

# Zulu warriors dance in

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## celebration of Aspers



Racing drivers, supermodels and media moguls bid farewell to a true romantic, writes **Richard Alleyne**

WITH dancing Zulu warriors, animal impressions and wonderful tales of derring-do, John Aspinall, the millionaire zoo owner and society gambler who died in June, could not have wished for a more appropriate send-off.

The assembled throng reflected the colourful character and varied interests of the flamboyant 74-year-old.

Lady Thatcher, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Sir John Paul Getty, Elle MacPherson and Jackie Stewart were among the diverse personalities who counted him a friend.

So fallen ministers rubbed shoulders with statesmen. Billionaire businessmen chatted with environmentalists and supermodels mingled with racing drivers and media moguls.

In what was described as a tribute to his "towering personality", 700 friends and family, including his widow Sarah, attended the gathering held in the elegant surroundings of St John's Smith Square, Westminster.

In one of the most touching speeches, Chief Buthelezi, head of the Zulus, who had flown thousands of miles to give his address, described him as a "true romantic".

"John Aspinall was one of my best friends, if not really my best friend," he said. "We have known each other for decades and his premature departure has been a devastating loss to me. We



Lady Thatcher and Neil Hamilton, the ex-Tory minister, attended

were both avid and dedicated environmentalists at a time when a concern for animals and plants was considered frivolous and unsuitable for people with real businesses to run and public affairs to attend to.

"Aspers was a true romantic who, with his life, offered one of the most exemplary testimonies to the values of romanticism in an age which has long forgotten them."

Lord Tebbit said that if Aspinall had been born in a different time he might have been a knight of the Round Table, a buccaneer with Elizabeth I or a Cavalier fighting "that bigot Cromwell".

Dr Ian Player, the conservationist and brother of the golfer Gary Player, expertly mimicked the sounds of hippos, leopards and hyena, so they too "could pay tribute".

Teddy Goldsmith, brother of the late Sir James, recounted how he met Aspinall at Oxford where he first acquired his taste for gam-

bling. This taste was to see him make his £200 million fortune in casinos — and then lose it.

But the most spectacular tribute had to wait until the end when a troupe of 31 Zulu warriors, complete with spears and shields and wearing leopard skins, danced around the throng to thumping drums.

The beat of the Ngoma, a traditional dance of celebration, was so loud that it travelled through the heavy stone walls to the street outside where the broadcaster Sir David Frost said: "It was a magnificent service in which everybody spoke from the heart."

James Osborne, John Aspinall's half-brother and master of ceremonies, said: "It was everything that he would have wanted. Loud and a great celebration of his life."

Aspinall's son Bassa said: "It was a great celebration of my father's work and

(1)

## Triplets' mother sues birth clinic

By PAUL STOKES

A COUPLE who wanted a child are suing a private fertility clinic for more than £100,000 in compensation after the woman gave birth to triplets. Patricia and Peter Thompson claimed at the High Court sitting in Sheffield yesterday that they had never agreed to three embryos being implanted.

For five years they had tried unsuccessfully to have children before Mrs Thompson, 34, had treatment at the Sheffield Fertility Centre in June 1996.

She said that, after speaking to a doctor, she and her husband decided they wanted only two embryos planting in her womb. "I just wanted two babies or a baby."

They are alleging a breach of contract by Sheffield Fertility Centre, which they paid £1,600 for treatment.

Mrs Thompson, of Thrybergh, near Rotherham, claimed she was told after the 10-minute procedure that three embryos had been implanted but that the risk of a triplet birth was "minimal". Out of 350 women having treatment, 254 had opted

for three embryos and only Mrs Thompson had given birth to triplets.

She was offered a foetal reduction when it was known she was expecting triplets, which she declined.

In March 1997 she gave birth to a girl and two boys and said she was very happy, but in 1998 she became pregnant naturally and now has a two-year-old daughter as well.

The clinic argues that Mrs Thompson was told that the three embryos would be implanted and was shown them on screen before the operation went ahead with her consent.

