

THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, THE ALAN PATON CENTRE & STRUGGLE ARCHIVES, THE STEELE FAMILY AND THE VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM

**REQUEST THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY AT THE 30TH
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF THE OPENING OF THE ALAN
PATON CENTRE & STRUGGLE ARCHIVES, AND THE LAUNCH OF
THE NOLA AND NICK STEELE ARCHIVAL COLLECTION**



Date:

Thursday, 25 April 2019

Venue:

Leeb-du Toit Council Chambers, Pietermaritzburg Campus
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Time:

17h00

RSVP:

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A LIGHT FINGER MEAL WILL BE PROVIDED

INSPIRING GREATNESS



LAUNCH OF THE NOLA AND NICK STEELE ARCHIVE

Nick Steele (1933 - 1997) started working as a game ranger, and later warden, for the Natal Parks Board (NPB) in 1956, originally stationed in Hluhluwe. In 1983 he was seconded to eventually become the director of the KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources (KZBNR or KBNR) in 1986. Nola Steele (née Perkins) (1942 - 2017) was an artist in her own right, well-known for her beautiful drawings and bronzes of animals, particularly of rhino's. They married in 1961 and had three sons, Warren (1962), Vaughan (1966) and Clinton (1969) while living in Ogome, Mpila, Hilltop (Hluhluwe), Karkloof, and finally back to Ulundi.

The collection of Nola and Nick Steele, made available by the sons of Nola and Nick Steele to the Alan Paton Centre & Struggle Archives, is a combination of personal and work related documentation, diaries, artwork, letters, reports, minutes of meetings and much more, encompassing the period of 1949 - 2008. The collection helps to shed light on the history of nature conservation in Natal and Zululand, now KwaZulu Natal, the many dilemma's that have arisen over the years and the various roles of this dedicated couple in it.

'Operation Rhino' was one of the milestones of Nick's time as a game ranger in iMfolozi game reserve. He always placed great value on the role of horses in nature conservation and set up mounted game guard forces, on which he reflected in his published books *Game Ranger on Horseback* (1968) and *Take a Horse to the Wilderness* (1971), enlivened by Nola's illustrations. During his work in Natal in the 1970s and '80s, Nick originated the 'conservancy concept' and his design of the private wildlife conservancy system in Natal has spread across South Africa and was also 'exported' to other countries in southern Africa, like Zimbabwe and Namibia. During the last decade of his career, as first the Chief Conservator and later Director of the KBNR (later again, the Department of Nature Conservation), conservation practices slowly moved away from a heavy top-down approach towards more community inclusive conservation areas.

Nola was very young when she joined Nick as 'bush wife' in 1962. She never regretted this decision, and became known as Yaluza, 'she who goes where she wants'. She often joined Nick roaming around the wilderness areas and developed excellent skills as an observer and tracker of wildlife. In her diaries, and even more in her art work, she demonstrates her deep love for nature. After Nick had passed on, she took on the task of continuing their common passion for nature conservation; she wrote newspaper articles and produced numerous illustrations for journals and books.

Adjoined to the archive of Nola and Nick Steele is documentation donated to the Alan Paton Centre & Struggle Archives by Peter Rutsch (1941) who worked for the Legal Resource Centre in Durban. The donated material is from the period in which Peter Rutsch was involved with finding ways to ensure the rights of local communities around Maputaland, Tembe and Ndumo Game reserve through (amongst other ways) liaison committees, together with the Association For Rural Advancement (AFRA). In that capacity he interacted, often representing opposite sides, with Nick Steele. Peter Rutsch is still active as a lawyer concerned with nature conservation.

Currently Dr. Ida Sabelis and Dr. Harry Wels, from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, are involved in the writing of a double biography on the lives and work of Nola and Nick Steele. For this project Rosa Deen (MA) has catalogued the archival collection as to make it accessible to researchers and the general public at the Alan Paton Centre & Struggle Archives.