

Right: Jayne Mansfield and Josie, the author's favorite elephant, were introduced for a publicity shot. They didn't get on together—Josie hated Jayne's perfume.

Author Ryhiner (below, with chimp) had to choose between his wife and his love for the jungle. The jungle won.



## MY BEAUTY and MY BEASTS

# The Trouble With Elephants

The author braved a stampede to bag a shipment of Indian elephants. Later one of his ponderous "pets" put on an unscheduled act with Jayne Mansfield.

CONCLUSION

By PETER RYHINER  
as told to  
Daniel P. Mannix

When Mercia and I left the United States with an order for the largest group of elephants ever to be shipped, I had no idea how to start about the business of trapping them. I did, however, know that the Garo Hills, the scene of Kipling's famous story, Toomai of the Elephants, was the best elephant country in India. So we flew there and I set about learning something of the complicated art of catching these great and wonderful creatures.

I found that there are two types of elephant *shikars* (hunts): the *keddah shikar* and the *mela shikar*. In the *keddah shikar*, groups of wild elephants are driven into a big corral. In the *mela shikar*, young animals are noosed from the backs of *kunkis* (tame pad elephants) in the jungles. There is one big *keddah shikar* held every year in the Garo Hills, but it was not due for several

months yet. Therefore I decided to go out on *mela shikars* while waiting.

For this type of hunting, two *kunkis* are used. Two men, the mahout and the *phundi* (catcher), ride on each elephant. The *phundi* has a long, soft hemp lasso. No other tools are needed.

I was warned that no one could say how long the hunt might last, for the tame elephants must follow the herds for days until an opportunity comes for capturing the right calves. Mercia wanted to go with us, for she didn't trust either the catchers or me to get the right calves, but the natives believe that the presence of a woman may put a curse on a hunt, so she had to stay behind and make preparations for the arrival of the calves.

Scouts reported the presence of a herd a few miles from our

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Her husband did not capture this London Zoo zebra, but Mercia (right) charmed him.

## How to Catch More FISH

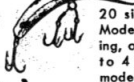


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## My Beauty and My Beasts

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camp and the hunters performed the *pudja*—an elaborate ceremony which includes the sacrifice of a white cock and two white pigeons to assure good luck. Then we started out on the two tame elephants. Our only food was two sacks of rice. Meat would go bad in the intense heat and canned foods are too costly.

We picked up the track of the herd; simple enough to do, because the marks of their huge feet were clear in the soft loam of the jungle. Late that afternoon we caught up with them. There were twelve cows and five young bulls; as well as three calves, just weaned. We next had to find out whether the calves were males or females.

I was amazed at how close the men could approach the herd on the *kunkis*. Apparently wild elephants can't distinguish a man on the back of a tame elephant and, what is even more surprising, can't scent him. However, when the men were in sight of the herd, they never spoke and seldom moved. If alarmed, a herd can move with astonishing swiftness and tame elephants can't keep up with them.

Two of the calves were females. "It would do us no good even if there were more, for our *kunkis* can only handle two animals," the mahouts told me. We ate our rice cold that night, for we did not dare to light a fire. The hunters told me that sometimes they were able to catch fish on these hunts, but they could not shoot game, for the sound would frighten the herd.

Every herd has an old bull that does not stay with the others, but maintains a parallel course two or three miles away. The babies must be captured while the herd bull is as far away as possible, for if he is able to join the others, the *kunkis* have no chance against him. We followed the herd for five days, one *kunki* keeping track of the old bull from a discreet distance while the other followed the cows and calves. However, the old bull was never out of earshot of the herd and even the catchers were beginning to grow discouraged.

On the afternoon of the sixth day, the *kunki* following the herd bull returned at full speed. The catcher reported that the bull was in a wallow many miles away and would probably remain there for several hours. This was the moment for which we'd been waiting. The catchers uncoiled their ropes and the mahouts urged the tame elephants forward.

