

Man with a mission

by Fleur Ng'weno

'We have come an extraordinarily long way to stand here on an evening in Nairobi and listen to plans to dispense enormous sums of money to countries other than our own, primarily as a result of the efforts of ourselves', said Richard Leakey, Director of the Kenya Wildlife Service, at the gathering to launch Michael Werikhe's Walk for the Rhino in America. 'It is a tribute to the maturity, growth and self-confidence that now exists in Kenya's conservation movement.'

Werikhe aims to raise US \$ 2 to 3 million during his six-month walk in the United States and Canada in aid of the black rhinoceros. Most of the funds will be disbursed to priority rhino conservation projects in six African countries: Cameroun, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and of course Kenya. One-quarter of the money raised will be allocated to the Species Survival Plan of American zoos, a programme for breeding endangered animals in captivity.

It has been a long road for Michael Werikhe, as Nehemiah arap Rotich, Executive Director of the East African Wild Life Society, pointed out, since he first stepped into Rotich's office and said: 'I want to walk from Nairobi to Mombasa to help the rhino.' Rotich recalled how Werikhe con-

THE RHINO WALK



SAVING AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

vinced him that he could do it, and even decided to walk uphill, from Mombasa to Nairobi, to prove that conservation is difficult, but worthwhile. As for security, Werikhe simply brought along two of his pet snakes.

Richard Leakey was there to welcome Werikhe at the end of the first walk, and both Nehemiah Rotich from EAWLS and David Western of Wildlife Conservation International saw him off on his second walk, across the three countries of East

Africa. *Them Mushrooms*, the well-known Kenyan band, composed and sang 'Save the Rhino' for him; the song will now be heard in the US as part of a promotional video about Werikhe's Walk.

For his third trek, Werikhe hiked across five European countries, from Assisi in Italy over the Alps into Switzerland, through Germany and The Netherlands and across to Great Britain. With the World Wide Fund for Nature, he raised a million dollars for rhino conservation projects in Africa. In recognition of his crusade for the rhino, he was named to UNEP's 'Global 500' honour roll in 1989.

'Planning for the American walk began in March last year when we heard that Michael Werikhe would receive the award of the Goldman Environmental Foundation of San Francisco, California', said Helen Gichohi of Wildlife Conservation International, who is the chairman of the Michael Werikhe Walk Committee in Nairobi. She recalled that the walk really got off the ground thanks to a start-up grant of US \$30,000 from the Liz Claiborne and Art Ortenberg Foundation. The challenge of matching the grant and organizing the walk in North America was taken up by the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums, AAZPA, and the Dis-

... a mission

covery Channel, an American cable television network.

'Rhino numbers have gone down dramatically in most African countries', Hon Dr J K Misoi, chairman of the East African Wild Life Society and Member of Parliament for Eldoret South, said in summary. 'With goodwill, money and effort, however, rhino populations can be protected and brought back from the brink of extinction. Michael Werikhe will hold Kenya's flag high as he explains to the American public the achievements and needs of rhino conservation efforts in Africa'.

Werikhe must have felt the surge of pride, affection and hope that came from the guests, because his voice was choked with emotion as he thanked them. In the audience were ambassador Smith Hemp-

stone of the USA, representatives of Associated Vehicle Assemblers and Caltex, and a veritable 'who's who' of the conservation movement in Kenya.

Caltex Oil of Kenya spearheaded the local effort in support of the rhino walk in March with a donation of Kshs. 50,000, advertisements in the daily newspapers and the *Weekly Review*, and a pledge of US \$10,000 to be given by Caltex Petroleum Corporation in Dallas, Texas. Under a striking photo of Michael Werikhe's beat-up walking shoes, Caltex's ad said: 'Michael Werikhe's last walk raised 1,000,000 US dollars to help save Kenya's dwindling rhino population. With your help, this time he will do even better'.

