



Mr. van Oudtshoorn in his darkroom. In the left corner can be seen the Enlarger with the Clock on a swivel bracket.

Photo : E. v. Z. Hofmeyr.

Photographic Personalities

A. v. R. van Oudtshoorn, Hon. F.R.P.S.

By Eric Vertue, A.R.P.S.

IT is with considerable pleasure that I write of an old friend and associate for it is to Mr. van Oudtshoorn that I owe so much of my interest in photography, to my love of the Cape and my close association with the oldest photographic Society in the Southern Hemisphere, the Cape Town Photographic Society. I first met Van (or Avie, as he is known to his close friends) in 1932 when his kindly manner and helpful advice to a beginner made a marked impression.

Albert van Rheede van Oudtshoorn was born in 1894 at Aberdeen, Cape, where his father was the magistrate.

The family subsequently moved to Cape Town and young Albert became a Civil Servant rising to the position of Assistant Registrar of Deeds. His interest in photography started early but it was not until 1923 that he became interested in pictorialism. In 1925 this interest received a fillip when he won place in a Cape Peninsula Publicity Association competition and received the award of a bronze medal. In 1926 he joined the Cape Town Photographic Society from whose members he received much help and encouragement. It says much for his personality that he almost immediately became a

member of Council. The following year he was elected vice-President and in 1930 was elected President—a position he retained for 13 years.

Van's main interest is in landscape and seascape. He considers the latter as the most difficult form of pictorialism. I am reminded of a story told by E. van Zyl Hofmeyr of an incident at Hermanus which befell Van years ago. It is of course commonly known that Hermanus was his happy hunting ground and here one afternoon he unfolded his tripod, mounted the camera and disappeared under the focussing cloth only to emerge and move the tripod and repeat the performance. After this had happened several times an old gentleman who had been watching from the hotel stoep opposite approached the photographer and suggested that he move nearer the new harbour where the waves were much better. It was then explained that what was required was a lower angle of sunlight to give a lower light to the breaking waves. The old gentleman then introduced himself and much to his surprise he learned that the person to whom

he was giving advice was none other than van Oudtshoorn, the noted seascape photographer about whom a friend had been telling him!

In 1928 Van became an Associate of the Royal Photographic Society and gained his Fellowship three years later. It was in 1937, however, that Van received the signal honour of becoming the first Honorary Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society in South Africa.

It was during this time that he was particularly active in exhibiting overseas and reached a peak not equalled of being placed fourth in the world in the rating of The American Annual of Photography during 1935. 158 prints were accepted by 42 International Salons.

In 1936 he was rated 12 with 136 acceptances at 41 salons. Between the years 1926 and 1939 Van won 300 awards in addition to having 450 prints accepted at approximately 150 Salons spread over 5 Continents—an impressive record indeed for these figures do not include Invitation Salons!



Sands and Shallows



Thro' the Mist



Thundering Through



Steeplechase

Meticulous in all things Avie kept a scrapbook and record of every entry and paging through this is a pleasure but tells only half the story for the other half is contained in a display cabinet filled with medals, plaques and trophies of all kinds but to me this was but the smaller part of his achievements. The larger portion is not visible for it is the kindly advice he was always pleased to give to beginner and advanced worker alike. An able lecturer, his services were much sought after by kindred Societies.

What of the equipment which produced his masterpieces? A $\frac{1}{4}$ plate camera of unknown vintage and a $3\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ " rollfilm reflex acquired in 1935 are the "taking instruments." The enlarger is however the *piece de resistance*. It is home-made, from old ceiling board strips and has not altered much in the years since it was constructed in 1923 and used for his first enlargements. Horizontal in design the distance from the easel became somewhat far away when a 20×16 enlargement was made but this did not disturb Van overmuch for he fitted a small telescope to the lamphouse! Gadgets had a particular place in his darkroom for this is a man of many parts and he could have been as adept as an amateur carpenter or metal worker as in pictorial photography. Visits to his home were never dull as there was always something new. Ashtrays made from shells, an

umbrella stand from an old copper case found on a field, print drier from an old vacuum cleaner motor—never a dull moment.

A modified amidol developer was used for most prints and dodging was his main stock-in-trade. I say WAS for unfortunately Avie has stopped producing masterpieces and turned his attention to astronomy. The garden of his house in Pietermaritzburg, where he now lives, is literally dotted with telescopes with magnifications varying from 20 to 220 and all home-made.

The heritage left is a rich one. Apart from his own collection countless friends have "a van Oudtshoorn" but perhaps one of the greatest honours was when the Royal Photographic Society acquired "Family Group" for the Permanent Collection.

Honorary Life Memberships awarded include Amsterdam Focus Salon (1936); Pietermaritzburg Photographic Society (1948); Overseas vice-President, Western International Photographic Salon, Bristol (1934) and the very exclusive Hon. Life membership of the Cape Town Photographic Society in 1943.

