

Artist first learnt from her grandmother drawing patterns in cow dung

HELEN Mapula Sebidi failed miserably in the occupation most taken for granted as the working domain of African women of her generation — that of domestic servant. When she had to do floors, her knees got swollen; when she was given a chance at cooking, her feet objected. "For days on end I couldn't walk, I had to crawl around. I was very sick."

After being dismissed and sent back to her native village at Skilpadfontein, she awoke one night in near-delirium. She had had a dream — as vivid as "pictures in a bioscope".

Four mythical ancestors appeared to her: builder and agriculturalist Ramabele Sebidi; witchdoctor Lotta Sebidi; an unnamed thatcher of roofs; and wall painter Robert Sebidi. Each in turn beckoned to her, asking her to follow, but she chose to follow Robert, the maker of images.

Sebidi got off her sickbed at her grandmother's house and set off on a long, lonely journey through a life filled with pain, frustration and struggle to emerge today as one of South Africa's major talents — a painter whose work has gained pride of place in some of the country's most prestigious collections.

A rejected character makes her mark



ARTIST'S WORLD: Helen Sebidi peeps from between two of her giant black-and-white charcoal works which go on display at the Everard Reed Gallery in Rosebank this week. She derived her artistic inspiration from an ancestral spirit seen during a dream.

● Photograph: JOE LOUW

charcoal — as well as some of her earlier works, such as clay pots — go on display at the Everard Reed Gallery in Rosebank, along with two other self-made artists, Lucky Sibiyi and Noria Mabasa (more about them in

the next Saturday Star).

Her work today is strikingly modern and powerful — with touches reminiscent of some of the greatest painters of our time, among them Picasso,

JOE LOUW steps into the world of artist Helen Sebidi — and tells of her incredible journey from rags to cultural riches.

Marc Chagall and the British contemporary, Steven Campbell. But her large can-

vases, often the size of murals, have a vitality and spontaneity all of their own — with in-

tense rhythmic patterns intricately worked with brilliantly playful colours.

Both her storytelling and her technique come from her grandmother, who she says was her greatest teach-

er, friend and admirer.

"I believe my grandmother lives on in me," she says simply. "As a child I used to watch her fingers as she decorated the walls of our home with cow dung."

SHE continues: "What I'm doing today is just an extension of this. I feel safe in my work. I'm settled and happy and I enjoy it while I do it — much as I enjoyed the embroidery my mother taught me or the clay pots we used to make. My work is an extension of my enjoyment of it."

Sebidi says that despite the poverty of her rural home, they were actually rich — rich in the culture of the Tswana people.

"We had a very busy home and we were rich from doing most of our chores: pot-making, decorating the home, the men carving wood, our stories and our values, and even the cooking made people more alive and made them happy."

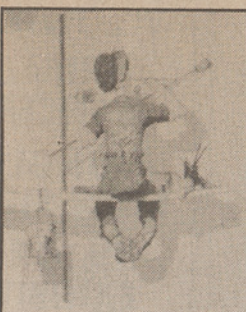
HELEN insists that helping other people, especially those blind, crippled or otherwise disabled, is a source of enrichment. "There is no such thing as a scrap person," she says. "When I looked after my grandmother, and sick uncle, and brought up my son, I never felt it was a problem or even a duty. I did it with joy."

For many years, she says, she used to troop to the city with "clay pots in one hand, paintings in the other and a suitcase balanced on my head to look for survival, more knowledge about art and perhaps, one day, recognition."

Helen Sebidi has not only survived, she has arrived.

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Payment: 5% deposit of the fall of the hammer, balance 30 days of acceptance.
For an appointment phone Nina Obel 788-2035 (bus).