Ronald Walker, QC, for the clinic, said: "Her implicit suggestion that her powers of perception may have been impaired by having taken a tablet is implausible."

Mr Thompson, 57, who has three adult children from a previous marriage, said that when his wife told him three embryos had been replaced he "felt a little bit numb".

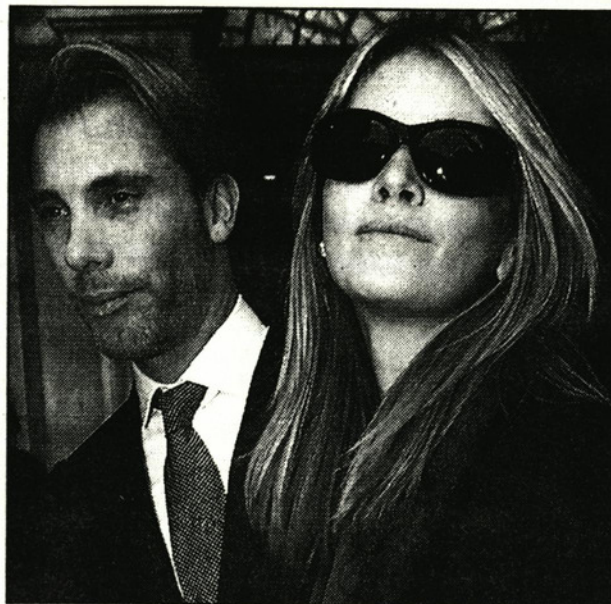
He had a heart attack three months after the birth of the triplets, had a bypass operation and gave up his work to help to care for the children.

The hearing continues.

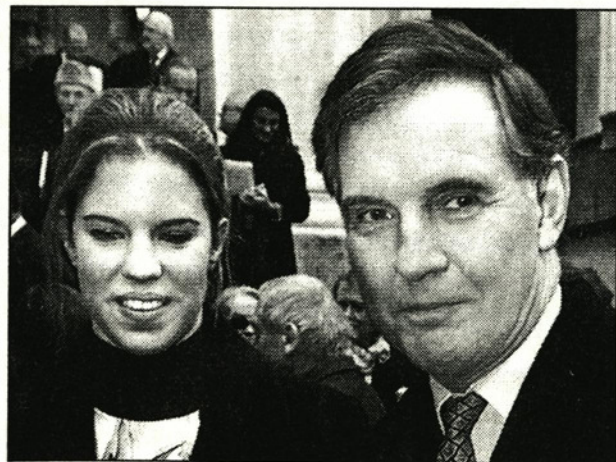
Pictures: ROY LETKEY, EDDIE MULHOLLAND and WHITES

# Zulu warriors dance in

(2)



Elle MacPherson with Aspinall's son Damian



Jonathan Aitken with his daughter Alexandra



The late Sir James Goldsmith's son Zac with his wife Sheherazade

achievements. The experience was quite moving."

Zac Goldsmith, Sir James Goldsmith's son and himself a leading light in the conservation movement, said: "It was a wonderful service for an extremely inspirational

man." Elle MacPherson, the model and close friend of Aspinall's other son Damian, said: "It was everything he would have wanted."

The former church has been deconsecrated and the eclectic crowd paying their

respects to "Aspers" at more a celebration of his life than a memorial service also included Conrad Black, chairman of Hollinger, the owner of *The Daily Telegraph*, his wife Barbara Amiel, and Charles Moore,

the editor of *The Daily Telegraph*.

The former ministers Jonathan Aitken and Neil Hamilton were there as well as Jane Clark, the widow of the maverick MP Alan Clark.

In a book of tributes,

handed out at the gathering, Lady Thatcher said: "The causes which he upheld were never mere theoretical concepts. He was a man who enjoyed giving them his all, and in tirelessly persuading others of their merits."

# celebration of Aspers

THE MERCURY  
FOUNDED IN 1852EXPECTATIONS  
UNFULFILLED

A SURVEY by the Human Sciences Research Council reveals not just a high "undecided" factor as the country approaches local government elections but a corresponding degree of disillusionment with all kinds of institutions – private as well as public – business, trade unions, the media, the police and the courts.

