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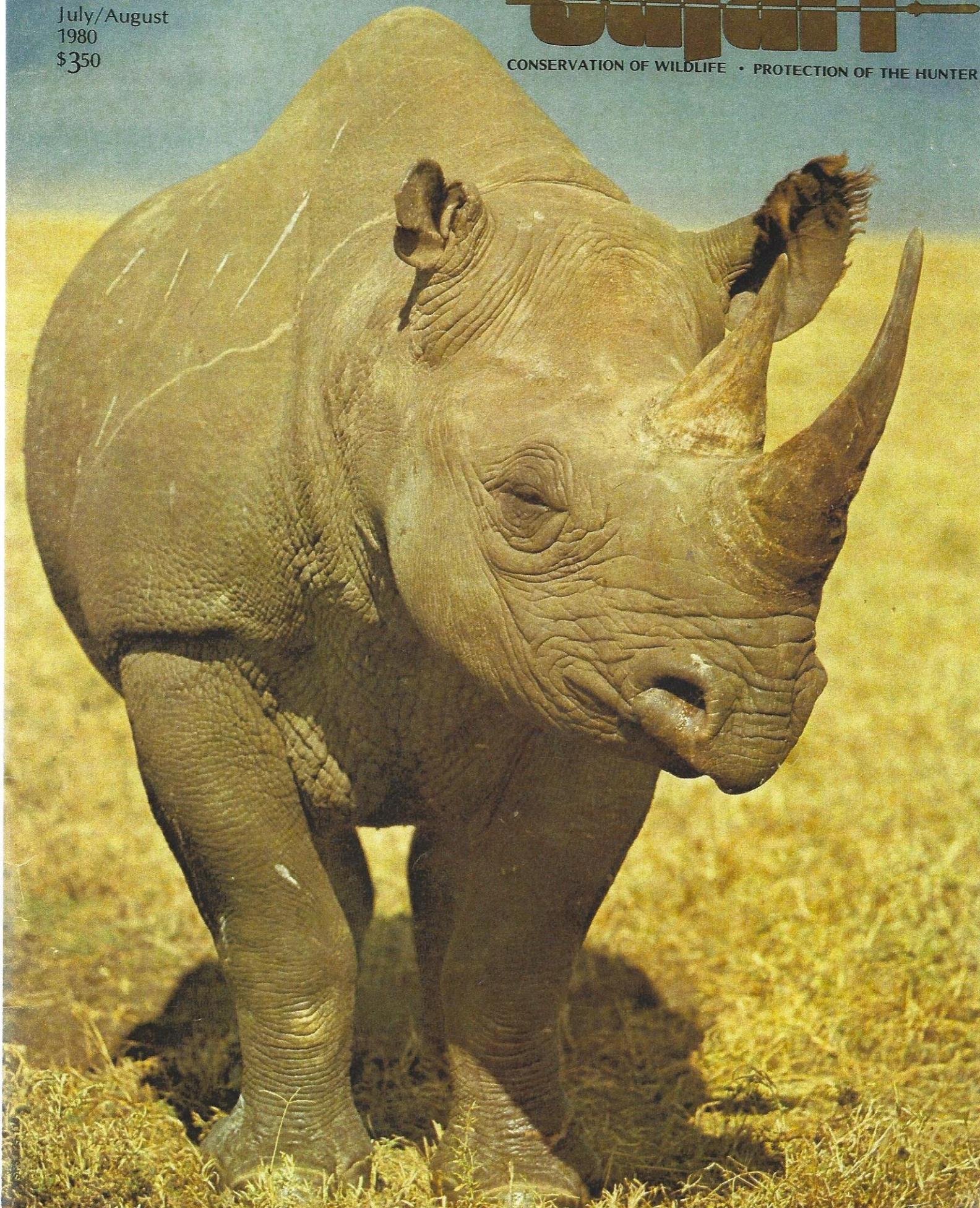
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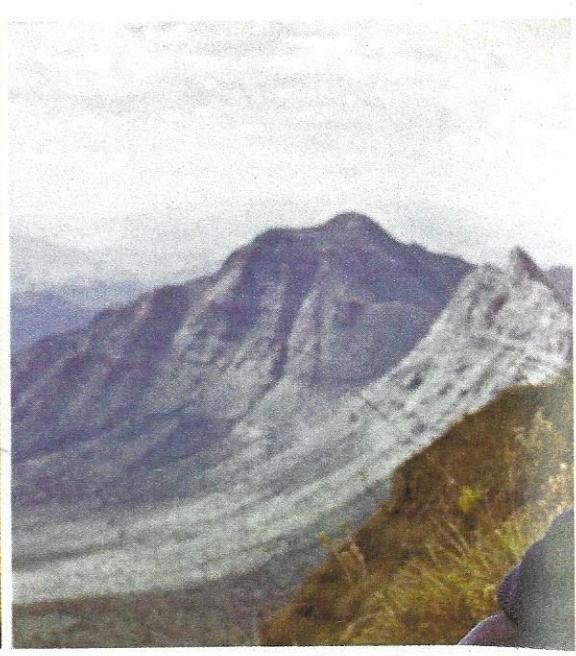
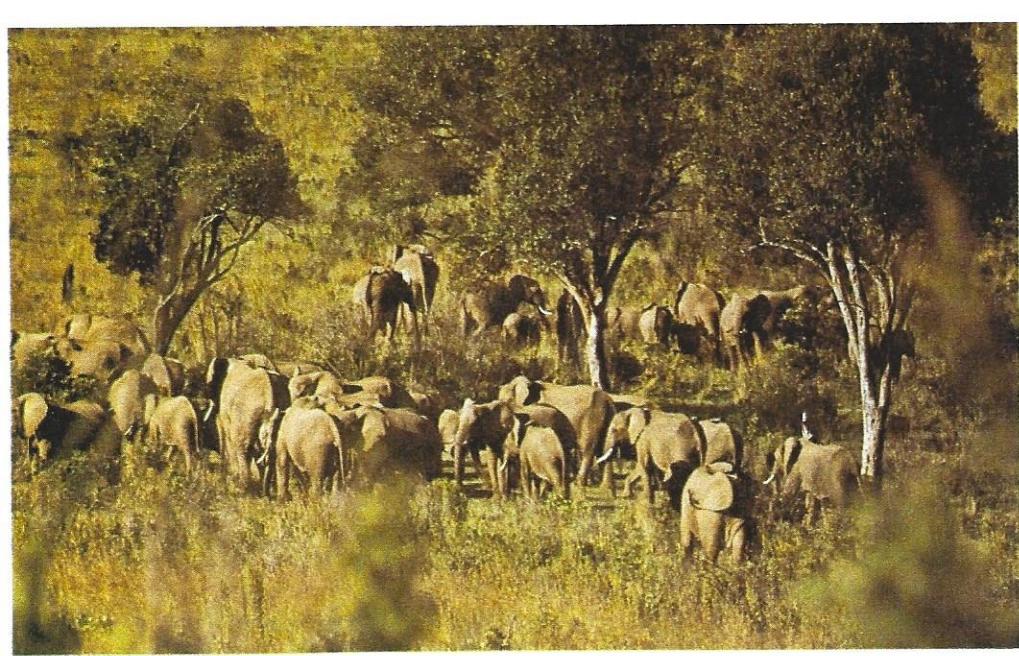
THE JOURNAL OF