Guided by the knees of the mahouts, the *kunkis* moved in to cut out a cow with a female calf at her side. As the pad elephants came in on either side of the cow, one of the catchers swung his rope and noosed the calf around the neck. The calf squealed loudly and her mother turned on us, trumpeting a warning to the rest of the herd. The others began to trumpet and came for us. The biggest *kunki* turned away and met the charge. He had enormous tusks and the cows could do nothing against him. The females and young bulls are instinctively cowed by the presence of a big bull with tusks. When the herd was driven back, the catcher on the second *kunki* also roped the struggling calf and she was hurried away between the pad elephants. As soon as we were clear, the baby was tied to a tree, and then both *kunkis* chased away the elephants that had tried to follow us. The second calf was captured in the same way an hour or so later. Then we hastily made our escape with the two calves before the old bull could come up.

When we returned to our base camp, Mercia was ready for us. Raising the

babies would be a major task. Mercia had got several milk buffaloes and also had a supply of a milk formula which I consider the best substitute for mother's milk with baby animals.

By combining the buffalo milk with the milk formula, plus some cod-liver-oil extract and a few vitamins, we were able to rear the babies. A hollow bamboo had to be inserted in their mouths and the milk poured down it. At first the babies fought desperately, but within a few days they followed us around the camp and even tried to climb into our laps, like enormous dogs. When we ate, they would come running to the table to get their "specials"—butter-and-sugar sandwiches—and if they didn't get enough, they'd butt over the table. They were terribly inquisitive little rascals, always sticking their trunks into things—especially the pots on the stove. They were constantly getting burned and would then run to Mercia to be petted and consoled. There was a Hollywood camera crew at the camp photographing wild life in India, and one night the smallest of the babies got cold and went into the tent of one of the cameramen. When the man woke up next morning, there was the baby lying by his cot, snoring loudly.

If this is the space age the average commuter doesn't know it.

JOE RYAN

While we were in Assam, we received word from some American animal dealers that the North American Fertilizer outfit had sold our first shipment of animals for an enormous profit. They'd disposed of the tame black leopard almost immediately for a profit of over \$600 to a television program needing a tame leopard.

Mercia sat moaning, "Oh, why didn't I know about that TV program? Peter, it's the dealers who make the big profits while running none of the risks of a collector. You'll have to become a dealer."

"I'm not a businessman," I told her. "And besides, the dealers don't have any fun."

"Fun!" sniffed Mercia. "You call it fun to live in the jungle and fret over these little devils of elephants?"

I did, but I knew how Mercia felt. I'd had dreams of opening my own zoo in America, featuring unusual and interesting animals—like the strange maleo, a bird that buries its eggs in the sand, like a reptile; or the golden-crested gibbon that lives only in the highest trees and is said never to set foot on the ground. I tried to explain my plans to Mercia, but she shut me off.

"You're not practical, Peter. Those maleos just look like little turkeys, and people can't see them burying their eggs in a zoo. The golden-crested gibbon is just another monkey to the general public. You could never run a successful zoo with creatures like that."

I supposed that she was right, but I still couldn't be a dealer, doing nothing but sit in an office in New York or London.

We were able to get four more elephant calves on other *mela shikars*, but then the herds moved away. Since we needed ten calves, we had to rely on the *keddah shikar* for the others.

High in the hills, men had been at work for weeks constructing a giant corral of heavy teak stakes, bound together with

strong ropes to give additional strength. This corral was circular, about fifty yards in diameter, and the stockade stood some fifteen feet high. A trench ran around the inside, because not even the heavy stakes could withstand the attack of an elephant herd unless the force of their charge was broken. There was a swinging door at the entrance of the corral, with two platforms on either side where the men could stand who had the all-important task of handling the door. A long, V-shaped runway of lighter stakes led into the corral, carefully camouflaged with vines and creepers.

When Mercia and I arrived at the corral, scores of men were busy planting decoy trees inside, so it would not look too barren and cause the herd to turn away at the last moment. We were told that the hunters were at a nearby salt lick, watching for a herd that would probably come in that evening.

As soon as it was dark, Mercia and I took up our positions on the stockade. It was lined with men carrying sharpened poles, torches and noisemakers, for in spite of all precautions, the elephants could still break through if left to themselves. The herd would have to be kept in the corral all night, for the drive took place after dark and the hunters could not go into the corral to separate the calves from the cows until it was daylight and they could see to work.

About eleven o'clock that night a hunter came in to report that the herd was at the lick. An army of several hundred men silently spread out to start the drive, carrying horns, drums and a few old muskets loaded with black powder. Other men lined the sides of the long runway leading to the corral, but kept themselves carefully concealed. The men on the platforms tested the swinging gate and a last-minute check was made of the stockade. At any moment now the drive would start.