For many years, Caltex Oil of Kenya have been a leader in corporate support for conservation of the black rhinoceros and other wildlife. They have produced several wildlife films, which depict endangered animals and also the positive efforts made by

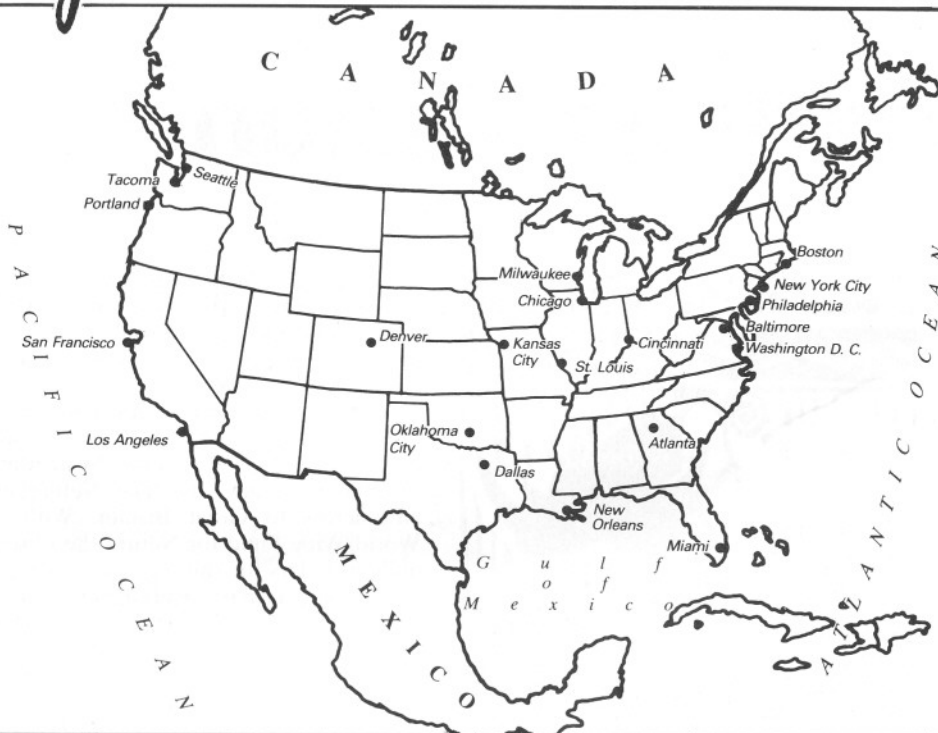
African governments to protect wildlife and habitats. 'The people here today not only care about threats to the environment - they are actively doing something about it,' Rotich said when Werikhe received the Caltex donation. 'With support like this, we really can make a difference.'

Other donors to Michael Werikhe's Walk up to April 1991 include: Let's Go Travel's donation of Ksh 1,000, H. Roeske (USA) with Ksh 10,000, Janet Allison a junior member with Ksh 10, James A Davidson (USA) who gave Ksh 1,725 and Mrs J H Martin (UK) who gave Ksh 960.

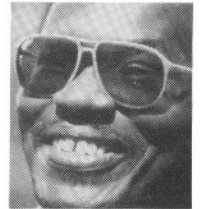
'The fact that you are from Africa, and as an African doing something for conservation, will not be lost on the American people,' Richard Leakey said to Michael Werikhe in parting. 'Regardless of the financial outcome [of the walk], the political, sociological and public respect outcome is already assured.'

Join the Rhino Walk

U.S.A. 1991



THE RHINO WALK



Schedule of Events

JUNE

1	New York City
10	Milwaukee
15, 16	Chicago
19	Topeka
22	Kansas City
30	San Francisco

JULY

3	Seattle
6	Tacoma
14	Portland
17	Colorado Springs
20	Denver
27	St. Louis
29	Indianapolis

AUGUST

4	Cincinnati
6	Kings Island
11	Columbus
17	New Orleans
18	Atlanta
24	Boston
27	Philadelphia

SEPTEMBER

1	Baltimore
7	Washington D.C.