BIG GAME HUNTING

safari

CONSERVATION OF WILDLIFE • PROTECTION OF THE HUNTER





AN OLD-FASHIONED BIG FIVE SAFARI

*The Story
of a Professional Hunter's Last Safari Tour
in the Grand Tradition of Kenya with
Explorations of the Hinterland*

by Nelson Hendlar

Abercrombie and Fitch—the name conjures up Teddy Roosevelt, Ernest Hemingway, and the fabulous seventh floor with Boss, Purdey, Holland and Holland, Mannlicher-Schoenauer, Rigby, Jeffrey, Westley-Richards, and lesser weapons on display. On one of my pilgrimages during my college years at Princeton I had the opportunity to meet the late Buzz Chapin, director of Adventures Unlimited. The firm's name proved not to be misleading, for once I told him of my desires to collect the "Big Five," he proceeded to outline a fantastic hunt.

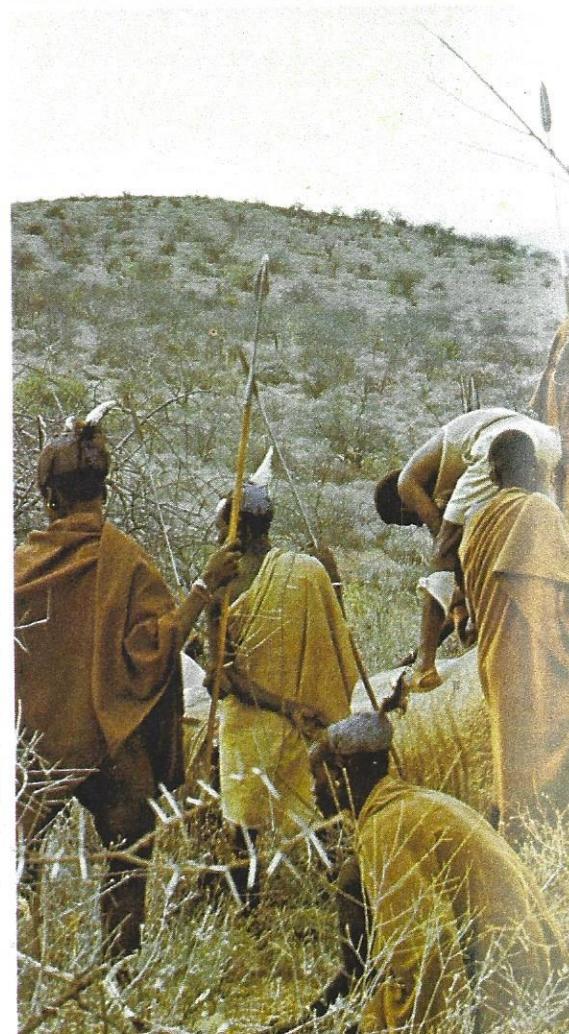
Booking the proper hunting blocks in the right seasons in Kenya required three years' planning. To hunt rhino, one needed to book at least a 35-day safari; to have a good chance at the big five we settled on 45 days at the recommendation of White Hunters Ltd. Buzz engaged Bill Jenvey for the hunt, to take place in 1969. I had heard that Bill was a feisty Australian bantam rooster who had hunted kangaroo for a living before coming to Kenya. How-

ever, he also came highly recommended, and I was certain that I could tolerate his personality for 45 days.

