

*On the lookout, Bob and I scan elephant country from tree*

# THIS WAS MY AFRICA

*In the green hills of Kenya, Sports Illustrated's hunting reporter finds a paradise rich in animals and adventure*

by VIRGINIA KRAFT

A NOON SUN stood high in the sky and the sound of grasshoppers scraping their wings formed background music for a dozen birds. I climbed to the top of a fallen giant and looked down on my elephant, massive and still beneath me. This was Africa. And in this moment were fulfilled the dreams of a lifetime.

All of my dreams and the dozens of books and movies on which they were built had not prepared me for this moment. I was here at last, and I had actually shot an elephant. The feeling was one of awe and excitement, of triumph mixed with sadness, of reality and unreality. Underlying all of my first impressions of Africa was this sensation of unreality, of being at last in a place I'd hoped to be for as long as I could remember—and then being almost uncertain that I was actually here, that maybe this, too, was a dream.

From the moment we arrived in Nairobi, Kenya's capital and the safari capital of the world, we were caught up in the excitement of a city

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*Photographs by Robert Grimm*





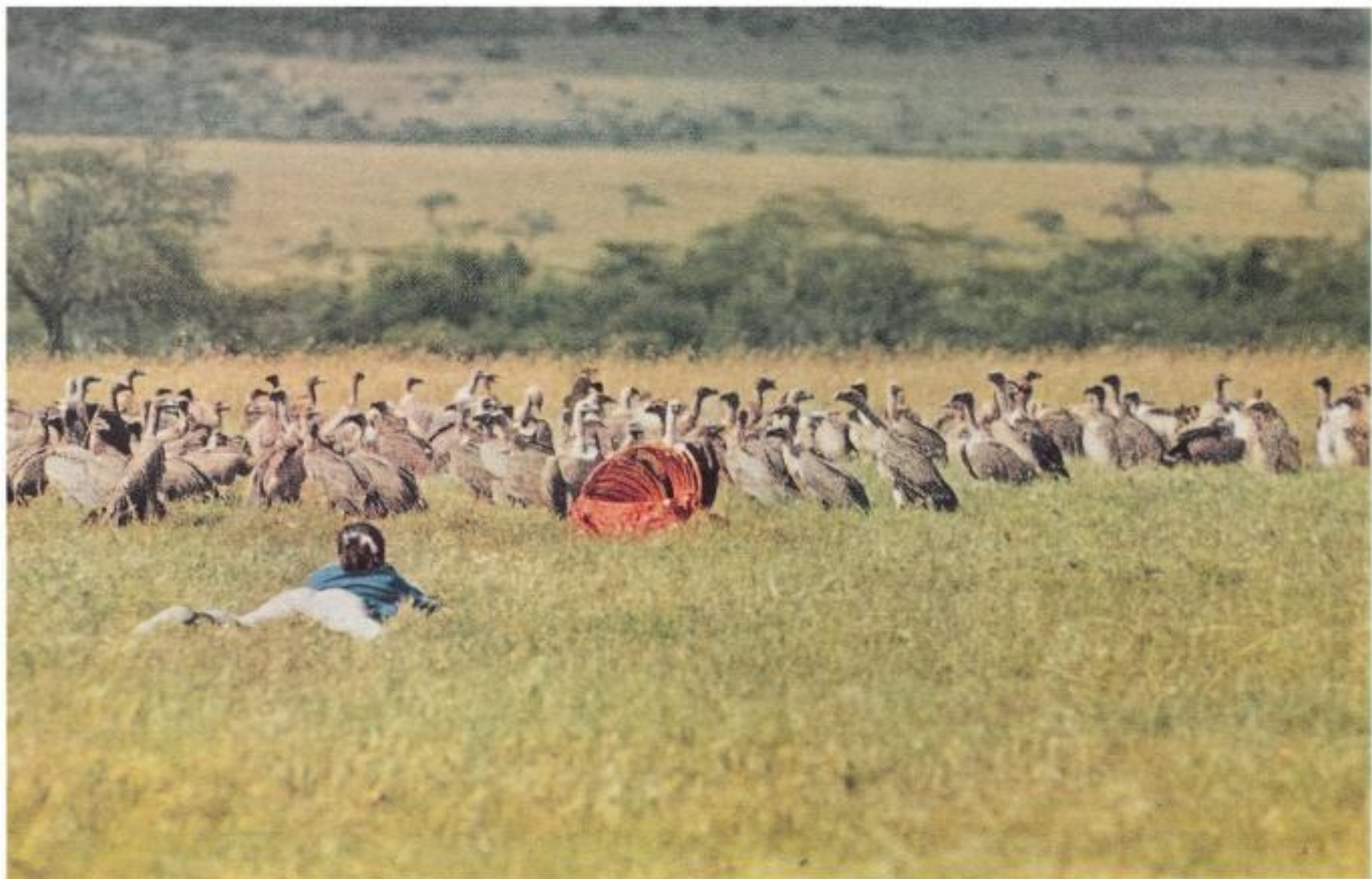


*Sighting a herd (above), we watched cows and calves enjoy bath in swampy watering hole on Northern Frontier*

*Enthroned on a giant, I sat atop my elephant minutes after it had fallen to a single slug from my Winchester .458*