Then we heard the faint sound of yells, drums and horns, punctured by the occasional boom of a musket fired into the air. The sounds grew louder, but we could see nothing in the darkness. Suddenly the men at the wide mouth of the runway began shouting. This meant that the herd had passed them and was in the chute. They could still break out, for the walls of the chute were too light to stand a determined attack, but with men on both sides and behind them the herd would probably run forward.

We saw the first of the great gray shapes in the darkness as it drifted through the trees toward the entrance of the stockade. As the herd passed, men appeared as if by magic on the walls of the chute, shouting, waving torches, beating on pans and blowing horns. It was absolutely necessary that the herd be panicked now and driven into the corral as fast as possible.

The first of the herd plunged into the carefully camouflaged entrance to the corral and tore through the planted saplings and bushes. The rest followed them, jostling one another in their eagerness to escape the figures springing up on either side. Behind them were coming the drivers, making more noise than an inferno full of devils, but ahead everything seemed peaceful and safe. As the last animal entered the corral, a man slashed the vine holding back the door. The heavy door slammed shut. Great beams were instantly raised by a score of hands and thrown into place. The herd was caught.

Within a few seconds, the milling animals had tramped the artificial jungle within the corral absolutely flat. Then for the first time they could see the stockade around them and realized that they were trapped. Led by the young bulls, they charged the teak stakes repeatedly. The men on the

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(Continued from Page 146) stockade fought the crazed animals back, prodded them with poles, firing off blank cartridges, waving torches in their faces. The rest of the men had run up to join us with their noisemakers, and the racket was deafening, but through all the tumult sounded the furious trumpeting of the captive animals as they rushed the stockade, pushing against it with their broad foreheads or trying to tear the stakes loose with their trunks. Time after time they came on, until I thought that they would surely break through, but at last the fury of the attack passed and the herd began milling, some of them even pausing to pick up the crushed shrubbery with their trunks and eat it.

At last, dawn came and the roping of the calves could be attempted. This was exactly like a *mela shikar*; two big *kunkis* going in, each with a mahout and a *phundi*, to noose the calves. The cows did their best to protect their babies, holding on to them with their trunks and butting at the *kunkis*, but they had no chance against the bulls' tusks. The young males pawed the ground and threw dust over their backs as they tried to work up enough courage to charge the *kunkis*. One old cow came up to the stockade and tested stake after stake with her trunk, looking for a loose one, before the men were able to drive her back with their sharpened poles.

The best of the calves were taken by the Forestry Department to be trained for lumber work in the forests, but we were able to purchase six young females. I knew that when the last calf was secured the herd would be turned loose, and I wanted a picture of it. Leaving Mercia to direct the handling of the calves we'd purchased, I ran to where I'd left the camera and started back.

I was still a few yards from the entrance to the corral when I saw the gate swing open and the herd rush out. I was right in their path. Luckily, there was a tree there and I jumped behind it. The herd rushed past me on both sides. I could have reached out and touched them. I stood there shaking while the great beasts thundered by. I've never been so scared in my life. Fortunately, the elephants paid no attention to me. They only wanted to get away. Mercia's only comment, when I joined her, was, "Did you get any good pictures?"

There was one tiny baby only three feet four inches high at the shoulder, and very furry. She even had bangs like a little girl. I named her Josephine. Josephine was the smartest, cutest, most playful little elephant I'd ever seen. I decided to keep her for myself and perhaps build her up to be a big TV and movie star, like Mr. J. Fred Muggs, the chimpanzee.

We took the elephants to Calcutta by truck and I loaded them aboard an English ship. Since Mercia and I had to pick up some other animals before leaving India, I hired a young Dutchman who was experienced with animals to take them across. The captain of the ship was a very unpleasant man, rude and overbearing. He looked and behaved like an old colonel from the military school at Poona. I was glad to see the last of him and pitied the young Dutchman.

The next day the Dutchman came to our hotel to say that at the last minute the captain had changed his mind and ordered the animals off-loaded. The elephants were now on a flatboat in the middle of the bay. The customs men refused to allow them to be landed, arguing that they had been on an English ship, so they were now technically English elephants and couldn't be imported into India.

