

Dr Hym Ebedes

by Clive Walker

Hym Ebedes B.V.Sc. is like one of those perennial wild flowers that never seem to fade away. Not unlike the scarlet pimpernel, you see him here, you see him there, you see him everywhere!

He is one of the most active conservationists I have ever known and if one were to read his CV (a feat taking up at least a Sunday morning), one would be utterly amazed at exactly what this man has packed into his lifetime, from the time he was born on the 14 June 1936, later to matriculate from Ermelo High School and then to obtain a Bachelor of Veterinary Science degree in 1959, from the University of Pretoria.

I first ran into Hym after I had founded the Endangered Wildlife Trust in 1973 and if my memory serves me correctly, it was at the first symposium staged by that organisation at the University of Pretoria in 1976, that we met for the first time. I would imagine that the period between 1965 and 1974 when he headed up the position as Chief Biologist/Wildlife Veterinarian at Okaukuejo in Etosha National Park, must rank amongst the most exciting times of his wildlife career and it was during that period, that he was responsible for assisting in the establishment of the Etosha Ecological Institute at Okaukuejo. He and the late Dr Eddie Young were founders of the SA Wildlife Management Association and the Wildlife Group of the South African Veterinary Association. The Etosha National Park, of course, has had a long history of anthrax and it was here that he was particularly active.

His interest in the chemical capture of wildlife, especially black rhino and elephant and a host of other species in that part of the world, provided him with considerable expertise in this particular field, which he diligently applied over the intervening years. He played a particularly important role in the capture and translocation of the black rhino sub species *bicornis* from the Kaokoveld to the Etosha National Park, which resulted in the re-establishment of the species within that park and of course, there is the success of those early operations, which involved many committed

individuals, not least Dr Ian Hofmeyer, a colleague of Hym and Dr Eugene Joubert, who was later to head up the entire research programme for the wildlife department of what was then, South West Africa.

The capture and relocation of the sub species *bicornis* from the Kaokoveld to Etosha was not without its risk and loss of animals, for anyone who knows that part of the world and given how many years ago that this operation was implemented, will appreciate the many inherent difficulties when working under those desert conditions. For the first time in Africa, helicopters were used for the capture of rhinos and elephants and aircraft used for transporting rare species such as the black faced impala and roan antelope, to safety. The establishment of the black rhino in Etosha, has enabled Namibia to be ranked amongst the four remaining important populations of black rhino in Africa.

The black rhino has obviously been a favourite of Hym, for he spent many, many years, collecting carvings which he has subsequently donated to the Rhinoceros Museum in the Waterberg Mountains.

During the period 1981 - 1989, he was the Senior Zoo Veterinarian at the National Zoological Gardens in Pretoria and it was here that I first had the opportunity of calling upon him to assist me, after we had introduced white rhino for the first time, into Lapalala Wilderness in the Waterberg Mountains.

I have always been a firm believer in obtaining the services of qualified veterinarians when immobilising large animals such as elephant and rhinoceros, and Hym rendered us invaluable assistance in those early days, when our knowledge of the reintroduction and care of rhinoceros was somewhat dismal, to say the least.

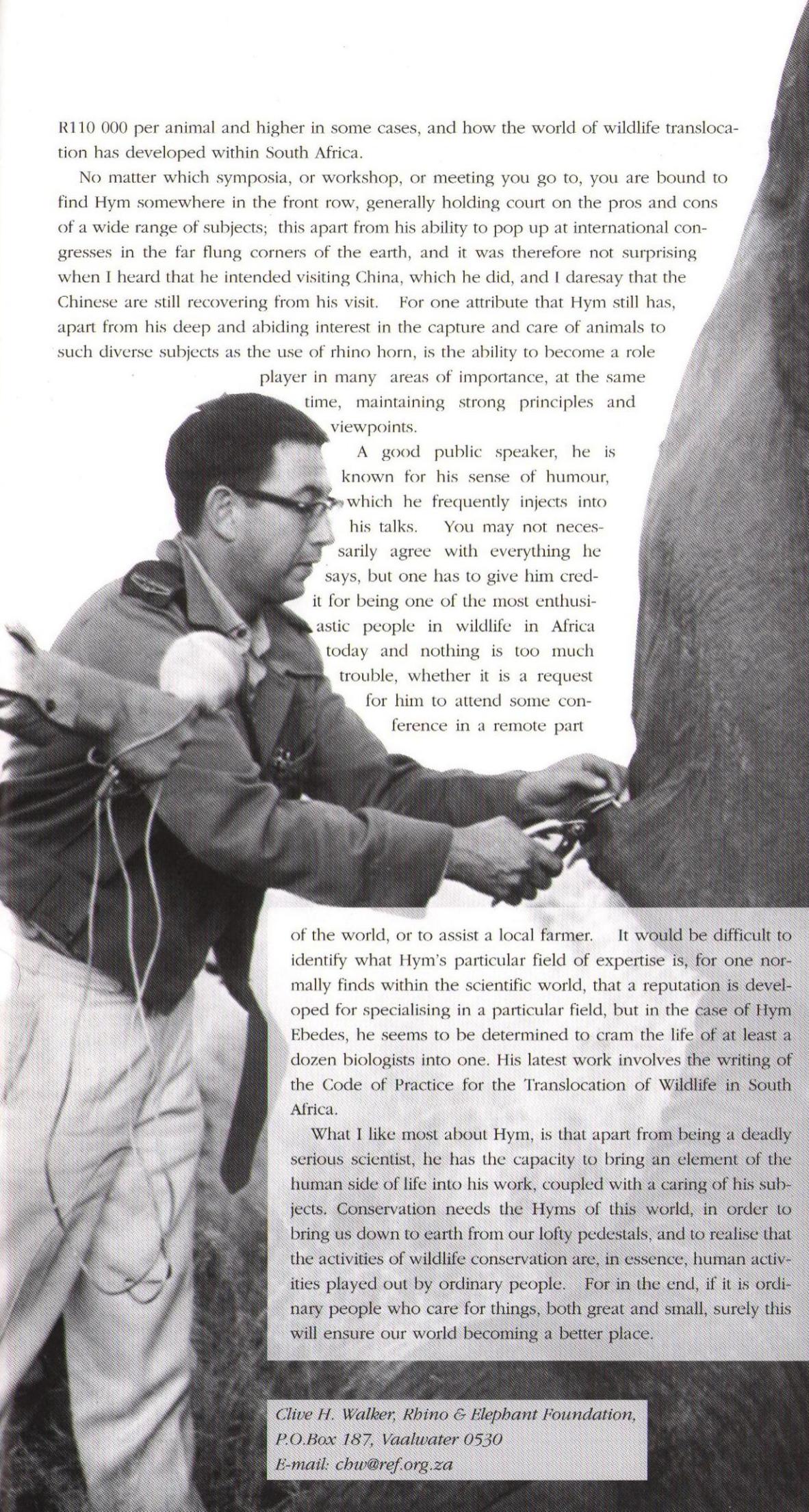
In writing this, I am reminded of the price, in those early days, that Lapalala paid to obtain a white rhino from the Natal Parks Board - R1 000 per animal, plus the cost of the transport. It is staggering to think of the prices that are now being realised, which are in the order of