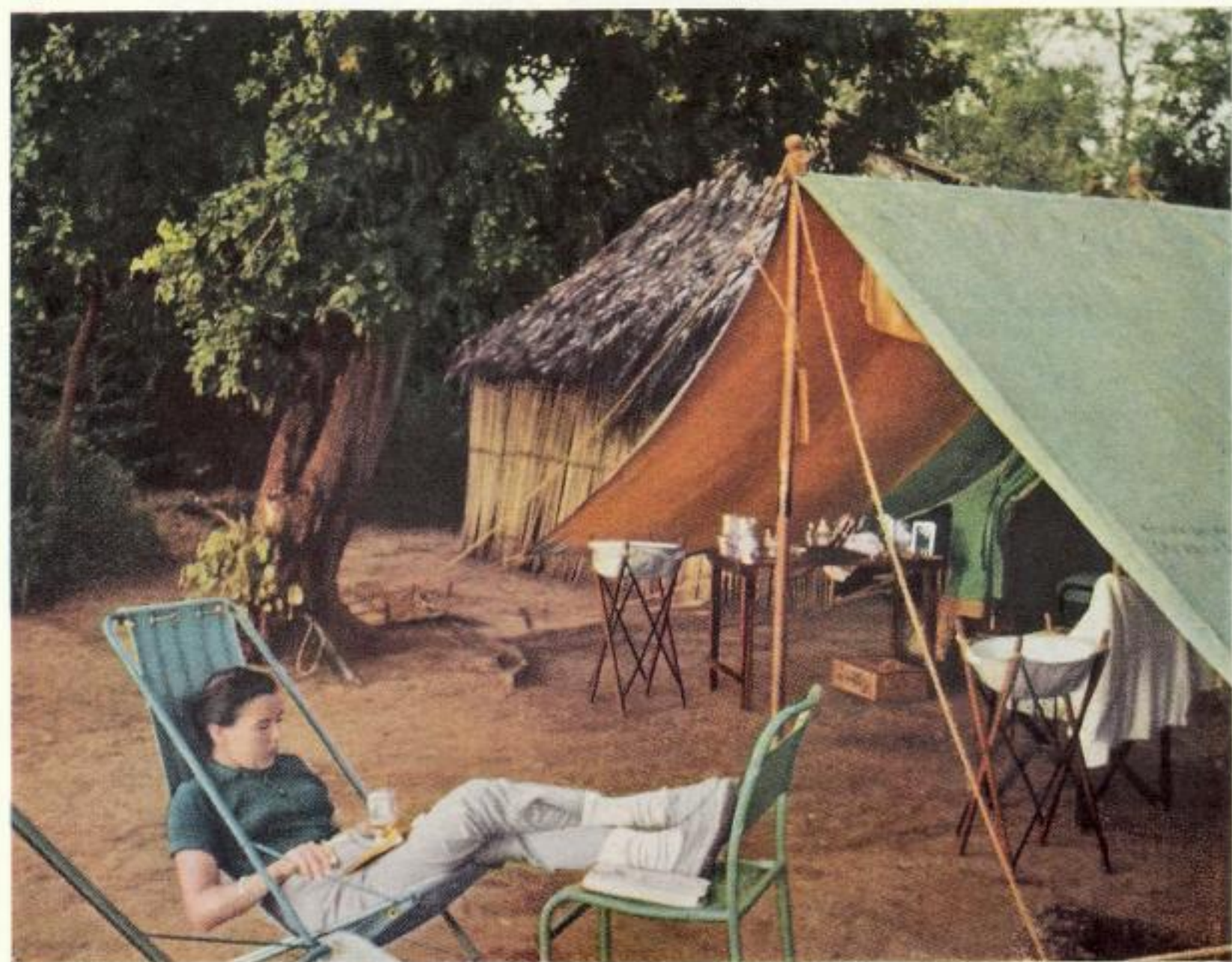






*A flurry of vultures fights over fresh zebra carcass. Getting this close to the wary birds took 30-minute crawl*

*A moment of idleness was break at midday. Living tent in background was set up on site of abandoned village*





## AFRICAN SAFARI

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geared to visiting hunters, expatriated novelists and traveling movie crews. I stood with my husband, Bob Grimm, at the bar of the New Stanley Hotel and watched a procession of characters wander by from all the books and movies on Africa we had ever known. Men with great red beards and British accents argued wars of half a century ago with retired Indian officers; turbaned desert princes toasted bejeweled Hollywood starlets; a delicate old lady discussed the ballistics of her pearl-handled revolver with a latter-day Colonel Blimp who incongruously had killed three Mau Mau.

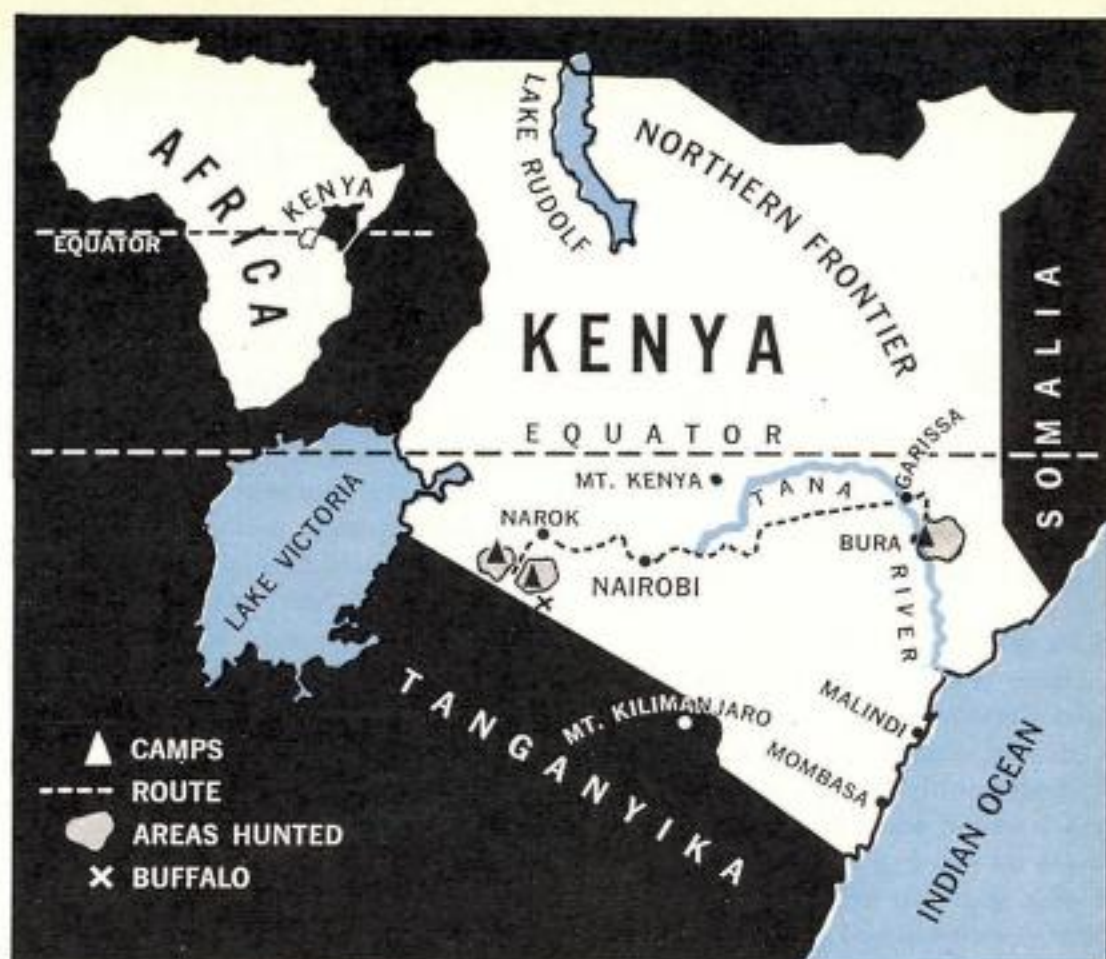
Outside, lights burned through the night as dinner-jacketed businessmen ended the day in the Mogambo and Equator clubs while Moslem merchants began theirs in a dozen little shops along the avenues. Signs flashed messages about Chevrolet, Lever Brothers, Daraprim for malaria, and latest Wall Street stock prices. Natives lounged on the city square ogling an endless stream of baggage moving in and out under the marquee of the New Stanley. Tanned hunters climbed from battered Land Rovers, dust-covered after a month in the bush. Others headed out of the city and toward their own adventure.

