

ALAN PERCY-LANCASTER (1944–1995)

Alan Percy-Lancaster passed away on Saturday 3 June 1995. He had a heart attack whilst tending his garden in Pietersburg in the Northern Province, South Africa. Thus, southern African botany, and in particular those of us interested in succulent plants, lost a friend and indefatigable collector and field naturalist (Figure 5).

Alan was born in New Delhi, India, on 19 June 1944 and spent his early years in India. His deep love for and appreciation of plants in general undoubtedly stems from the fact that his father, grandfather and great grandfather were all professional horticulturists (Khoshoo 1966). The young Alan accompanied his parents to South Africa where they immigrated in 1956. Finding it difficult to secure employment, they eventually settled in Zimbabwe, then Southern Rhodesia, in 1958. Here he received his secondary school training at the Ellis Robins High School in Salisbury (now Harare), after which he completed a three year contract with the British South Africa Police in 1965. He then joined the Government Veterinary

Department and spent the next nine years at various stations in Zimbabwe. In 1974 he moved to South Africa and settled in Gravelotte in the eastern Transvaal Lowveld. He subsequently resided in Tzaneen, and at his untimely death lived in Pietersburg, where he was self-employed.

Alan was initially interested in exotic orchids and hybrids of *Amaryllis* L. (Kimberley 1989). One wonders whether this interest was stimulated by his grandfather who was a noted hybridiser of *Amaryllis* and other genera (Khoshoo 1966). However, during his career with the Government Veterinary Department in Zimbabwe, particularly while stationed at Melsetter (now Chimanimani) and Chipinga (Kimberley 1982), Alan's interest was extended to the genus *Aloe* L., and indigenous orchids. In 1970 he joined the Aloe, Cactus and Succulent Society of Zimbabwe and thereby started a long involvement in succulent plant collecting and field observations. His numerous field trips soon led to the discovery of new localities for known species (e.g. *Euphorbia halipedicola* L.C. Leach and *Poly-*

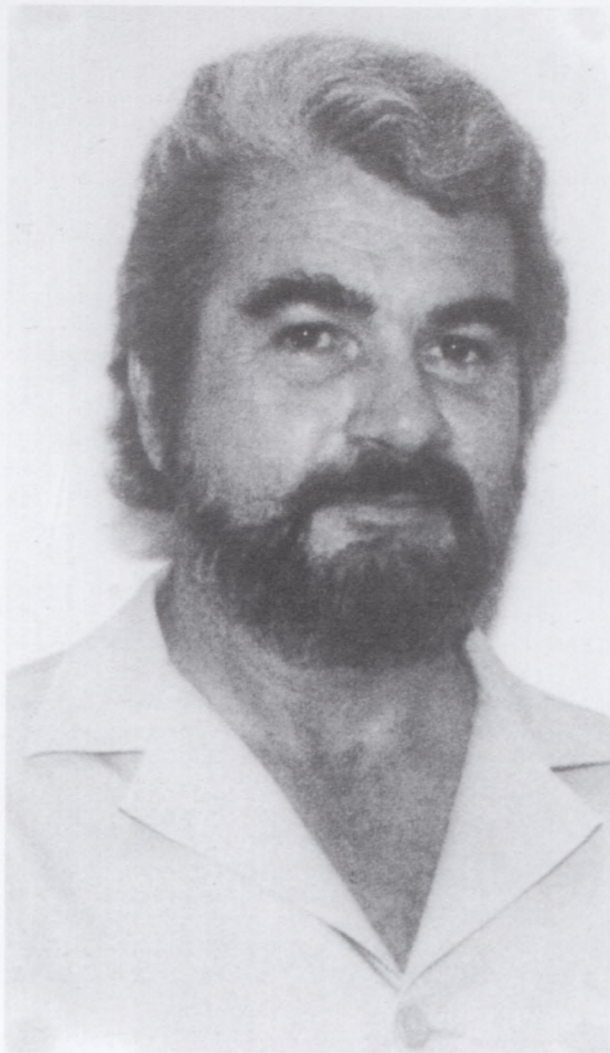


FIGURE 5.—Alan Percy-Lancaster (19 June 1944–3 June 1995). Photograph taken ± 1988.

stachya golungensis Rchb. f.), a trend that continued after his emigration to what was then the Transvaal Province of

South Africa. Some of his other collecting achievements include finding a number of new species of *Brachystelma* R. Br., e.g. *B. gemmeum* R.A. Dyer, and new species of *Ceropegia* L. and *Raphionacme* Harv., and a new variety of *Euphorbia lydenburgensis* Schweick. & Letty.

Alan Percy-Lancaster has collected about 2000 plant specimens, mostly in Zimbabwe, the Northern Province of South Africa and the Eastern Transvaal Province, and has contributed various papers on the genera *Aloe* and *Euphorbia* L. to *Excelsa*, the journal of the Aloe, Cactus and Succulent Society of Zimbabwe. His herbarium specimens are in SRGH and PRE. He was also a popular lecturer at congresses where he freely shared his vast knowledge of succulents from Zimbabwe and the northern territories of South Africa. In his spare time he was working on the Zimbabwean species of *Brachystelma* and *Ceropegia*, and he was a keen stamp collector. He is commemorated in the plant names *Pachycymbium lancasteri* Lavranos and *Brachystelma lancasteri* Boele, both species of the Asclepiadaceae.

Alan is survived by his wife Anna (née Menage), whom he married in 1965, and three daughters, Elayne, Liesl and Annabel.

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