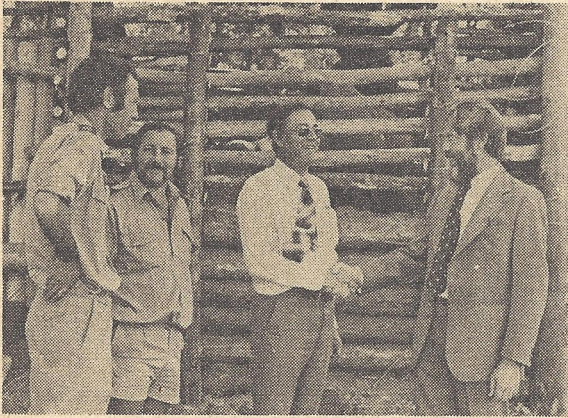


From the Manicaland Branch

RHINOS ON CECIL KOP

The bird residents of Cecil Kop Nature Reserve can be reassured that their nesting and roosting places in the tree-tops are now truly returned to them; also the monkeys will have no more competitors for their playground in the branches! They must surely have thought the Wildlife Society, Ministry of Information, National Parks, and some Umtali residents had completely taken leave of their senses and decided to change the laws of nature, when they all suddenly took to the trees and anything else climbable on July 18th at four o'clock in the afternoon!

All this strange behaviour and excitement was due to the long awaited arrival of four white rhino so generously donated by the Natal Parks Board. Mr. Jimmy Pattendon and Mr. Chris Freeman were the drivers who brought them on the long journey from Umfulosi to Umtali. Wildlife enthusiasts could be seen balancing on top of boma walls and posts, perched in trees, or madly rushing around and quickly climbing to a more rewarding viewpoint. Almost everyone was armed with a camera, from the professional Ministry of Information crew to the everyday amateur.

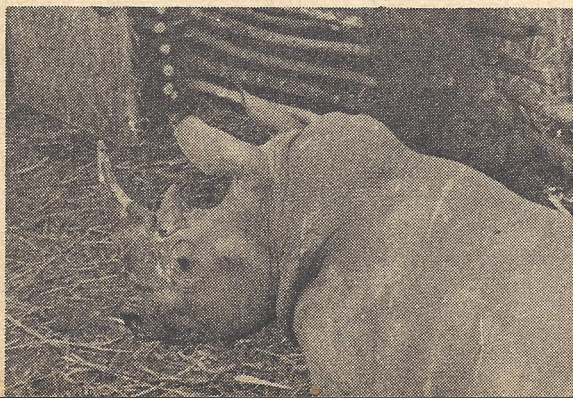


Watched by Natal Parks Board Wardens Jimmy Pattendon and Chris Freeman, the Chairman, Dave Burnett, thanks Dr. Lautre, President of Umtali Lions, for their help in building the boma

Excitement mounted as the huge truck trailer was slowly and expertly backed up to the boma ramp — then it was discovered the floor of the trailer was higher than the ramp! The truck pulled away, then soil below the ramp was dug away more and more until both levels were exact. Meanwhile, loud thumps, snorts, huffs and puffs resembling a steam train were coming from the trailer.

Eventually, the moment we had been waiting for arrived — the trailer door was opened, we waited with bated breath as our first baby rhino — MUCH bigger than we expected — cautiously surveyed the scene, decided all was well, and entered the first section of the boma. Cameras clicked,

None the worse for wear after four days in a crate



Photos: S. Higgins

Ian Jarvis persuading a rhino to enter its pen

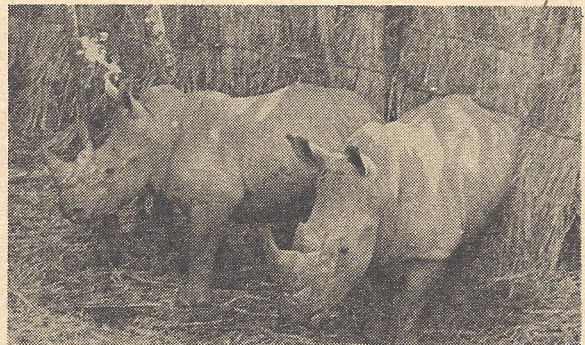
whirred and snapped and poles were hastily pushed into place to seal off that section. The second rhino behaved quite differently — she stepped out slowly — then quickly spun around on her axis to re-enter the trailer. This was definitely not allowed, so she decided to briefly attack the trailer door. This was not allowed either, so she gave up.

By now light was fading quickly while this obstinate rhino refused every persuasion to enter the boma allocated to her. She had other ideas — she saw the male rhino in the other boma and wanted to stay with him. Light had almost gone, so we capitulated — who can argue with a rhino? She won the day and has been with the male ever since.

"Operation Rhino" for the other two was delayed until next morning, when they were released. Cameras and tripods were again set up on the trailer roof, in the trees and on the ground to record the arrival of four of our most exciting animals so far. Beautiful warm bright sunshine now made filming easy, and publicity for this event will be world-wide.

We feel highly honoured to be entrusted with the care of these valuable animals which were in danger of becoming extinct before strict conservation measures took them off the endangered species in South Africa. "To the Point" reports: "Some are now even available to other countries but their future is jealously guarded — a request from the Meru Park in Kenya for white rhino from South Africa was turned down as local conservationists felt that Kenya was unable to provide adequate protection.

All four rhinos have settled down very well, providing a fascinating attraction for the people of Umtali. They are VERY well behaved, docile animals — and not to be confused with the black rhino, noted for his unpredictable bad temper.



The two larger animals in their boma. The cow still has the dart in her neck and, despite drugging, remained with the male

They have now been released from the taming-down paddock and have chosen their territory in Stage One. The younger pair are always around the dam area, while the older pair have decided to live higher up the mountain. As they move around their territory, a most unusual sight is often seen — RHINOS ON THE SKYLINE — in perfect silhouette.

**Grace Turner
Committee Member**