For to each hunter an African safari is what he makes it and what he wants it to be. It can be the roughest hunt imaginable, or the easiest, or anything in between. This is so because the land is vast and sparsely populated, and because it is rich and crowded with an unbelievable abundance of game.

For us, Africa was 10 times what we had hoped for, and our safari was the rainbow at the end of our dreams. In Kenya's green hills we found excitement, adventure and hunting as we never imagined it could be.

Of all experiences on safari, elephant hunting was the most unforgettable—not because an elephant is necessarily smarter or more difficult to hunt but because of its tremendous size. My first sight of an elephant was a moment of complete disbelief. There, before me, ambling casually among sparse trees which came only to its shoulder, was an animal which seemed twice as big as I had expected.

In the days that followed we saw many elephants as we searched for



SCENE OF SAFARI is illustrated on map above which shows general routes traveled, major areas we hunted, our three campsites and region in which buffalo was killed.

one which had tusks large enough to take for a trophy. In all that time I was never able to overcome my sense of awe at their size.

When finally we located a really good elephant, it was in the company of many others. This, our white hunter Owen McCallum told us, was an unusual sight since adult bulls seldom travel together. Old bulls, especially, prefer being alone or with no more than one companion. They look for quiet, Owen said, because like old men they often become crotchety with age.

But on this morning there were 11, and among them was a bull with tusks which appeared to sweep along the ground as it moved. We huddled together, Owen, Bob, myself and our two trackers, using the low, thorny bushes typical of Kenya's Northern Frontier country as cover, while we watched the herd move slowly before us. Each of us took turns studying the big bull through binoculars. It would be an excellent trophy but, in the company of so many elephants, a dangerous one to stalk.

For three hours we followed the herd, moving carefully through the bush, concentrating on wind changes which might send our scent to the animals ahead. Eventually, as we hoped, the elephants began to separate, moving in small groups away from each

other. The country in this area is flat and sandy, covered with low thorn bushes and an occasional acacia tree. There is seldom anything big enough to climb to safety or to get behind.

Even our trackers, Mamu and Methui, who had lived all their lives with elephants, were visibly nervous as we moved closer and closer to the group in which our big tusker was. With it was a young bull and a very big elephant with a broken tooth. About 50 yards from them, a pair of bulls strolled leisurely among the bushes. Though he knew that we could not afford to pass up so good a trophy, Owen was disturbed that the other animals remained so near.

Another half hour passed and the elephants slowed their pace. They were looking for a place to stop and rest. Our excitement mounted as we watched them pause, move restlessly for a moment, then stand motionless in the midday sun.

Owen scooped up a handful of sand and let it slip through his fingers. He nodded us in the direction of the lightly blowing wind. Carefully we shifted position until the wind was coming directly from the elephants to us. I looked at the elephant that was to be mine.

Only then did full realization of the moment react upon me. My heart,

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## AFRICAN SAFARI

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which had been pounding, seemed to pound harder. Side by side we moved in crouched position toward the elephants. Fifty yards from where they stood we stopped. My hands on the .458 were clammy. Owen motioned the others back and I knew that Bob was setting up his camera. I looked at Owen. He shook his head and motioned me on. I got down on my knees and began crawling forward. I was conscious of nothing but the elephants and the sound of my breathing. Owen touched my shoulder and I knew that we had still to move closer.

Owen had explained before the hunt that the brain of an elephant is relatively small and can best be reached in only one specific place. He said I would see a ridge midway between its ear and its eye. The center of this spot, an area of about three inches, was where I should aim. But should I miss, there would be an infuriated elephant and no place to run.

As we moved closer, my consciousness seemed aware only of this target. Thirty yards from the animal I stopped and twisted to a kneeling position. I fixed my sights on what I hoped was the elephant's brain. Deliberately, I took a deep breath and began to squeeze the trigger. The wind made the muzzle sway. I took another breath and started again. My hand tightened.

I did not hear the rifle go off. There seemed to be a long moment in which nothing happened. Then the elephant shuddered. In slow motion, noiselessly, it sank to the ground. I could see its knees bend under gracefully as it went down. The thud of its body striking the ground came after, and with it a more terrible noise. The young bull threw up its trunk and trumpeted in anger. Then it rushed toward us.

