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**12. The life and work of a  
botanical explorer:  
John Jacob Lavranos  
(1926-2018)**



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPERS ON  
A MISCELLANY OF TOPICS ON  
THE SUBJECT OF SUCCULENT  
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**The life and work of a botanical explorer: John Jacob Lavranos (1926-2018)**

b. Corfu, Greece, 29 Mar 1926; d. Loulé, Portugal, 1 Feb 2018

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**Summary**

This biography of the celebrated late twentieth century botanical explorer John Lavranos is compiled mainly from his own archives and a 32-year friendly relationship and correspondence with the author. His name will be well known to most readers through the acquisition of plants bearing his field numbers, which form an integral part of any modern botanical garden's records.

Integrity and a forthright personality sometimes got him into trouble with officialdom and authority, but he valued his independence of institutions, allowing him the freedom to act and think as he wished. His declaration that "I never did anything that I hadn't wanted to do" epitomises his attitude to life and his work. His long and productive life has had its fair share of triumphs and pitfalls, and attracted both criticism and admiration, but not in equal measure. All those who knew him well could not help but respect his energy, wisdom and courage, and the honest search for truth that is the mark of all good scientists. The small minority with whom he clashed mainly comprised those who were opposed to his particular brand of conservation through plant collecting and distribution, which he saw as an antidote to the unremitting human encroachment on natural habitats.

He should be remembered most for the considerable contributions that he made to science with his new discoveries, re-gatherings of known plants, and a vast legacy of specimens in institutions. His gatherings of plants sent to propagators also continue to exist as live cultures as ex situ conservation reserves for plants that are often under threat of extinction in their native habitats. He was a popular speaker at conferences and other meetings in many countries.

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## The life and work of a botanical explorer: John Jacob Lavranos (1926-2018)

### The family name

Lavranos is Greek in origin for the name of a double headed axe. The family has a coat of arms depicting an arm in chain mail with the hand wielding an axe, and the motto *Patria Fidelis*, faithful to [my] country.

In Italy, the name is spelt Lavrano, which is sometimes also used outside Italy. The Italian spelling was used by John's cousin Iris in her history of the family, and John himself used it occasionally, most notably in his correspondence of 1958-59.

The spelling of botanical epithets formed from a surname is governed under the rules of nomenclature by Art. 60.12 (Rec.60.2.). The genitive of lavranos is *lavrani*, which is the correct spelling. However, wherever it has been originally spelt as *lavranosii*, the epithet is not to be corrected.

### Historical background

John Lavranos was born into an idyllic, rather privileged world in Corfu (or Corfou as he sometimes spelt it), one of the Ionian Islands belonging to Greece. A brand of feudal system of mixed origins still applied after 400 years of Venetian Empire when the population was divided into nobles, civilians and the populace, followed by a smattering of 19C Victorian English influence, until the islands were finally ceded to Greece in 1864.

John was the eldest son of Philip Lavranos (1885-1969), a Greek Orthodox landowner, and was in line to inherit quite a large estate

on the Island of Corfu. This had been in the Lavranos family since the family house was built in 1460 by the founder of the dynasty, a local adventurer and entrepreneur. In those days the whole area was a wilderness and claim had been laid to an area that extended to perhaps a quarter of the entire island of Corfu.

The Lavranos family flourished for many generations, gradually bringing the land under cultivation, laying roads, founding the town of Chlomos and planting many thousands of olive trees and grapevines, some of which continued to be owned by the family, while others were given to the local people who lived in the village in return for their services. Wine and olive oil were produced in the Lavranos oil presses, and the output was sold throughout Europe.

At first, all the dwellings in the village belonged to the Lavranos Estate, but over time through the benevolence of the family the villagers gradually earned a freehold status for their homes in exchange for their labour and a proportion of their produce. The village is perched high above the surrounding countryside, with streets barely wide enough for a man and his donkey.

The road into the Lavranos estate was marked with green iron gates, and a broad, cobbled walkway wending through an avenue of oleander, covered in pink blossoms in season. The house itself had stepped gardens on each side, punctuated with large clay pots here and there, bursting with geraniums that had been planted by John's mother.

### Parents

John's mother was Lily Marie Regina Wartmann (1887-1982), a protestant lady descended from German Swiss and Irish parents, but born in Corfu. She was energetic, creative, and a gifted pianist who loved Chopin waltzes and Beethoven sonatas.



Ladies did not ride bicycles in those days, but she popularised the activity, inventing large, skirt-like shorts for the purpose. Her husband, Philip Lavranos, had a sister who lived in Corfu Town, and a brother, Angelo, a heroic veteran of the First Balkan War, who was a Corfu Scout Master.

The Lavranos household had staff, of which Aristidis was the majordomo, butler, and driver of the Lavranos motor car. Philip had gained his education at a University in France, where he studied the latest methods of viticulture, which he put to good use on the estate. His prize-winning wines became known and respected throughout Greece and the rest of Europe. Philip was known to the villagers as Πατριάρχης (Patriarch), and Lily was κυρία (Lady). They referred to the house as the Αρχοντικόν (Mansion).

Fig. 1 The earliest known photo of John, in the arms of his mother Lily (c.1929).



Fig. 2 Young John already showing an interest in botany, taken by a friend of his mother's (c.1930). It shows him admiring two grass twigs, which he thought was *Lagurus ovatus*. John did not know this photo existed until it came to light on the wall of his mother's bedroom during the house clearance after she died.





### The early years

John took to natural history from his earliest days. He was always busily investigating the habits of insects and plants. Everything in nature was of interest, and in the village the peasants respected him and called him Φιλοσοφος (Philosopher). As a small boy he spent many hours pouring over an ancient family atlas. The desert regions particularly fascinated him, and he vowed that one day he would visit them.

By far the greatest influence on his early life was from his mother, Lily (Fig. 1-2), who was mainly responsible for his early education, otherwise frequently disrupted by the years of depression and political unrest. John also inherited her fair complexion, blue eyes, facial features and small stature, quite unlike his brother, Max, who was 3½ years his junior and very different from John both in physiognomy (he was, like their father, rather short and stocky and typically mediterranean) and in his interests and pursuits. They had very little in common but maintained a polite relationship to when Max died at the age of 75, in 2004, from lung cancer. He had been an inveterate smoker and his addiction to card games, in closed spaces with everyone belching clouds of tobacco smoke, which did nothing to prolong his life.

The contrasting personalities were also present in their youth. John was more interested in looking for scorpions under rocks, while Max got up to all sorts of mischief and was often spanked. John was mature for his age and rarely did anything to embarrass the family.

John and Max (Fig 3) had a Swiss governess, Mademoiselle Besançon, whose main job it was to teach the boys French, which she did with a Swiss accent. John was also taught to play the violin



Fig. 3 John Lavranos is here shown on the extreme right of this group, and to the left of him is his brother Max, on a Corfu beach in 1944.

by Mr. Nikokavuras, which, it is said, he did very well. He was also an accomplished pianist.

The cosmopolitan household and private education also gave him a mastery of most European languages that would stand him in good stead in later life. For his later adventures in East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, he also studied and had a reasonable working knowledge of Arabic, Amharic, Soqotri, Somali, and of course Latin, a requirement for all good botanists.

## Dystopian chaos

The beginning of the decline of the Lavranos dynasty began as the world depression of 1929-1933 hit Greece severely and the value of exports declined. On 28 Oct 1940, Italy invaded Greece, entering the country via Albania, followed by air raids.

John was 14 years old when air raids passed over Chlomos on their way to their targets. He began a diary that he kept till the end of the war, recording the bombing frequency. Corfu Town was fire bombed by the Germans on 25 Sep 1943 as a result of their quarrel with the Italians. His cousin Iris commented that he seemed to be on the whole untouched by the commotion going on, and continued to observe the habits of insects, to plant and transplant plants, and amused himself reading a sumptuously leather-bound Larouse French-English Dictionary, illustrated with engravings. He would accompany Aristidis into the village where the only local radio was kept in the Taverna, in order to hear the latest news broadcast by the BBC. Other than that, the swirl of other people's affairs seemed to be irrelevant in his scientific world.

An underground trench was dug in the rose garden for an air raid shelter, but John was the only one ever to use it because he was so fascinated by the tertiary fossils that were exposed in the trench walls.

The ill-equipped Greeks were successful in driving back the Italians in the north, but then on 6 April 1941 Germany also attacked Greece, and the Greek army was forced to capitulate on 23 April 1941. As a result, Greece was occupied by the Italians from 1941 to 1943, and then by Germany from 1943 to 1944. What ensued was economic collapse and a worthless currency, made worse by factions fighting among each other in a civil war,

and it was not until October 1944 that Allied forces liberated Athens.

Chlomos had passed through the war more or less unscathed, so the Lavranos family remained in residence. The island of Cephalonia, however, where John's aunt Alice and cousin Iris resided, was not so lucky, and their home had been destroyed by the end of the war. They fled to the Greek mainland, then on to Egypt, and finally to South Africa, where they relocated twice and eventually settled into a new way of life in Johannesburg by 1950.



Fig. 4 Failed application to get special dispensation for John to go to Switzerland in 1942.

## Career preparations

At the age of 16, it had been decided that John would travel to



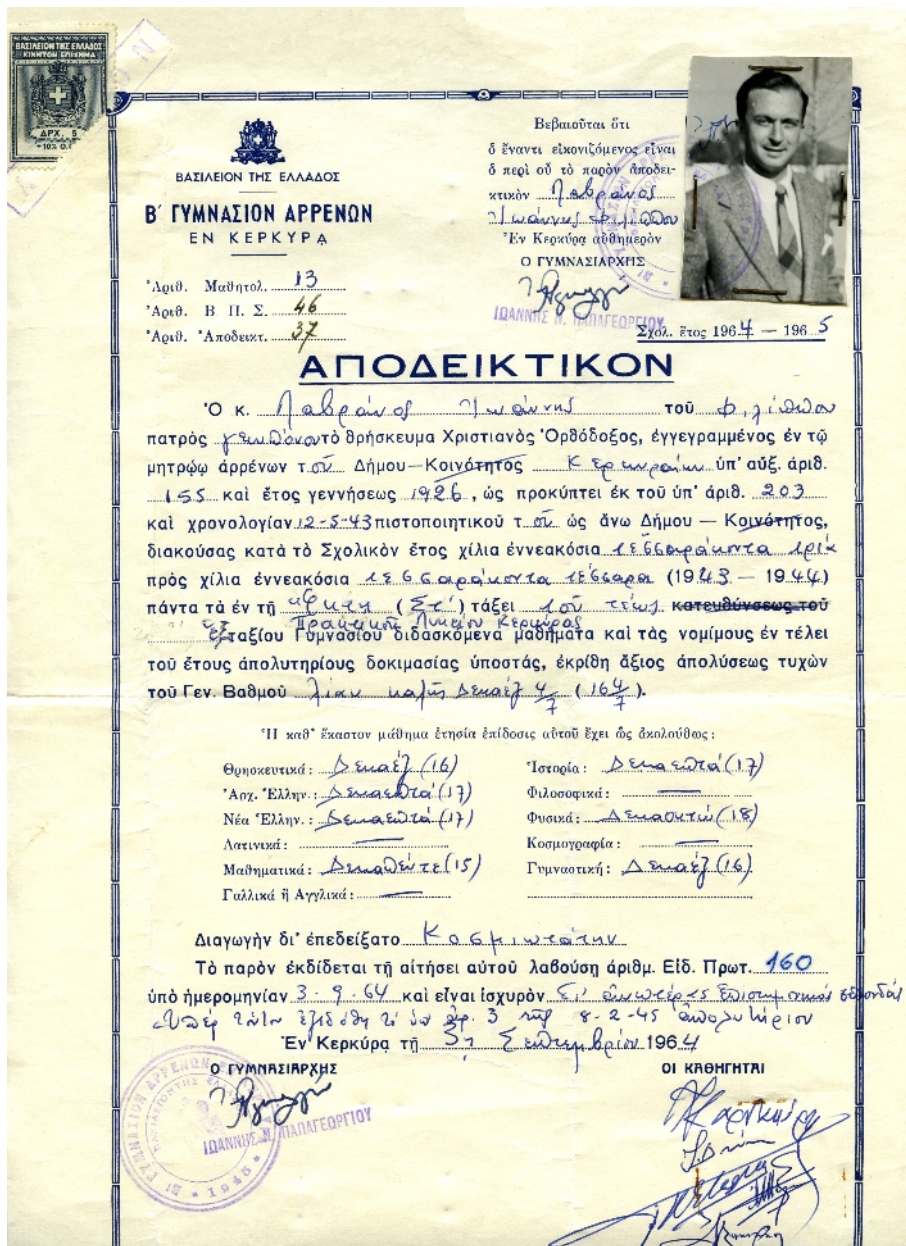


Fig. 5 John' High School Certificate of 1944.



Fig. 6 Examples of some Greek banknotes while under occupation in 1941-1944, kept as souvenirs by John. Hyper-inflation made it necessary to print new and ever higher denomination banknotes.

Switzerland to further his education. This was during Italian occupation so it required the issue of special dispensation from the German consul in Corfu, Hugo Spengelin, together with an Italian passport. The Swiss, however, insisted that he travel under a Greek passport, so in the end nothing ever came of this (Fig. 4). Instead, he remained in Corfu and in 1943-1944 attended High School. A copy of his 1944 High School Certificate is shown here in Fig. 5.

The period of Italian and German occupation was disastrous to the Greek economy. Hyper-inflation eroded the value of money (Fig.6), so that banks in Corfu ran out of liquidity by Oct 1944 and printed the banknote shown in the middle here for 100 million drachmas to keep things going. The Greek state itself issued banknotes from 0.5 drachma



to 100 billion drachmas while under occupation, until the 100 billion drachma note was eventually exchanged for one new drachma. As bank deposits had been blocked since 1941, this effectively wiped out all monetary assets.