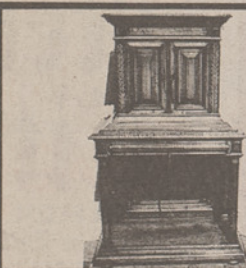
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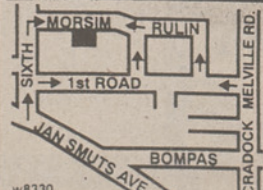
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Boxing star with the world at his feet

HE'S TALL, dedicated, the typical boy-next-door — and one hell of a prospect. Corrie Sanders, the unbeaten South African heavyweight champion, seems to have what many of his compatriots lack: charisma. This quality, plus an impressive physique, dark good looks and exciting natural boxing skills, could take him to the top of the heap. Sanders meets American Levi Billups on the Heavyweight Explosion bill at Sun City tonight.

He is handled by two of the shrewdest heads in local boxing — Harold Volbrecht and former world champion Brian Mitchell, who believe their property is dynamite.

"The best thing about him," says Mitchell, "is his easy-going, down-to-earth manner. He's just a regular guy ... there's no danger of a swollen head."

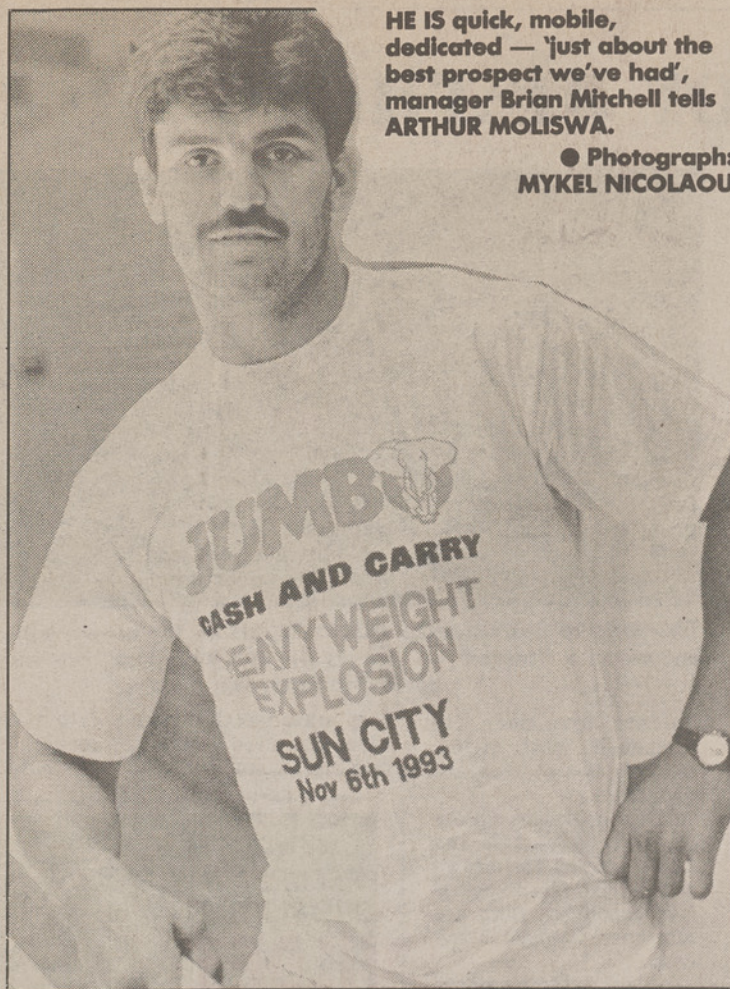
THE Pretoria-born former policeman took up boxing by accident. "I watched my uncle, Irvin Sanders, boxing in Brits once. It looked easy. If I'd known how tough it could be, maybe I wouldn't have taken it up." He was all of seven years old then, but the boxing bug had well and truly bitten.

At 1,89 m, weighing 100 kg, Sanders is ideally built for a heavyweight. His natural athleticism gives him an edge on the many ponderous contenders among the big men. Driven by a burning desire to become the second heavyweight in the country to win a world title (Gerrie Coetzee, the "Boksburg Bomber", was the first, taking the WBA crown), Sanders is not afraid of hard work.

Mitchell bristles with confidence when discussing the young man's prospects. "Sanders will be the best of them all. He has mobility, lightning-fast hands."

Former WBA and IBF world junior lightweight champion Mitchell retired from the ring to take on a new role as fight manager.