Owen fired at its feet and shouted, "Don't hit it. Try to turn it." I fired twice as Mamu screamed, "Run!" Behind me, Bob's tracker was shouting at him to run. Owen's gun was spurting dirt into the elephant's face and I think all of us were yelling something as I half ran, half aimed another shot in front of the elephant's feet. Fifteen yards from us, it turned.

We stood for a moment dust-covered and unspeaking. Then, as we walked to the fallen animal, I was suddenly aware of a sadness which other hunters have reported after

killing an elephant. Partly it was the sadness I have never escaped when the act of death is done and a once-wild creature lies still forever. Partly it was regret that the life of an animal so large and majestic can be snuffed out by a single tiny missile of lead. And part of the sadness, I think, was the letdown which comes after an experience of such tremendous intensity; the finality which follows, bland and empty, upon the mixed and powerful emotions that surged toward the climactic moment of action.

I don't really understand why I wanted so much to shoot an elephant. I know why I hunt when I stand in a forest with a pink dawn filtering



**HUNTER'S HARTEBEEST** was the product of high hopes and some hard stalking.

through the trees and the sound of sleepy birds awakening to a new day. I am conscious of the magic of nature when a chattering squirrel hops within feet of where I wait motionless, or I glimpse the silent, almost imperceptible movement of a young deer tiptoeing through the woods. But I am not sure why this, which is as much a love of the wild as it is a response to an age-old instinct, is sometimes not enough.

All the elements which I enjoy in deer hunting were here—the stalk, the increased sensitivity to surroundings, the intense concentration on a single objective, the challenge of meeting an animal in its own environment—but with an elephant there was something more. From the mo-

ment I saw my first elephant in Africa, I was frightened by its size and the unpredictable things about it which I didn't know. Crawling in on the elephant I was to shoot, the fear was almost paralyzing. My skin was cold, my heart raced as though I had run a dozen miles. Yet, almost as if I were hypnotized, something inside me kept luring me closer. With each move I felt a thrill almost like that which a child must experience when he lights his first match, and then, knowing the danger yet fascinated by it, moves his finger closer and closer to the flame. In one sense I, too, seemed to be playing with a flame, tempting whatever fates were there that day, afraid because I was doing so, but intrigued by the fear.

**T**HERE was a festiveness in camp that evening which extended to all of our native boys. The cook, who regularly performed culinary miracles on an open wood fire, made a special antelope roast and baked a celebratory cake in the five-gallon tin can he used for an oven. Each of the boys in turn shook my hand and mumbled in Swahili a message of congratulation.

As we sat before the open fire, recounting the day's adventure for the 20th time, Gongi, the boy whose job it was to skin our trophies, brought me a bracelet he had fashioned from the wiry tail hairs of my elephant. In Africa this is a symbol of good luck and the reward of a successful elephant hunt.

Besides Gongi, we had a boy to wait on table, one who supervised the camp, three to gather wood and water, another to attend the chemical toilet. Our dining tent had a kerosene refrigerator which was always filled with cold beer and a variety of delicacies. In our sleeping tent there were twin cots, chairs, on request a canvas bathtub which was filled with hot (though often muddy) water, and even twin mirrors hung at Bob's level and mine. In the morning we'd drop our soiled clothing on the floor and by nightfall everything was washed, ironed and neatly folded away in our tin trunk.

Wherever we set up camp, natives in the vicinity wandered by to look us over. Often they seemed frightened of us, and particularly of our long-lensed cameras, but curiosity brought them in spite of their fears. When we camped in the plains area southwest of Nairobi, young Masai

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girls sometimes came with gourds of milk which they exchanged with our boys for corn meal. To put them at ease one afternoon, I helped fill their gourds with meal and noticed that they were intrigued by my nail polish.

In sign language I offered to paint their nails. Hesitantly they extended dirty black hands and watched fascinated as their nails were turned red. Then I showed them how to blow on the polish to dry it, and for 10 minutes four shaven-headed, bare-breasted Masai debutantes blew on their fingernails. I don't know what reaction their transformation had in the Masai village, but no American teen-ager ever looked more pleased after a beauty treatment.

Among the Somalis of the Northern Frontier, too, I noticed this particular fascination for nail polish, makeup and jewelry, which was often strong enough to overcome their initial fear of us as strangers. In the region where we hunted elephants, we made it a practice each day to stop at a tiny Somali village where we tried to make friends with the natives. As curiosity overcame fear, they finally permitted me inside the *boma*, which is a wall of twigs and grass surrounding the huts of the village. Soon they were listening to the ticking of my watch and looking through our binoculars—and we were friends.

THE flat, brushy country of the Northern Frontier is an excellent area in which to hunt rhinos. Owen, who a year before had been knocked down by a rhinoceros, gave us a good idea of what to expect from this animal. The rhinoceros' stupidity, he warned, warrants the hunter's special attention. Where most animals, except when sick or wounded, run the other way when man comes along, the rhino more often than not will charge anything moving which suddenly confronts it. We saw proof of this later when we watched a rhino repeatedly charge an elephant until the elephant finally had enough and sent the rhino on its way much sadder for the encounter.

My own experience was somewhat similar to the elephant's. After following a fresh rhino track some 20 minutes through moderately heavy bush, we finally caught sight of a huge, dark head projecting from behind a tree. At this point the wind changed,

and did so several times; with each change we altered our stalk. On about the fourth attempt to move in close, I crossed a small clearing and was about to swing around a bush when over it I saw a number of birds wing into the air with loud chirping. From what I'd read, these looked like tick-birds and their taking off meant the rhino was alarmed.

Instinctively I jumped back into the clearing just as the rhino rumbled out from behind its tree, paused for an instant—head down, forefoot pawing the earth, and wheezing its peculiar snort—then visibly gathered itself together and rushed headlong toward where I stood.

On reflex I yelled loudly to Owen, "Shoot!" and fired my rifle. The rhino veered sharply from me and galloped in a cloud of dust out of sight. I looked down and realized that there was already a new cartridge in the chamber of my .458 and that the first shot must have been fired from the hip. At least it had turned the animal. We paced off the turning point: it was 12 feet from where I'd been standing.