Surely no man got more fun out of our hobby than did Van—but he also gave unstintingly. May he remain with us for many years to come—not only to give pleasure to his wide circle of friends but to enjoy a well earned retirement.



The late Mr. van Oudtshoorn in his darkroom with his enlarger, pictures and pipe

Photo : E. v. Z. Hofmeyr

ALBERT VAN RHEEDE VAN OUDTSHOORN

HON. F.R.P.S.

AS I REMEMBER HIM

by Eric Vertue

SOUTH AFRICA has lost her greatest photographer and I have lost a great and loyal friend.

Very early in the thirties I first met Van during the judging of the South African Salon with the result that some years later, in 1936, when I was transferred to the Cape I at least knew the President of the Cape Town Photographic Society and what a warm welcome it was. That was the man, he never did things by halves—it was either all or nothing.

His home was open to photographers of all ages for such was his love for his hobby that no one asked for help or advice without obtaining all possible assistance.

It was in the early twenties that Mr. van Oudtshoorn

first "got the bug" and 'Erb French, then with Lennon Ltd., sold him the camera that was to make history. I am told that his progress was quite remarkable and it was not long before he started winning competitions of the Cape Town Photographic Society which he had joined. Indeed, he often paid tribute to the work done by Societies. He was also most insistent that you cannot get *out* of your club *more* than you put into it and Van certainly gave back in good measure.

His early period with the Society was in the company of great names but by hard work and endeavour he worked his way through Council to become President—a position he retained for thirteen full years with great

dignity. It was a strange thing but Van filled a room—his presence was immediately felt. Gifted with a charming personality he was always good company.

Holidays were invariably spent at Hermanus and it was on a trip there through Shaw's Pass that "The Road to Caledon" was taken. This was possibly his favourite print because it was the first real winner but later came some of his best landscapes. "Family Group" was undoubtedly his best print; simple in structure, a group of pines, but delightful and masterly in execution.

Mr. van Oudtshoorn was without doubt one of the world's leading seascape photographers. "Thundering Through" and "Force Unfurling" are but two of many that we have space to mention. Taken at precisely the right moment from an angle chosen with much care they looked so simple!

Equipment was simple, for serious work the Linhof Silar 5" × 4" and for outings general work a Welta Perfecta 3½" × 2½" roll film reflex. The enlarger—well, it worked! Made from ceiling boards and a lens of no particular vintage it made the prints which in 1935 placed

Van 4th in the listing of Salon acceptances compiled by the American Annual of Photography.

His honours filled a large display cabinet, medals, plaques and awards of all shapes and sizes while a scrapbook contained the certificates.

In later life an older hobby also came to the fore when he spent much time on astronomy and the building of telescopes. The last few years were spent painting in oils.

Throughout his life Van felt the necessity of organised photography and was not only a foundation member of P.S.S.A. but one of the signatories to the Articles of Association.

But for Mr. van Oudtshoorn the address from which this Journal is published would not have been in existence. Knowing my wish to live in this suburb, his house was but a block away, he phoned me when he heard the plot was for sale and during building operations was a frequent visitor giving advice and encouragement.

The person has gone but the name remains—a goal to which South African photography can aspire.



Sands and Shallows

TRIBUTE TO LATE BARON ALBERT VAN RHEEDE VAN OUDTSHOORN Hon. F.R.P.S.

TOWARDS the end of April, beside the sick-bed of our old friend Albert Van Oudtshoorn in Pietermaritzburg Hospital, my thoughts went back over the past quarter of a century. His name was honoured in photographic circles the world over and men like Frank Fraprie wrote of him as "one of the world's greatest exponents of land and seascape photography".

"Thundering through", "Sands and shallows", "Road to Caledon" and "The Elements" are amongst some of his great works which brought him fame in 5 Continents. He had received the best part of 300 awards for his pictures, and apart from Invitational exhibits he had had 450 acceptances at International Salons. One of his prints was accepted by King George VI. He was awarded the Associateship of the Royal Photographic Society in 1928, Fellowship in 1931 and was honoured at the Coronation in 1937 as the first Honorary Fellow in S. Africa.

One of his forebears Pieter Van Rheede Van Oudtshoorn came to South Africa in 1745 as second in com-

mand to the Governor of the Cape. Another was the first Earl of Athlone who was given the title when he went from Holland with William of Orange to fight against James II in Ireland. A picturesque village in the Cape bears his family name, and he is one of the 17 privileged families of Holland in which the title is handed down to every child of the family, male and female alike.

"Alby" or "Van" as he was affectionately known to his friends, lived all his life in South Africa mainly at the Cape, and in later years in Natal as Registrar of Deeds. He was a beloved personality with a gentle smile and a kind word for everyone, and in later years even in failing health he was one of the most enthusiastic adjudicators in P.S.S.A. Honours and Awards.

He had contributed in no small manner to our photographic heritage, and will always be remembered as the greatest personality of photography in South Africa.

Dr. A. D. Bensusan.



"Thundering Through"