The immediate postwar period saw John attending the University of Athens, graduating with Degrees in Law (D.Jur.) & Economics (B.Sc.Econ.) in 1948.

In April 1948 John joined the Greek navy, as a translator. However, he remained in the navy only till September 1950 (Fig. 7). Then for a couple of years he spent his time leisurely exploring in Greece and contemplating his future (Fig. 8).



Fig. 7 John is first from left on the back row of recruits at the Poros (Attica) naval training centre in April 1948.



Fig. 8 John exploring on Mt. Parnassus in central Greece in 1951.

### South Africa

He emigrated to Johannesburg, South Africa, with his first wife, Helen, in September 1952. His reasons for choosing to settle in Johannesburg were never mentioned, but already having relatives who had arrived there 4 years previously and were flourishing after the war had turned them into refugees, was probably the main factor. Like them, John wanted to escape the economic cloud that had settled over Greece.

A few years later (1962 or earlier), he married his second wife, Mrs. J. Suzanne Lavranos (1918-2010). Suzanne was a rather dumpy little French lady, well-groomed and precise. She was, at the time they met, the French Attaché in Johannesburg.



She had friends in Santiago and often went to visit them in Chile. Suzanne was commemorated in the name *Crassula susannae* Rauh & Friedrich (1962). The spelling here is not an error because the name Suzanne had been latinised to Susanna. In 1968, John met his third wife, Mireille, while she was working as a nurse in Djibouti. However, Suzanne was a staunch Roman Catholic and at first refused to agree to a divorce. They were estranged by the late 1980s, but she eventually relented and allowed a divorce after she left South Africa to move to Alicante, Spain. The split seems to have been amicable. She herself later became Mrs. J. S. Pèchels, who died at the age of 92.

When John arrived in South Africa, he could not work in the legal profession, as it would have meant taking various new exams, the local law being modelled on British usage, not the Roman law he had been taught in Greece. So, with the help of a friend, he got work as a property agent. That was in late 1952. In 1959, the bottom fell out of the local housing market (it recovered later) so he had to find other employment. He joined the *Canadian Manufacturers Life Insurance Company*, with whom he remained until 1972. They were then taken over by a local group, so John and a colleague decided to form their own insurance brokerage firm under the trading style of *John Lavranos & Associates*. After a further 18 successful years, he sold his one third share of the business to his then two partners. This arrangement gave him much freedom to carry on with his botanical activities that, by 1972, were already well established.

### Mireille

John had first met Mireille Laudrin, his third and final partner for life, while flying to Djibouti in 1968. She sat next to him during the flight and romance blossomed. Just over a year later he took her on a guided tour of his favourite haunts in Somalia, south Yemen, and

Kenya. They soon became inseparable and Mireille accompanied him on very many other journeys to come.

They both lived in Pretoria, and in 1970 Mireille created a most successful dog grooming parlour that happened to make more money than John did himself. It was John who prepared her accounts for her. However, despite their devotion to each other, they were unable to marry because Suzanne would not grant a divorce until very much later. Suzanne rarely used Mireille's name, referring to her only as 'John's paramour'.

Just a few years after Suzanne settled in Alicante, John and Mireille, now finally married, left South Africa and lived out the rest of their lives in the Algarve, Portugal.

Mireille suffered a minor stroke in 1993 and remained in poor health thereafter. She died in 2014 of leukaemia. Devastated, John became depressed and frequently predicted his own early exit, although for his age his health at that time was still quite robust, and he outlived her for another 4 years. This, at least, gave him time to put his affairs in order, and he had disposed of most of his plants, library and other assets before his own time came, mostly by simply giving them away! He said that he had enough money to see him out and was not interested in acquiring more.

### Botanical exploration

The famous Lavranos number list began in 1954 as a checklist of vouchers supplied by other collectors and nurseries, supplemented by his own gatherings, at first in South Africa.

From 1961 onwards he began explorations further afield, especially to areas known to have been largely unexplored, mainly in the company of guides and other botanists. Expenses for these explorations were partly recovered by sending live plants and seeds to sponsoring botanical institutions, specialist nurseries, and private enthusiasts, while dried specimens were donated to herbaria. It was a tradition for plant collectors of the day to finance their expeditions in this way, pretty much as had always occurred throughout the history of botanical exploration. Other contemporary botanists such as Werner Rauh did the same. Others, like Hans Herre, took it a step further and distributed their gatherings via their own mail order nursery business. John's wide interests meant that he also had the knowledge to gather non-botanical specimens such as mollusca, insects, fossils and geological samples for a wide variety of clients.

Nothing in nature was off John's radar, but he did have certain specialities of his own. He was attracted to succulents, he said, because they had really been the vehicle that allowed him to explore remote places, but he had always been interested in all plants and their geography. Of the succulent plants, aloes and apocynaceous plants were his favourites, and of the 207 taxa that he described himself or jointly co-authored that were new to science, 99 of them were aloes, and 74 asclepiads.

### **Lavranos of Arabia**

Aware that the natural history of Arabia was poorly understood, John's curiosity about the flora and fauna of southern Arabia was aroused and in early 1958 he wrote to the Public Relations and Information Department of Aden, saying that he was planning a trip there, but it had to be postponed because he was concerned about the security situation as shown in press reports.

On 7 Mar 1958, the Public Relations Officer wrote back to say that the reports were exaggerated and that the Aden Colony was quite settled with ample hotel accommodation and that the only unsettled region to be avoided was in the west.

John had also expressed a wish to make contact by letter with someone in Aden who had an interest in the flora of South Arabia. The Officer recommended that he write to Captain W. J. Waring, who was in the British Army, who in his spare time did a considerable amount of study of the local flora. Thus began a period of letters, plants and seed exchange with the good Captain that lasted till 1961.

Waring sent him carallumas, euphorbias, and aloes from short expeditions until his posting ended in mid-1961 and he had to return to England to work in the War Office. Captain Waring was quite competent as an amateur botanist, and unusual in being fluent in Arabic and Russian languages. He compiled notes and sketches of plants that were eventually published by the Aden Government in a small booklet (now rare) aimed at tourists and schools.

John also wrote to the Ministry of Natural Resources, Hargeisa, British Somaliland, in 1959, searching for contacts, but this came to nothing and was ended when the country declared independence in 1960 and became part of the Somali Republic. It was some years later before he found a way to travel in Somalia.

Pretoria-born Clyde Conrad Carl Meintjes (1936- ) was an architecture student who gained his DipArch degree at the



University of Pretoria in 1960. From May 1961 till May 1963 he was working at the Aden office of Brandt & O'Dell, P&O House. He enjoyed travelling, especially to the cooler high altitude areas of the Aden Colony, sending letters reporting on his adventures to his friends at the Pretoria office.



Fig. 9 Collecting *Euphorbia qarad* N of Lahej on the road to Dhala from Aden in 1962.



Fig. 10 Transport in 1962, with Clyde Meintjes (right) and John Lavranos (second from left).

Although not a botanist, he sometimes collected plants to send back to plant in a garden in Pretoria. Somehow, John got to know of him and from about Oct 1961 there began an exchange of letters, which led to him embarking on his first exploration of Yemen in August 1962 accompanied by his new-found friend. No plants had been collected there since the end of the previous century and John was determined to fill that gap in botanical knowledge.

At the time the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula was a British Protectorate, with a military base at Aden, and the authorities were not keen on people wandering around in a politically sensitive area. However, in 1962 a chance encounter with Brian Doe, an English architect and antiquities expert at the Aden base enabled John to get permission to visit him in Aden. The British Middle East Command also permitted John to travel and explore in the Aden hinterland in the company of Clyde Meintjes and Major Michael van Lessen on the Yemen Audhali plateau (Fig. 9-10).





Fig. 11 John Lavranos with *Euphorbia* sp. (Yemen, Hadhramaut, E of Al Khalaf). Photo Rauh, Mar 1964.



Fig. 12 Aden Airways flight at Seiyun, Hadhramaut, which took John back to Aden in Apr 1964.

All three of these companions became life-long friends, and gathered many specimens in subsequent years to send to John by post. John gave thanks by commemorating them in the names of new species. He returned to Yemen eight times, until, in 1971 under a communist regime, all permission was refused to travel away from Aden.

In 1964 (Mar-Apr) he was again in South Yemen, but this time further north in Hadhramaut accompanied by Werner Rauh (Fig. 11-13). This was an opportunity to visit locations last seen by the French botanist Alfred Deflers in the 1890s. The tribes-people confessed that they had never seen a white man in their wild hills, but they still talked about the one who had been there in their great-grandparent's days. Information left by Deflers of the places he visited was so detailed that the plants he discovered could still be found exactly where he had found them. John said: "It was a moving experience to follow in the footsteps of such an eminent naturalist after 90 years."





Fig. 13 Lavranos (1964), with one of his favourite plants, *Adenium obesum*. Photo Rauh.

Rauh fell ill and had to return home early. John himself was also afflicted with bacillary dysentery (shigellosis) which curtailed any further exploration that was meant to have continued until May. Disease is one of those ever-present hazards for travellers in tropical countries, and John had also had a bout of malaria at about this time. Anti-malaria tablets were always one of the essentials on all Arabian and East African expeditions thereafter.

John had promised Kew that he would send them exsiccata from this expedition. Rauh had despatched all the material to Heidelberg, under an agreement promising to forward one full set to Kew, and another to Pretoria. Unfortunately, neither happened, and it was a cause of great embarrassment for John and strained his relationship with Rauh.

#### **The Gilbert Reynolds connection**

It was after the 1964 expedition, in a letter from Gilbert Reynolds (1895-1967) dated 20 Apr 1964, that the apposite sobriquet ‘Lavranos of Arabia’ was first applied to John by this elder statesman of aloes. Gilbert had given £50 of his own money towards financing that expedition. The grant body itself, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, had refused to help, so Gilbert and John shared the costs, which neither could really afford.

John’s awakening interest in aloes all began and caused him to write to Gilbert Reynolds on 29 Jan 1962, from which there followed a voluminous exchange of letters that was to continue until Aug 1965 when the manuscript for Reynolds, *The Aloes of tropical Africa and Madagascar* (1966), had been sent to the publisher.

Reynolds had been to Somaliland, then a British Protectorate, but he never travelled in the rest of Arabia, mainly because of the risks to life and limb. Yemen’s aloes were almost a complete mystery to him. He even tried to put Lavranos off visiting Yemen in Aug 1964, when he said: “Don’t dream of going there – even if you can enter which is doubtful – neither British nor

(& especially) South African passports are popular [he didn't know then that John was travelling under a Greek passport] – I was warned of all sorts of dangers by the Ambassador in Addis, etc. - So, be advised, forget Yemen.”

Handicapped for his book by only having a paucity of earlier accounts by travellers about Arabian aloes to go on, Reynolds was naturally delighted when John turned up and freely offered him the considerable benefit of his personal experience and knowledge of that region. He even offered John a chapter of his book in order to write up the Arabian aloes himself. That did not transpire, but it ought to be recognised that all the accounts of Arabian aloes in his book were in fact prepared for Reynolds by John.

Reynolds heaped much deserved praise on John time after time. “Now let us get something straight” he said, “I do earnestly believe you are the one & only person I know who could handle the aloes of Arabia. Your descriptions of huernias absolutely opened my eyes wide & gave me a most pleasant shock. Your work seems pretty sound to me, you go into things with meticulous care, & you are painstaking & thorough in your botanical work. That's why I would love to give you every ounce of help & support I can. Find me an unmistakably new species of *Aloe* in Arabia & I'd gladly honour you by describing it as *Aloe lavranosii*” (letter 18 Feb 1963), which of course he did.

On 1 Jan 1965, John's account: “Notes on the aloes of Arabia with descriptions of six new species” (*J. S. Afr. Bot.* **31**(1): 55-81) was published, about which Reynolds commented: “Really I must congratulate you on a masterly piece of work which will fill in a badly-needed gap. Funnily enough Somaliland & Arabia were my two weakest brutes – now both are pretty well completed. The

more I study it, the more I realise what a splendid piece of work it is.”

The close friendship that had developed continued until Gilbert's failing health resulted in his death in Apr 1967. He had sustained a 50 cigarettes a day habit for over 40 years and in 1963 was shocked into giving them up completely after being told that he had only 50% of normal lung capacity. However, he did at least survive just long enough to see his precious book published.

John's contribution to *The Aloes of tropical Africa and Madagascar* (1966) was not inconsiderable, and should have been more widely recognised than it was. Also, considering that, up to this point, his botany was entirely self-taught, the respect that the also self-taught Gilbert and other botanists from the professional world had for him showed that he was already ranked among the best. He had learned much from the likes of Rauh and Reynolds, both traditional in their botany though quite different in their approaches. Rauh, John said, was determined to prematurely name everything without hesitation yet was often forced to retract, while Reynolds would never do so until he knew absolutely everything that he could learn about a plant. John himself adopted the latter stance and hence his voucher list was full of unidentified plants until the correct determinations had become clear later, usually after consulting specialists at Kew and elsewhere. However, in 1964, John decided that the time had now come for him to seek formal qualifications in order to be taken more seriously by the botanical profession.

Since catching the botanical exploration bug, John had become dissatisfied that his only qualifications were suitable for a legal career, so he resolved to enrol for a 3yr. degree course in



botany and geography in 1964. As he said in a letter to Sir George Taylor at Kew: “I consider this essential in order to round off my knowledge. I hope that when, Deo volente, I have completed my degree I shall be more acceptable to the professionals!” These courses were completed in 1967, as the Diploma issued in April 1968 shows (Fig. 14).