As I watched the dust resettling on the ground, I reflected on the peculiar clarity of thought which must have passed through my mind in split seconds. For in those seconds I had consciously recognized the signal of the birds and the danger of being unable to shoot accurately through bush, had questioned my own reaction under panic conditions and, not trusting it, shouted to Owen to shoot and had then automatically fired my rifle and prepared it for a second shot. Well, at least I knew now that I wouldn't freeze under charge, but probably the only way anyone ever finds out is by having it happen.

The departing rhino, which I suspected hadn't even been hit, left a very easy track to follow. About 40 yards away we found a large quantity of bright red blood which looked suspiciously like lung blood. About 30 yards from this we found the rhino, very dead.

BESIDES elephants and rhinos, the Northern Frontier offers excellent bird shooting. Bob and I had always thought of Africa in terms of big game and were really surprised to find bird shooting which surpassed any place we'd ever previously hunted. Guinea fowl were the most fun to shoot because they invariably got the best of us.

These big, purple-colored birds travel in flocks and are reluctant to fly, but they can travel along the ground like greyhounds. Our shotguns were always handy in the Willys jeep we used to get from camp to the various hunting areas. Whenever a flock of guineas was sighted, Bob would leap out one side of the moving jeep and I out the other, and we'd take off cross-country after the birds. The challenge was in scaring them into the air so that we could shoot before they outdistanced us running. On more than one occasion it was one of us who went flying face first in the mad scramble after a flock of guineas.

Sand grouse and quail were less frustrating to hunt and equally good to eat, but the most exciting bird hunting was for waterfowl. Nothing is more thrilling for New Yorkers who can hunt seasons and never see a goose than to flush several different kinds of geese, a few dozen ducks and maybe a grouse or two all in one hour. Fowl was also a nice variation in our diet, which otherwise consisted chiefly of antelope meat.

Many evenings we wandered on foot 15 or 20 minutes from camp to small potholes or swampy ponds where we would sneak up Indian-style on ducks and geese. Since waterfowl is not popularly hunted in Kenya, the birds are reasonably unwary and have a tendency to sit tight much longer than ducks and geese in the U.S. Often we crept to within feet of a grass frond hiding a goose before the bird suddenly flushed practically into our faces. These were the shots we usually missed.

Our antelope hunting came to be called "Grimm hunting" by the trackers, who never quite understood why we spent so much time trailing antelopes the hard way. An interesting thing about African animals, Owen pointed out, is that they show relatively little fear of automobiles even though they see very few of them. He thinks it is because the jeep covers up human scent and arouses their curiosity without alarming them. Because of this, it is often much easier to get close to a herd of animals in a jeep than on foot.

Before starting our safari, Bob and I both agreed that hunting in Africa, to be successful for us, had to meet the same standards which we set for ourselves when hunting at home. One of these was our insistence that Owen never fire at any game we were hunting unless he was positive that our



lives might be endangered if he did not. We both wanted to be absolutely certain that any trophy we took was earned 100% by one of us and not helped along by our hunter. Another was the stalk, which both of us feel is the most important—and also the most exciting—part of any hunt. For this reason we probably did a lot more walking than is really necessary on safari. But Grimm hunting gave us many pleasant moments.

Evenings when we weren't bird shooting, we'd go out antelope stalking, much to the bewilderment of our trackers, who preferred riding to

the second failure, our trackers were convinced that we didn't know what we were doing. We weren't positive that we did either, but we were sure that we hadn't yet encountered any African animal we felt was more wary or more difficult to hunt than our native whitetail deer. Until we did, we planned to use deer-stalking techniques on antelopes.

Fortunately for us they worked, and several afternoons later Bob and I managed to get on opposite sides of a small herd and by creeping carefully up on it took the best Hunter's hartebeest we saw on the trip. This

for the black hairs which often grow in their manes. Because the Masai lion is considered by the Kenya government superior to most lions found elsewhere in the colony, a special license is required to shoot one.

Three zebra baits, a favorite lion delicacy, were hung in various trees before we finally attracted one of the big ones. It was already daylight when we checked the second of these baits with glasses from about a mile away and saw the tawny form beneath it. The wind, which plagued all of our hunts, opened the worst possible approach to us. Because of this we left the trackers behind, and Owen, Bob and I began crawling through the foot-high grass. When we were about 70 yards from the lion, and hoping that we might still get another 20 or 30 yards closer, the animal sensed danger and left the bait. It turned and padded inquisitively in our direction, sniffing the air. Then it stopped and snarled. We stayed motionless where we were. Owen whispered to me, "It suspects something is wrong. Better try for a shot from here."

As carefully as possible, I pulled myself to a kneeling position. Directly between me and the lion was a small bush which would surely deflect my shot. The lion was already quartering to take off in the other direction. It kept up a low, annoyed growl. I leaned on one knee as far to the right as possible so that I was aiming around the side of the bush, lined up on the lion's shoulder and fired. In such a position the .458 sent me sprawling backward. But not before I saw the animal somersault into the air, come down and, howling, take off.

We followed, not sure what to expect. The lion had run about 50 yards before falling. It was shot cleanly through the shoulder—and was about twice the size I thought lions should be. Owen estimated it would go over 500 pounds, and in its heavy mane were those long black hairs for which the Masai is prized.

LEOPARDS, like lions, are often attracted by baiting, but many safaris, Owen told us, never see a leopard even when using this method. Or when they do, he said, they fail to bag it. Unlike the lion, when a leopard senses danger it rarely waits to investigate but heads instantly for heavy cover. This elusiveness makes it a highly coveted African trophy.

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**THE WARMING GLOW** of a campfire was welcome luxury on cool evenings in plains area as Bob (left), Owen and I rehash day's adventures over equally warming Martinis.

walking and assumed that everyone else should. In spite of their lack of enthusiasm, Bob took a near-record impala this way and a fine oryx. A waterbuck, which we tracked until dark for three consecutive afternoons and more miles than I'd like to remember, is one of my favorite African trophies chiefly because it proved so elusive.