I was desperate, but Mercia listened quietly. "An Englishman, you say?" she

commented thoughtfully. "Old colonial type? You leave this to me."

She shooed us out of the room while she changed. A few minutes later Mercia emerged looking as though she had just come from a beauty salon on the Rue de la Paix. I stared in astonishment, but Mercia only snapped, "Get that flat alongside the ship. We're loading." She started off toward the harbor, provoking "Wows!" and "Ahs!" from everyone who saw her.

I hurried down to the wharf, where our headman was sitting disconsolately on the flat with the baby elephants.

"Get the flat moving back to the ship!" I shouted as I sprang aboard.

The headman shook his head. "*Sahib*, it is no use. I know that sort of Englishman. Nothing can move him."

I was mad with impatience. "The *memsahib* has just gone aboard to argue with him!" I shouted.

The headman bounded to his feet. "Why didn't you say so, *sahib*? . . . Boatmen, cast off the lines! Get out the oars! We haven't a moment to lose!"

The boatmen threw all their weight on the sweeps while the headman and I urged them on. We went fast, but long before we reached the ship I could see the crew swinging out the loading booms while the captain goaded them to fresh efforts. Mercia had obviously already boarded the ship.

The elephants were loaded without trouble, Mercia directing the crew while to stow the animals as they came on board. The captain followed her around, whinnying eagerly. He glared at me as I came over the side, as much as to say, "What the devil are you doing here?" and continued to pursue Mercia, making little chuckling noises and stroking his mustache.

The Dutchman came on board and the ship weighed anchor. I wanted Mercia to leave with me, but she said, "No, you idiot! This fat fool thinks I'm going with him to Europe. He could still have the animals off-loaded. I'll go ashore with the pilot boat."

I was still concerned about her and, as soon as we returned to the docks, I rented a power boat and followed the ship. When the pilot was dropped, I picked up Mercia. The captain, his face the color of

a ripe tomato, leaned over the rail, screaming insults at white men who married Eurasians, dishonesty of foreigners, and his opinion of the whole affair in general. From the stern of my boat, Mercia responded in kind, tracing the captain's ancestry back for several generations and making some interesting comments on his personal morals.

We had no more concern over the elephants. They were heavily covered by insurance, and the insurance company would hold the captain strictly responsible for any trouble during the voyage. With a clear conscience, we returned to the hotel and had a cooling drink.

We got the rest of the elephants needed to fill out our shipment, as well as a number of other animals, including several baby tigers. We also had a very tame gibbon and a fishing cat, as well as Josephine, the cute baby elephant. I knew that Mercia was right and that animal collecting was no real life for a woman, but as I've always been very good with pets, I hoped to build up a TV program featuring tame wild animals. With high hopes, we sailed for the United States.

We were met at the dock by the usual crowd of reporters and, as usual, Mercia made a bigger hit than even the animals. She had taken care on our first trip to learn American slang and habits, so she chattered with the reporters about baseball scores, how she was looking forward to seeing everything from the Bunker Hill Monument to the Grand Canyon and how much she loved the United States. The reporters were delighted with her. She posed with everything from the gibbon to the elephants, although a disaster occurred when she was posing with the young tigers.

The tigers were by now nearly half grown, and to hold them near her during the picture taking, Mercia fed them small pieces of meat. As the photographers kept saying, "Just one more," she began to run out of meat and only pretended to feed them. One of the youngsters got mad and bit her in the behind. It was an extremely painful bite, but Mercia, like the good trooper she was, said nothing. The photographers got their pictures and left while Mercia retired below to give first aid to her injured posterior.

I didn't realize how deep the bite was or I'd have called a doctor immediately. Deep tiger bites nearly always infect, because there are bits of rotten meat on the cat's teeth. As soon as the photographers left, we were both busy unloading the cargo and arranging to have it shipped to the various zoos and dealers, so when Mercia told me that the bite wasn't bad and that she'd disinfected it, I forgot about the matter.

We were deluged with newspaper clippings about Mercia and the animals. Apparently none of the rewrite men could think of any title but "Beauty and the Beast," and I got a little tired of it, but Mercia was delighted. She collected every line written about her and had trunkfuls of clippings. Since she was still sensitive about being a Eurasian, I said teasingly, "Poor little neglected girl, no one will have anything to do with her!" I only meant to show how silly she was to let the old fears still haunt her, but Mercia instantly screamed, "You think that I care about these clippings? Well, I'll show you!" and she began tearing up her precious collection.