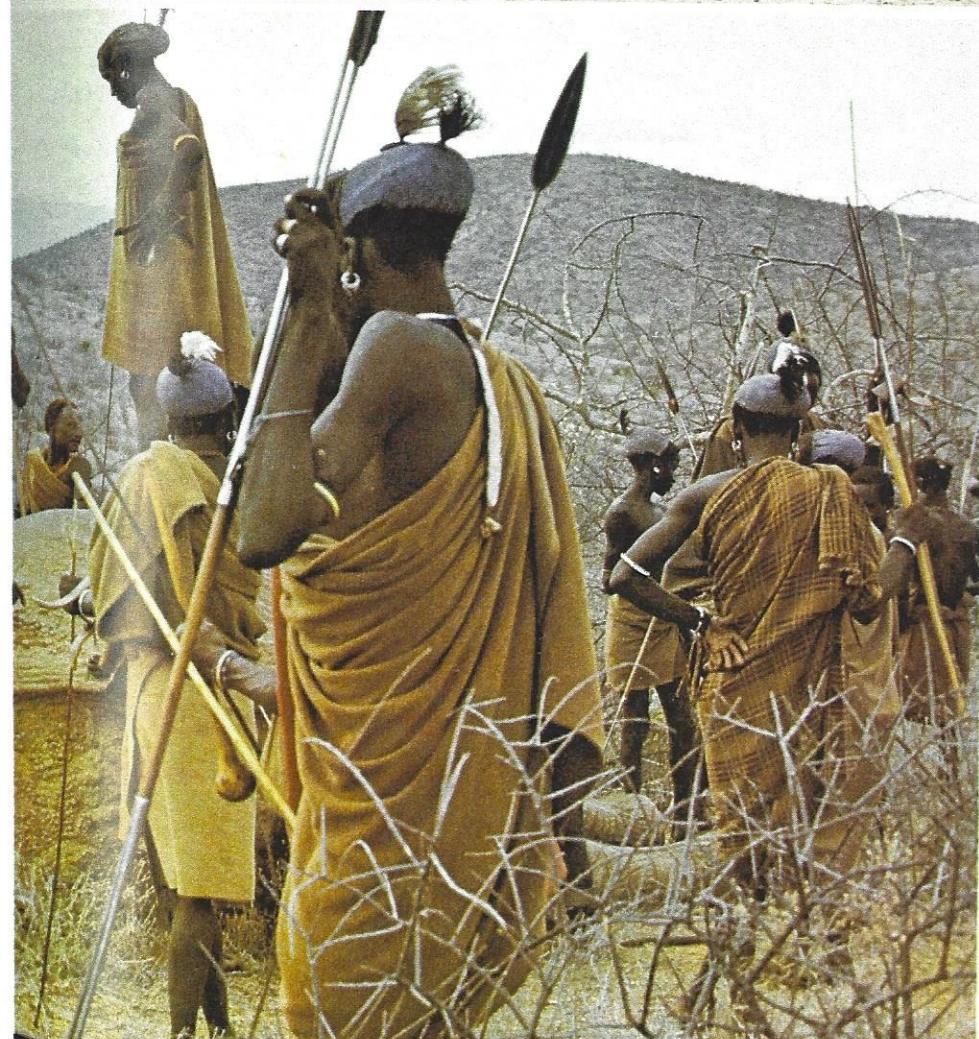
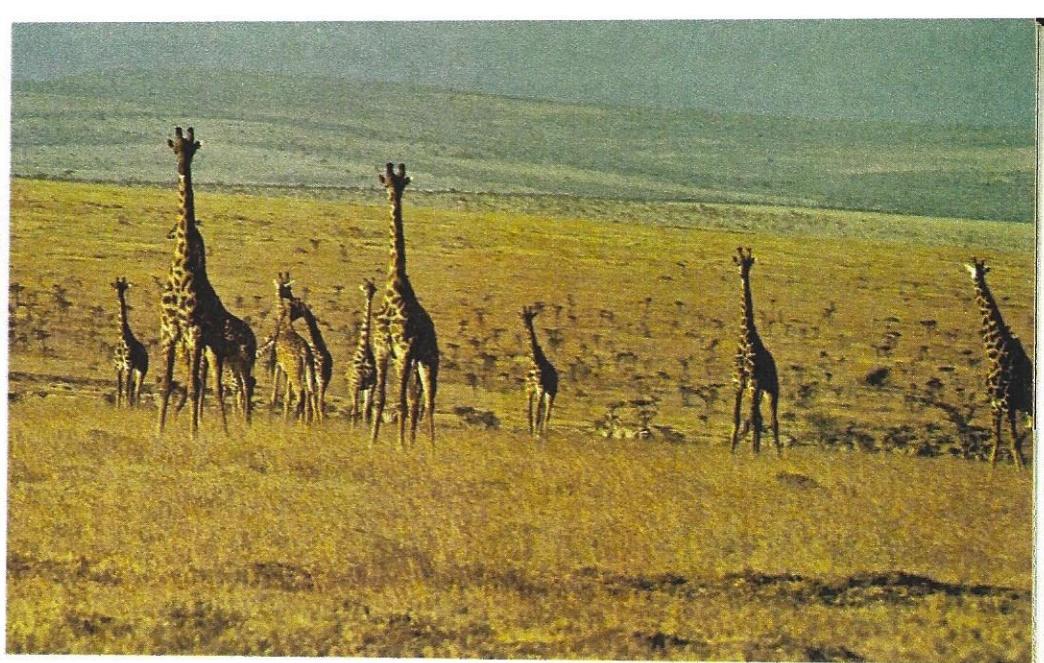
The flight to Nairobi was charged with excitement for me. Upon arrival at the airport I had my first glimpse of Bill Jenvey—spindley-legged in his Bermuda shorts, and scrawny-armed in a short-sleeved khaki shirt.

He cleared my guns through customs, using a variety of forms joined together with a straight pin. We both agreed that I should sight-in after the long journey, while he assembled the last provisions.

I was introduced to the gun-bearers and trackers. The first was Berisa, a shifty-eyed man who avoided my gaze and seemed to have an excuse for every oversight. He was the number one tracker. I instantly liked K'Tembo, number two tracker, a Wallengulu tribesman with an infectious smile, and M'Fupi ("Shorty" in Swahili), number three tracker, a 5-foot short bundle of muscles. M'Theka, the cook, was a rotund, bald and capable chef, a



An entire Samburu village appeared in single file on the horizon, and in a matter of hours there was nothing left of the elephant. One tusk weighed in at 113 pounds. Above: A cheetah in a tree was one of our unusual sightings on this safari.