The real test for the trackers came, though, when we said we'd like to shoot a Hunter's hartebeest, a rare African antelope because its range is limited to a tiny area near the Tana River in the Northern Frontier. Within a week we had the unusual luck to come upon two good bucks—and on foot lost both of them before we ever stalked within shooting range. By

didn't succeed in completely converting our trackers, but it helped.

Besides the several antelopes we shot for camp meat, and those with good heads which we shot for trophies, several others were necessary for lion and leopard hunting. Because cats are nocturnal, Owen reminded us, it is uncommon to come upon them during the daylight hours. This poses a problem for the hunter which is generally best solved by baiting. A lion enjoying a free meal is sometimes careless enough to dine late into the morning sunlight.

We hoped this would hold true when we hunted in the great, grassy plains of the Masai country south of Narok (see map) where, Owen said, lions attain great size and are prized

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Its custom is to drag its kill into a tree and hang it high in a branch where it will rot safe from other predators. Apparently, the more decayed the meat the more the leopard enjoys it. Once it begins feeding on a kill, a leopard may return several nights running to finish its meal. Three days passed before one began feeding on an impala we hung in a tree some 50 feet from the dense stream growth which leopards seem to frequent.

About 150 feet on the other side of the tree we built a rough blind of bushes to give us cover while we waited for the leopard to return. From inside, Owen, Bob, Methui and I watched the tree through peepholes. Owen, who had hunted several dozen leopards in his nine years as a professional guide, told us that in all that time he had never once seen a leopard actually climb a tree or cross a clearing from heavy bush to a tree. On every occasion, he said, the bait was alone one instant and in the next a long spotted cat stretched over it. Wounded or alarmed, they disappear with equal speed; a good reason, he reminded us, for making the first shot count.

Just as evening was darkening the bushes around us, the leopard returned. Our eyes were tired from staring at the tree, mosquitoes had plagued us unmercifully and we were tense from waiting motionless so many hours. Suddenly on the branch a leopard appeared as if by magic. One second the branch was bare, the next it was not. For a moment we did nothing, each uncertain that this was not imagination. I heard Bob suck in his breath. Then he fired.

Something seemed to drop off the branch, but so fast that I wasn't sure I had actually seen anything. We cautiously moved out of the blind. There was nothing under the tree, not even a drop of blood to indicate that the cat had been hit. There was no trail, no sign. Night was close and it was growing more difficult to make out the dense wall of stream growth nearby. Safeties off, we tiptoed shoulder to shoulder toward the thick bush. The only sound was our labored breathing.

Bob is a good shot and he was confident that he'd held steady on the target. The leopard *must* be wounded. And if so, Owen said, we were

no match for it in the gathering darkness. Juma, our mess boy, had followed one under similar circumstances some years before. The animal waited for him to pass, then sprang and disfigured him for life. Reluctantly we listened to his arguments when, from just inside the heavy bushes we heard a single, ugly snarl. The leopard was in there all right, and badly wounded, Owen guessed, or it would have been miles away by now. The only choice we had was to wait for dawn.

Gloom hung over the camp that night. Safari boys are generally cheerful, and evenings they joke among themselves and sing around their campfire. That night, sharing our disappointment, they were silent. Over a Martini, we sulked. For an hour we debated how we might go after the leopard without endangering ourselves. By morning, we were certain, the scavengers of the jungle—the jackals, hyenas, wild dogs—would have found the dead trophy and carried it away. By now, we were sure it was dead. Owen was not and refused to hear our various

plots for going after it that night.

By the Professional Hunters' Association rules, clients are not supposed to follow wounded big game into heavy cover. At our insistence and because of our hunting experience, Owen agreed to relax this rule, but only if we would wait until morning. Finally we decided there was *one* thing we could do. At least we could go back and take down the bait. By dragging it away from where we thought the leopard was, scavengers might be lured in the opposite direction.

In the jeep we drove back to the baited tree. About 30 yards from it our headlights picked up the hanging impala. It was swaying on the branch. Above it stretched a long feline form. Golden in the beam of light, a tawny yellow lioness was clawing at the meat. We tooted the horn. She continued on her meal undisturbed. Bob jumped out of the jeep and shouted. Still she ate. Finally he took a few steps toward the tree. With a bored look the lioness glanced down at him, made one more pass at the meat, then gracefully



AT END OF SKIRMISH with quick-tempered rhino I was happy but a little shaken. Here Owen McCallum thoughtfully estimates the weight of the trophy's valuable horn.



leaped from the tree and disappeared into the darkness.

Owen cut down the bait. There was no need to drag it away now. As soon as we left, he said, the lady would return for it. As we swung the jeep around toward camp, our lights picked up her amber eyes. She hadn't gone far away.

Before sunlight we returned. All the boys came with us, carrying *pan-gas* to cut away the bush. We alternated—a native with *panga*, one of us with rifle. In five minutes of chopping the search was ended. A few feet inside the wall of bush the leopard lay undisturbed where it had died the night before—in death as in life, a creature of magnificence.

THERE was still one animal which had eluded us. Of all African trophies, the Cape buffalo was the one we wanted most. The dozens of tales we'd read about the buffalo intrigued us, but the respect which Owen and all of the natives vocally expressed for the animal's cunning and intelligence excited us even more.

Around the campfire we listened to Owen's tales of the buffalo's endurance, tremendous physical strength, its viciousness when wounded. All big animals are dangerous when injured, he told us, but none is as dangerous as the buffalo. With its fine brain and great strength, a wounded buffalo sooner or later becomes the hunter instead of the hunted, meticulously and skillfully doubling back to stalk its human enemy.

The white hunters have a theory about this. They believe that any big animal which is not killed by the third shot may take 20 or more to die. An overproduction of adrenalin follows the initial wound, they claim, which makes the animal impervious to further pain or shock, giving it in its last moments of life a superanimal strength.

