



Ade Pinchen

23 September 1956 – 9 April 2008

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Brief Obituary

The unexpected and untimely death of Ade leaves behind a devastated closely-knit family – husband Shane, daughters Nicky and Taz, sisters Vivienne and Kirsty, brothers John and Quintus. Not to forget her little brown shadow, Diesel the dachshund.

The ripples of distress widen beyond family, relatives and friends. The Pinchens are respected business people who always chose the interests of clients and staff over the expedience of quick money. And then there are the 25 years they spent working ceaselessly to achieve their African dream, Nitani Private Game Reserve, in the Tuli Block of Botswana.

This meant that Ade met a great many people from all around the world. And everyone who had more than a cursory encounter with her, loved her. It was impossible to resist that gentle humour, that honesty, that passion for the bush.

Her death is a loss not only to the people who knew her and loved her. It leaves also the animal kingdom bereft of a rare presence, a woman with an almost magical rapport with God's creatures.

It might have been because in a way they were kin. Ade was a free spirit, untrammelled by worldly vanities. Once in Nitani, her visits to civilisation became more and more rare, because at Nitani was almost everything she loved.

Ade had a rare ability to accept without sentimentality the harsh eat-or-be-eaten realities of wildlife existence. Yet she would still lavish love on a menagerie in and around their home, Papate, which any time might include the likes of Impi the Serval, Arni the Bushbuck, Chopper the Warthog, Martha the Hyena, and Pula the Leopard, along with their various offspring.

It was an unforgettable experience to visit Nitani and see her talk to two or three of the resident elephant bulls. They would walk up to her and simply stand there, listening to her voice. Sometimes when she and Shane were alone at Papate, Martha would bring her cubs into the dining room to suckle.

It is not surprising then that part of the philosophy of Nitani as a reserve is that "our home is their territory".

This passion for animals dated from childhood. One of her brothers recalls: "From a very early age Ade demonstrated a special affinity for animals and from our earliest memories, every time she got a hiding, so did her ever-faithful spaniel Floppy, who invariably flew to her defence."

It is typical of Ade's unassuming nature that very few people know that she was a pioneer at breeding the endangered red duiker in captivity and was consulted by the Parks Board for her expertise. She was currently involved in a breeding and release project for the rarely seen serval cats.

As much as Ade lived for her animals, and deeply loved her two splendid daughters, the greatest love of her life was Shane – and in his, Ade.

It is a great love story. They were high school sweethearts and kept all manner of injured animals, which they nursed back to health and then released into the wild.

After matriculating at a 16, Ade followed Shane to Durban. One of Ade's siblings notes: "Before long, Tick and Ruth's conservative foundations were rocked when they discovered that their daughter

was now shackled up with Shane and true to that stubborn streak of hers, was not moving out. At 19 years-old, Shane and Ade got married."

The young married couple deliberately arranged their lives so that they could spend at least three months of each year travelling in Botswana and on one of those trips stumbled upon the stretch of virgin bush that was to become Nitani. Not even the birth of their daughters deterred these treks.

The girls were simply packed in the truck and grew up among the spiders, scorpions, snakes and assorted large predators.

For a lifetime the two of them stood shoulder to shoulder against predatory business competitors, outrageous swings of fortune, drought, flood, drought, flood... and never wavered. It has been humbling and inspiring to watch.

Nitani is now part of a huge trans-frontier park, a dream reaching fruition. Their great friend Bruce Page, the ecologist and elephant specialist, summed it up succinctly in an entry to the Nitani visitors' book during the early days: "I came to Nitani and found that I was at Eden's heart and that my friends were its keepers."

Sadly, the one Keeper of Eden, Protector of the Animals is gone. One can only weep.



Poem

I Am Not There

Don't stand by my grave and weep
For I'm not there, I do not sleep
I am a thousand winds that blow
I am the diamond's glint on snow
I am the sunlight on ripened grain
I am the gentle autumn rain
When you awaken in mornings hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circle flight
I am the soft stars that shine at night
Do not stand at my grave and cry
I am not there, I did not die

- Native American Poem

Songs

"You raise me up"
"Fields of barley"



Biography

Adrienne Pinchen, born 23 September 1956 in Krugersdorp. Daughter of Tick and Ruth van der Merwe. Sister of Vivienne, Kirsty, John and Quintus.

Schooling at dual-medium Monument Primary School, then Krugersdorp High School. Excelled at ballet and swimming, and won Transvaal colours for lifesaving. Nursing Diploma (Addington Hospital) and Wildlife Diploma (University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg).

Married Shane Mark Pinchen, 1 May 1976. Mother of Nicole (15 September 1978) and Tarryn (27 April 1981).

Died 9 April 2008, Johannesburg, of complications following a recurrence of cerebral malaria.

Conservationist, Researcher, Lodge Owner, Defender of the Animals.