"He has the dedication Johnny du Plooy lacked. He is faster and more mo-



HE IS quick, mobile, dedicated — 'just about the best prospect we've had', manager Brian Mitchell tells ARTHUR MOLISWA.

● Photograph: MYKEL NICOLAOU

Sanders does his homework

ble than Coetzee. He certainly hits harder than Coetzee and has better boxing skills than either Kallie Knoetze or Mike Schutte.

"I think that makes him just about the best prospect we've had."

Volbrecht says it is no longer a question of "ifs" — the Pretoria left-hander will realise his dream when he challenges WBC titleholder Britain's Lennox Lewis next year.

Lewis will defend his crown at the opening of

the new MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas on March 5, against an opponent yet to be named.

SANDERS'S promoters, Cedric Kushner and Rodney Berman, say that no matter who comes out on top in that fight, Sanders will meet the winner in June.

No longer nervous in front of cameras and notebooks, Sanders is

emerging as a craftsman who studies others' styles and apparent shortcomings. "Homework is important," he says.

"Take Lewis: he's a good boxer with fast hands and a hard right-cross, but there's nothing about his make-up that makes him exceptional."

"I don't rate him nearly as highly as Riddick Bowe, for example."

Says Volbrecht: "Corrie still has some shortcomings ... but I'm certain he has it in him to become a world champion."

SAP marchers summonse

POLICE began serving summonses yesterday on SAP members who took part in a Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union march in Johannesburg last month. A police spokesman said they could be charged departmentally for contravening the police disciplinary code. Charges included using State vehicles to attend a political march and conducting unbecoming of police officers. — Sapa

Fergie makes comeback

LONDON — The Duchess of York felt like "a tightrope walker" after her separation from Prince Andrew. "I was hugely overweight and bulbous," she told Australian magazine New Weekly — and admitted she had gorged herself on food to help her cope with the pain of separation. Friends say she has slimmed down. Fergie is back to her old self. — Foreign Service

Jailed for daughter's death

NOTTINGHAM — A judge jailed a Rastafarian man for 30 months yesterday for refusing to let his diabetic daughter life-saving medication because it contravened his religious beliefs. Dug Harris (32) and his wife Beverley (33) were convicted eight days ago of the manslaughter of their daughter Nahkira, who lapsed into a diabetic coma and died in February. — Sapa-Reuter

New turn in baby deaths case

MURDER charges against five National Education Health and Allied Workers Union members, said to be responsible for the deaths of 14 babies during a strike at Garankuwa Hospital in 1990, have been provisionally withdrawn, the Attorney-General's office in Pretoria said. — Sapa

Flu shots lead to AIDS tests

WASHINGTON — Nineteen Time employees were given anti-flu shots with needles used more than once before being tested for AIDS. Dr Wesley Oler (75) acknowledged re-using several needles. "I ran short and used the same needle twice after carefully scrubbing them down with alcohol sponges ... not a wise judgment." But the practice was not risky because that's how doctors cleaned needles before disposable ones were invented, he said. — AP

Dirty powerlines halt city

ATHENS — A power failure plunged Athens into chaos yesterday. And officials warned the Greek capital's 4 million unhappy residents to brace for more. They count on rain to clean the high-voltage cables. But there has not been a downpour since early spring. — Sapa-Reuter

Boy (11) drove drunk dad

SYDNEY — An Australian man, accused of killing his 11-year-old son drive him home because he was too drunk, was charged yesterday with letting an unlicensed person drive his car. The boy was sentenced. — Sapa-Reuter

Hope for stranded hospital

CAPE TOWN — The South African field hospital for Bosnia may soon resume its journey after a Foreign Affairs offer to "do everything possible to" and a promise by Britain to protect it on the way. R5 million hospital has been stranded in Croatia, the Croatian port of Ploce since September. — Correspondent

Killer said to be bushman

BELANGLO STATE FOREST (Australia) — The killer of seven backpackers, most of them young foreigners whose bodies were found in a remote Australian forest, appears to be an expert bushman, police say. The killer disposed of the remains in a deliberate pattern on either side of trails. — Sapa-Reuter