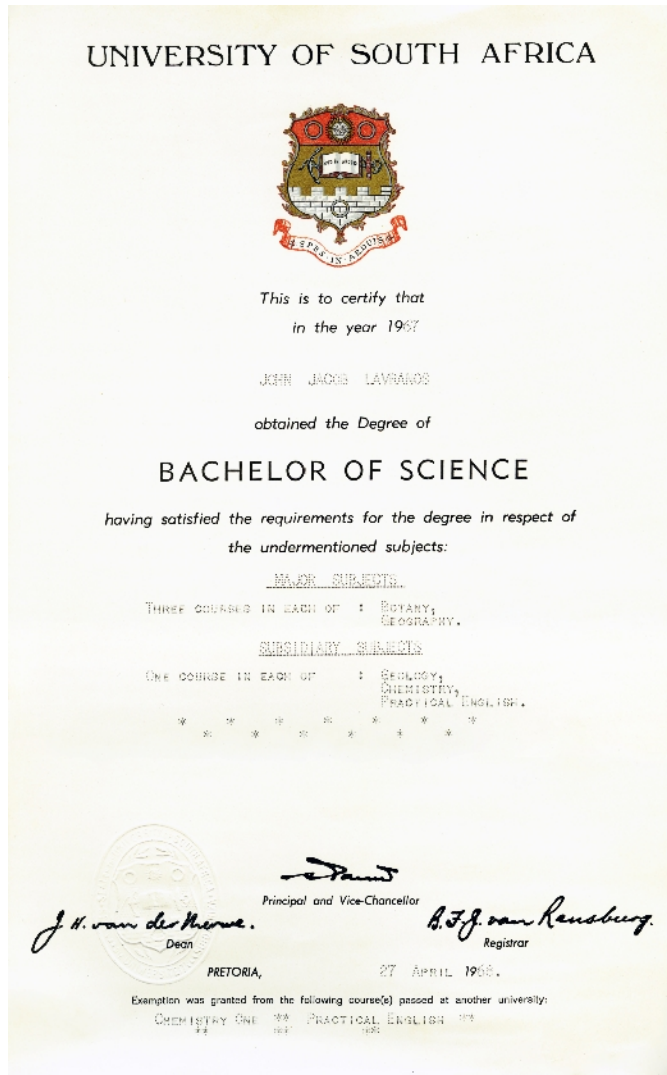


Fig. 14 John’s BSc diploma in botany & geography, University of South Africa, gained in 1967.

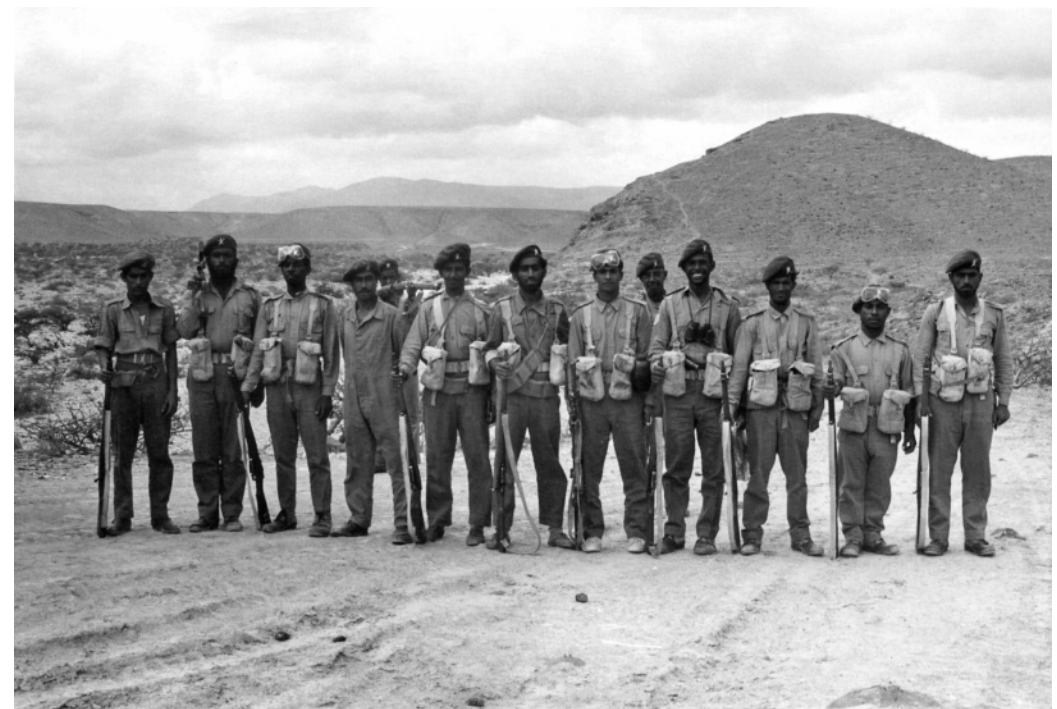


Fig. 15 Platoon hired to provide protection on the 1966 expedition to Dhofar, Oman.

At the end of 1965 and early 1966, John explored the Dhofar region of Oman. This was a difficult territory, constantly beset with ambushes, land mines and other similar nuisances: “At times I just had to jump off the vehicle and snatch a plant or two.” (Fig. 15)

### Socotra

In 1966 he spotted an opportunity to join the Middle East Command expedition to the little known island of Socotra, led by Major Peter Boxhall, which enhanced his reputation as a distinguished botanical explorer immeasurably (Fig. 16-17).





Fig. 16 On Abd Al-Kuri, 1966. Lavranos is the figure standing, apparently gazing at a ship on the horizon, Radcliffe-Smith is crouching, nearest to the camera).

Brian Doe was also on this expedition, having himself been on a previous expedition to the island in 1964. By that time John had already explored parts of mainland Yemen, and it was this valuable previous experience in the Arabian Peninsula that gave him the opening to join Alan Radcliffe-Smith from Kew, the pair forming the botanical contingent of the 1967 scientific expedition. John wanted the botanical gatherings to be included in his already established Lavranos list, but Kew insisted that the numbers be in the name of the botanical contingent leader, who was Radcliffe-Smith. A sort of compromise was agreed whereby they would be called Smith and Lavranos numbers, or 'S&L'.



Fig. 17 Perhaps the largest *Adenium* anywhere, at Ras Hebak, Socotra. *Adenium socotranum* and John Lavranos.



It was also agreed that evaluation and determination of the findings were to be mainly carried out by Kew's respective specialists, while John requested that the aloes and stapeliads be worked on by himself. The expedition was cut short when the Federation for the Liberation of South Yemen insisted that the British military base of Aden should withdraw early.

John's correspondence after the expedition contained many requests by him for a complete checklist of the 798 gatherings and their identities from Kew, but such a list never seemed to appear, apart from gatherings made by John on his own in the Aden hinterland before he returned home. However, the checklist of determinations did eventually appear, authored by Radcliffe-Smith, but with only a very limited private distribution, in July 1976.

Fig. 18  
A typical letter from Radcliffe-Smith to John, dated 7 Aug 1967.

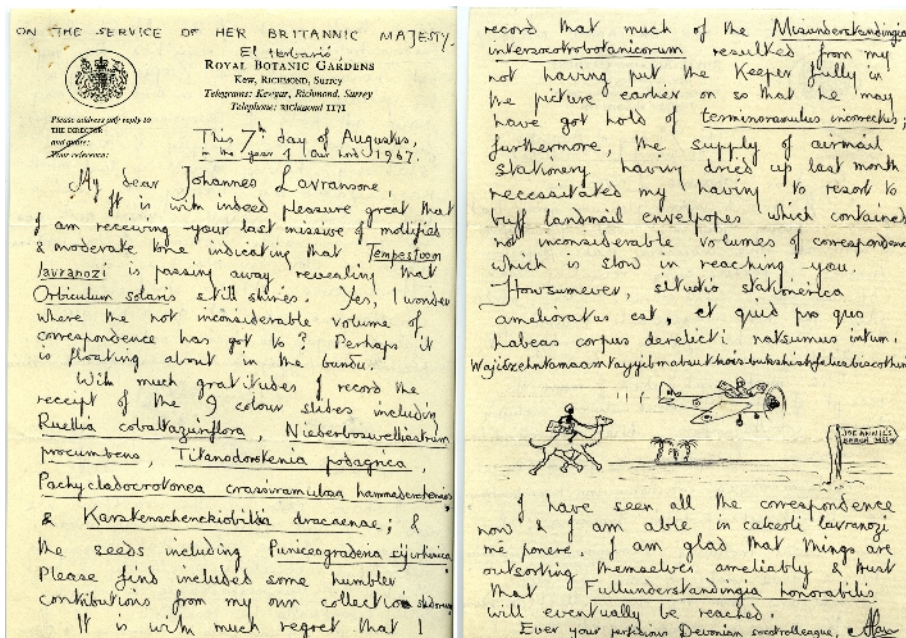
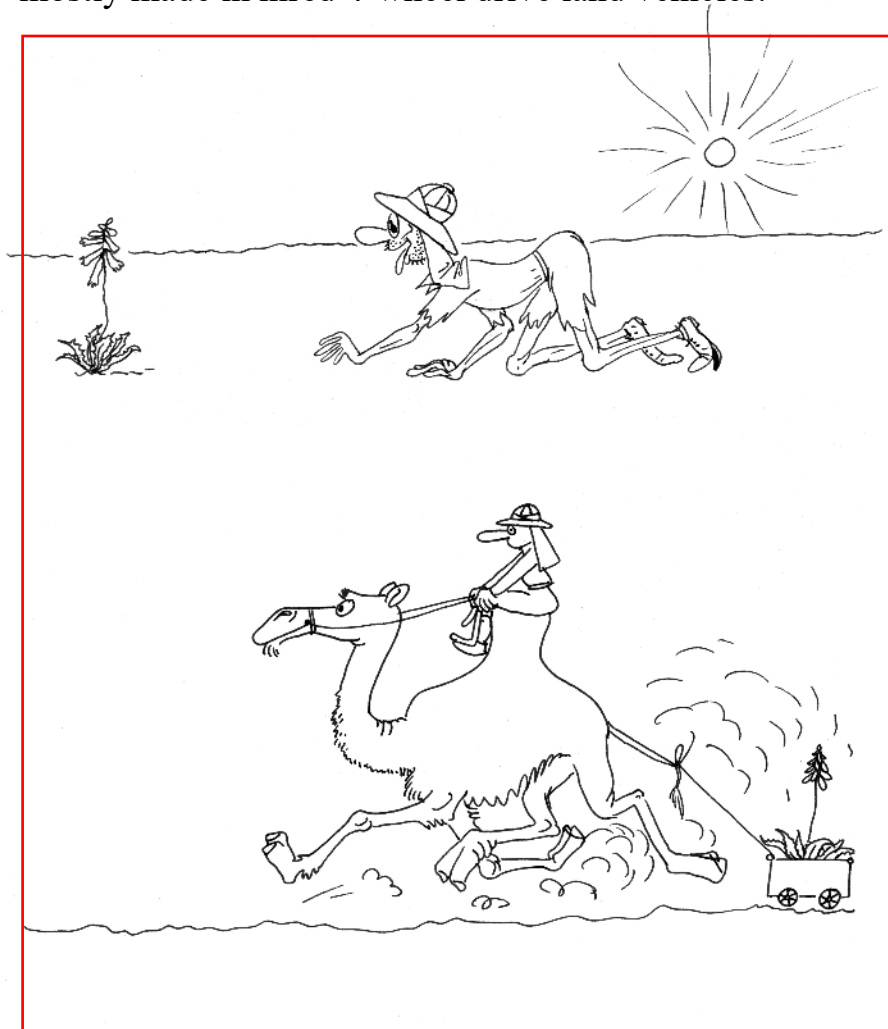


Fig. 19 The image of John Lavranos by 1967 was parodied in this unpublished affectionate caricature by the botanist Adrianus Meuse, showing him tracking down and gathering an aloe. There is no record of John actually ever mounting a camel and this was presumably introduced just for comic effect. His explorations were mostly made in hired 4-wheel drive land vehicles.





Alan Radcliffe-Smith was a *Euphorbiaceae* specialist at Kew. He was a perfect travelling companion with a lively sense of humour. His letters were generally punctuated with jokes and amusing cartoons (Fig. 18), while in contrast John's replies tended to be matter-of-fact.

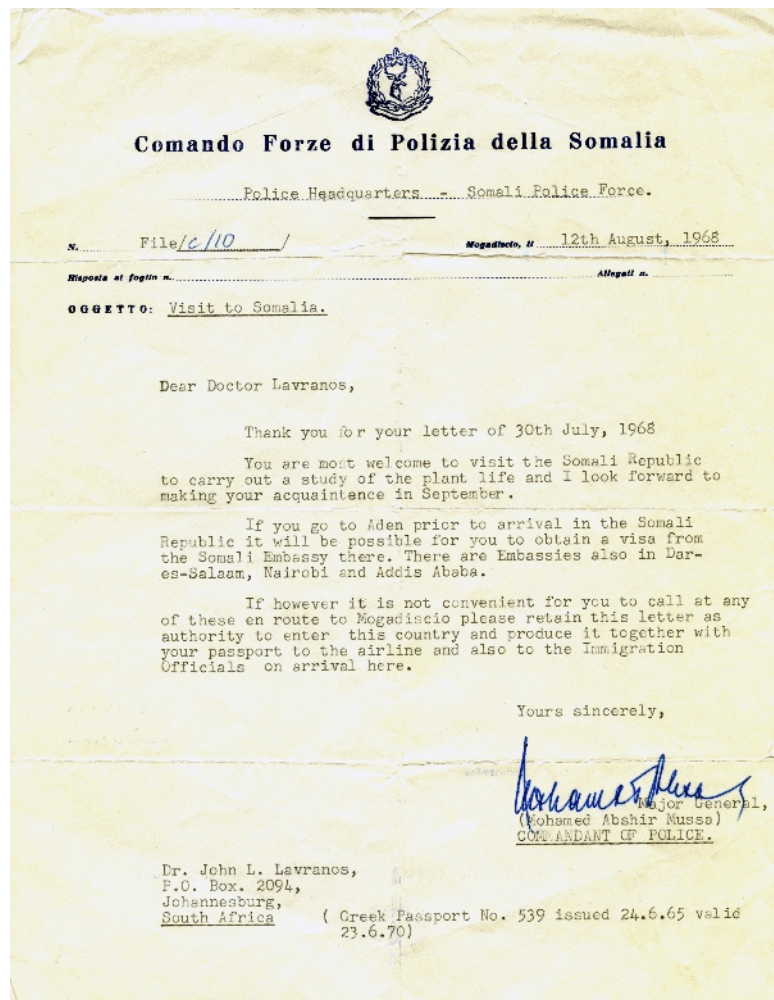


Fig. 20 Letter of authority to enter Somalia from the Commandant of Police, Aug 1968.