Even the churches are not trusted quite as much as they were. It seems to reflect a sense of expectations unfulfilled.

For the overwhelming majority of South Africans, political emancipation was held out for decades as the event which would transform their lives for the better. The expectation always was exaggerated, and political parties did little or nothing to adjust those expectations to reality as the 1994 elections approached.

Yet it is also true that factors beyond local political control – a declining gold price, rocketing fuel prices, turmoil in the international capital markets and serious political instability among South Africa's neighbours – have made the jolt to reality a particularly sharp and unpleasant one as the economy has failed to grow as had been expected. The disillusionment is understandable and not entirely misplaced.

The priority of the government – and all who care for this country's good – has to be to start the economy and allow people their legitimate share before disillusionment becomes alienation or worse. The continued relative prosperity of elites – black as well as white – among a sea of poverty is not sustainable.

Deputy President Zuma hits the nail on the head when he calls for an end to political point-scoring and a return to the nation-building spirit of 1994.

## HIV/AIDS PLAN

IT IS positive news that the KwaZulu-Natal education department will spend more than R6 million next year in an attempt to control the spread of HIV/Aids among pupils.

This amount may seem to be a mere drop in the ocean in view of the enormity of the problem. However, positive attitudes can virtually "work miracles".

The impact could be multiplied many times if teachers selected to undergo the life-skills training and HIV/Aids programmes become sufficiently trained and enthused to spread the message far and wide.

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## Time to come clean, Mr Mtshali

Explain your abuse of power, demands Hospersa president Gavin Moultrie

OVER the past four days, the media has been filled with reports of the premier of this province allegedly abusing his privileges in regard to air travel.

The negative consequences of this for the taxpayer speak for themselves. This, however, while making sensational press reports, is a peripheral issue.

There is something more sinister afoot and the premier, Mr Lionel Mtshali, or his office, need now to give the public a satisfactory explanation.

Hospersa, (the Health and other Service Personnel Trade Union of South Africa) enjoys significant representation among the staff of the premier's department.

Earlier this year, the premier assembled his staff and dropped a bombshell by announcing that he was restructuring his department and was choosing Ulundi as the centre from which to operate.

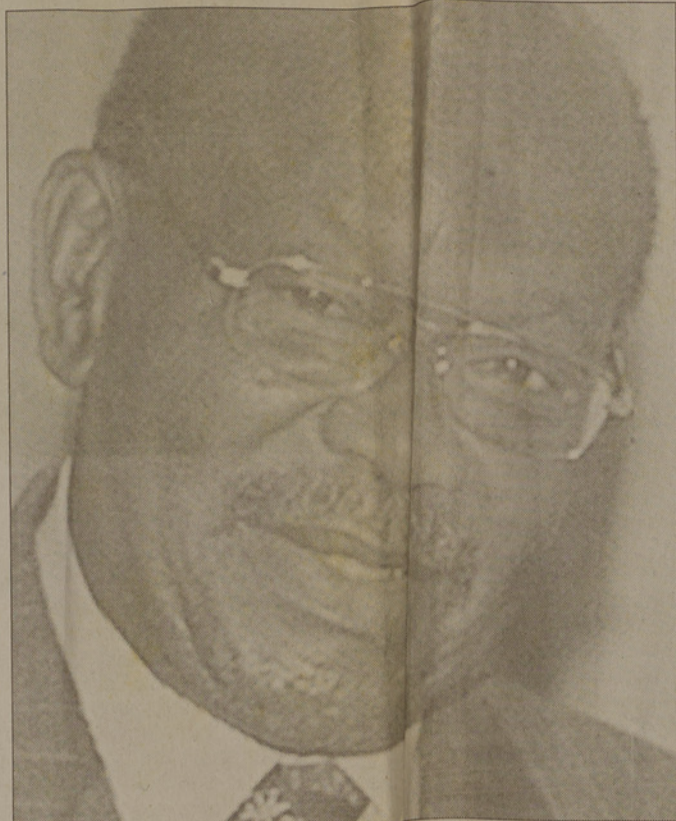
In his address, he claimed that the existing structures were performing non-core functions, which were not adding value, and that he needed to purify these operations.