World record stamp price

GENEVA — A woman believed to be acting as a private collector bought the "crown jewel of philately" this week for a world record price of R12,9 million. The 1847 envelope from Mauritius carried the rarest stamps in the world — a One Penny Red and a Two Pence Blue — and contained the original letter to a Bordeaux wine firm. — Sapa-Reuter

500 luxury homes destroyed

LONDON — US insurers are expecting to receive claims of well over \$1 billion (about R3,3 billion) damage caused by this week's California fires, reports suggested around 500 "high value" homes destroyed in the fires. — Sapa-AP

Latest Scope 'undesirable'

SCOPE'S November 12 issue has been declared undesirable, the Directorate of Publications announced yesterday. Of 32 films submitted for examination, 12 were approved unconditionally and 20 conditionally. — Sapa

Plane hijacked to Taiwan

TAIPEI — A Chinese civilian airliner with 138 people on board was hijacked to Taiwan yesterday. It was the fifth Chinese civilian plane hijacked to Taiwan since April. — Sapa

Girls suspended over scarves

LYON — Four Muslim girls were suspended from school yesterday for refusing to take off their scarves. Last month the school's teachers staged a strike to express concern over the headscarves, they said as religious symbols undermined the institution's secular status. — Sapa-Reuter

Tower Beefeaters strike

LONDON — Thousands of tourists hoping to see the Crown Jewels and other attractions at the Tower of London found the castle closed yesterday as red-coated Beefeaters joined a one-day civil service strike. — Sapa-AP

Aussie jails overcrowded

MELBOURNE — Most of Australia's prisons are crowded to the extent that many prisoners double cells designed to hold only one. Northern Territory are 117 percent full. — Foreign News Service

Farming gift from Japan

CAPE TOWN — Japanese Ambassador to South Africa Katsumi Sezaki yesterday signed a grant contract for R111 000 for agricultural assistance to the Saron community near Cape Town. — Sapa

Thief takes hero's medal

AN 83-year-old recipient of the Star of South Africa — the highest award given by the State — to a civilian — has lost the medal to a thief. The man had taken the medal to his office to show his colleagues. — Sapa

Fleet Street circulation wars trigger the tormenting of Di

LONDON — Princess Diana is an ill, broken young woman, driven to tears and back to bulimia by a heartless husband, his conniving father and their palace lackeys.

Princess Diana is a vain, moody young woman who is determined to wreak revenge upon the royal family for cutting her adrift and destroying her ambition of one day becoming a revered Queen Mum.

Princess Diana longs for a reconciliation with Prince Charles.

Princess Diana can't stand living in the same country, let alone the same city as Prince Charles.

All four scenarios have been painted

as the gospel truth, according to "close friends", "royal insiders", "senior courtiers" and "top palace aides".

For obvious and, one suspects, not so obvious reasons, none of these "informers" has ever been named.

For the truth is that far from being the plaything of the Windsors/the woman spurned, the Princess of Wales has become the circulation war football of Fleet Street. Every day of the week/month/year, valuable hours are spent planning the next royal "scoop".

A front-page photograph of Diana looking beautiful or bothered, sexy or sad, cross or cute is deemed top priority. Then a story must match the mood.

THE princess has become a football in a pursuit 'beyond understanding' for newspaper sales, writes ALAN ROBINSON.

For example: This week the princess went home early and red-eyed from a charity concert. It was obvious that she had been weeping. Buckingham Palace released a statement saying she had been suffering from migraine.

Ah, said the media, what causes migraine? Stress, said their on-tap medical experts. Yes, but what caused

the stress? Fevered imaginations went to work, the "insiders" and "top aides" were summoned for an answer.

They produced at least five:

● Charles and the palace were being beastly again.

● She was upset because her "little boys" had gone back to boarding school.

● Her friend, the wife of the Brazilian ambassador, was leaving for Washington.

● Her faithful police bodyguard was being transferred.

● She was likely to bump into dejected mistress Camilla Parker-Bowles at a memorial service the next day.