## Somalia

While collecting *Hibiscus* seeds on Socotra he came across some beetles. It was suggested that he send them to a certain Dr. Koch at the Namib Desert Research Station. Dr. Koch subsequently visited John in Johannesburg and by a stroke of luck it transpired that he was in a position to introduce John to the Somali Chief of Police, General Mohammed Abshir Mussa.

He also got to know Ambassador Bernardeli and Professor Scortecci. As a result of these useful contacts, John was allowed to explore and collect plants in Somalia (Fig. 20).

His first visit to Somalia took place in September 1968, then at the end of 1969, and again at the end of 1970, this time with the Italian botanist Renato Bavazzano from the University of Florence. In addition to live material, some 1800 herbarium specimens were gathered with Bavazzano, all deposited at the University of Florence Erbario Tropicale, Firenze (FT), where it was agreed that Renato would make a checklist, with determinations where possible, and John would then apply joint Lavranos & Bavazzano numbers to them. However, these good intentions never materialised. Renato died a few years later shortly after he retired, before any such list had been made.

The sheets were actually examined by Susan Carter in 1991, and she was able to recover the sheets of *Euphorbia* for rehousing at Kew. The rest, however, remain unevaluated to this day.

John's success in Somalia is all the more remarkable because it took place at a time in history when relations between Somalia and South Africa were bad, and South African passport holders could not enter Somalia. He was, however, able to travel in Somalia because he held a Greek passport.

Perhaps the most noteworthy of the Somalia expeditions was the one conducted with Frank Horwood in 1972/73, on which a remarkable number of highly derived *Euphorbia* and *Pseudolithos* came to light in the area of Eyl. The eponymous *Euphorbia horwoodii* was discovered on this expedition, a species related to *Euphorbia turbiniformis*, also itself found and recollected, and also *Pseudolithos horwoodii*.



Fig. 21 Frank Horwood in his tropical greenhouse at Leeds University in 1974. Photo: Mottram.

Frank Horwood (1924-1987) was a gifted grower of exotic plants, based in Leeds, West Yorkshire, who worked at Leeds University as a gardener. There he was in charge of a rabbit warren of small greenhouses, one of which was heated to 24°C, perfectly suited for Somalian exotics (Fig. 21). Here he propagated rare plants, including stapeliads, euphorbias and caudiciform succulents that were his favourites, which were pollinated and raised from seed. He and John became close friends and their combined knowledge

was formidable. Frank at that time confessed to the writer that he harboured ambitions to go into partnership with John on a commercial scale. However, John did not care for the notion of ‘commercial’ as opposed to ‘scientific’ collecting and would never have seriously contemplated the idea.

Instead, Frank emigrated to California in 1975, where he worked part-time at Ganna Walska’s Lotusland garden, and then fulltime at the nursery of Abbey Garden. He also joined John’s Missouri Botanical Garden Mission to Somalia in 1985. Alas, he was a non-stop smoker and died prematurely of lung cancer in 1987. Even by 1977 there were many who did not enjoy his company because he coughed and smoked continuously, yet stubbornly refused to listen to medical advice. His poignant final words in his last letter to John were: “All the best John and my most heartfelt thanks for your friendship and making it possible for me to visit Somalia.”

A new law was passed by the Somalian Government in Nov 1986 putting severe restrictions on all live plant collecting, unfortunately while the Missouri Botanical Garden’s second expedition was under way.

The new rules refused export licences on live plants, unless its sponsors agreed to sign an undertaking to the effect that all exported plants were still the property of the Somalian Government. John did sign an agreement to this effect on behalf of his main sponsors, Missouri Botanical Garden and Kew, having no option, but both botanical gardens subsequently claimed that he had no authority to do so, and assured the Somali Government that all live plants received would be immediately returned to Somalia if they required. These measures have virtually put a stop to almost all botanical activity in most of Somalia since 1986, except for the autonomous states of Somaliland and Puntland in the north of the country.



### Herbarium specimens

In the early years most of John's herbarium specimens and also a great number of live plants went to Pretoria (PRE), but almost stopped when relationships turned sour after 1979. Missouri Botanic Garden (MO) received a great deal of material from him as did the University of Florence (FT). For live material, Huntington Botanical Gardens received some, as also did Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh (E), and Kew (K) in the UK. There is a scattering of herbarium specimens in German institutions, particularly Heidelberg (HEID), the Conservatoire & Jardin Botaniques, Chambésy, Geneva (G), the badly run Coryndon Museum of Kenya, Nairobi (EA), and others. He never kept a record of what he sent where, but it runs into very many thousands of specimens.

John never carried plant presses in the field, considering them to be too heavy. Sometimes he would place specimens between newspapers and press them by sitting on them on the driving seat of his vehicle. He said: "It works very well in the dry areas where I do my collecting." Otherwise he would keep his specimens in plastic bags until he could press them later in the hotel. (Fig. 22)

John cultivated some of the live material in his own garden, mostly for distribution or description later. However, he much preferred to put live plants in the hands of skilled cultivators, to ensure their continued survival and enable wider distribution. "I send them to other people to grow, I am no gardener" he modestly declared. Lucky recipients in the nursery trade who did receive material were mainly from Europe, America and Japan.

His parcels went through the postal system in small packets, with plants individually wrapped tightly and mostly in the tissue-like pages torn from old phone directories. His labels were scraps of

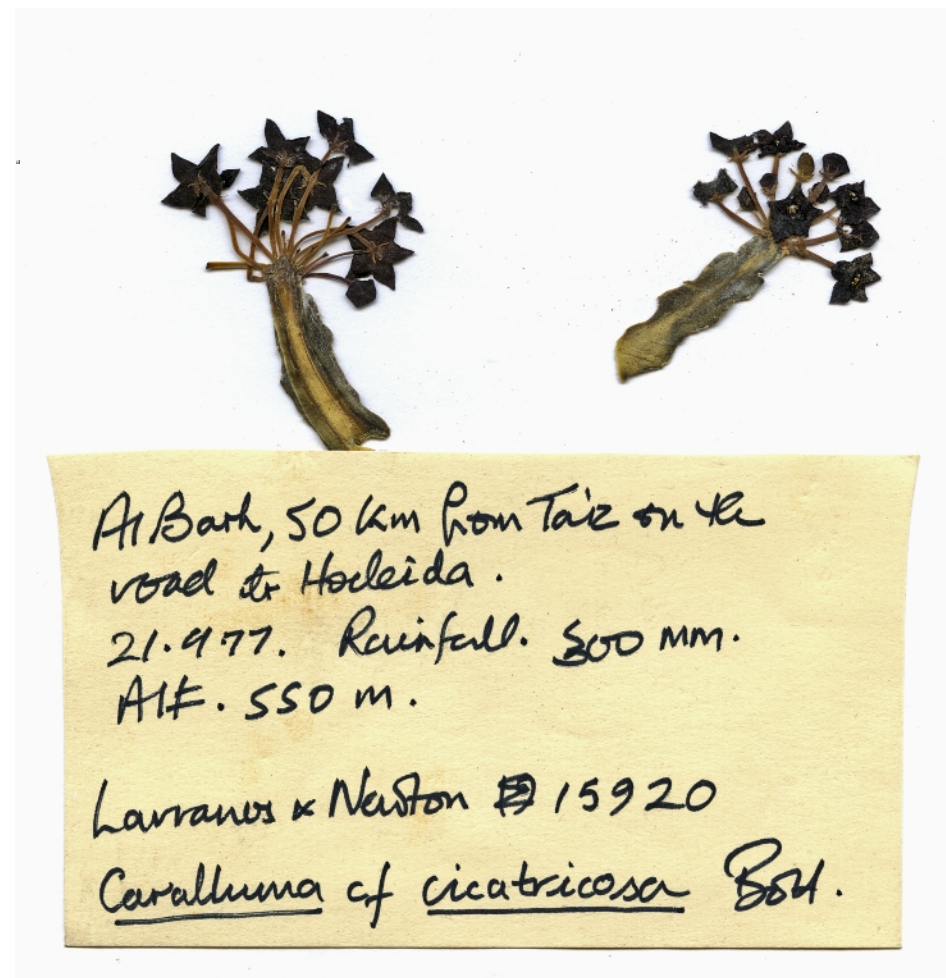


Fig. 22 A typical Lavranos pressed specimen preserved in the Whitestone archive: *Caralluma* cf. *cicatricosa* L&N 15920. Photo: Mottram.

paper with the locality and name if known, and his collection number if that had been requested (Fig. 23).

Collection numbers sometimes came later because his field notebooks were kept at home, written up from memory or from provisional notes made in the field. He was blessed with a phenomenal memory and could conjure up events, plants and places from several decades earlier. Many have commented on this remarkable ability to recall obscure details from his almost photographic memory.

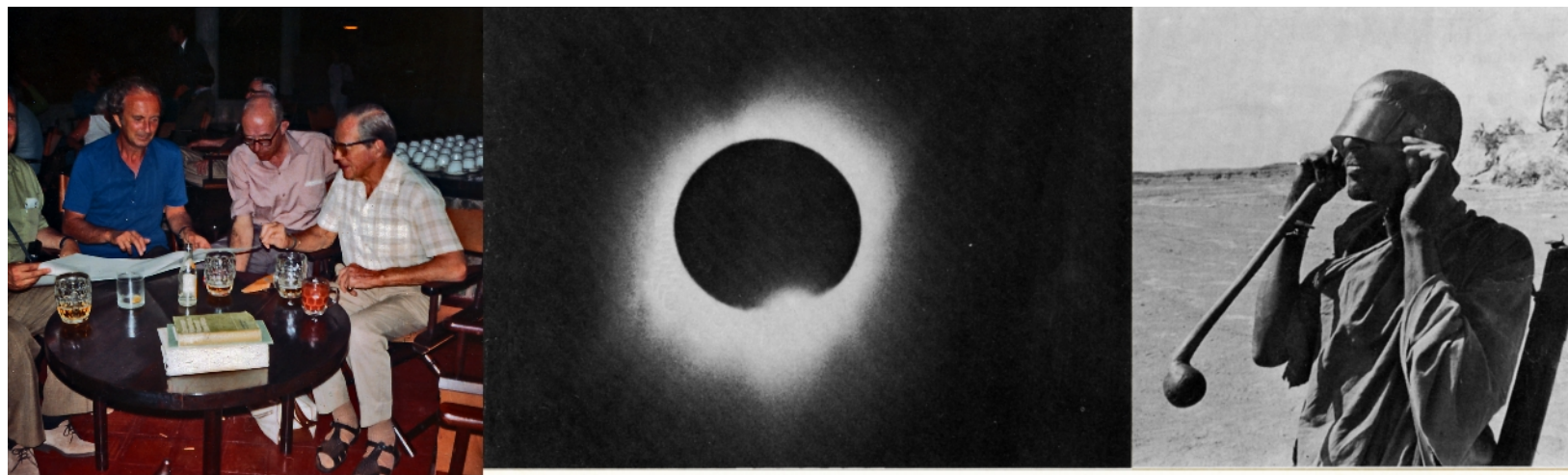
**Total eclipse of 1973**

On 30 June 1939 there was a total solar eclipse at Cape Sounion, SE of Athens and John’s cousin Alex (born in 1906) went there expressly, returning with glowing tales of the event. In Corfu it was only a 90% affair and John had always dreamt of having a similar opportunity.

When the news of a totality due on 30 June 1973 reached him, John flew to Kenya to observe it. The eclipse maximum, over 7 minutes, actually occurred in Chad, but at John’s observation post in Kenya it lasted for just over 6 minutes (Fig. 24).



Fig. 23 A typical selection of John’s labels that were wrapped with the plants.



ECLIPSE... AND A TRIBAL OBSERVER

Fig. 24 The gathering at Samburu Lodge, Kenya on 30 Jun 1973 to observe one of the longest solar eclipses in history (7min. 4sec). John Lavranos (left), Peter Bally (right). The eclipse event and observer are from a contemporary magazine.



He said: “My recollection of that incredible event is as clear as ever. I recall the spot near Laisamis whence we observed it and even the fact that, on the same occasion, I collected a *Commiphora*, undescribed to this day, which Gillett lists at the end of his contribution on the genus in *Flowering plants of East Africa*. I returned to the spot in 1981 and contrived to collect flowering material. But the fruits have never been collected thus far. Curiously, there was another total solar eclipse in 1974, visible at sunrise from a short distance inland from the Kenya coast. Had I pretended of going to see that one, my Mireille would have murdered me!!” (pers. comm. 20 Aug 2017)



Fig. 25 John samples a pitahaya (*Hylocereus*) fruit with Charlie Glass at the Huntington Botanic Garden in 1975.



