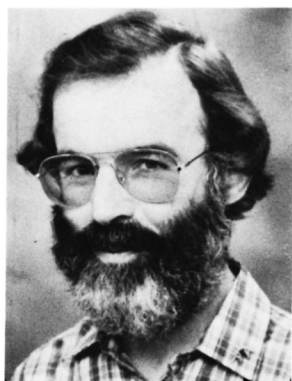


OBITUARY

Han Huikeshoven, Ph.D.

1937–1986



On Thursday, 22 May 1986, our friend and colleague Han Huikeshoven died in the Academic Hospital in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. On 7 April he was shot by an armed robber after collecting money from a bank in Zaria (northern Nigeria) for the leprosy center there. In an emergency rescue operation, he was flown home, where his condition appeared to improve initially. At that time, he promised to return to Nigeria with his wife Liza to resume his work as soon as possible. His condition declined rapidly, however, in the last two weeks (the last few days in coma) due to late complications.

Han started his activities in Africa as a Catholic priest in Ghana in the 1960s. He later left the priesthood because he felt he could be of more benefit to leprosy patients in the tropics after a thorough scientific and medical education. He studied biochemistry at the University of Nijmegen, during which time he also worked for a time in Tanzania, and at the Leprosy Control Training and Research Centre in Zaria (where he was later to return). He became deeply concerned about the threatening problem of dapsone resistance, which finally formed the basis of his Ph.D. thesis, "Patient Compliance with Dapsone Administration in Leprosy," written and defended at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Amsterdam. It was characteristic of him that he dedicated his thesis "to more than ten million leprosy patients." At that time, he was working at the Royal Institute of the Tropics (KIT) in Amsterdam (Department of Tropical Hygiene,

Leprosy Division). He developed an ELISA urine test and later a more simple urine spot test to monitor dapsone self-administration under field conditions. At the same time, he was one of the initiators of the research into sustained-release dapsone injections at the University of Amsterdam. He wrote a number of scientific articles in several international journals.

After completing his further studies at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and at ALERT in Addis Ababa, he made his services available to the Leprosy Control Training and Research Centre in Zaria, a project supported by the Dutch Association for the Relief of Leprosy (NSL)—the aim was to coordinate the leprosy control program for northern Nigeria. Han saw this as a difficult task but a challenging one. He was busy organizing training courses and fully intended to continue his scientific work as soon as the patient-care aspects were attended to to his satisfaction.

Han was an idealist and also a realist, moved as he always was by the needs of the people around him. His work for the peace movement was not inspired by fear but by the conviction that the world's financial resources are wrongly directed; it was his firm belief that the world should invest its money and know-how in eradicating world poverty rather than on war and destruction. His stand and the way in which he lived out his beliefs often inspired others to change their attitudes and to work to combat poverty in the world and to seek nonviolent solutions. The following free translation of a small part of a credo, as mentioned on his funeral card, expresses something of what Han stood for: "I refuse to base my life on having and keeping, in sounds of discord and war, angry voices and raised fists, I rest my faith on giving and receiving, in an open dialog, with arms that reach out, I refuse to be closed in by walls and the barriers that divide coun-

tries and peoples, I rest my hope on friendship and freedom, acceptance and respect for all mankind, regardless of color and creed.”

Han combined in his person a sound scientific attitude with enormous care and attention to his patients together with a warm and generous personality. Africa, and leprosy patients in particular, have lost in Han one of their most devoted and highly qualified workers.

Han was able to do his work and fulfill his ideals because he was always accompanied and supported by his wife Liza, whenever and wherever the work for leprosy called them. We hope Liza will be able to find the strength to bear this loss, and that she will see a way of continuing her part of the work and the convictions they shared.

—Jan Zuidema