R110 000 per animal and higher in some cases, and how the world of wildlife translocation has developed within South Africa.

No matter which symposia, or workshop, or meeting you go to, you are bound to find Hym somewhere in the front row, generally holding court on the pros and cons of a wide range of subjects; this apart from his ability to pop up at international congresses in the far flung corners of the earth, and it was therefore not surprising when I heard that he intended visiting China, which he did, and I daresay that the Chinese are still recovering from his visit. For one attribute that Hym still has, apart from his deep and abiding interest in the capture and care of animals to such diverse subjects as the use of rhino horn, is the ability to become a role

player in many areas of importance, at the same time, maintaining strong principles and viewpoints.

A good public speaker, he is known for his sense of humour, which he frequently injects into his talks. You may not necessarily agree with everything he says, but one has to give him credit for being one of the most enthusiastic people in wildlife in Africa today and nothing is too much trouble, whether it is a request for him to attend some conference in a remote part



of the world, or to assist a local farmer. It would be difficult to identify what Hym's particular field of expertise is, for one normally finds within the scientific world, that a reputation is developed for specialising in a particular field, but in the case of Hym Ebedes, he seems to be determined to cram the life of at least a dozen biologists into one. His latest work involves the writing of the Code of Practice for the Translocation of Wildlife in South Africa.

What I like most about Hym, is that apart from being a deadly serious scientist, he has the capacity to bring an element of the human side of life into his work, coupled with a caring of his subjects. Conservation needs the Hyms of this world, in order to bring us down to earth from our lofty pedestals, and to realise that the activities of wildlife conservation are, in essence, human activities played out by ordinary people. For in the end, if it is ordinary people who care for things, both great and small, surely this will ensure our world becoming a better place.

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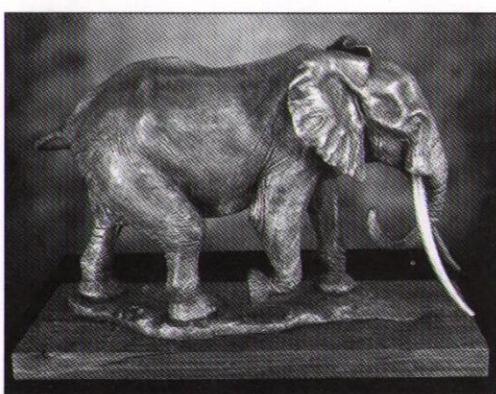
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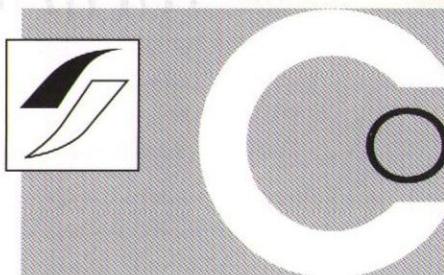
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Cover Story: "Mafunyane"

Alan Ainslie, South African wildlife painter and sculptor, was born in Port Elizabeth and grew up on a farm near Graaff-Reinet in the Eastern Cape. His works rank amongst the finest in the world and today, his sculptures, paintings and drawings grace the homes of art collectors worldwide. Committed to the conservation of wildlife in South Africa and elsewhere in the world, Ainslie has donated part of the proceeds from his work to numerous wildlife organisations, including REF.

Details on the raffle of this magnificent bronze of Mafunyane can be obtained through www.ref.org.za or tel: 453-9829



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