That being the case, it would be interesting to hear what the premier's rationale behind his thinking that a core function of his department is aviation services. Surely this is best placed with the department of transport?

The function of the department of the premier is co-ordinating and policy determination for the province, not operational.

As a public sector trade union, we are baffled about why the new structure of his department contains 17 firemen. Surely this is not a core function of such a department? An explanation is required for this contradictory state of affairs.

During the current furore, Mr Mtshali has rebutted what he calls rumours of his excessive use of the Learjet and has



LIONEL MTSHALI  
Dropped bombshell

uttered his usual plaintive cry of being committed to clean and open government. He has also said in radio reports that the jet is used on a first-come, first-served basis. However, the facts do not appear to show this.

Hospersa challenges the premier, through the forum of this newspaper, to put his money where his mouth is and divulge information, such as his personal itinerary for the year, the flight

log and passenger manifestos relating to him and his entourage.

Of particular interest would be his explanation about the circumstances for using the jet to fly between Durban and Pietermaritzburg and how it can be viable, either in terms of finance, time or accessibility.

We are not aviation experts, but such a trip is obviously not economically viable for this class of aircraft. What is

also worrying is how dismissive Mr Mtshali is of such concerns.

His propensity for air travel is justified, according to himself, by his commitment to being accessible to all his constituents. Does that not highlight the difficulties of trying to run a province from a governmental outpost such as Ulundi?

We have raised these concerns and asked these same questions in the official negotiating forums, but have met with tight-lipped silence and by officials too afraid or unmandated to give direct answers.

The restructuring was presented as a fait accompli, despite there being obligations to consult the unions.

The requirement to consult is a product of the collective bargaining process, a process that Mr Mtshali is clearly ignorant of or not prepared to respect. Hospersa will not tolerate such pompous, bully-boy attitudes.

BY WAY of example, when he addresses his staff, as he did in Pietermaritzburg, it is usually in the presence of video cameras, so that dissenting individuals can be identified.

Such intimidation shows, at best, total disregard for the concerns of his staff and good-faith negotiations. At worst it borders on the criminal.

While this debacle continues, the province is on its knees with cholera epidemics, foot-and-mouth outbreaks and absent provincial MPs not performing as they should.

It is high time Mr Mtshali stood down and handed over the reins to someone who can give these issues the urgent attention they require.

In closing, this union notes with disdain that what is essentially a workers' issue, highlighted by a non-political organisation, has had various political parties scrambling to piggyback on it and gain leverage before the elections.

Trade union is hellbent on misleading the public, says Premier Lionel Mtshali

HOSPERSA has dealt with several issues to which I have already responded in the media.

It is not difficult to understand the motives of Hospersa, which is hopping from one paper to another with the same accusations and calls for my dismissal. Hospersa is hellbent on misleading the public.

This is my response:

FLIGHT LOGS, ITINERARIES  
AND EXPENDITURE

The subject of overexpenditure from any sector of the government is dealt with first internally by departmental auditors, which are mandated to recover from individuals any financial losses by the department concerned.

Besides that, the auditor-general's reports are tabled in parliament for debates.

There is nothing strange about our commitment to a clean and open government. Therefore, the demand of Hospersa to be supplied with confidential flight information is arrogant and irresponsible in the extreme.

The people of KwaZulu-Natal are reeling from epidemics of cholera and foot-and-mouth. It would help a great deal if Hospersa and its cohorts were to refrain from engaging the government in fruitless expenditure of time in hypocritical arguments and lend their full support to the eradication of these scourges.

THE RESTRUCTURING  
OF THE PREMIER

The restructuring of my office was a sequel to a report of the Ncholo audit, which was confirmed by the presidential review commission.

