

Abraham/Ampie 'Tsotsi' Espag: (1924 - 2006) - Information provided by Tant Sannie, Ampie's much loved wife of many years

Abraham Jacobus (Ampie) Espag spent most of his adult life conserving nature in the Kruger National Park. He knew the Park like the palm of his hand and was a gifted story teller, spending many hours around camp fires, sharing his experiences and what with privileged listeners, whoever they were.

*He started his career on 1 February 1954 as Section Ranger at Malelane. Poaching in that part of the Park was rampant at the time and Ampie's relentless, often clandestine and highly successful efforts to curb the problem soon earned him the nickname of **Tsotsi**. He was still part of that generation of Section Rangers who patrolled the veld not per 4X4 vehicles, but on horseback, per donkey convoy, bicycle and on foot.*

After ten years at Malelane, Ampie was transferred to N'wanetzi, a Ranger Section east of Satara rest camp, bordering Mozambique. Here, for the first time, he had to curb elephant poaching, escalating from out the neighboring country.

Six years later he was transferred to Tshokwane where, apart from his normal Section Ranger duties, he became very involved in the capture and translocation of game to other Parks.

He then became Section Ranger at Mooiplaas, next to Mopani rest camp at a time when elephant poaching from out Mozambique was a huge problem in the north of the KNP. His experience and knowledge of old, which he gladly shared with the younger generation, came in very handy during the multiple anti poaching operations during that time, resulting in a number of poachers being apprehended.

From there he went to Kingfisherspruit at Orpen Gate where he met with Phelwane, one of the biggest ivory carriers in the history of the KNP. Ampie and this legendary elephant shared various management incidents, some of which can be described as rather hilarious and of course quite breathtaking.

After retiring as Section Ranger, Ampie assisted at Punda Maria in the Tourism Department until he eventually retired in Pretoria where he passed away on 18 July 2006 at the ripe old age of 82.

addo elephant

agulhas

augrabies falls

bontebok

golden gate highlands

karoo

kgalagadi transfrontier

knysna lake area

kruger

mapungubwe

marakele

mountain zebra

namaqua

table mountain

tankwa-karoo

tsitsikamma

|ai-|ais/richtersveld

vaalbos

west coast

wilderness



Extract from the Letaba Elephant Hall

Tsotsi was recently named as part of the 2006 emerging tusker’s competition. A known resident of Letaba he has been monitored for some time due to his ‘cheeky’ habits around the Rest Camp. It was for this reason that it was decided to name this bull after one of the long serving rangers in the Kruger National Park, Abraham ‘Ampie’ Espag (Tsotsi).

Ampie Espag started his career as a Section Ranger in the Malelane region in 1954. At this time poaching was rampant in the Kruger National Park and it was Ampie’s relentless and often clandestine efforts to curb poaching that earned him the nickname of ‘Tsotsi’. Ampie retired as section ranger after many years, but continued to assist at the Punda Maria camp in the Tourism department. Ampie sadly passed away at on the 18th July 2006 at the age of 82.

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