Our hunting time was running out. With only three days left and weeks of fruitless searching behind us, we feared we might never find buffaloes. Then, through the bush toward our camp came a jeep. In it was a government veterinarian headed down-country to inoculate a herd of Maasai cattle. There were hundreds of buffaloes where he was going, he said. Without further word, we packed our bedrolls, food, rifles, took along Mamu and Methui, and headed the Willys after him.

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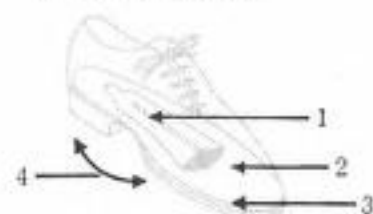
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SEEKING GAME IN TYPICAL MASAI COUNTRY, WE ENCOUNTERED A NATIVE LEADING HIS CATTLE TO PASTURE ON THE PLAINS

## AFRICAN SAFARI

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The trip was about 50 miles, an all-day journey in that roadless, rough terrain. By late afternoon we'd lost the veterinarian's trail and continued on alone. As soon as we located buffalo sign, we planned to pitch our bedrolls and begin hunting the next morning. Plans changed when up ahead we saw the welcome green tents of another safari. A great hulk of a Californian and his 18-year-old son invited us to spend the night, as anxious for American company as we had become in a month away from civilization. They had located many buffaloes and already taken two.

At 3 the next morning, young Richard Colyear Jr. and his white hunter, John Cook, took us part way to the area in which they'd previously seen buffaloes. They had a lion bait to check but promised to join up with us later in the morning. Dawn was just touching the great grass plains when about a mile and a half away we saw a hill dotted with black spots. There must have been 150 buffaloes in the herd, and from where we were they looked like cattle grazing in a meadow. We took off on foot, passed several stands of thick bush, crossed a stream and worked our way through heavy stream growth to the foot of the buffalo hill. For a full half mile to

the top of the hill there was nothing but low, uninterrupted grass. On top of the hill one small bush furnished the only cover we could hope to find.

On our stomachs we began to crawl single file up the hill. Occasionally we peeked over the grass. The herd stood motionless and alert, facing in our direction. This was the hardest stalk I've ever made. The morning was cold and the grass was soaking wet. With one arm I pulled myself inch by inch up the grade; with the other I guarded the muzzle of my rifle from twigs and mud. Each time I looked over the grass I wondered what would happen if the herd began moving toward us. I didn't think we'd have a chance. Through the entire stalk the buffaloes remained, looking steadily in our direction.

At the top of the hill we crawled under the bush and Owen motioned me ahead of him. He pointed at a big bull in front. The herd was 30 yards from us. As if in slow motion, I pulled myself around to a kneeling position and tried to raise my rifle. I was completely winded from the long crawl, and more than a little frightened. I couldn't hold the rifle steady. Too late. The buffaloes swung around and trotted off in the opposite direction. They covered about 150 yards and stopped.

Owen whispered to stay still. Buffaloes have great curiosity, he said,

and sometimes come back to whatever alarmed them. We waited and slowly they began moving back toward us. About 130 yards away they stopped. The big bull was still in front and quartered slightly toward us.

Owen said, "Take him." I whispered, "It's too far. I'll never be able to drop him at this distance." He said, "Sure you can. It's now or never. We won't get another chance at buffalo. Just hold steady and take your time."

I lined up on its shoulder and fought the conviction that I shouldn't be taking this shot. At such long range I knew there was a good chance I might only wound it. But I *wanted* a buffalo. Greed overcame common sense, and I took the only shot in my hunting experience I am ashamed of having taken.

The bull dropped clean where it stood. The rest of the herd bounced off toward heavy bush. Almost casually, I stood up and reloaded the .458. Then, completely unexpectedly, the bull got up on its feet, shook itself in a brief instant, and galloped toward the stream growth at the bottom of the hill.

On reflex, Owen and I ran after it. It had to cover the distance we'd crawled but it was running apparently unhurt. We each fired two badly aimed shots before it disappeared into the bush.



Just inside the stream growth we found blood. The buffalo was badly wounded, Owen was sure, because it was bleeding very heavily. We had a cigaret to give the animal time to stop, and possibly stiffen, before going after it. Nobody said anything but we couldn't take our eyes off the thick brush ahead of us. It was a tangle of thorny vines, close-knit bushes and hundreds of wiry trees not big enough to climb or get behind but thick enough to cause a lot of trouble.

While we waited, Richard and John Cook pulled up in their jeep. They'd heard the shooting and figured correctly what had happened. They had an extra rifle and three trackers with them. That made the posse 10 people and six rifles. In single file, wriggling between brambles and bushes, we started into the blackness.

For an hour and 40 minutes we kept up the slow, steady pace. The blood trail grew more difficult to follow. Three times we heard the buffalo move ahead but never caught sight of it. As time passed, tension grew. The natives began moving to the back of us, worrying now that we were the hunted. The trail was leading into a narrowing circle, pulling us after it into the thickest growth. I could think of only one thing: with a selfish shot I had endangered the lives of 10 people.

Now the trail disappeared completely. We stopped and Methui, without explanation, took my rifle. Mamu took Bob's and went to the other end of the line. Moving in opposite directions, the trackers began working away from us into the bush. Suddenly Mamu shouted and fired. Straight for us, from not more than 20 feet away, the buffalo roared out of the thicket and into our midst. A native screamed as he was knocked down by the charge.

From all sides of the animal, rifles burst into fire. I saw it lower its horns and rush at Bob. He flung himself head first under a bush as the buffalo whirled around and thundered in my direction. I jumped backward as it passed three feet from me, continued past Richard and straight for Owen. Both barrels exploded at its chest as Owen stood spread-legged facing the charge. With a lunge, the buffalo lowered its massively horned head and hit him with all the power of its 2,000 pounds. Owen screamed, a cry which came from deep inside

*continued*



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## AFRICAN SAFARI

*continued*

him, as his body was lifted up on the great horn.