The Ncholo audit examined administrative, management and structural strengths and weaknesses of all the provinces. The report showed some provinces as being ill-structured for effective service delivery and lacking in appropriate skills.

The National Department of Public Service and Administration identified weaknesses in the premier's offices as provincial centres of the government in three provinces: Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Province. The public service department deployed its specialists to assist the province in determining their strategic focus.

For three months the department's Dr Mala Singh led the Integrated Im-

And the  
premier  
strikes back

"The demand of Hospersa to be supplied with confidential flight information is arrogant and irresponsible in the extreme."

—LIONEL MTSHALI

plementation Programme in KwaZulu-Natal, which was responding to the findings of the Ncholo audit and the presidential review commission.

The findings led to our province becoming one of three targeted for the Department for International Development support programme, which funds the National Integrated Provincial Support Programme.

The restructuring of my office was initiated by the public service department's Integrated Implementation Programme.

The prescribed procedure of this programme, in the evaluation of posts in order to attract people with the required skills to fulfill the office's mandate, was followed.

Throughout the strategic planning process the senior management of the premier's office worked with the public service department, represented by Dr Singh. The directives were followed in terms of the new management framework and implementation programme. The premier did not unilaterally restructure his office.

Hospersa would do well to reconsult with its significant representatives among the staff of the premier, and to add

to numerical enjoyment the benefit of the truth.

THE PREMIER'S  
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

In 1994, after the democratic elections, the provincial government of national unity could not agree on the capital for the province.

The Cadman commission recommended alternate use of Ulundi and Pietermaritzburg.

Members of the executive committee were given the option to choose the location of their departments, bearing in mind the logistics and staff considerations.

As Hospersa says, the decision to opt from a certain centre is dropping a bombshell, several bombshells were dropped in 1994 and in the following years without any shrapnel hitting Hospersa and its lately sensitive members. Some departments operate from Pietermaritzburg, others are in Durban.

A department even chose the Agricultural College of Cedara as its administrative headquarters without any blinking an eyelid, even though the relocation meant that all

three administrations which were being amalgamated were to be uprooted.

At least with those departments, which were moved either to Ulundi, Pietermaritzburg or Durban, savings were made on the existing infrastructure. As premier of the province and head of my office, I believe that I do have that same prerogative as my colleagues in the government to locate my office strategically to serve all communities of KwaZulu-Natal. Over and above that, as premier, I have an obligation to provide leadership.

CORE AND  
SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

The decision to assign certain strategic functions to the office of the premier was taken by the first premier in 1994. The core and non-core functions were identified by senior management of the office of the premier. The function of aviation services was identified as a support function, so was communication services and others.

If Hospersa is demanding the elimination of all non-core functions from the premier's office, this decision will be out of step with reality.

Such an approach contradicts the constitution.

If members of Hospersa have no ulterior motives they should not be intimidated by cameras. Are they afraid that if the meetings are recorded they will make it difficult for Hospersa to launch its spurious vitriol? In fact, by Hospersa's implication I should shun cameras.

ULUNDI AS SEAT OF  
THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

Ulundi is not an outpost as indicated by Hospersa. It is insensitive and irresponsible to neglect rural communities in favour of developed cities.

Running the province from Ulundi gives an opportunity for rural communities to feel closer to the government, and to benefit from that proximity.

Can it be argued that Pietermaritzburg is currently situated to service rural KwaZulu-Natal, north of Uthukela River?

It is irresponsible and hypocritical of Hospersa to pretend to have the interests of people at heart while it does not give a thought to previously marginalised rural communities who have still not experienced to any degree the positive impact of democracy and development, and who should receive priority consideration.

Eat, drink  
and buy  
one size up

IT MUST have been a Freudian slip that caused a woman reporter to write on our business pages the other day that new steps were being taken in KwaZulu-Natal to contain "food-and-mouth disease".

One way or another food and mouths are never too far from the female agenda, and by a happy coincidence that report coincided with another on the GoodLife pages headlined "Ditch the Dieting". It was about the launch of a new book by a dietician, Tabitha Hume, called *Women & Food*.

