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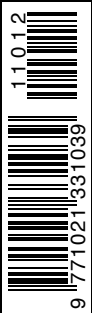
BULLIES

THE WORLD OF MALE ELEPHANTS

**MIKE
HORN**

on adventure,
adversity &
adolescents

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p26

BEST OF FACEBOOK 2011



p63

CRUISING THE QUIRIMBAS



p50

SENTINELS OF THE SEA

ROUND THE HORN



DMITRY SHAROMOV (4)

SB: Let's start at the beginning. Where did you grow up and where did your passion for taking on such challenges come from?

MH: I was born in South Africa and I think that was a real advantage in becoming an explorer. My father played rugby and cricket and his influence, along with the great climate, meant it was normal for me to participate in a lot of sport and to be outside. You know, I would never go indoors when it started to rain; I would always stay outside. All these things made me understand that I am more comfortable in nature than sitting in an office.

SB: Why call the expedition 'Pangaea' and where did the idea for the Young Explorer Program come from?

MH: During 20 years of professional exploration I had seen a lot of changes in the natural world and it concerned me that nothing was being done and that nobody in the cities was *really* seeing what was happening in nature. So, while I was doing the Arctic Circle expedition, which took two years and three months to complete, I started to think about showing young people the natural beauty of the planet, teaching them how to conserve that beauty and then actually doing it. I wanted to give back to nature what I had received for so many years as an explorer.

As for the name, well, 250 million years ago there was one supercontinent that we call Pangaea, and the world was perfect. You can't reunite the continents, but you can reunite the

youth of the continents and get them to work together, so to me Pangaea was the ideal name.

SB: Until now, all your adventures have been solo affairs. Sharing an expedition with people, and young people at that, must be a very different dynamic.

MH: The dynamic is completely different! Most of what I did in the past was to accumulate knowledge, which I am now able to share with the youth. And I think you can only do that when you're a bit older, when you've seen a lot of things and you've learned to be more patient.

At the same time, you need to be open to seeing the world through the eyes of a 15-year-old. Young people are our biggest source of untapped energy; they will be the ones to lead a change. I believe that if we can teach them to consider the needs of nature above how much money they're going to earn; if we can get them emotionally and intellectually connected to nature from a young age, it will inform the decisions they make when

South African-born Mike Horn is a fully fledged adventurer. He has completed four circumnavigations of the globe, swum the length of the Amazon, walked around the North and South poles and climbed in the Himalaya – all on his own. For the past three years, however, he has been tackling his biggest challenge yet – sailing around the world with a crew of teenagers. **Sarah Borchert** caught up with him in New York.

they run big companies in the future. That's why we select kids who have the potential to perform well once they finish school and university.

SB: You're speaking too as a father of teenagers?

MH: *Ja*, I've got two daughters; one's 18, the other is 17. The 18-year-old has taken a gap year and she's on the boat with me full time. She could be doing anything, but she prefers to be with me, to sail the oceans and climb the mountains. It's that contact with adults, the contact in nature, that kids today don't usually have. But I believe that it's only in situations that are unknown to both parent and child that you can really bond and give your children something that no-one else can. Buying them a computer and a bicycle just takes money and anybody can do that.

SB: I'm interested in the word 'explorer' because I associate it with discovering unknown places – and there aren't really any of those left. What then is the role of a 'modern-day explorer'?

MH: You know, everything is mapped, but not everything has been discovered. We took our Young Explorers to Baffin Island, where we went into fjords and crossed glaciers that have been there since the Ice Age, but don't even have names. So there is still a lot to do off the beaten track but, no, it's not like James Cook or Christopher Columbus, who went off to find new land. It's more about inner travel; it's



about finding new land inside yourself. What we need today, especially when we speak about the world's problems, is to open up and understand more about other people. If you close yourself off and never leave home, you're like the big fish in a small pond that only swims around and around, and that's as far as your knowledge will stretch. And I don't think that can lead to change.

SB: What have been some of your highlights as an explorer?

MH: The highlight is every time you come home alive! We don't go out there to die. Reaching the end can be the saddest moment of the expedition because the way that you've lived for so long is over, but it is also when you really prove to yourself – and it's only to yourself, it doesn't matter what other people think – that you've been able to do it and that you've learned from it.



SB: And your worst or most challenging experience?

MH: My biggest challenge as an explorer is dealing with human beings. If you understand the wind and the waves, you can calculate where a storm is going to go and you can control your actions in the elements. When you come across people, you can only control your actions; you can't control them.

SB: You alluded to the changes that you've seen in the natural world, but there are people who live in harmony with their environment and conserve it. Have you encountered examples of this and is there one that stands out?

MH: There are some amazing conservation programmes around the world. What upsets me a little though is that we keep on doing science and we keep on doing research, but very little of that knowledge is applied. And it's collecting dust. That's why I go out with these young people and we plant trees, we grow coral, we rehabilitate turtles, we turn thermostats down in schools in Europe... We use that research and we act.

SB: Because this is Africa Geographic, I must ask: what is your best experience or memory of Africa?

MH: For me, it's always when I sail into Cape Town and see Table Mountain. When I reached Table Bay three years ago after my Antarctica expedition, it was what identified Africa and South Africa for me. Although it's part of a city and it may not be the most beautiful mountain in the world, it is one of the most seen natural icons. It's what the sailors and explorers always looked for when they were trying to find the southern tip of Africa.

SB: You don't have to persuade me, you're talking to a Cape-tonian! The Young Explorer Program is coming to an end in 2012. What happens after that?

MH: Maybe the moon?

SB: You're only half-joking, aren't you?

MH: This Pangaea expedition has grown into one of the biggest environmental youth programmes in the world, without us really intending it to. It's the kids, they've taken on the responsibility 100 per cent. So, although the boat will be docked next year, this project will carry on. If we can create a bigger platform where we can give anybody, of any age, who wants to do something for the environment the knowledge and experience to be able to make a change in the world, that would be really great. **AG**

Find out more about Mike Horn, the Pangaea Expedition and the Young Explorer Program at www.mikehorn.com



SHIP OF YOUTHS

To date, 72 young explorers between the ages of 15 and 20 have accompanied Mike on different stages of his four-year sailing expedition around the world. South African Henko Roukema (above), was one of three South Africans who made it through the rigorous training and selection camp at the Mike Horn Expedition Centre in Switzerland, and he joined the ninth expedition, a three-week sail to the Arctic region of Nunavut in Canada in August 2011.

'The selection process was really tough,' he recalls, 'but a lot of fun at the same time! We were tested on our physical and mental fitness, leadership, communication skills, self-discipline and teamwork abilities while doing numerous activities.' Of his time on the boat, he says, 'My lasting memories will definitely be Mike Horn's passion for life, his inspiring personality and the amazing results of teamwork. It gave me the opportunity to experience a truly unique but fragile destination and it inspired us all to take action!'

ABOVE Henko Roukema was selected to participate in the ninth Young Explorer expedition to Arctic Canada.

LEFT During that journey to Nunavut, Mike Horn and his young team crossed glaciers and fjords that had never been traversed, let alone named.

OPPOSITE, ABOVE 'Everything is mapped, but not everything has been discovered.' Mike Horn believes that the value of extreme exploration lies in its ability to take you on inner journeys.

OPPOSITE, BELOW Sponsored by Panerai and Mercedes Benz, among others, the four-year Pangaea expedition aims to connect the world's future leaders with the beauty and fragility of nature.