

At Your Leisure

Hobbies, sports, adventure—how Rotarians relax.

ON THE PLAINS of East Africa last Summer ROTARIAN LEO W. ROETHE, of Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, spent an adventurous two months away from his agricultural-supply business. He recounts some of his experiences in the following story.

IN KENYA, on the East Coast of Equatorial Africa, is the greatest hunting paradise in the world. I spent June and July of last year there with two friends, Bud Jackson, of Springfield, Missouri, and Dr. John Bolger, of Pulaski, New York, both of whom are associated with the U. S. National Wildlife Federation.

Some hunters go on African safaris to shoot big game with powerful rifles, or with cameras. Our safari was a combination of both. We shot ammunition and we shot loads of film, and both types of shooting have their own excitement and dangers. Our photography—still photos and motion pictures—was done largely for National Wildlife Federation.

Originally called British East Africa, Kenya is a scant 14 hours from Rome, Italy, by jet plane. But life in the Kenya bushlands and jungles is many centuries behind the Jet Age in development.

You see this the moment you step outside of Nairobi, the modern and prosperous capital of Kenya. Its Government buildings, its stores, its air of sophistication—all belong to the 20th Century. But in the cool enchantment of our first African evening, we strolled to the city's edge. There we heard the roar of a lion, the scream of a leopard, and the trumpeting of a mighty bull elephant. Occasionally a hippopotamus lumbers into the city, or a rhino comes in to graze at the edge of the air field.

This is a land of primitive emotions,

of animal life protected in national parks and reserves and unprotected in the bushland, and of savage dangers which have fascinated man through the ages. Death is quick in the jungle, but it is seldom easy.

We caught on color film dramatic proof of how the law of the jungle operates in favor of the swift and the cunning. It shows a mother cheetah stalking and killing a Thompson gazelle to feed her young. The cheetah is the most magnificent of the cats. It is related to the leopard, but is stronger, faster, and much wiser.

As this mother cheetah was ending the life of its victim, another gazelle lingered in the clearing an instant too long, confident of being the fleetest creature of the jungle. It wasn't. The gazelle paid for that discovery with its life.

Death stalks all living creatures in the jungle, even the hunter with a 16-man safari such as ours. The big cats, the rhinos, the water buffalo, these and other animals can kill you before you know it. The ugly wart hog can sever your leg with one thrust of his razor-sharp tusks.

I awoke one night covered by glutinous ants, millions of them. Thanks to the miracle of American insecticides, the ants were killed. But hunters have been known to swoon under an ant attack, and by morning nothing would be found but their bones.

The most dangerous of the jungle animals is the bull elephant. His main asset is his size. One morning we came upon one. When I looked down my gun sights at that magnificent beast, I was astounded that any living creature could be that big.

As I took aim, I knew I had to hit

Millions of ants from this nine-foot anthill covered Rotarian Leo Roethe (left) from head to toe one night. He awoke, the ants were killed with an insecticide, and the hill was completely destroyed.



a spot above the eye no larger than a baseball. This small area of vulnerability to gunshot is one reason for the elephant's survival; the other is its tanklike charge when wounded. I was lucky that day. My first shot hit the spot. The elephant stopped in its tracks, swayed, and fell in a heap. The crash of its huge body shook the earth. Ikram Hassan, one of Africa's greatest professional hunters, estimated the age of my elephant at 80 to 100 years, its weight at five tons. Its tusks weighed almost 200 pounds.

Soon after the kill, the entire population of a near-by village appeared. They hoisted me on their shoulders. No football hero was ever cheered more enthusiastically after scoring the winning touchdown. They presented me with the elephant's tusks, giant feet, and a charm bracelet woven from the fine hairs of its tail.

The villagers then attacked the elephant's carcass. They cut its flesh into long strips that were dried in the shade and later boiled to make their favorite dish—biltong.

In 60 days of leisurely hunting we bagged 67 animals, including a leopard, kudu, rhino, cape buffalo, and a 600-pound wildebeest. Our kill also included many small animals and fowl, such as Egyptian geese, ducks, francolins, doves, and wild guinea.

This should not lead anyone to conclude that hunters are decimating Kenya's jungle game. There are only 71 hunters licensed to lead safaris in Kenya, and each seldom conducts more than three a year. As only two members of each safari are permitted to shoot, it is evident that not more than 400 white hunters can invade the Kenya jungle annually, and this number has no appreciable effect on the animal population.

There is another generally held notion about safaris that needs correcting. They are not only for the wealthy. A safari is not cheap, but neither is it out of reach for the man usually looked upon as being "well off" financially. A "poor man's" safari like ours costs \$1,600 for each hunter. Hunting licenses range from \$140 for antelope and gazelle on up to \$1,000 for all game, including lion and elephant. Add your plane or ship fare to Africa and back, plus a few hundred dollars for tips and extras, and that's about it. A six-week safari is generally regarded as minimal, while for big game the two- or three-month safari is best.

A final word: these jungle jaunts take much advance planning. I'd say that minimum planning time is four months, while six months to a year is better. And if you don't want to hunt, remember you can go to shoot—with your camera.



Kenya natives skin a bull elephant killed in the bush land by Safariman Roethe. Tons of meat were cut from it.

AFRICA
HUNTING.com 