There were others too bizarre to rate a mention here.

Establishing the truth in this crazy world of rumour-mongering, news manufacturing and junk journalism is impossible. It would be easier to challenge Einstein's theory of relativity, out-talk Pik Botha and convert Eugene TerreBlanche to Judaism all on a wet Sunday afternoon in Westville.

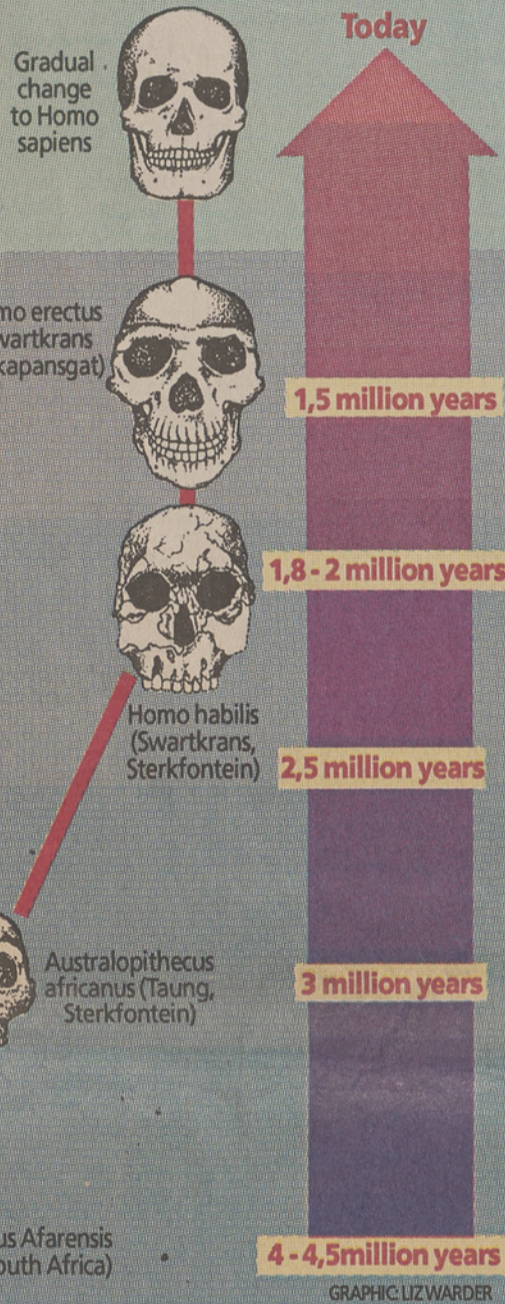
But what is beyond doubt is that this young and beautiful woman, who protocol denies the opportunity to respond, is being tormented and terrorised beyond either understanding or acceptability. A terrible price may one day have to be paid for it.



DEMURE DI: Front pages seem to be designed round her day's appointments.

New clues to man's family tree

Evolution of man according to one hypothesis



ANITA ALLEN, Science Writer

IT IS fitting that in the centennial year of Dr Raymond Dart's birth, and in the significant month of November when he discovered the "missing link" between man and ape in 1924, that South African palaeo-anthropologists are again leaping to the forefront in the study of man's origins.

The discovery of a new hominid site at Drie-meulen, announced this week, may prove to be the richest fossil site yet in a country already boasting the largest and richest — Sterkfontein.

More specimens found

The discovery of the site on July 9 1992 by Dr Andre Keyser has been a well-kept secret among SA palaeo-anthropologists. Excitement ran high at the symposium hosted by the Palaeo-anthropology Research Unit (PARU) at Wits University, where the first public announcement was made.

Drie-meulen, a name derived from the owner of the property, Dr Piet van Driemel, is an extraordinary "honey hole", according to Keyser.

He carried out his first excavations three days after first seeing what is a disused lime quarry. On his third visit, he had already found a huge tooth fossil of one of man's early ancestors, Australopithecus robustus. Since then, eight more robustus specimens have been found, representing five separate individuals.