Center above: Professional hunter Bill Jenvey gazes out over the Rift Valley escarpment for the last time.

In the northern frontier district our safari became a camel caravan.

Kikuyu, and former member of the Mau-Mau. B'wanga was my "tent boy," M'sangi the driver, and Peter Kengeli (bell) the camp boss and maitre d'—looking rather effete in his blue robe and white skull cap. M'wonga helped prepare the skins. And the real artist of preparation and skinning was Fundi—"the master"—who sharpened his skinning knife on rocks until the blades were worn at the belly.

Bill announced that mine was the last safari he would take out before returning to Australia. Kenya was no longer the place for him, with nationalism on the rise, the last vestiges of the British Empire crumbling. He had decided it was time to move on. Before we left Nairobi, Bill took me to meet Colonel Caulfield, the head of White Hunters (Africa) Ltd., who was a large, gregarious man with a booming voice. He discussed the various trophies I was to collect, the various hunting blocks to which I was assigned (58 A, 51 A, 33, Maralal, and 53 B) and helped me procure extra ammunition for the .475 #2 Jeffrey double rifle I had purchased on one of my visits to Abercrombie and Fitch. He complimented me, as did Bill, on the Parkerized barrels to eliminate glare, and the absence of a scope.

"Bloody things always break, fog up, or lose their zero—" said Colonel Caulfield, and assured me that the presence of five fold-up leaf sights up to a 500-yard range was a rare bit of British over-statement, since most dangerous game would be taken at ranges of 75 yards or less. He also acquired some specially loaded .300 Weatherby car-

tridges, that used 180 grain Nosler partition bullets. He approved of the Griffin and Howe detachable side-lever scope mount and the iron sights on my Weatherby.

"Too many blokes don't have back-up sights if their telescope fails. It ruins the hunt for them, you know!" He confided that he felt scopes were not sporting, and resulted in too much lost and wounded game, since they gave inexperienced hunters false confidence. I challenged the statement, recounting my various trophies from competition rifle shooting, and assured him that errors of that sort wouldn't occur with me. The Colonel smiled wryly.

Bill Jenvey gave me a disgusted look and exploded. "I've had too many sports [a derogatory term—client being the polite and proper label] tell me the same thing, and I've been clawed by a leopard and thumped by a buffalo wounded by 'good shots' like yourself." Apparently, modesty and proof were the bywords in African hunting circles, and I was off on a bad footing already. We had a silent ride back to the hotel.

The first camp was in the Masai-Mara Game Preserve (block 58 A). After a quick lunch, I took my first African game—a Thompson's gazelle, which required two shots at a range of 150 yards, since I first gut shot the poor

beast. After enduring some disparaging remarks about what a "fine shot" I was since the "average" hunter usually took three shots on his first game, I offered some excuse about the loss of zero on my scope. Indeed, it was loose in its mount, and Bill begrudgingly lent me a screwdriver to tighten the mount.

By the evening of the fourth day, as Bill enjoyed his second beer, and I my gin and tonic, a truce had been established. "You're not a bad shot," he conceded, "but most of my clients are bloody awful boors. They're all fiftyish, want you to nearly bring the game into camp for them, and even shoot it for them. By the end of the hunt I can't stand them." Obviously, I had partially redeemed myself with one-shot kills on zebra, gnu, impala, and baboon. He then told me we should get a leopard soon, since the zebra and gnu baits we had placed were being worked by at least one cat. I asked if we could hang the baboon, since I had read that leopards are fond of the young of this species. He made some unintelligible comment about having hunted Kenya for 25 years, and never having used baboon yet, but said he'd do it for me because I was paying for the safari. After that gruff concession, I knew the rest of the trip would be pleasant.

For two days, we checked the bait, with signs of leopard being found at the zebra and, wonder of wonders, the baboon. Bill looked most chagrined, but dutifully built a blind about 80 yards from the hanging baboon. He left Berisa with me, Berisa carrying a 12-gauge double barrel loaded with buckshot.

Berisa was not conversant in English; that fact and my limited vocabulary of Swahili reduced us to a mixture of monosyllabic pronouncements and charades. After hours in the blind, Berisa whispered, "Chui!" Barely discernable through the bush was the silent, graceful form of a leopard. However, Berisa was reluctant to tell me to shoot. "Manamuki?" I asked, and he shrugged. He glassed the leopard as it rose on its hind legs, and even at 80 yards, I could hear the crunching of incredibly strong jaws driving dagger-like teeth into the baboon's skull.

"H'pana manamuki, B'wana. Piga pesi-pesi!"

"Piga?" I asked.

"Piga-piga!!" he hissed. Visions of me languishing in some Kenyan jail for shooting female leopard flashed through my head, but I had to trust Berisa's judgment. He muttered something totally incomprehensible to me,

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which I assumed was a curse in his native dialect, and raised the shotgun. I centered the cross-hairs on the leopard's neck, squeezed off a round and the leopard disappeared from view.

I uttered a few curses of my own, until Berisa shouted, "Mzuri sana B'wana!" and I noticed the leopard had merely dropped in its tracks, its neck broken by my shot. Berisa was particularly pleased, since he didn't have to fend off a charging leopard, and when Bill arrived several minutes later, he lost a bit of his British reserve.

I was somewhat pleased with my shot, but disappointed in the perfunctory slaughter of such a beautiful beast. The excitement and thrill of acquiring my first of the big five was anti-climactic. However, the next few minutes were not. I decided to walk back to camp, since there was still some light left, and we were only a mile or so away. K'Tembo accompanied me. As we walked, I noticed a large hole in the ground, about 20 yards in front of me. K'Tembo shouted a sharp warning.