The buffalo lowered and raised its head, snorting in its efforts to free itself from the thickets in which its charge had unexpectedly ensnared it. White with terror and balanced astride a horn, Owen clawed at the brambles which had momentarily saved his life. Angrily pawing the earth, the buffalo fought to swing its head in the murderous arc which would thrust its horn into Owen's body. With a final lunge, Owen grabbed for the brambles above him and pulled himself off the horn to safety. At its shoulder Richard sent

shot after shot from his .375 into the buffalo.

Then, as suddenly as it had become entangled, it was free and whirling, started at Richard. He pulled the trigger again. There was only a hollow snap. Bracing the rifle against his hip, he faced the buffalo with one desperate chance that he might ram the muzzle into its eye and on to its brain. From his right, John fired. The buffalo fell at Richard's feet.

We counted 13 bullets in vital areas. Six had penetrated the buffalo's heart. My first had demolished one lung. Owen was badly bruised but not seriously injured. Fortunately, no one else was hurt. The buffalo ended our safari. To hunt any other animal would have been anticlimactic,

and there would not be another buffalo that day.

I rode alone with my thoughts on the long trip back to camp, and for the first time in a month of hunting I accepted a fact which I had been unwilling to admit. Man, with his rifle and his fine mind, may not always claim the victory over the animal he hunts. With an elephant or a buffalo, or even with the cats, the contest is more evenly matched than we like to believe. Because this is so, fear is an emotion which carries with it no shame. And triumph belongs not to the victory over an animal but to the victory over one's self. In Africa I found a land rich with animals and adventure, but danger was there, too.

END

## AN AFRICAN LEDGER OF SAFARI FACTS AND FIGURES

MODERN air travel and excellent government organization have put a safari in East Africa within reach of more Americans than ever before. Our safari was outfitted by White Hunters (Africa) Ltd., one of several excellent organizations operating out of Nairobi, Kenya, the safari capital of the world. The reputation of White Hunters was well known to us and we had heard much about Owen McCallum to make us want him for our guide. Most outfitters are booked a year in advance, so it is advisable, particularly if a special hunter is wanted, to plan an African safari early.

Once the reservation is made, an outfitter such as White Hunters Ltd. arranges all details from time of arrival in Nairobi to ultimate departure.

We traveled Scandinavian Airlines, which flies directly to Nairobi from New York or from California. Round-trip first-class fare from New York is \$1,521 per person; \$1,125 tourist. Service is excellent in both classes, but if the budget permits the extra money, first class is less tiring for this two-day-and-two-night flight.

White Hunters Ltd. took over upon our arrival at the Nairobi airport. They saw us through customs, were ready with the necessary permits for our firearms and ammunition and secured our hunting licenses. The \$3,500 which we paid for a 30-day safari for two hunters included McCallum's guiding services, tents, food, a full staff of natives, the Willys jeep and a five-ton truck (plus the first 1,200 miles on each), all hunting area permits and a dozen personal services which can't be given a price. This fee did not include beverages (liquor, coke, beer: \$160), extra mileage (\$500), tips (\$100), or our hunting licenses, which broke down as follows: two general licenses (\$140 each), two ele-

phant licenses (\$210 each), two rhino licenses (\$112 each), and one leopard and one Masai lion license (\$70 each). We dined and danced away a couple of hundred dollars more in Nairobi's plush Mombasa and Equator clubs.

With us we brought five firearms and 280 rounds of ammunition. In addition to my Winchester .458 we had a Remington Model 721 in .300 H&H for heavy plains game, and a Winchester Model 70 in .308 for smaller antelopes. From White Hunters Ltd. Bob rented a double-barreled British .465 for his big-game hunting. By the end of the trip he was sold on my .458, however, because of its lighter carrying weight and beautiful performance. For it, I had 40 rounds of 510-grain soft-nose and 40 rounds of 500-grain full-patch ammo. We also had 100 rounds of 180-grain Silvertips for the .308 and 100 rounds of 180-grain Core-Lokt soft-points for the .300 H&H. We bought ammunition for our two 12-gauge A. H. Fox doubles in Nairobi, where German shells were available.

Although we were equipped with a Bausch & Lomb 6X scope for the .300 and a BALvar 8 for the .308, we found telescopic sights useful in our kind of hunting chiefly for their light-gathering qualities in early morning and late afternoon. One good variable such as the BALvar 8, which adjusts instantly from 2½- to 8-power, would have done the job. Good binoculars, of course, are invaluable. Although Owen had a pair of his own, he relied upon our sharper Bausch & Lomb 7x35s almost continually for spotting game and studying terrain.

On the photographic side, we had a 16-mm three-lens-turret motion picture camera and 6,000 feet of Kodachrome; two 35-mm still cameras and four lenses with 120 rolls of color and black-and-

white film, and three light meters. A stock of plastic bags and a pound of Silica Gel protected film and cameras from dampness and excessive dust.

Insects were not generally a problem but on several evenings they caused us trouble. A new U.S. repellent which we brought with us, Meta Delphene, was very effective and less messy than most products.

Clothing was the smallest portion of our overweight, which cost \$192 one way—actually no more than shipping our equipment in advance would have cost. Since laundry on safari is done every day, a few changes of underwear, two or three shirts, socks, a pair of flannel pajamas and two pairs of khaki trousers is an ample basic wardrobe. Nights and mornings in Kenya's high country are quite cold and made more uncomfortable by dampness, so a medium-weight sweater and a warm jacket are essential. I even found red flannels welcome on a number of days. Trousers can be custom-made in Nairobi in 24 hours for \$6 a pair, and are as good if not better than any brought from home. Crepe-soled suede hunting shoes can also be made in a day and cost \$8 to \$10. We generally wore these in the morning and switched to sneakers as soon as the grass dried at midday.

At the end of our safari we had 14 trophies which we wanted to bring home. These were dipped and prepared for shipping by Rowland Ward in Nairobi and cost just over \$300 to bring to the U.S., where George Lesser of Johnstown, N.Y. is handling the taxidermy. That bill is still to come, but all in all, we figure our safari cost roughly \$10,000. That's a large sum to spend in six weeks but both Bob and I are convinced that the adventure and beauty which Africa has to offer was more than worth it.



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