I apologized, but Mercia went through the pile like a fury, ripping and tearing right and left. I finally left the room. When I returned a few hours later, Mercia was down on her hands and knees, gluing them all back together again. She wasn't the least embarrassed at being caught. She only said, "Don't stand there. Come here and help me."

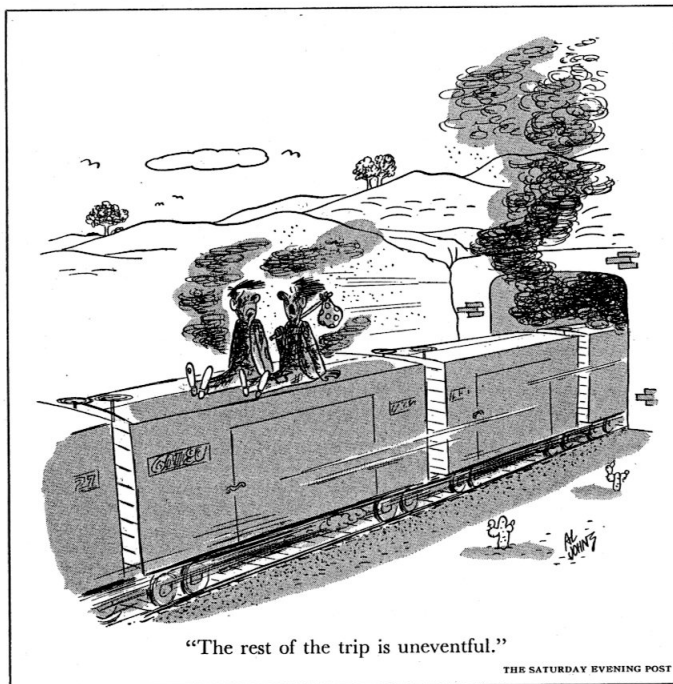
Mercia's tiger bite did infect, and soon it was so bad that she couldn't sit or lie on her back. I called in a doctor, who said that she must be kept quiet for at least two weeks. Meanwhile, a big reception had been arranged for us at Rockefeller Center, where we were to exhibit our tame animals, especially Josephine. Since Mercia couldn't attend, I went on without her.

Arrangements had been made to have Jayne Mansfield, the actress, meet Josephine. We had advertised Josephine as "The Kiddies' Friend," but the reception wasn't a success. Josephine was usually dog-tame, but she hated perfume and Miss Mansfield reeked of it. Josephine instantly knocked Miss Mansfield flying and, I'm afraid, really hurt her, as the impact of even a small elephant is no laughing matter. Miss Mansfield was very nice about it, but the idea of advertising Josephine as "The Kiddies' Friend" was a flop.

Then our agent had another idea—to have Josephine and me register at a prominent hotel, Josephine signing the register with her trunk. He called the hotel's publicity man, who thought this was a great idea, and we all took a taxi.

A battery of photographers and reporters were waiting for us. Unfortunately, one of the ladies was wearing perfume, and Josephine opened proceedings by sending her flying. I dragged Josephine off the indignant lady, and then Josephine and I had to ride up in the elevator to our room. The elevator boy got frightened and dashed out, slamming the door behind him. I didn't know how to open the door and Josephine was terrified. She charged around the car, batting the walls, while, from outside, the elevator starter shouted directions to me for opening the door. Meanwhile, a rumor had gone around that a gigantic elephant was running amuck in the hotel, and a panic began. Women were screaming, men shouting, and the delighted photographers were taking pictures of the whole affair. I finally got the door open and emerged just in time to hear the manager firing the publicity man.

Poor little Josephine had to go to a stable in



"The rest of the trip is uneventful."

(Continued from Page 148) Queens, but Mercia, who had now recovered, was determined to get the gibbon and the fishing cat into our room. She tried to smuggle them in under her coat, as she used to do in Singapore. The manager caught her and pointed to a sign that read, "No dogs or cats allowed."

"But these aren't dogs or cats," Mercia protested.