Tabitha's theory is that women have a love/hate relationship with food.

They love it – don't we all? – but they are also

terrified by the prospect of putting on weight, "because to be thin is to be nice, to be successful, to be happy".

Tabitha, however, teaches that hunger is good, sugar is good, dieting is bad, bad, bad.

Sounds good to me, and I hope Tabitha has every success in spreading her gospel, but it's not going to be too easy, because women and diets go together like, well, food and mouths, and probably have done since Adam and Eve cultivated their orchard.

In fact, I have just discovered – all right, made up – some Wisdom Literature called the Book of Eatalotomomy, which says:

In the beginning God created Man in His own image. Male and Female He created them. And he gave them dominion over the beasts of the field, over fish and fowl and all living creatures. And He created for them every good thing to eat: fruit and veg, green and yellow vegetables of all kinds, and fresh spring water to drink.

And He even threw in some chocolate and icecream to delight Man and Woman. And He said: "Of all that springs from earth shall you eat in abundance, especially broccoli and cauliflower and salads, for behold they are good."

And Satan saw Man and Woman were lean and mean and keen to be beheld, and he frowned and said: "I must do something about this." And he brought forth mountains of lard in various disguises, and fatty fast-foods of all shapes, sizes and colours.

And he took the humble health-giving potato and removed its skin and cut it into cubes that he soaked in oil, and prepared a banquet for Man and Woman, saying to them: "Eat up, for it is not all delicious, and would you not like double French fries with it, and a nice creamy dip, and a couple of beers to wash it down?"

And the Man and Woman said to each other: "Well, perhaps just this once we can eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we diet."

And so it came to pass that the first diet was created. But you will learn more of this in my new Book of Dietetonomomy, which is going to sell like fat-free hot cakes.

Blessings to count

IT DOES seem an irony that so many of us have to watch our weight when a national food consumption survey, now with provincial health departments, finds that half the country's children are eating less than half the recommended amount of daily basic nutrients.

The survey also says that almost two-thirds of all South African households have food shortages, and a high proportion of mothers eat less to save food for their children. On that theme, some international statistics sent in by a reader:

□ If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million who will not survive the weekend.

□ If you have never experienced the danger of battle, loneliness of imprisonment, pain of torture or pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 500 million people.

□ And if you have food in the fridge, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of people.

## Men of the world

DIETING isn't only a girl thing, but men have a more relaxed view of food and mouth problems. Alan Brent of Durban says this is because we men are secure in the knowledge that our bellies hide our big hips, and offers some more reasons why it's great to be a man:

□ You have freedom of choice concerning growing a moustache.

□ Christmas shopping can be accomplished for 25 relatives on December 24 in 45 minutes.

□ Your figure is never a factor in a job interview.

□ Wrinkles add character.

□ One mood, ALL the time.

Tailpiece

THE minister's wife came home from a shopping spree with an expensive new outfit. He looked at the price tag and groaned: "You know we can't afford this. Why did you have to buy it?"

She replied: "The devil made me do it."

"But just this once couldn't you have said get thee behind me, Satan?"

"I did," she said. "But he whispered in my ear: 'Do you know how nice that suits you from behind?'"

JON PENN

THE BOTTOM LINE:  
ONE swallow doesn't make a slimmer.

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## MADAM &amp; EVE

THOUGHT  
OF THE DAY

AS LONG as there are human beings experiencing pleasure and pain just as you do, there is no logical basis to discriminate between them to alter your concern for them if they behave negatively.  
Dalai Lama

## WORD FOR WORD

JUST AS A "DISARMED" PERSON HAS HAD HIS WEAPONS REMOVED, YOU'D EXPECT THAT A DISARMED PERSON WAS WITHOUT "GRUNTLE." HOWEVER, IN THIS SENSE, THE PREFIX DIS IS, WHAT IS CALLED, AN INTENSIFIER. THIS, A DISARMED FELLOW IS VERY VERY GRUNTLE!"