"B'wana, hapa-hapa ngiri. Rudi hapa," he said, wildly pointing at the hole. With my broken Swahili, I figured out that he was warning me about something "right here" and obviously it was a "ngiri," whatever that meant. "Probably a hole," I thought to myself, but he seemed a bit too excited if "ngiri" meant "hole." Armed with this infallible logic, I unslung my rifle and proceeded towards the hole, trying to see if anything was in it. At about five yards from the hole, I made out the dusky form of a warthog—facing me. The first thought that flashed through my mind was—*don't hit it in the head: you'll ruin the trophy*. While I was deliberating on the proper method of dispatching him, he decided he had had enough and charged out with a horrendous rumbling grunt. I fired from the hip, and the next moment I was smashed into a thorn tree.

When I recovered, there was blood everywhere—my hands, my face, on the ground, and even the rifle bolt was slippery with blood. I quickly worked the action, vowing to retaliate against the warthog that had obviously gored me. But before I could wreak my vengeance, K'Tembo greeted me with his infectious toothy grin and pointed to the warthog—dead in his tracks some 30 yards away. As the shock wore off, I found that indeed I had not been gored, but had merely ripped my ear on the thorn bush! We both broke into laughter—K'Tembo's no doubt at the scene he had just witnessed, though

mine was of pure relief. Later that evening, I could hear the gales of laughter coming from the trackers' fire and could glimpse K'Tembo gesticulating wildly, silhouetted by the soft glow of light.

Several days later we moved on to another locale, closer to the Rift Valley. We engaged a Masai guide, a toothless old man, who spoke only in the tribal dialect. "Sobah ehro,"—"Hello friend," began Bill, and asked about buffalo. The old man prattled on, and within hours we were tracking a herd. As we followed the tracks, and crested a hill, we came face to face with an old bull not more than 75 yards away.

(Colonel Caufield was right.) In response to the urgently shouted, "Take him!" I snapped the 12-pound Jeffrey to my shoulder and fired. The "thunk" of a 500 grain solid hitting flesh was confirmed by the cloud of dust puffing from his shoulder, but he turned to run, and my second shot produced the same result—dust from the shoulder. The bull sped up, I reloaded, and Bill snapped off a .300 Holland and Holland slug from his model 70, without apparent effect. Two more .574's in the shoulder from me did nothing, and the buff disappeared into the bush near a stream. The silent glances that Bill and

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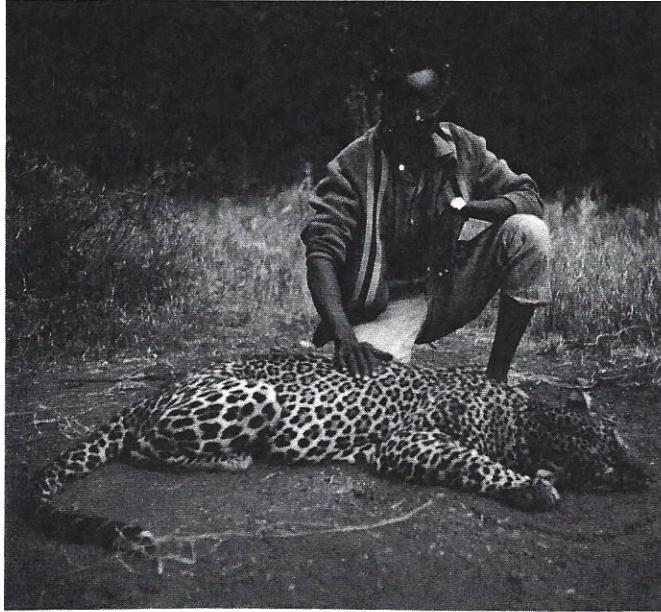
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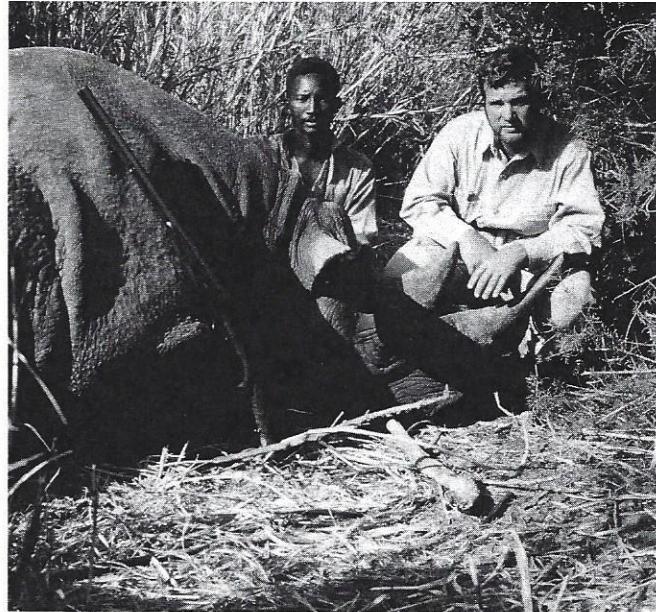
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Number one tracker, Berisa, was as pleased as I was at a one-shot kill on a leopard.



Wallengulu tracker K'Tembo was my gunbearer on the rhino stalk.

BIG FIVE

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the gunbearer exchanged told me more than any words could have. Bill, Berisa, and I started off into the thicket.

Fifty yards in, we found frothy blood in the deep tracks in the mud. "Lung shot. Let's wait him out," said Bill, but as he finished his sentence I glanced up to find the buff staring at us not more than 30 yards away. Fortunately a stream with steep banks separated us, but before Bill could speak again, I put a shot into the buff's neck, which downed him. Upon inspection, we found five holes in his shoulder, all of which could be covered by a hand, and my respect for and fear of these awesome creatures soared.