"That thing's a cat," said the manager, pointing to the fishing cat.

"But your sign means domestic cats," cried Mercia. "I won't be thrown out on a technicality."

She wasn't, either. We got them into the room.

When the publicity about Josephine broke, we were asked to appear on the Garry Moore Show. I made sure that no one would have any perfume before I signed the contract. Then, with Josephine trotting along beside me with her bangs nicely brushed and a pink ribbon around her neck, we headed for the studio.

The audience broke into sighs and "oh's" when Josephine appeared on the stage. She performed her little repertory of tricks, and then I gave her a pitcher of milk, which she drank with her trunk. Unfortunately, Garry Moore took this moment to laugh at her. Josephine hated to have people laugh at her, and she immediately lifted her trunk and squirted Mr. Moore from head to foot.

We hastily left the studio. On the street we ran into a long line of women waiting to see Heartline, a very popular TV show. At that moment, a police car went by with sirens screaming. Poor little Josephine gave a terrified trumpet and started running. She went through the line of women like a miniature tank and I never saw such a mess. Women were leaping over one another, crawling around on their hands and knees, and lying flat on their faces, screaming for help. Josephine ran into the plate-glass window of a store. The whole window reverberated and I held my breath, waiting to see it come crashing down into the street, but it held. Then Josephine turned and dashed back into the studio with me after her.

Mr. Moore was just introducing the next guest when Josephine and I crossed the stage. Garry managed to save himself by a quick spring, but the guest wasn't so fortunate. I don't know who he was, but he certainly took a tumble. Then I managed to collar Josephine against one of the cameras and dragged her out to a taxi, kicking and trumpeting every inch of the way.

After that, we decided that Josephine wasn't cut out to be a TV star. I sold her to Gussie Busch, of Budweiser Beer. "That animal has spirit," Mr. Busch told me. "And I like spirit." He certainly got lots of spirit when he got Josephine.

That was the end of our hopes of having tamed animals on TV. However, the demand for wild animals for zoos and circuses continued unabated. Mercia and I went to the jungles again and brought back more than 110 more young elephants—the greatest number of elephants ever imported by anyone anywhere. In addition, we collected thousands of other animals in Africa, South America, India and Indonesia.

The strain on both of us was heavy—especially on Mercia. Once I had to send her to Europe with two Indian rhinos while I stayed behind in Assam to oversee the elephant trapping. When we met in London, Mercia told me that there'd been what she called a "mutiny" on the ship—the sailors had refused to clean out the cages or bring up food for the rhinos. Mercia had done everything herself, hosing out the cages in all sorts of weather and dragging the heavy bales of hay up to

the deck. "I didn't really mind, except on my birthday," she said rather pitifully.

When I went to see the ship's captain, he had a rather different version. "Your wife treated the sailors as though they were coolies," he told me. "She screamed orders at them and behaved as though they were dirt. Naturally they wouldn't take it. I know what the trouble is. She's trying to be a 'mehsahib.' She was brought up to regard the colonial 'mehsahibs' as the pattern of all that a lady should be, but the day for that sort of thing is past."

Mercia had never been able to forget the terrible experiences of her childhood, when she followed the English girls around, sucking the discarded peels from their fruit. With her charm, quick wits and beauty, there was nothing that she

market instead of starting a zoo of my own based on theories which every experienced zoo director had assured me were impractical. In spite of her temperamental outbursts, Mercia was very practical—far too practical to understand the passion for working with strange, exotic animals that possessed me.

I grew increasingly bored with this wholesale handling of ordinary wild animals which brought in big profits, but was merely a routine job. Mercia and I began to quarrel more and more often. During one of these quarrels in a London hotel, Mercia threw a heavy ash tray at me. I ducked and the ash tray went through the window. It landed on the pavement with a crash, and a crowd gathered. The manager of the hotel came up to our room to

full of snakes and mosquitoes? I want to stay where I'll be treated like a human being. Besides, the animal business is through. Oh, I know there's a big boom in it now, but after all, how many baby elephants can America absorb?"

"There are other animals."  
"It's getting almost impossible to export them. China's closed and Indonesia is going. Elsewhere, nothing but red tape and endless headaches."

She was right, as usual. Even India, Africa and South America were making it increasingly difficult to export animals.