Fig. 26 John Lavranos meeting Ian Smith, Prime Minister of Rhodesia, at the Aloe Congress, July 1975. The Prime Minister's wife looks on. The Aloe Congress was a side show of Rhodesia's first International Succulent Congress, held in Salisbury, for which a set of 6 postage stamps were minted to commemorate the event.

### Furthering a career

In 1972, John was accepted for an M.Sc. course by Witwatersrand University. His dissertation was to have been “Botanical observations on winter rainfall enclaves in the northern Somali region”. In June 1973, the title of the thesis was modified to “A study of Mediterranean and related floral elements in certain winter rainfall enclaves of northern

Somalia” and the course was changed to that of Ph.D. A period of inaction followed until June 1978, when the subject was again revised to “The flora of the Goda Massif, Republic of Djibouti, and its phytogeographical relationships”. Then came a change of heart in Aug 1978 and he applied instead to the Institute for Systematic Botany, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

This abandoning of the pursuit of a qualification in South Africa was no doubt a direct result of his dispute with the South African Association of Botanists (SAAB), who were instrumental in John losing his South African collecting permit in that year. Despite much of the work having already been completed for the thesis, that too was eventually abandoned, probably because he had by then decided to pursue an independent career for which further qualifications could be considered unnecessary.

In Feb 1996 he was once again considered applying for a Ph.D. degree and sought advice from his friends, but this too progressed no further.

John had considered a career as an institutional botanist, but after consulting Dr Leslie Codd, at the time Director of the Division of Botany of the Ministry of Agriculture (later to become SANBI) and asking him whether he would give him a job once he had obtained a Ph.D., his answer was unequivocal. He said that he would be most happy to employ John but that he would be mad to even think of it. He said, in as many words, that, as he was then a part proprietor of an insurance broking firm, he was as free as the wind to plan botanical activities, without having to refer to anyone but his wife and partners, whereas, if employed by the Government, he would have to do what he was told, such as “writing up the grasses for a flora on the effect of overgrazing on the domestic stock of

some obscure Kaffrarian sub-tribe.” John took the hint and continued to remain independent of any institution thereafter. There was a mixed blessing to this decision because it would later cause him to be regarded as an outsider of the establishment, particularly among the xenophobically inclined members of the South African professional botanical fraternity. It also made him a target for extremist elements of the conservation lobby, who fabricated many false rumours about the extent of his modest gatherings.

### **Restrictions on collecting in South Africa**

South Africa was always very conscious of conserving its plant heritage, and long before the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) it operated a system of allowing plant collection only through a collecting permit system, granted annually to applicants, together with landowners’ permissions. Permits had been issued solely at the discretion of the Department of Nature and Environmental Conservation (DNEC) until 1974, but after that the system was changed to enable permit applications to be routed first through the heads of botanical institutions and faculties, whose professional staff would consider applications on their merit.

Because of tightening attitudes brought about by the conservation lobby, SAAB fell into line by refusing to support any collecting of plants additional to those needed directly for research, for example as a means of raising finance for the research. This was a break from past practices, and effectively meant that few botanical expeditions could ever again take place unless they were financially supported by institutional research grants or sponsors. A tradition seen as harmless in the past was now suddenly viewed in a very different light.



The system worked fine for John over a period of 15 years, until a fateful application made by him on 20 Jan 1979. This application was deemed to be unacceptable by the South African Association of Botanists (SAAB) and they turned it down mainly on the technicality that the eventual repository of the gathering had not been stated on the application. John was furious and made his feelings known in no uncertain terms, because he believed it to be a result of certain South African botanical establishment people trying to undermine his reputation.

There had been a few other incidents leading up to this, such as the attempt to refuse John a collecting permit for the 1978 (Sep-Oct) Monaco state-sponsored "1978 Monaco Namib Expedition" organised and led by John (Fig. 27-29). All 12 of the other members of the expedition had been granted collecting permits, but John succeeded only after the intervention of no less than Prince Rainier himself.



Fig. 27 1978 (Sep-Oct) Monaco state-sponsored "1978 Monaco Namib Expedition" organised and led by John. With specially prepared vehicle. Photo: Kroenlein.

Fig. 28 A camera-ready John Lavranos, wearing little else on the 1978 Monaco Namib Expedition. Photo: Kroenlein.



Fig. 29 John with Len Newton resting in shade on the 1978 Monaco Namib Expedition. Photo: Kroenlein.

As a trained professional lawyer himself, John had always respected the legal responsibilities of plant collectors. The timing here was contemporary with the introduction of CITES, which would not allow export of any species that were on a list of supposedly endangered species. Most South African plants, however, such as all mesembs, crassulas, asclepiads and most *Alooiidae* were not on this list, so for John compliance meant only excluding the few nominated included species.

Nevertheless, CITES was an unnecessarily complex nightmare of bureaucratic legislation that few people understood. It cast a long shadow over gardening and botany alike, with bad, ill-informed attitudes being aimed unfairly at people engaged in perfectly innocent pursuits, particularly nurserymen and private scientific projects undertaken by freelance qualified botanists, exacerbated by false rumours and outrageously exaggerated statistics about quantities and prices. It resulted in a slow death of interest in succulent plants in general from 1980 onwards, collapse of the skilled, specialist nursery trade that fed it, and also turned botanists away from taxonomic research.

John himself held the sensible opinion that controlled distribution of wild origin plants to the nursery trade for propagation was a necessary overture to reducing horticultural demand for plants direct from wild sources. He moreover wanted collectors to be encouraged to rescue plants from habitats that were about to be destroyed by mining, damming, construction, plantations, and other similar human development. This was all very obvious and rational except to remote legislators blinkered to the reality of human habitat destruction, caused mainly by those human weapons of plant mass destruction known as grazing livestock. John himself (1973) warned the Somali authorities that their tolerance of random

grazing for human consumption was putting undue pressure on the rarer flora of their country. Needless to say it had no effect because politicians never act in any way that might keep them out of power, but it did prompt an interest within Somalia for the formation of a national botanic garden in the capital Mogadishu during the 1980s.

The South African permit refusal was taken deeply personally by John, who believed that it had been orchestrated by certain members of SAAB making false allegations, and jealousy on the part of the Director of the National Botanical Institute in Pretoria, who envied his ability to travel in other countries barred to South African passport holders. So he resigned from SAAB on 27 Feb 1981, despite having been one of its earliest members, a sad culmination of 11 years of previously amicable fellowship.

John said: "I am not overly enamoured with the South African botanical establishment who have, for the last 20 or so years treated me with exquisite duplicity" (Letter to Henrik Van Zijl, 1 Nov 1998).

One of the malicious rumours circulated about John was that he profited from selling wild plants. In one bizarre example that John had traced back to someone at Kirstenbosch after he had presented them with flowers of *Haemanthus nortieri* in 1995, was an untrue story that he had been selling bulbs of this species for \$1000 each!

John did not make any sort of living from plant sales. The few institutions, other botanists and skilled growers who were sponsoring his expeditions were rewarded with small gatherings



of material for study purposes or propagation. At no time would he have taken anything from wild populations that was not entirely sustainable or protected by legislation.

### **Emergence of a *bête noire***

The Second Missouri Botanical Garden expedition of Nov 1986, travelling with Susan Carter, Jerry Barad, Myron Kimnach, and Seymour Linden to Somalia was potentially placed in jeopardy by a letter addressed to the Somalian Embassy with a copy to Gren Lucas at Kew. It was signed “Vadulia Thühellengonn” and addressed as though sent on behalf of the “Oxford Anti-Apartheid Movement”, which, as it happens, was a bona fide organisation.

It could have had very serious consequences, putting members of the expedition at personal risk. The writer was quickly identified as the young Oxford student Peter Bruyns. Luckily it failed to prevent the expedition from taking place, although it did encounter some unexpected bureaucratic difficulties.

It had been quite easy to guess the name of the perpetrator, as many did, but he had in any case ineptly blown his own cover by bragging about it to Seymour Linden in California, not realising that Seymour was part financier and a participant on the affected expedition to Somalia and a good friend of John. The identity of the letter's author had also been independently confirmed by Gren Lucas, then Keeper of the Herbarium at Kew, from a face to face meeting with Bruyns. Gren then made it known to everyone affected, including John.

Bruyns had taken to botany as a boy, having been mentored by Bruce Bayer and it was Bruce who had introduced Bruyns to Lavranos in 1974. In 1981-1986, Bruyns studied mathematics at

Oxford University financed by a Rhodes Scholarship, gaining his Ph.D. in 1986, and from 1983-1986 exchanged correspondence on asclepiads with Lavranos and offered to do some botanical drawing for him. They had once met at Lavranos's home for about 3 hours to work on the Latin diagnosis for a new *Pectinaria* in 1984. John helped many authors by supplying Latin descriptions.

The pseudonym ‘Vadulia’ is an anagram of *Duvalia*, and was later used to form the name of *Caralluma vaduliae* Lavranos (1991), a plant found by Frank Horwood on the First Missouri Botanical Garden expedition of 1985. John said that it was appropriate to use this name for a particularly unremarkable species and wrote that it was "dedicated to Vadulia Thühellengonn in recognition of intense, though misdirected, interest in our expeditions to Somalia".

### **A *Livistona carinensis* reserve in Djibouti**

The Bankoualé Palm, *Livistona carinensis*, formerly called *Wissmannia carinensis*, has a type locality in Somalia, where it was rendered extinct due to harvesting for timber and the expansion of date palm plantations.

It occurs most abundantly in Yemen, but populations there are under great pressure because its timber is used for house construction. In Djibouti it has also been known since 1938 as a small population, where it is considered to be regionally Critically Endangered.

John gathered specimens of it in 1968 at its oasis near Bankoualé, a beautiful place with flowing water that supplies the palms and the gardens around it.



Fig. 30 Lavranos (right) & Werner Rauh (left) in the dunes S of the Tiras Mtns on Itzko's Farm Weissenborn, carefully extracting a *Euphorbia* in 1979. There is no record of this encounter in Lavranos's field notes, and no Lavranos number associated with it. Photo: Lavranos.

He revisited the site a further five times in later years. Its locality is in the south-east of the Day Forest National Park in the picturesque Goda Mountains, which was among John's favourite regions for botanising (Fig. 31).

Recognising the threat posed to the palm, its site at Bankoualé was proposed for conservation status in 1973, and an 80m × 50m project site was delineated in a report written by G. Oubron, Director of the Agriculture Office in Djibouti.

Oubron proposed plans for declaring the grove of *Livistona* (*Wissmannia*) *carinensis* as a protected reserve. Unfortunately, nothing came of it because "independence" interfered with any civilised activity in the territory as John put it, and it is now only 40 years later that the site has again been officially recognised in Djibouti's 2017 National Biodiversity Strategy



Fig. 31 John's own undated photo of *Livistona carinensis* at Bankoualé, Djibouti. Rising to 40m, it dwarfs the *Phoenix* palms below it.



and Action Plan. A few young palms have been allowed to grow in peripheral areas in two gardens at Bankoualé, and some seed has been distributed in Tadjourah and Djibouti city to encourage horticultural interest in growing the palm in private gardens.

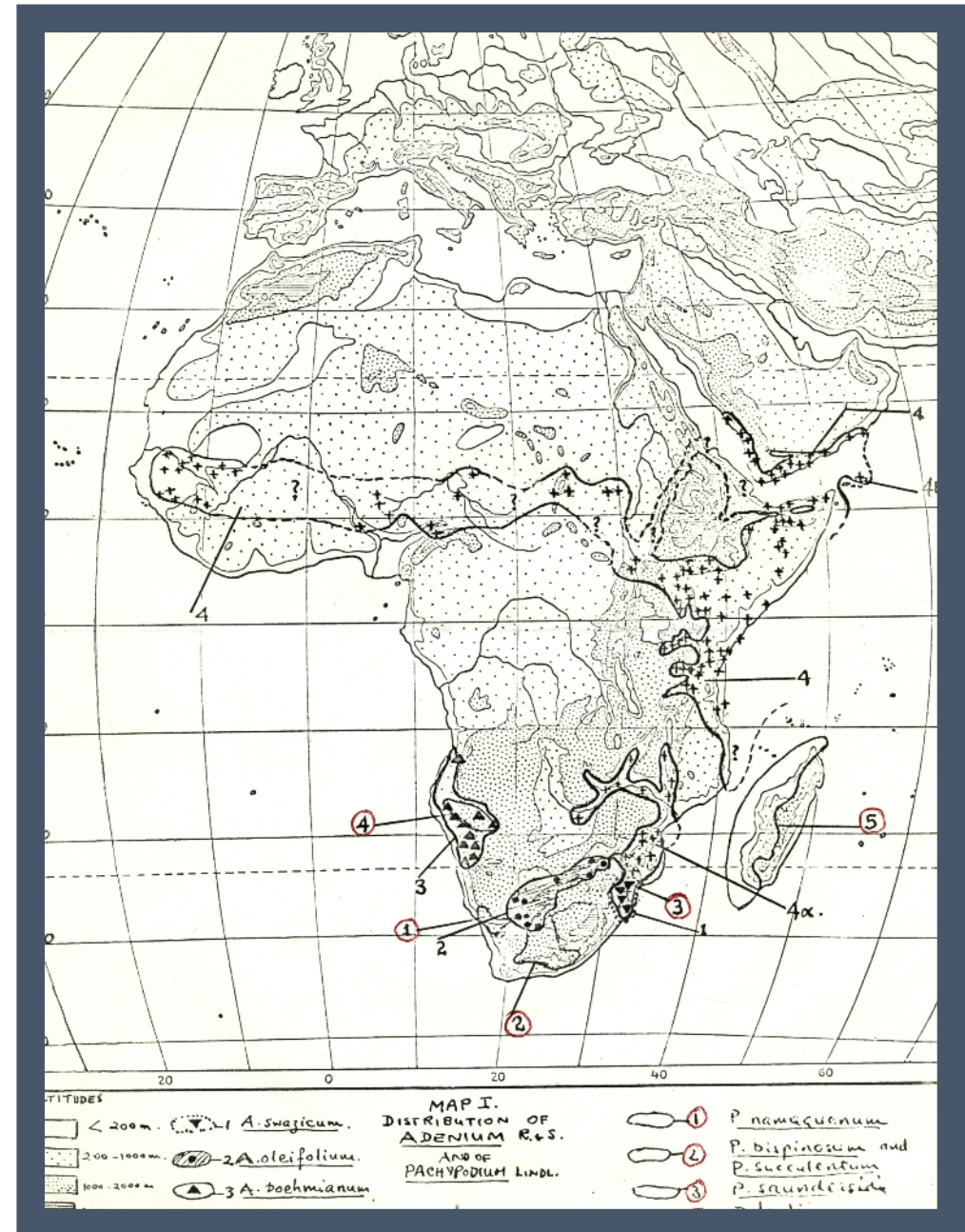
### ***Adenium*, and pioneering work in its classification**

John's interest in all succulent *Apocynaceae* is exemplified by his particular passion for *Adenium obesum*, represented in more of his gatherings than perhaps any other taxon (Fig. 13, 16). His curiosity was first aroused whilst on his travels in Socotra and Arabia, and he wrote an article in 1966 on the occurrence of *Adenium* in that region.