"Bill—we blew apart his shoulder."

"It doesn't matter," he replied. "Spine shots are the only way to stop them." I took that lesson to heart.

The rest of the time in the block was spent collecting another zebra, shooting guinea fowl and dove, and even a duck, with my 20-gauge Browning. It was relaxing and peaceful. However, all the while Bill was looking for lion; we traveled the dusty road and the trackers would shout to Bill to stop if lion signs were noted. How they could ever spot the 16th of an inch impression of a paw print in the dust while traveling at 40 miles an hour still amazes me, but they were uncanny and unerring.

Finally, fresh signs of lion were found. Near the tracks, a hind quarter of the second zebra was fastened to a lone tree. The trackers gathered brush for a blind on the hillside about 200 yards from the bait. Bill and I began our vigil

that afternoon, sitting silently with occasional exchanges of pleasantries.

Suddenly, Bill placed his finger to his lips. His ears, trained by years of hunting, had detected a sound—a muffled padding of paws. Then I could hear it too, the *pad-pad-pad*, behind us. Seconds later I heard a regular, repetitive, deep, low-toned huffing sound. In disbelief, I recognized this as breathing—a lion was so close behind the blind that I could hear its footsteps and breathing! I wondered how close that might be. My question was soon answered, for as we sat silently still, I saw a maned lion not more than five feet from the blind, walking down the hill towards the bait.

Then came two lionesses. I was sure my thumping heart beat could be heard. I held my breath, afraid to move, lest I give warning to the big cats. I could feel the sweat drenching my clothes even though it was cool that afternoon. At Bill's signal I raised my Weatherby, but could not shoot for a full 30 seconds; I could see my heart beat in the rifle scope. Years of competition shooting could not compare to this moment. I put the gun down and got a sympathetic and knowing nod from Bill.

We let the lions work the bait for a few minutes, while I composed myself. How and why they did not detect us, or if they had, why they ignored us, I shall never know. I only was grateful that they had concentrated on the bait, not us. Confident that they were totally absorbed with the bait, I again prepared to shoot. At the crack of the rifle, one lioness bounded away and the male lept straight up in the air and landed facing us. He began to crawl, using his fore paws, but it was apparent his spine was broken just above the shoulder blades.

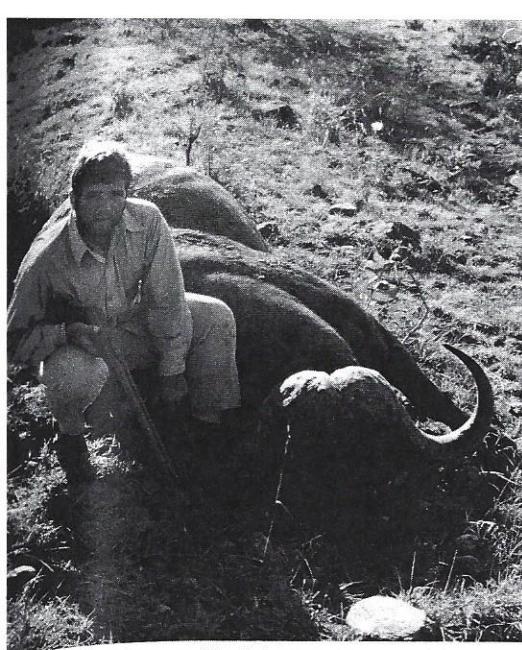
A second shot in the chest finished him, but the other lioness would not move. She firmly stood her ground, glaring at us. We emerged from the blind and began to shout, to no avail. I had to put a shot about 10 feet from her before she moved. I felt remorse, true sorrow, for the devotion she showed to her mate deserved a better reward. It was with admiration and respect that I watched her run off into the brush.

As we gutted the lion, she reappeared on the crest of the hill where we had sat only minutes before. Backlit, she was like an Egyptian goddess plotting revenge as she sulkily sat watching us. It spooked me, sent chills down my spine. Her image on that hillside still haunts me.

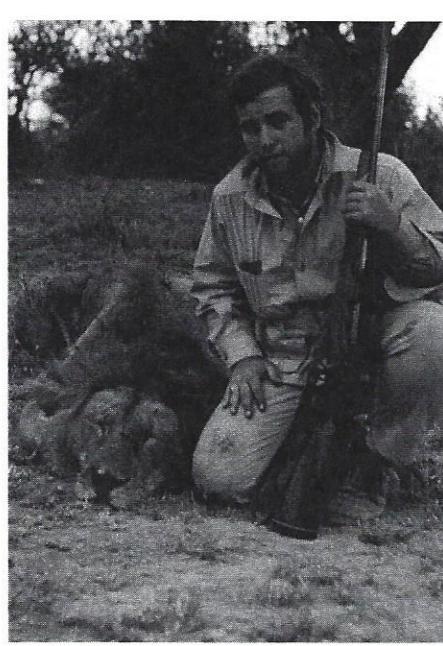
That evening Fundi, the skinner, presented me with the floating ribs from my lion. I told Bill I was going to save them, to give to a woman who demonstrated the same devotion to me as the lioness had for her mate. Years later, when I met my wife, I had the bones made into a necklace for her. Suspended between them is a gleaming tiger eye stone, a reminder of the loyal and watchful lioness.

The next several days were spent collecting a record book North Kenya Grant's gazelle, an eland, ostrich, some more tommy for camp meat and another zebra. We then headed back to Nairobi to replenish our supplies for the next part of the trip.