"But if I open my zoo, we can live here together and I won't have to collect," I pleaded.

"Peter, you're not a businessman. How many people would come to see the kind of zoo you have in mind? In America, people go in for quantity. There's a very successful zoo in the Catskills. They advertise 'More kangaroos than in any one place in Australia.' They have a hundred and twenty kangaroos in one pen and the zoo is crowded every day. The owner sells packages of food so people can feed them. That means he doesn't have to pay for keeping them and he makes a profit on the food besides. What a genius!"

"Well, I could do that," I argued.

"I can just see you! One week later you'd be trying to raise some rare polliwog that no one cares about, or else headed for China to get a giant panda, even though you know that the Communist government won't let them be exported."

It so happened that I was planning how to get a giant panda out of China. I began to tell her the details, but Mercia shut me off.

"See what I mean? You'll never be practical. Peter, you're not a businessman, and I tell you that the animal-collecting business is dead, dead, dead. Drop it and go into something else before it breaks your heart."

"I can't, Mercia," I said miserably. "It's my life."

"I know it is, Peter, but it's not mine. It's not any woman's. I want a home and a family and some sort of security. I've never had security and I want it more than anything else in the world."

So we decided to part. I took Mercia out to dinner that night, hoping that after a good meal and a few drinks she might soften somewhat. I decided on an elaborate dinner with three wines and brandy. When I'd finished ordering, Mercia glanced at the waiter and said indifferently, "Bring me the vegetable platter and a glass of water."

She wasn't trying to be unpleasant; she just didn't care. When I remonstrated with her, Mercia said irritably, "What do you think a dinner like that costs? That's the trouble with you, Peter; you never think about money."

In many ways, money meant even less to Mercia than it did to me. But to her, money was a shield against the world, and she knew too well what the world could do to you if ever you lost the protection of that shield.

So Mercia and I were divorced and she returned to Switzerland. I continued as I began, an animal collector. The year after the divorce, I brought to New York the famous Serata, the only white python ever seen. Serata, now in the Staten Island Zoo, is valued at \$25,000. I am now planning to go to Malaya in search of the hairy Sumatran rhinoceros, possibly the world's rarest mammal. Whether or not I'll get the rhino, I don't know, but as I'm going into unexplored areas I'll find some unusual animals. As Mercia said, it's my life. I couldn't give it up, even for my lovely, brilliant wife.

Editors' Note—This is the last of three articles by Mr. Ryhiner.



couldn't have accomplished if only she'd been able to break with her tragic past. As I had done so many times in the past, I tried to explain this to her and, as usual, Mercia was all contrition. "I'm sorry, Peter; it's my awful temper. I'll control it; I promise." So she would—until the next time.

I knew quite well that I wasn't the sort of man who could really help Mercia. She admired strong, resolute men and wanted the feeling of security that wealth could bring her. Except for clothes, which were a sort of symbol to her, Mercia was the least extravagant woman I've ever known, and she would still cheerfully suck fruit peels if necessary, but she wanted the feeling that she could buy all the fruit in India.

I have always been an easygoing fellow and I have cared little about money, except as it has enabled me to work with my beloved animals. Mercia had always been the one who handled our money, who understood clearly that it was ridiculous to spend weeks and several thousand rupees attempting to get some rare animal which wasn't spectacular enough to bring a big price from the zoos, and who'd urged me to ride the boom on the animal

protest. I apologized, explaining that it was an accident, and he left, warning us that if another such "accident" occurred we'd have to leave the hotel. Mercia's only comment was "Well, you shouldn't have ducked."

The final break came in New York. I'd been in India getting more elephants, and Mercia had come over from Europe with a shipment of African animals. We hadn't seen each other for nearly six months. We met in Zeehandelaar's office, and almost her first words were to ask for a divorce.

I can't say that the request came as any great surprise to me, but I was still deeply in love with her. Besides, Mercia and I complemented each other perfectly. She had a good business head, was clever at publicity, and could handle the social end of the business. Together, we'd made a perfect team.

As always, Mercia was perfectly frank. "Peter, I'm sick of the animal business and you can't think of anything else. Even suppose I stayed in America while you went collecting, I'd only see you for a few weeks out of the year."

"You could go with me," I suggested. "Spend the rest of my life being insulted by petty native officials and live in jungles