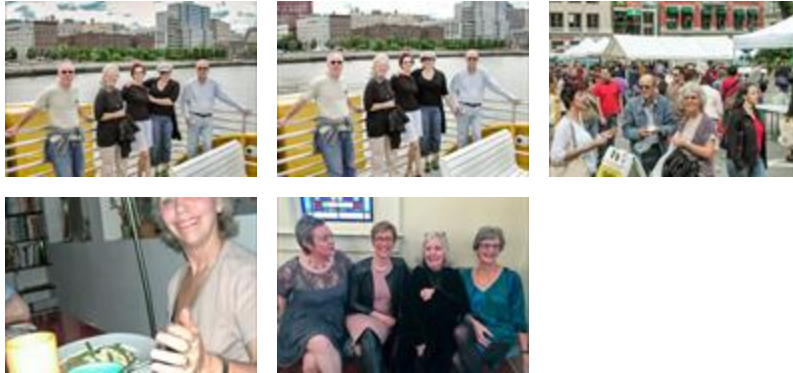
“ 5 files added to the album Schalk Photos



Lizette Cloete - March 08, 2025 at 08:59 PM

LC

“ 50 files added to the album Schalk Photos



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**Lizette Cloete** - March 08, 2025 at 08:57 PM

TH

“ *The years and distances made us lose touch, but most of my childhood memories feature Madeleine and she will be missed*

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**Tessa Hanekom** - March 06, 2025 at 01:20 PM

RN

“ *She was a remarkable woman and I am honored to have know her. Fly high sweet lady.*

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**Randi Carlson Neideffer** - March 05, 2025 at 06:29 PM