We were now to embark on the most exciting part of the hunt. This was a journey into Samburu and Turkana country—Maralal—the northern frontier district. It was here that we were to hunt the rhino and elephant, and the excitement and anticipation grew as we selected our horses for the



My second buffalo was a Rowland Ward trophy that gave us a dramatic hunt indeed.



Years of competition shooting could not compare to the moment of taking aim at a lion.

journey. The Game Department of Kenya strictly limited entry into this primitive territory, and maintained a stable of nags for hunters. They also rented camels to us, as beasts of burden. We began this leg of the trip by traveling in a "donga"—a dry river bed. The first night our water came from a well dug nearly eight feet into the sandy bottom; I couldn't help wondering how animals could survive in such arid country. Bill told me the gerenuk could survive on the vegetation's moisture, and go weeks without fresh water. I collected one of these unusual antelope, as well as several baboons, so I could give the skulls to my friends in medical school. Single shots dropped a lovely Grevy zebra and a Beisa oryx. However, these were only warm ups for the main event—elephant.

We began our search by checking every footprint of any consequence. Bill offered me a shot at a 90-pounder which I thought about, but declined. The search continued on horseback, on foot, by scouts, and native informants. I heard the phrase, "Wapi ndofu?" so many times that I shall never forget it. Little M'Fupi distinguished himself by spotting a herd of elephants. He pointed to the horizon, way in the distance, but even using Bill's 8 x 30's I couldn't see anything. It was only when I used the zoom lens (3 power) on my movie camera in conjunction with his binoculars that I could discern movement, and then the forms of elephants. Even after I had spotted them, I could not see them with the naked eye. "How?" I kept asking myself. "How? How could they have spotted them?"

In any event I was grateful for his help, and we began a four-hour trek on foot. Unfortunately, there was not a

good bull in the lot, and we began again. Two days later, we came across huge footprints and we began a six-hour tracking task, with Bill dutifully kicking elephant turds apart and testing them for temperature. After finding a steaming hot dropping he announced that we were only minutes away.

"They amble along at two or three miles an hour, and if we keep up a brisk pace, we'll be on them in minutes." As predicted, we did find the large lone bull, but he had disappointingly small tusks. "Well," said Bill, "you need a big elephant to carry big ivory, but there's no guarantee that they will." Small consolation after a 12-hour round trip on foot. Several days later, another big footprint was found, but this time we followed on horse back. My heart leapt as I saw the bull's tusk at least 6½ feet out of his mouth. We dismounted, and the bull must have caught our scent. He turned towards us, and we stopped dead in our tracks: he had only one tusk! "I'll guarantee you the record book on that one," said Bill, but I decided to wait.

By then, I was doubting the wisdom of my patience and was a bit remorseful that I had not taken the 90-pounder earlier. Also, not being an equestrian, I decided that I'd rather have sore feet than other parts of my anatomy, so we gave the riding a rest. A day later, a breathless Samburu arrived in our camp. "Ndofu B'wana-mzuri sanarudi hapa pesi-pesi tafedali." It needed no interpretation. I even braved the horse again. We hadn't been gone more than 20 minutes when, without warning, a huge bull appeared out of a stand of trees, with his trunk straight out, ears flapping in the breeze, running full tilt at us. I still have the

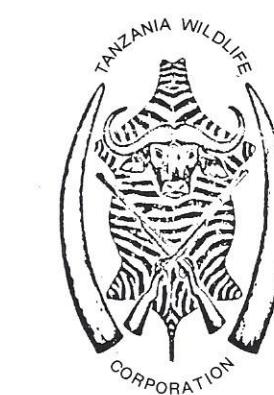
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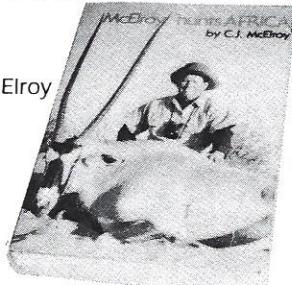
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image of Bill racing away—elbows askew and arms akimbo, looking like a modern day Ichabod Crane, with an angry elephant pointing its trunk straight at him, like some monstrous four-legged mobile artillery piece.

In the meanwhile, my great horsemanship left me unable to control my mount, who proceeded to prance around in circles as I struggled to get my rifle from the scabbard. The first thought I had was to shoot the horse, and then the elephant, but I quickly vetoed this plan as fear replaced anger. However, after charging at Bill, the elephant rambled off. We regrouped. Bill and I decided to go on foot after the bull, and within a half-hour, we were upon him. "No guarantees on this one," said Bill.

"Good enough," I said, but as we approached the bull from the rear, he got our scent and turned.

"The ear," shouted Bill—reminding me to place the bullet half-way on the line formed by the ear and the skull. As the bull turned broadside, I fired the left barrel. He collapsed in his tracks, and lay still.

"Wait!" shouted Bill. "He can still get up. Put another shot into the top of the head." I did, and Bill pronounced the bull dead.

We spent considerable time sizing up the tusks. Stifling my impatient nature, I told Bill to let them rot out. (Months later, Rowland Ward weighed one in at 113 pounds, which placed me comfortably in the record book.)

An entire Samburu village began to appear in single file on the horizon. The men, with their ochre mud-matted hair and spearmint-shaped spears (unlike the Masai long sword-like blades), began to chant and pound spear butts against the ground. After a while, I discerned that they were saying, "N'yama, n'yama, n'yama," and working themselves into a frenzy. This was similar to a scene described by Teddy Roosevelt in his book *African Game Trails* (page 253-1910 Edition, Scribner's, New York), and I had visions of mass hysteria in the making. I finally stood on the elephant, and fired a shot in the air to break the trance and allow us time to remove all the desired parts from the huge beast, before the Samburu descended on the carcass. With pangas flashing they dismembered, dissected, and destroyed the elephant in a matter of hours. The "n'yama," cut into biltong-like strips, was loaded by the women into baskets suspended on either side of donkeys, and the procession started back to the village, a mere three or four hours after the kill. Most of the elephant went with them.