In 1968 he undertook a more extensive research project on *Adenium*, writing to numerous international herbaria, and compiled a 48-page checklist of specimens from published sources and herbaria, other than his own gatherings. This was written in his best handwriting on UK Crown foolscap notepaper, and forms a database for his *A preliminary account of the distribution and ecology of the genus Adenium* in which he recognised 4 species and 2 subspecies, later adding a detailed distribution map of *Adenium* and *Pachypodium* (other than the Madagascan species) (Fig. 32).

This account was never distributed, and was unfortunately partially overtaken by Plaizier's revision of 1980, where five species were recognised in a classification very similar to that of John's.

Fig. 32 Distribution map for *Adenium* and *Pachypodium* species other than Madagascan, drawn by Lavranos in 1968 or shortly thereafter.



Rowley, however, was steadfastly opposed to recognising any more than just a single species of *Adenium* with six subspecies, and expressed this concept in his own *The Adenium and Pachypodium handbook* (1983). Among other sources, he had consulted John, who sent him a copy of his own 1968 preliminary account, together with his distribution map. Rowley singled out John for special mention in the acknowledgements for freely sharing his “wide experience and knowledge of both genera in the field excelled by none”.

His expertise was again later called upon to be a technical consultant and co-author of Rapanarivo, S. H. J. V., Lavranos, J. J., Leeuwenberg, A. J. M., & Rööslü, W., *Pachypodium (Apocynaceae): Taxonomy, habitats and cultivation* (1999). Despite his involvement, John himself did not contribute anything to the text and had a low opinion of the book’s quality. Indeed, he was acutely embarrassed, because he considered his own contribution to be worthy of perhaps a mention in the acknowledgements but certainly not co-authorship. He said “I am certain that, besides doing no good at all to my personal reputation, it will not be favourably received. We have scarcely produced an alternative to Rowley’s book – and let us not overlook the fact that Rowley did not, as we do, claim his booklet to be a monograph or treatise of any kind, but merely a “handbook” - and much of the effort will have effectively been in vain.” (Email to Leeuwenberg, 18 Dec 1999).

Later still, he praised the book of Rööslü, *Pachypodium in Madagascar* (2015), to which he contributed a foreword. In 2018 this appeared again in an expanded English edition. It is a pity that Lavranos never got around to publish his own work on *Adenium* and *Pachypodium*, because his classification was sensible and would have readily provided the standard nomenclature.

### Another fine mess

John had very good relationships with the staff at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh. For most of his career it became one of his favourite places to send new plants and specimens. In particular he shared experiences in Yemen and Socotra and a friendly relationship with Tony Miller for some 20 years, until a rift unexpectedly developed in 1999. In March of that year, John was in Socotra and he noticed a change in attitude by the local administrators. Three Yemeni sources who he knew well had each independently told him that Tony had said that he should not be granted a collecting permit and had labelled him as a ‘commercial’ collector. It transpired that this was not really what Tony had said at all, but his actual words had been misconstrued and misquoted out of context and then regrettably made public as a false allegation.

Rightly or wrongly, John was led to conclude that Tony must have turned against him, and withdrew his support of the botanic garden at Edinburgh, and also to his planned *Aloe* contribution to the *Flora of Arabia*, a joint Edinburgh/Kew collaboration, projected to appear in 6 volumes. At John’s own recommendation, Len Newton was offered the opportunity to replace him. Part 1 of the *Flora of the Arabian Peninsula and Socotra* was published in 1996, but has made no further progress, primarily because it lacked any financial support.

The new Director at Edinburgh, Professor Stephen Blackmore, tried to intervene and mend bridges later in 1999, but unfortunately it did not seem to work. For John it became an unenviable choice between believing his Yemeni friends or Tony Miller, but the latter was probably being used as a scapegoat for instructions that had come from the Yemen



authorities. There had developed an acute atmosphere of suspicion of scientific collectors in Yemen and elsewhere following the international agreements on biodiversity. This was aimed primarily at freelance botanists like John who were not acting on behalf of an employer institution.

The Convention on Biological Diversity was in preparation at the time, and it was open from 5 June 1992 for countries to sign up to it, becoming effective on 29 December 1993 when signatory countries were obliged to implement its provisions. It stood for “the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources, notably those destined for commercial use”. Yemen signed this treaty in 1992. It was eventually set out in great detail in the 70-page Republic of Yemen National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan of January 2005.

As early as March 1991, John’s Yemeni friend, Ali Saleh Bilaidi, wrote to him: “Conditions have changed both in the approach and practice with regard to the use of natural resources [in Yemen]. I’m afraid the favour you [John] have enjoyed in the past may not be available at present.” The decision that John had made in the mid-1970s to remain independent of any institution was now rebounding on him.

By 1999, government officials had reasoned incorrectly that if he was not working for an institution, then he must be ‘commercial’. Some of his Yemeni friends knew that he was not, but bureaucrats issuing permits had to implement impersonal instructions received from above.

John endeavoured to compensate by obtaining letters of introduction from those institutions where he was going to deposit

specimens or live material, and in the case of his last expedition to Yemen it was the Botanical Institute of the University of Essen, Germany.

The interests that the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, had in the flora of Yemen, and Socotra in particular, was continued, and it resulted in the formation of a group called Friends of Socotra (FOS), established as a registered UK charity in 2001. The Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, rented a house in the Socotran capital, Hadiboh, which they called Darwin House, as a base from which to launch further expeditions.

FOS was set up for botanical investigations, but it soon expanded into other unrelated fields in order to keep Darwin House economically viable. John was of course a member of this organisation, and also of another group formed in Germany, Deutsch-Jemenitische Gesellschaft e.V., Freiburg, founded in 1970. The latter is much respected in Yemen, so they were a great help to John on expeditions by providing letters of introduction.

Socotra was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2008, because of its rich and distinctive flora and fauna.

### **A new *Aloe* project initiative**

In 1993, Strawberry Press proposed to publish an illustrated book on aloes, involving Susan Carter, Len Newton and John. After some to and fro discussion it was decided to update Reynold’s two works of 1950 and 1966 with a supplementary volume of new taxa described since then. However, in 1996 Strawberry Press found it necessary to review its publishing policy, necessitating a retraction of activities, and it withdrew its interest in

publishing a book on aloes.

Kotie Retief & Alex Fick on behalf of Umdaus Press, however, then expressed a keen interest in undertaking its publication, but again this was not followed through.

The concept was later revised to its final format where species of the entire genus *Aloe* would be included in a single volume. Colin Walker also became involved as a coordinator and author of the introductory history of *Aloe* exploration.

Colin Walker acted as general editor and author of the introductory material, while work for the species accounts was divided between the other three authors. John's close association with Gilbert Reynolds before 1967, which had done so much to ignite John's life-long interest in aloes, was invaluable in enabling him to contribute his own knowledge and experience to this update of Reynold's work.

It was eventually published as a joint venture by Kew Publishing Ltd and the British Cactus and Succulent Society in 2011. The book was nominated as one of five finalists for the Garden Media Guild's *Reference Book of the Year 2011*, an honour in itself, but unfortunately failed to win. However, each author received a framed FINALIST certificate.

### The end for Max

Back at the Lavranos family estate in Chlomos, by 1972 Max had ceased to work the grape, wine and olive industries and was leading a life of the idle not-so-rich. Iris said: "We all knew that Max had been eating up the family capital in order not to work. He had been selling off bits of the Lavranos property to support his



Fig. 33 The quartet of co-authors of *Aloes: The definitive guide* (2011) signing copies of the book. Left to right: Len Newton, John Lavranos, Susan Carter, Colin Walker. Photo: Trevor Wray

leisurely way of life, and had even sold the chapel of Agia Pelagiá where the family graves of five centuries were interred. Servants no longer worked at the house." He eventually even sold the family house itself in the nineties.

Max died at the age of 75, in 2004, from lung cancer. He had been an inveterate smoker and his addiction to card games in closed spaces, with everyone belching clouds of tobacco smoke, did nothing to prolong his life. John had kept a polite relationship with Max but often maintained that he had robbed him of his inheritance.



### **Voucher list**

John was frequently exhorted to produce a checklist of his vouchers and gatherings throughout his career. Daunted by its sheer volume, however, that never happened, and it was not until 2012, soon after John had begun to send some separates and papers to the present author, that it was agreed that we should attempt to compile a complete list. This was completed in Jan 2017.

John sent me his original notebooks, a few at a time, which were digitised and a copy printed out in order to simplify the work of compiling the list. I undertook to create the long text files, which had to be reorganised several times because of computer file size limitations, and it was eventually split into three numeric files and two alphabetic files, interrupted once by a computer crash in 2015.

There were many problems, associated mainly with tracking down locations and updating them with their modern spellings, and a lively exchange of emails entitled “query” took place to resolve these. He would encourage this exchange, saying that it kept his mind active, and I like to think that it also helped him through the dark days after Mireille died.

### **The end for Mireille and John**

Mireille was French, and because of this John had adopted a French nationality himself, despite living in Portugal. He also had the nationality of his place of birth Greece, and had adopted a South African nationality during the long period of his life spent there, but in later life he regarded himself as being French. With his fluency in so many languages, Len Newton was once curious

to know in what language his thoughts were gathered and his reply was “English”. Interestingly it was an English spoken in a distinctly Afrikaans accent.

When John lost his wife Mireille (1927-2014) to leukaemia, he was devastated and fell into a state of deep depression. Then he lost his dog Spider, and he kept hearing of friends of old who had also fallen, all younger than himself. He kept predicting that he would soon be leaving this world himself, but his robust constitution kept him going until the fateful day on 21 Jan 2018, when he suffered a severe debilitating stroke, losing the use of his left arm and his legs. With what remained of his speech and his awareness he was able to mumble in five different languages. The end came some 10 days later. He slipped peacefully away and arguably the finest Old World botanical explorer of the second half of the twentieth century bade his final farewell. Not being religious, he was cremated without ceremony and his ashes scattered around his garden, where his wife’s ashes had already been distributed.

Characteristically he had made careful preparations. With no near relatives he and Mireille had agreed to let the house and Mireille’s collection of Persian carpets go to his lawyer niece in London, Philippa, his brother Max’s daughter. His plants went to Gibraltar Botanic Garden, and the substantial residue of his library and correspondence files were mostly sent over a period of several years to Roy Mottram. John’s substantial fossil and mineral specimen collection went to a collector in Germany. The majority of his collection of slides were sent to Tim Harvey and are being scanned and archived.

His library incorporated some books inherited from his mother's library, some bearing her signature and even one from 1906 with her photo as a teenager pasted to the endpaper. There was a substantial number of travel books, especially by authors who had travelled in Arabia such as Richard Burton, Laurence of Arabia and the travelogues of Freja Stark, mostly first editions. The botanical books were an eclectic mixture of regional floras, journals and a large number of author reprints, mostly signed and dedicated to him by their authors, and have now been absorbed into the Whitestone Library. There was also a large collection of geographical and geological books, papers, and maps, and an assortment of animal life books and papers, especially on mollusca. Fossil trilobites seemed to be another particular interest of his.

One of John's local friends, Burford Hurry (c.1937- ), President of the Mediterranean Gardening Association of Portugal, was named in John's 'living Will' to take care of all his affairs, should he become incapacitated or die. Burford was born in Johannesburg and then worked as a school teacher in Gweru (Gwelo) in Zimbabwe, before moving to Portugal in 1986.

### **Associates and correspondents**

Such a full life brought John into contact with a very great number of people. Most used positive adjectives to describe him such as kind, generous, modest, knowledgeable, thoughtful, honest, courageous, and he was indeed all of those and more – a fully rounded and gifted human being in every possible way. A few have described him as being difficult, and it is true that he expected a lot of his friends. He could seem to be dogmatic, but he was quick to evaluate new evidence and to change his opinions – the mark of any good scientist.

He enjoyed the company of most of his travelling companions, many of whom became life-long friends, and some were honoured by being commemorated in the names of their or John's discoveries. From the early days (known years of contact given here in parentheses) he remembered Gilbert Reynolds (1957-1965) with particular fondness, and those who had helped him to embark on his earliest Arabian adventures, notably Clyde Meintjes (1961-1963) and those three military men from the British base in Aden: Captain John Waring (1958-1961), Major Michael van Lessen, M.C. (1963), and Andrew Fuller (1968).