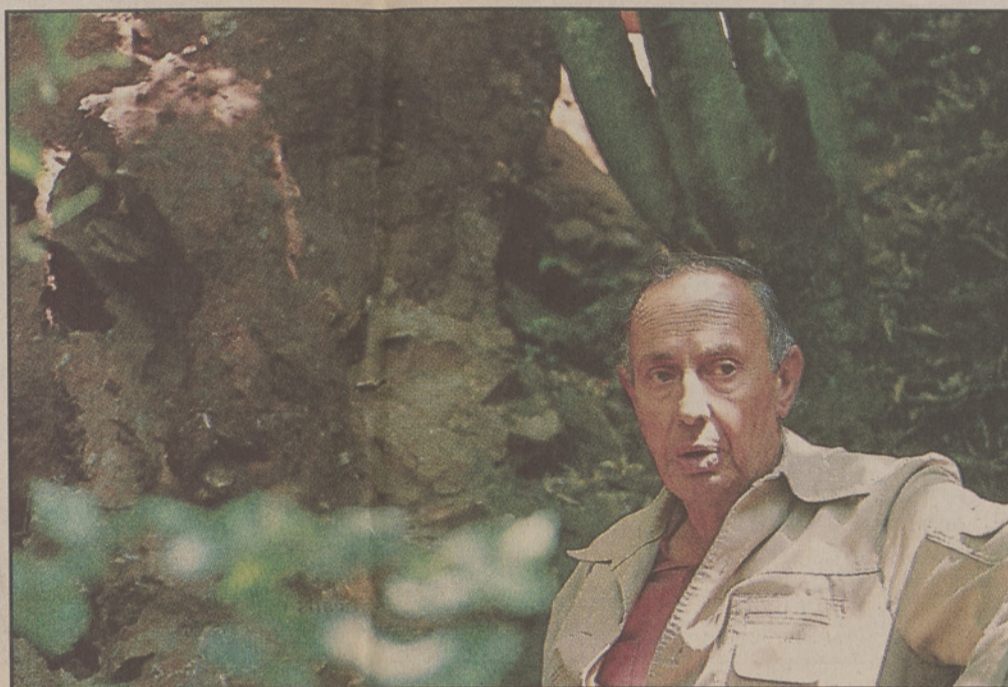
Altogether 400 faunal fossils have been discovered, ranging from extinct sabre-toothed tiger, monkey, musk ox and giant Cape horse through to extant species of kudu, eland and springbok.

To get some idea of the richness of the site,

Keyser compares it to Sterkfontein, where excavations have been continuing for 50 years. Drie-meulen, he says, will take 200 years to reveal its secrets.

The painstaking work of wrestling fossils from centuries of accumulated entombment, and then discerning the message of the bones, is a slow and laborious process.

In South Africa this task has been hampered by years of isolation and a lack of funding.



MORE PIECES FOR THE JIGSAW: The fossil site discovered by palaeo-anthropologist Dr Andre Keyser is one of the richest in South Africa and has the potential to revolutionise opinions on the origin of man. Photograph: JOAO SILVA

Fossil site kept secret for a year

On the other hand, the isolation has turned South African palaeo-anthropologists into a close-knit group of specialists, who follow in the footsteps of giants. Dart, Dr Robert Broom, Professor Phillip Tobias, Dr Alan Hughes — and many others — have all crossed frontiers that have changed the way we think about human origins.

The fossil-richness of South Africa's seven — now eight — hominid sites attracts the best scientists in the world, some of

whom have taken up permanent residence here. When these men and women get excited about a new discovery, as they did at the PARU symposium, it is a sure sign that something significant has happened in palaeo-anthropology.

The importance of Drie-meulen lies in the fact that it is the first site where fossil specimens of robustus have been found since Broom's discovery of this species at Swartkrans, which is also in the Sterk-

fontein area. Palaeo-anthropologists believe that robustus holds a key to some vexing questions about the evolution of early hominids and their connection to modern man. There are different philosophies about how this evolution took place.