After a few days rest and hunting plains game, we moved camp again and began to scout for rhino. For several days, we tracked, then spotted a fair sized rhino, who promptly went into thick cover. Bill told me to hit him between the eye and the ear, then sent me and my grinning gun bearer off into the lush vegetation. About 30 yards in, K'tembo whispered, "K'faru," and I saw the head of the prehistoric creature with prehensile lip and sagging skin about 25 yards away. One quick shot, and the rhino dropped. "Nothing like Teddy Roosevelt," I thought.

It was in the same area that one of the Turkana scouts arrived in camp to report a nice sized buffalo herd in the area. We were hunting at approximately 7,000 feet, and I had told Bill earlier that I had not noticed the altitude. I had played lacrosse at Princeton and I was certain my former athletic prowess would stand me in good stead. Wrong! After tracking the herd of buffalo through thick brush, K'tembo, ever smiling, loped back to us to report that the herd was breaking into a clearing.

Bill said, "Let's run. We can head them off." I smiled—all those laps, wind sprints, and stadium steps were finally going to pay off. We started at a fast trot, with K'tembo easily hauling my 12 pounds of Jeffrey, and I not so easily hauling my extra 15 pounds of Nelson. Bill, built like his countryman Roger Bannister, easily broke into a run, while Berisa, carrying Bill's Model 70 with solids, brought up the rear. As we broke into the clearing, we could see the buffalo herd making a broad sweeping circle through the half-mile-wide clearing to a steep ridge.

"Head for the far corner to cut off their exit," said Bill. We sprinted about 300 yards before the 7,000 foot elevation and lack of exercise began to show. I could feel my heart pounding in my chest and my lungs searing with pain. Then the weakness set in: attempts to move muscles had little or no response. I had to stop, panting.

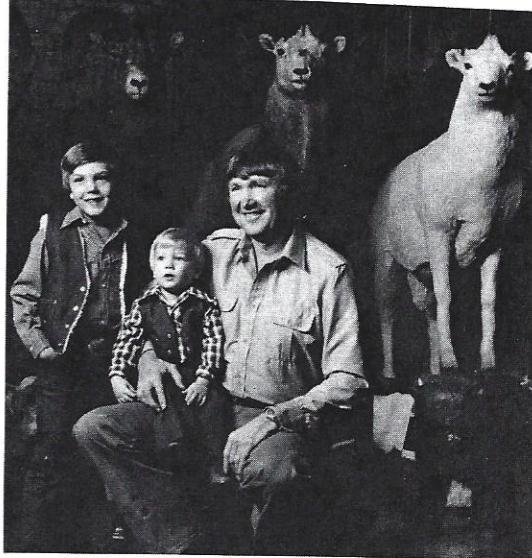
"Come on, Helder. Do you want to miss them? There's a record one for sure—third buff back." Somehow, some way, the legs began to move again, but they weren't my legs. They felt strangely numb and I was feeling dizzy, almost drunk, as we ran to within 50 yards of the ridge. I gasped, "Lete me-me bunduki pesi-pesi." K'tembo forced the double into my hands. The herd was running along the ridge, just before the drop-off.

"Shoot—the fifth one back,"
continued on page 59

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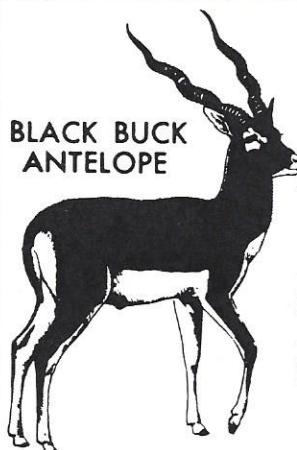
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BIG FIVE

continued from page 55

snapped Bill. Only the excessive weight of the gun helped me keep it steady. I know I didn't aim, but merely instinctively fired, and the bull dropped to his knees, plowing up the dirt and sending a shower of earth in a spray ahead of him. In a split second he was up, the rest of the herd running past him, and he struggled to rejoin them. The second shot produced a puff of dirt on his ribs—too far back for the shoulder. I quickly reloaded, and fired twice more—one shot in the shoulder, the other over his back. He fell and regained his feet while I fired again—one shot hitting rock on the ground some 30 yards in front of me, and the next one landed somewhere in Ethiopia.

"I'm out," I screamed in panic.

"Wapi rasasi?" K'tembo grinned. "N'pana rasasi." Bill quickly switched rifles with me, and I had to concentrate on the sights of a new weapon. This time I put the .300 H & H solid into the neck, and the buff was down for good. "Finally," said Bill.

Then it happened—my knees began to shake, my legs quivered, my entire body trembled. The bizarre experience lasted 10 seconds, and it was over. Fear, oxygen depletion, hypoglycemic response to a massive adrenalin surge during the barrage? The feeling was unforgettable. How Bill contained himself and did not fire while I was destroying the Turkana landscape with misplaced .475's, I shall never know.

Miraculously, Turkana appeared and began to skin my trophy while Bill wandered off. I followed him to where he sat on the hillside, glassing the plains below.

"Last hunt, you know. I'll never be back here again." We sat in silence, staring out over the magnificent landscape. I felt heaviness in my chest, a choking sensation in my throat, as if I wanted to cry for Bill. I could imagine, after his 25 years of such experiences, many with intense emotional involvements, that the prospect of never again feeling the exhilaration, the fear, the agony, and the euphoria of a hunt would be sorely missed. We mourned together—I for a new-found friend whom I had come to respect, and he for a lost past, never to be recaptured again. As if on cue, we got up together, and silently returned to camp.



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