Apart from Reynolds, he was mentored in tropical botany by Prof Werner Rauh (from 1964), and Peter Bally (1968-1980) (Fig. 34), and let's not forget the influence of Alan Radcliffe-Smith (1966-1977) of Kew, who gave him his first and perhaps most rigorous adventures in Socotra in 1967 (Fig. 35).

The 1970s decade saw the beginnings of several long-term associations, starting with Larry Leach (1972-1995) and Frank Horwood (1973-1986), both self-taught botanists. This is also the decade when the companion emerged that he confessed to liking to travel with the most of all, Prof Len Newton (1975-2004), and also Susan Carter (1975-2009), both consummate professionals and with both of whom he also had a voluminous private correspondence. At first he refused to travel with Susan because he felt that the journeys would be too onerous for a woman, but it wasn't long before he discovered that Susan was had a mental and physical capacity equal to any man, and he apologised to her later for many years for his lapse of judgement. Susan worked for Kew, and proved to be a very valuable conduit for news emanating from that important centre of botanical excellence.



The 1970s was also the start of a long working relationship with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, at first with Brian Burt (1974-1976), then with Ian Hedge (1977-1996), and later with Anthony Miller (1982-2002) and Thomas Cope (1996-1999). Edinburgh was of importance to John because it had a special interest in the flora of the Arabian Peninsula and especially Socotra.

Another emerging intrepid self-taught botanist, Sheila Collenette (Fig. 36), made contact with John in 1979 and they became the best of buddies for the next 20 years. She was a down-to-earth cattle breeder from the New Forest, Hampshire, accompanying her husband on long periods in Saudi Arabia where he worked for the State Oil Company, and combined her photographic hobby with a passion for plants in that country. The two editions of her book on the Saudi Arabian flora are indispensable classics, but the publication of the first edition was dogged by a lack of finance and a small publisher, Scorpion Press, that had a sting in its tail. The book was remaindered only weeks after publication, meaning that she received no further royalties and it was sold at a fraction of its original price.

John Wood (1978-1984) came to John's attention as Kew's authority on the flora of Yemen, so they occasionally swapped experiences by post.

Bruce Bayer worked for the Worcester Karoo Garden in 1979, where John had visited occasionally. Bayer had said that John could take an example of *Haworthia sordida* next time he was visiting, even if he was not there. When that time came, Bayer was indeed not present, so John chose a plant. Unfortunately it happened to be the only example from a location that Bayer was

still in the process of studying, and moreover, staff at the Garden, seeing John take it, convinced themselves that he was stealing.

Bayer and his staff then began to circulate a rumour that John was dishonest and not welcome at the Karoo Garden. John returned the *Haworthia*, which was swapped for another plant of the same species as soon as he found out that Bayer wished to keep that particular one. However, it was later reported to John by friends what was being said at the Karoo Garden, so he asked Bayer in a letter to look into the matter. Bayer apologised for maligning him, and despite this bad start, the two became friends from then on.



Fig. 34 Peter Bally in 1978. Photo: Lavranos.



Fig. 35 Alan Radcliffe-Smith (1966 Socotra, Abd-Al-Kuri, Jebel Saleh). Photo: Lavranos



Fig. 36 Sheila Collenette (c.1975) in Saudi Arabia on the mountain Jabal Qahar, with her driver. Photo: Collenette

The uneasy peace was broken once again in 1981 when Bruce mentioned the names of Lavranos & Pehlemann, among others, to the South African Conservation Department in connection with field collected plants seen at ISI and elsewhere in USA. Once again, Bayer had caused John unnecessary distress and damage to his reputation, and once again there was a written exchange in which Bayer couldn't apologise enough for being so indiscrete.

Unfortunately, the South African Conservation Department formed a mistaken view of John from then on as a plunderer of habitat plants without a collecting permit, and were constantly on the war path trying to catch him in the act.

In 1982 Bayer tried to make amends, telling Lavranos: "You have preserved your dignity and composure and gone on to become unquestionably a great figure in the history of the succulent world." Later on, he tried to mediate between Lavranos and Bruyns, but positions had by then become too entrenched. A more or less amicable rapprochement existed thereafter.

My own (Roy Mottram, 1986-2018) relationship with John began with mentions of my existence to John by Len Newton and Frank Horwood. Having always been keen to receive and propagate plants with location data, I was delighted when he started to send me occasional little parcels of a wide variety of South African and Namibian plants with full documentation. I always left the selection to him and he never disappointed. Many had no identities, but it was fun to try to track them down.

The association with Darrel Plowes came quite late (1992-2016) but soon made up for that in a very regular and lengthy correspondence on stapeliads. As did many others, John found his taxonomy just a bit too narrow.

It made for some lively exchanges, and both parties gained respect for each other.

The letters with Graham Williamson were concentrated into a relatively short interval of four years (1996-1999), but always friendly as they were like-minded in many ways. The topic most frequently discussed was conservation.



Fig. 37 Charles Craib (c.2000).

Charles Craib (1988-2012, Fig. 37), a South African anthropologist, natural historian, horticulturist and field collector, travelled with John in South Africa and Namibia, and they collaborated in the production of a monograph on the succulent monsonias.

His heart was in ecological research, but like John he needed to raise funds to finance his explorations. So he sold plants rescued from development areas and propagations, mainly bulbs and geophytic pelargoniums from a small nursery north of Johannesburg, trading from the late 1990s as Penrock Nursery. The business was not much of a success, thanks to an atmosphere of suspicion among conservation groups, but in spite of this, Charles made available many rare species not available elsewhere to the horticultural trade that still live on in some of the better plant collections.



Like John, Charles also distributed plants with habitat information and almost uniquely with ecological data too. His contributions to botany and horticultural science alas came to an end in 2012 with a heart attack at the early age of 57.

Tom McCoy (2000-2014) the well known Californian specialist in *Aloe* with a large private collection at his ranch, had been travelling throughout East Africa & Arabia from the early 1980s. As he and John shared so many interests, it is hardly surprising that they would eventually meet and forge a close friendship.

They travelled in Yemen (2001) and Madagascar (2003) together and have shared authorship in the introduction of many new *Aloe* species. Tom wrote a fitting obituary to his late friend in the Sep 2018 issue of the British journal, *CactusWorld*. A similar tribute came from Tim Harvey, now custodian of Lavranos's slides, in the American *Cactus and Succulent Journal* for Sep 2018.



Fig. 38 Allen Dyer Gold Medal Award (1992). This was the honour that he was most of all pleased to receive. Allen Dyer had been one of his early mentors.



Fig 39 Order of Cultural Merit Award, Monaco (1989). Comprises the left hand decoration and right hand scroll.

**Awards & honours**

- Corresponding Member of the Museum d’Histoire Naturelle, Paris (15 Nov 1968).
- Fellow of the Cactus and Succulent Society of America (1977).
- Order of Cultural Merit Award, Monaco (1989).
- Allen Dyer Gold Medal Award (1992).
- Life Member (nr. 6324) of the Geological Society of South Africa (2010).
- Myron Kinnach Lifetime Achievement Award (2013).

**Acknowledgements**

Len Newton and Susan Carter are thanked for kindly reading and making useful suggestions. Margrit Bischofberger is thanked for her excellent proof-reading.



**Taxa named for John Lavranos (20)****Aizoaceae***Conophytum lavranosii* R.Rawe (1980).*Conophytum lavranosii* var. *cuneatum* R.Rawe (1980).**Amaryllidaceae***Crinum lavrani* Lehmilller (2009).**Apocynaceae: Asclepiadoideae***Caralluma lavrani* Rauh & Wertel (1965).*Echidnopsis lavraniana* Plowes (1993).*Huernia lavrani* L.C.Leach (1986).*Lavrania* Plowes (1986).*Stapelia johni-lavrani* Halda (1998).**Asphodelaceae***Aloe doei* var. *lavranosii* Marn.-Lap. (1970).*Aloe johannis* J.-B.Castillon (2006).*Aloe lavranosii* Reynolds (1964).*Bulbine lavrani* G.Will. & Baijnath (2000).*Haworthia sordida* var. *lavrani* C.L.Scott (1981).**Asteraceae***Phagnalon lavranosii* Qaiser & Lack (1986).**Eriospermaceae***Eriospermum lavranosii* P.L.Perry (1994).**Euphorbiaceae***Euphorbia lavrani* L.C.Leach (1981).*Euphorbia johannis* S.Carter (1992).**Geraniaceae***Sarcocaulon lavrani* Halda (1997).**Mollusca***Reibeckia lavranosi* B.Salvat (1969) [terrestrial snail].**Moraceae***Dorstenia lavrani* T.A.McCoy & M.Massara (2008)**Taxa named by John Lavranos (207, including 74 asclepiads & 99 aloes)****Apocynaceae***Pachypodium bicolor* Lavranos & Rapanarivo (1997).*Pachypodium eburneum* Lavranos & Rapanarivo (1997).*Pachypodium enigmaticum* Pavelka, Prokeš, Vlk, Lavranos, Židek, & Ramavovololona (2014).*Pachypodium inopinatum* Lavranos (1996).*Pachypodium makayense* Lavranos (2004).*Pachypodium rosulatum* ssp. *bemarahense* Lüthy & Lavranos (2005).**Apocynaceae: Asclepiadoideae***Caralluma baradii* Lavranos (1993).*Caralluma deflersiana* Lavranos (1963).*Caralluma denboefii* Lavranos (1983).*Caralluma dioscoridis* Lavranos (1971).*Caralluma dodsoniana* Lavranos (1971).*Caralluma foulcheri-delboscii* Lavranos (1964).*Caralluma foulcheri-delboscii* Lavranos var. *greenbergiana* (1967).*Caralluma hexagona* Lavranos (1978).*Caralluma hexagona* Lavranos var. *septentrionalis* Lavranos & L.E.Newton (1979).*Caralluma kalmbacheriana* Lavranos (1965).*Caralluma kochii* Lavranos (1971).*Caralluma meintjesiana* Lavranos (1962).*Caralluma mireillae* Lavranos (1969).*Caralluma ortholoba* Lavranos (1972).



*Caralluma petraea* Lavranos (1983).  
*Caralluma plicatiloba* Lavranos (1962).  
*Caralluma rauhii* Lavranos (1965).  
*Caralluma sarkariae* Lavranos & R.M.I.Frandsen (1978).  
*Caralluma shadhbana* Lavranos (1978).  
*Caralluma shadhbana* var. *barhana* Lavranos & L.E.Newton (1979).  
*Caralluma sinaica* var. *baradii* Lavranos & L.E.Newton (1979).  
*Caralluma solenophora* Lavranos (1963).  
*Caralluma swanepoelii* Lavranos (1972).  
*Caralluma vaduliae* Lavranos (1991).  
*Ceropegia ampliata* ssp. *madagascariensis* Lavranos (1973).  
*Ceropegia lindenii* Lavranos (1991).  
*Ceropegia mansouriana* S.A.Chaudhary & Lavranos (1985).  
*Ceropegia tihamana* S.A.Chaudhary & Lavranos (1985).  
*Duvalia eilensis* Lavranos (1972).  
*Duvalia galgallensis* Lavranos (1974).  
*Duvalia sulcata* var. *seminuda* Lavranos (1967).  
*Duvalia velutina* Lavranos (1983).  
*Echidnopsis bavazzani* Lavranos (1974).  
*Echidnopsis chrysantha* Lavranos (1971).  
*Echidnopsis chrysantha* var. *filipes* Lavranos (1974).  
*Echidnopsis ericiflora* Lavranos (1972).  
*Echidnopsis insularis* Lavranos (1970).  
*Echidnopsis leachii* Lavranos (1972).  
*Echidnopsis mariae* Lavranos (1982).  
*Echidnopsis mijerteina* Lavranos (1974).  
*Echidnopsis mijerteina* var. *marchandii* Lavranos (1974).  
*Echidnopsis milleri* Lavranos (1993).  
*Echidnopsis seibanica* Lavranos (1999).  
*Echidnopsis socotrana* Lavranos (1993).  
*Echidnopsis stellata* Lavranos (1974).  
*Huernia erectiloba* L.C.Leach & Lavranos (1963).  
*Huernia hadramautica* Lavranos (1963).  
*Huernia ingeae* Lavranos (1982).  
*Huernia kennedyana* Lavranos (1965).  
*Huernia leachii* Lavranos (1959).

*Huernia lodarensis* Lavranos (1964).  
*Huernia marnieriana* Lavranos (1963).  
*Huernia nigeriana* Lavranos (1961).  
*Huernia repens* Lavranos (1960).  
*Huernia rosea* L.E.Newton & Lavranos (1993).  
*Notechidnopsis* Lavranos & M.B.Bleck (1985).  
*Pachycymbium lancasteri* Lavranos (1984).  
*Pseudolithos caput-viperae* Lavranos (1974).  
*Pseudolithos horwoodii* P.R.O.Bally & Lavranos (1974).  
*Pseudolithos mccoysi* Lavranos & Mies (2001).  
*Pseudoplectinaria* Lavranos (1971).  
*Pseudoplectinaria malum* Lavranos (1971).  
*Rhytidocaulon fulleri* Lavranos & Mortimer (1970).  
*Rhytidocaulon macrolobum* Lavranos (1967).  
*Rhytidocaulon mccoysi* Lavranos & Mies (2001).  
*Rhytidocaulon piliferum* Lavranos (1971).  
*Rhytidocaulon richardianum* Lavranos (1991).  
*Sarcostemma socotranum* Lavranos (1972).  
*Sarcostemma vanlessenii* Lavranos (1974).  
*Stapelia choanantha* Lavranos & H.Hall (1964).  
*Stapelianthus hardyi* Lavranos (1971).  
*Stapelianthus pilosus* Lavranos & D.S.Hardy (1961).  
*Stapeliopsis urniflora* Lavranos (1966).  
*Stultitia araysiana* Lavranos & Bilaidi (1971).

