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A Note From The Editor

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A note from the editor

Dear Friends,

It has been a great pleasure to meet all of you who attended the first informal meeting of the Elephant Interest Group at Michigan State University. It was an even greater pleasure to learn what a versatile, friendly, knowledgeable, interested and elephant-oriented group we are. This is indeed a group with much potential.

The crystallization of this group began over a year ago when a questionnaire was sent from our department to various institutions in North America. This questionnaire was part of a survey conducted in order to establish the number of animals representing the Subungulates (Proboscidea, Hyracoidea and Sirenia) and other mammalian orders that were found in captivity in the United States and Canada. Most of all we were interested in determining the number of elephants held in these countries. The overall response to the questionnaire was very positive; 125 out of 150 questionnaires were returned. Upon compiling and analyzing the information sent, it became apparent that there was a need to centralize ideas and collaborate thoughts so that research and studies are conducted efficiently and so that valuable time and money could be saved. (See specific examples later in the newsletter.)

Prior to that questionnaire there had been some thoughts and even attempts to organize a local group interested in elephants, but nothing meaningful was accomplished. These ideas stemmed from a deep and well-rooted interest in these unique animals; an interest that was acquired over several years. The coming-together at the informal meeting at Michigan State University and the establishment of this group (including the newsletter) was not an overnight development. Rather, it is the manifestation of perseverance and hope.

I would like to take this opportunity and thank those of you who attended the meeting. This is worth mentioning, especially since it was hard to abstain from the social gathering next door. In particular, I would like to thank William Prychodko for his invaluable advice and assistance past and present, Richard VanGelder for the first 'push' regarding the preliminary arrangements, John Eisenberg for the moral support and Mary Jo Szuba for taking minutes during the meeting. In addition, I would like to acknowledge the considerable assistance received from the Biology Department of Wayne State University in getting this newsletter ready and mailed.

It is our hope that this letter will serve as a nucleus for attracting new ideas, will stimulate further interest among individuals who are directly or indirectly affiliated with the subject, and lastly, will encourage members to contribute articles and/or any kind of relevant information they wish to appear in future newsletters.

Hezy Shoshani.

Jeheskel (Hezy) Shoshani