

Obituary: Hymie Ebedes 1936-2015

With my deepest sorrow I must report the passing of my father, the renowned wildlife veterinarian Dr. Hymie Ebedes, on 24 November 2015 in Pretoria.

Dr. Hymie Ebedes, was born in Ermelo, South Africa on 14 June 1936, he always joked that it was a cold morning. A graduate from The University of Pretoria veterinary faculty at Onderstepoort in 1959. From 1959 to 1964 he had a private veterinary practice in Springs, South Africa.

In 1965 he started his remarkable career in wildlife as the first biologist/veterinarian in the Etosha National Park Namibia. During his tenure there he pioneered the use of Tranquillizers, specifically Etorphine (M99), to capture wild African animals. He also identified Anthrax in Etosha and established the protocols to identify the disease and control its spread. He always said that the native Bushmen blamed him for bringing Anthrax to Etosha. Another highlight was writing the manual for translocation of Black rhino and the first ever in Namibia to translocate wild caught animals by air: A herd of Black-faced Impala from the Kaokoveld to the Etosha National Park. His groundbreaking research is still being used in Zoos and wildlife reserves across the world.

Hym, as he liked to be called, moved after Etosha to Stellenbosch where he was the State Veterinarian from 1975 to 1980. His passion for wildlife attracted him to the National Zoological Gardens in Pretoria where he furthered his research to humanely care for animals as Chief of Veterinary Services from 1981 to 1989. During this time he was a key contributor to the still in print book on the Capture and Care of Wild Animals. His research on the use of long acting tranquilizers for wild caught animals has saved tens of thousands of animals lives and this has limited the high mortality of wild caught animals by minimizing their stress.

After 9 years at the Zoo he was appointed Wildlife Specialist with the department of Agriculture in Pretoria 1989 to 1995, where he wrote the code for SABS for the Capture, Care and Translocation of Wild African animals. This included the guidelines for humanely caring for animals at wildlife auctions. Hym was also responsible for the deregulation of the strict captivity guidelines for African elephants on private game reserves by allowing the use of electric fences to contain them.

I have to share a fond memory with you that always reminds me of him: It was a Saturday afternoon when he was the veterinarian at the Pretoria Zoo and he was called in for an emergency; a sick Polar bear. I loved going to work with dad. Unfortunately, the bear was not doing well and dad started doing CPR on him. For those of you that don't know how it's done, and if ever the opportunity arises to resuscitate a Polar bear, you hold its mouth closed with both hands and blow a full breath of air into its nose a few times, it takes about 5 breaths to fill its lungs, then do strong chest compressions with both hands. My father tried relentlessly for about 20 minutes without any luck and unfortunately the bear did not survive. I'll never forget

the look of despair on my father's face on the quiet drive home.

Sharing his knowledge was always important to him. In his final working years he lectured in wildlife diseases at the Pretoria Technikon 2003 to 2006, his classes were always in high demand.



My father's passion to care for animals was like an elixir for him and gave him great pride and he was fortunate to share his passion across the world. He regularly travelled the globe, taking rhino to China, cheetah to Australia, consulting the Spanish government on how to catch rare Ibex in the Pyrenees mountains and guiding the Hong Kong Zoo on their giraffe enclosure are just a few of the exciting contributions he made to wildlife.

In 1993 he was awarded the National Agriculturist of the Year by the South African government, In 1995 he was honored by the South African Veterinary Association with the Lycaon Award for outstanding contribution to wildlife conservation and ecology. He also served on many committees to improve the care of animals, such as Rhino and Elephant Foundation and Committee for the Training and Welfare of the African Elephant.

He is survived by his wife Audrey and his children Simeon, Michael, Gertrude, Tania, Alicia, 11 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

Dr. Ebedes will be missed by humans and animals alike.

Simeon Ebedes