#### ***Asphodelaceae***

*Aloe aaata* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2014).  
*Aloe* × *abhaica* Lavranos & Collen. (2000).  
*Aloe abyssicola* Lavranos & Bilaidi (1971).  
*Aloe albostriata* T.A.McCoy, Rakouth & Lavranos (2008).  
*Aloe anodonta* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2015).  
*Aloe archeri* Lavranos (1977).  
*Aloe argyrostachys* Lavranos, Rakouth & T.A.McCoy (2007).  
*Aloe armatissima* Lavranos & Collen. (2000).  
*Aloe audhalica* Lavranos & D.S.Hardy (1965).

- Aloe austroarabica* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2003).  
*Aloe barbara-jeppeae* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2013).  
*Aloe bargalensis* Lavranos (1973).  
*Aloe berevoana* Lavranos (1998).  
*Aloe brunneodentata* Lavranos & Collen. (2000).  
*Aloe brunneostriata* Lavranos & S.Carter (1992).  
*Aloe buhrii* Lavranos (1971).  
*Aloe calliantha* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2014).  
*Aloe cataractarum* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2007).  
*Aloe cephalophora* Lavranos & Collen. (2000).  
*Aloe chlorantha* Lavranos (1973).  
*Aloe chrysostachys* Lavranos & L.E.Newton (1976).  
*Aloe collenetteae* Lavranos (1995).  
*Aloe compressa* var. *paucituberculata* Lavranos (1998).  
*Aloe cyrtophylla* Lavranos (1998).  
*Aloe deinacantha* T.A.McCoy, Rakouth & Lavranos (2008).  
*Aloe descoingsii* var. *augustina* Lavranos (1995).  
*Aloe dhalensis* Lavranos (1965).  
*Aloe dhufarensis* Lavranos (1967).  
*Aloe doddsiorum* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2007).  
*Aloe doei* Lavranos (1965).  
*Aloe downsiana* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2007).  
*Aloe droseroides* Lavranos (2003).  
*Aloe edentata* Lavranos & Collen. (2000).  
*Aloe elegantissima* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2008).  
*Aloe eremophila* Lavranos (1965).  
*Aloe eximia* Lavranos & T.A.McCoy (2006).  
*Aloe fibrosa* Lavranos & L.E.Newton (1976).  
*Aloe fleurentiniorum* Lavranos & L.E.Newton (1977).  
*Aloe florenceae* Lavranos & T.A.McCoy (2004).  
*Aloe fragilis* Lavranos & Rösli (1994).  
*Aloe fulleri* Lavranos (1967).  
*Aloe haggeherensis* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2007).  
*Aloe heliderana* Lavranos (1973).  
*Aloe heybensis* Lavranos (1999).  
*Aloe hijazensis* Lavranos & Collen. (2000).  
*Aloe hoffmannii* Lavranos (2002).  
*Aloe inexpectata* Lavranos & T.A.McCoy (2003).  
*Aloe irafensis* Lavranos, T.A.McCoy & Al-Gifri (2005).  
*Aloe kahinii* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2008).  
*Aloe koeneni* Lavranos & Kerstin Koch (2006).  
*Aloe krapholiana* var. *dumoulinii* Lavranos (1973).  
*Aloe kwasimbana* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2007).  
*Aloe lanata* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2007).  
*Aloe latens* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2007).  
*Aloe lensayuensis* Lavranos & L.E.Newton (1976).  
*Aloe lindenii* Lavranos (1997).  
*Aloe mahraensis* Lavranos & T.A.McCoy (2002).  
*Aloe makayana* Lavranos, Rakouth & T.A.McCoy (2008).  
*Aloe mccoysi* Lavranos & B.A.Mies (2001).  
*Aloe megalocarpa* Lavranos (1998).  
*Aloe meruana* Lavranos (1980).  
*Aloe molederana* Lavranos & H.F.Glen (1989).  
*Aloe neosteudneri* Lavranos & T.A.McCoy (2007).  
*Aloe niebuhriana* Lavranos (1965).  
*Aloe nigrimontana* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2015).  
*Aloe omoana* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2007).  
*Aloe orlandii* Lavranos (2006).  
*Aloe pachydactylos* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2007).  
*Aloe parvicapsula* Lavranos & Collen. (2000).  
*Aloe parvicoma* Lavranos & Collen. (2000).  
*Aloe pavelkae* Van Jaarsv., Swanepoel, A.E.van Wyk & Lavranos. (2008).  
*Aloe porphyrostachys* Lavranos & Collen. (2000).  
*Aloe praetermissa* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2002).  
*Aloe pronkii* Lavranos, Rakouth & T.A.McCoy (2006).  
*Aloe pseudorubroviolacea* Lavranos & Collen. (2000).  
*Aloe pulchra* Lavranos (1973) nom. illeg. = *Aloe bella* G.D.Rowley (1974)  
*Aloe* ×*qaharensis* Lavranos & Collen. (2000).  
*Aloe rebmannii* Lavranos (2002).  
*Aloe rigens* var. *mortimeri* Lavranos & T.A.McCoy (2002).  
*Aloe rivierei* Lavranos & L.E.Newton (1977).  
*Aloe roeoeslii* Lavranos & T.A.McCoy (2005).



*Aloe rubrodonta* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2008).  
*Aloe ruvuensis* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2007).  
*Aloe sakarahensis* Lavranos & M.Teissier (2004).  
*Aloe saronarae* Lavranos & T.A.McCoy (2006).  
*Aloe scabrifolia* L.E.Newton & Lavranos (1990).  
*Aloe schliebenii* Lavranos (1970).  
*Aloe serriyensis* Lavranos (1965).  
*Aloe shadensis* Lavranos & Collen. (2000).  
*Aloe sheilae* Lavranos (1985).  
*Aloe splendens* Lavranos (1965).  
*Aloe tartarensis* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2007).  
*Aloe teissieri* Lavranos (2002).  
*Aloe tugenensis* L.E.Newton & Lavranos (1990).  
*Aloe tulearensis* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2007).  
*Aloe whitcombei* Lavranos (1995).  
*Aløe woodii* Lavranos & Collen. (2000).  
*Aloe zakamisyi* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2007).  
*Aloe zubb* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2015).

#### **Asteraceae**

*Kleinia butleri* Lavranos & T.A.McCoy (2004).  
*Kleinia lauchsii* Lavranos & T.A.McCoy (2003).  
*Othonna pavelkae* Lavranos (2002).  
*Othonna wrinkleana* Lavranos (2004).

#### **Crassulaceae**

*Kalanchoe pareikiana* Desc. & Lavranos (2005).  
*Tylecodon nolteei* Lavranos (2000).

#### **Dracaenaceae**

*Dracaena serrulata* ssp. *dhofarica* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2017).  
*Dracaena serrulata* ssp. *mccoyorum* Lavranos (2017).  
*Sansevieria dhofarica* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2017).

#### **Euphorbiaceae**

*Euphorbia castillonii* Lavranos (2002).  
*Euphorbia frankii* Lavranos (2005).

*Euphorbia godana* Buddens., Lawant & Lavranos (2005).  
*Euphorbia holmesiae* Lavranos (1992).  
*Euphorbia momccoyae* Lavranos (2012).  
*Euphorbia razafindratsirae* Lavranos (2002).  
*Euphorbia seibanica* Lavranos & A.N.Al-Gifri (1999).

#### **Moraceae**

*Dorstenia gypsophila* Lavranos (1972).

#### **Pedaliaceae**

*Uncarina ihlenfeldtiana* Lavranos (2004).  
*Uncarina leandrii* var. *rechbergeri* Lavranos (1995).  
*Uncarina platycarpa* Lavranos (1996).  
*Uncarina turicana* Lavranos (1999).

#### **Portulacaceae**

*Avonia harveyi* J.van Thiel & Lavranos (2011).

#### **Vitaceae**

*Cyphostemma dhufarensense* T.A.McCoy & Lavranos (2017).

#### **Zamiaceae**

*Encephalartos cerinus* Lavranos & Goode (1989)  
*Encephalartos dolomiticus* Lavranos & Goode (1988)  
*Encephalartos dyerianus* Lavranos & Goode (1988)  
*Encephalartos eugene-maraisii* ssp. *middelburgensis* Lavranos & Goode (1988)  
*Encephalartos turneri* Lavranos & Goode (1985)

## A checklist of literature by and about John Lavranos

### Anon

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- (1975) A monograph of the genera *Pseudolithos* and *Whitesloanea*. *Nat. Cact. Succ. J.* **30**(2): [i], 31-36 (Jun). National Cactus and Succulent Society, England.

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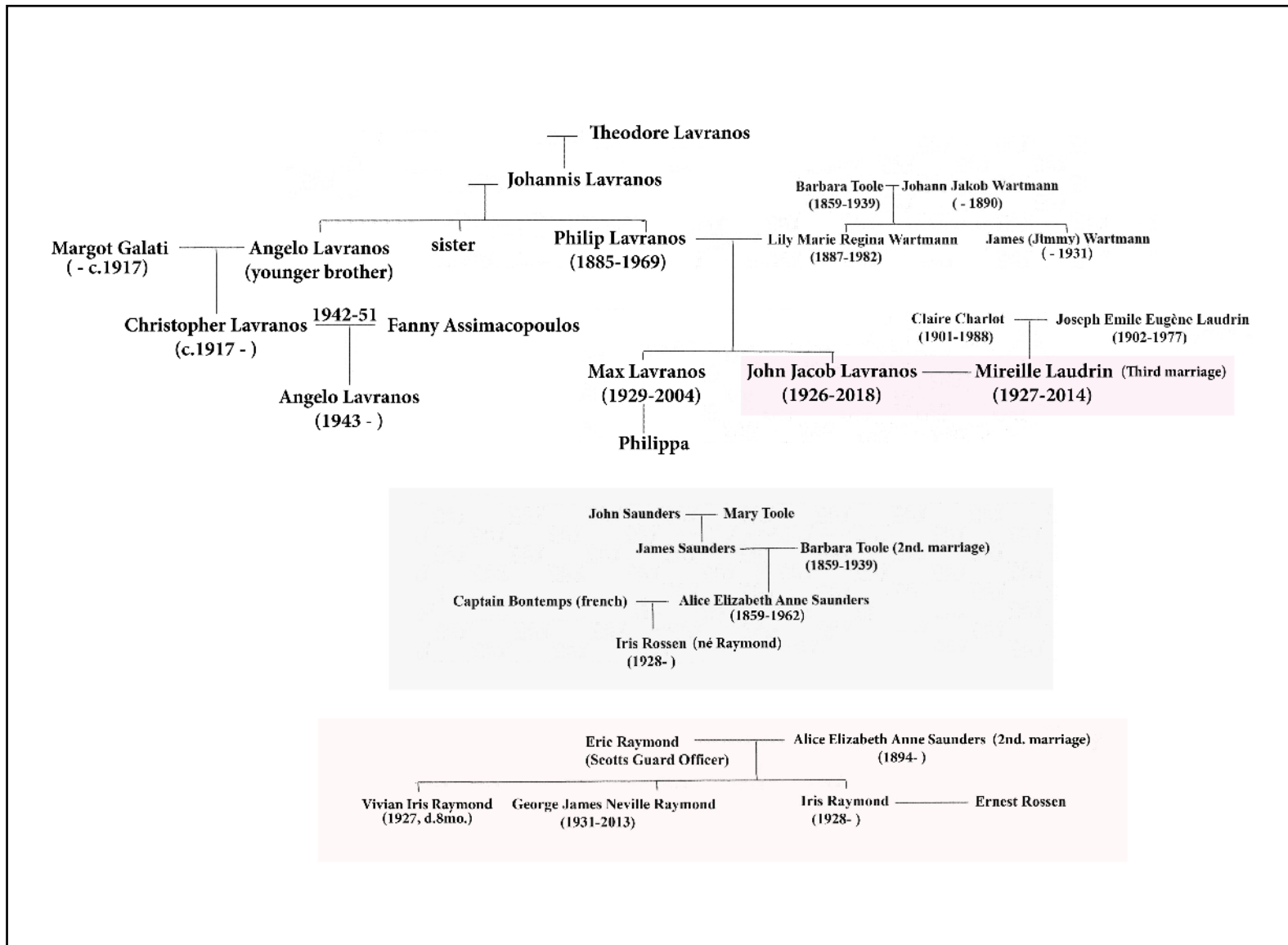
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**Lavranos family relationship connections**

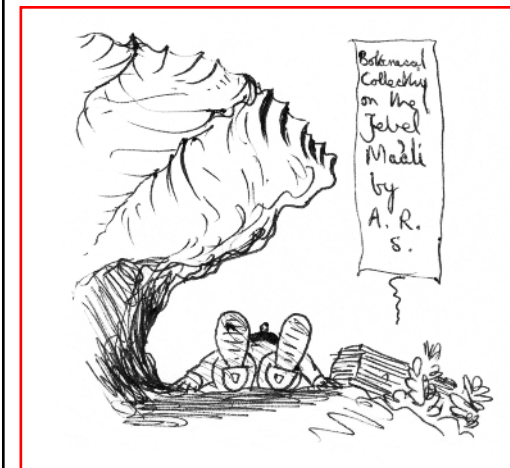


Fig. 40 Cartoon by Radcliffe-Smith in his letter to Lavranos of 18 Aug 1967 is an appropriate postscript to an adventurous life.