It is generally accepted by both molecular scientists and fossil men that man (hominids) and apes (pongids) branched from a common ancestor between 5 and 7 myr (million years) ago. The earliest

hominid, which gave rise to modern man, is found in the fossil record about 3-4 myr ago. This is Australopithecus afarensis, which has been found in east Africa and has not been found in South Africa. The next recognised species in the fossil record is Australopithecus africanus, which was identified by Dart from a fossil skull of a child found at Taung. From this specimen and others that have been found at various sites, palaeo-anthropologists give a date of 2,5-3 myr ago.

Ancestral

From africanus there is branching. On the one hand there are the more robust hominids with huge teeth and jaws, Australopithecus robustus and boisei. On the other hand, there are the more gracile types, Homo habilis (handy man), which Tobias identifies as the first species to have rudimentary language abilities; and Homo erectus, which is first found in the fossil record at about 1 myr ago and is commonly accepted as ancestral to all modern Homo sapiens.

"It is likely that Drie-meulen will considerably increase the sample of available hominid samples, thus shedding more light on the relationship between robustus australopithecines and the earliest humans," says Keyser.

In other words, Drie-meulen has the potential to revolutionise current thinking about man's family tree.

No cause for alarm as rain brings spiders

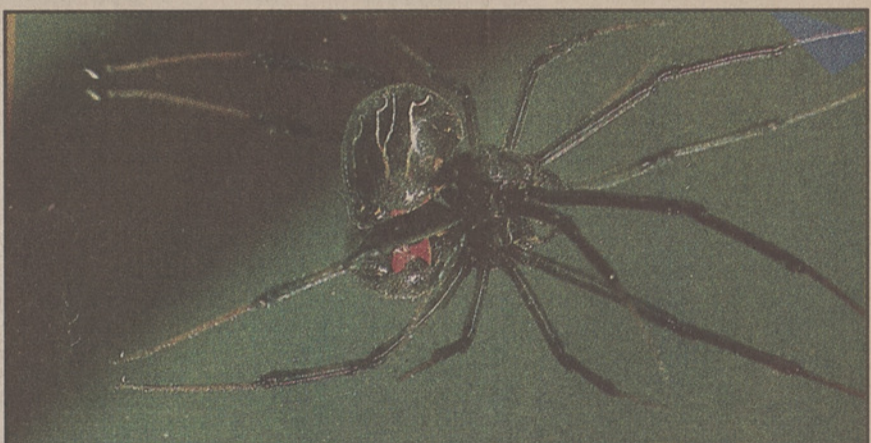
BARBARA BERLINI

"These spiders are nocturnal, seldom seen during the day, and harmless. They should be caught by putting a feather duster against them and rotating it. They will cling to the feathers and can be shaken off outside."

He says rain spiders are often mistaken for baboon spiders because of their size and hairiness.

Filmer advises against windows in the vicinity of hedges or wall-coverings, especially bougainvillea, being left open because these spiders come out of these plants into the house. Windows leading on to lawns, or with no undergrowth in the vicinity, should be perfectly safe.

Another type of spider frequently seen in baths and basins at this time of year is the grey or black gnaphosidae, more commonly known as the mouse-spider, which, Filmer stresses, is absolutely harmless and should not be killed. He says 6 000 species of



Theridiidae Latrodectus geometricus — the brown widow spider, also known as a "button" — shows the red hourglass body-marking and the geometric pattern on the back.

spiders have been described in South Africa, but only five of these are dangerous.

"One poisonous spider frequently seen in baths and basins at this time of year is the grey or black gnaphosidae, more commonly known as the mouse-spider, which, Filmer stresses, is absolutely harmless and should not be killed."

He says 6 000 species of

body, whereas the brown widow has a red hourglass mark on its stomach. The

latter, although still potentially harmful to man, has only about one-sixth

the toxicity of the black widow spider."

He warned that this spider's venom attacks the nervous system and can be fatal.

"The sac spider, though, is responsible for 90 percent of bites in our country. This is also a nocturnal spider which usually bites people while they are asleep."

Filmer adds that the jaw of a sac spider can open between 5 and 6 mm and sometimes even as wide as 8 mm. The bite can usually be diagnosed by the presence of yellowish-green spots representing the fang entry points.

"Don't touch a blister if you've been bitten by a spider. Rather apply an

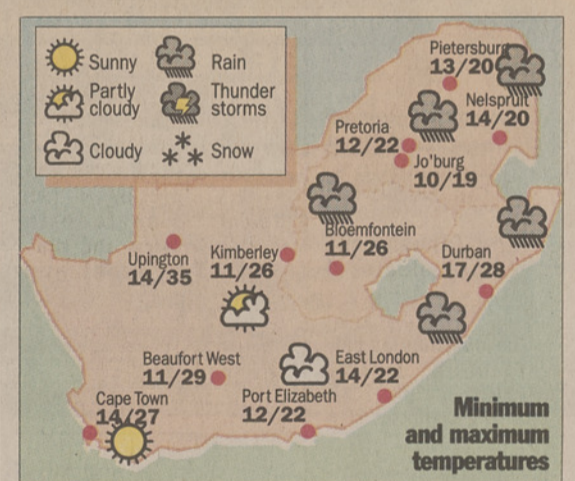
antiseptic cream and cover the area," Filmer advises. "See your doctor and get him to prescribe a course of antibiotics. This is the safest way to treat spider bites."

Finally, for those of us who feel that the spider on the wall is watching us and getting ready to pounce, there is some good news.

Vibrations

Filmer says that although spiders have eyes, they cannot see more than 2 cm ahead — they use the sense organs on their legs to feel vibrations.

● Filmer is prepared to answer any queries on telephone (011) 447-1020 (h) or 788-1447 (b).



Transvaal: Cloudy and cool, with rain over the southern and south-eastern parts.
Free State and Lesotho: Partly cloudy and cool, but cloudy and cold in the east with scattered thundershowers.
Natal and Swaziland: Cloudy and cool with rain, clearing partially in the afternoon.
Eastern Cape and Transkei: Partly cloudy and cool, but cloudy with light rain over the eastern coastal belt.
Cape north of the Orange River and southern Namibia: Fine and hot, but partly cloudy with isolated thundershowers. — Sapa.

Dirigible team sets sights on record

ENO — Crew members plan to set sail from Llandudno this weekend in a dirigible in a bid to be the first to travel west around the world in a balloon.

Weather permitting, the hourglass-shaped dirigible Hilton could be off today, Captain Newman said this

would rise 10 700 m to the jet stream, which should sweep it eastward at 120 km/h to 160 km/h.

Newman said it would take the Earthwinds between two and three weeks to circle the globe.

The craft consists of a huge helium-filled balloon on top and a pear-shaped air-filled balloon below. The crew com-

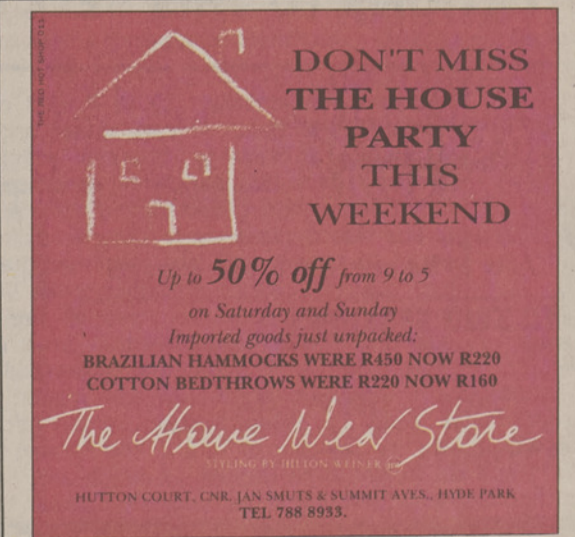
partment is sandwiched between the two. Earlier launch attempts were scrapped because of the weather. — Sapa-AFP.



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(Please note that no food or drink may be brought into the City) IMPORTANT NOTICE:

GOLD REEF CITY WILL BE CLOSED ON SATURDAY 13th NOVEMBER FOR A PRIVATE FUNCTION OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FROM 5.00 pm