



FOURTH IN A LIFE SERIES:
'GREAT ADVENTURES'

HELICOPTER

SAFARI IN AFRICA



IN SWIRL OF DUST, COPTER RISES ABOVE NATIVE HUTS



LeMay and Godfrey go into the remote bush hunting for big game

Photographed for LIFE by
HOWARD SOCHUREK

TO a remote place in Africa, a quartet of prominent men—a military leader, an entertainer, a plane builder, a renowned huntsman—went this year to shoot big game in a way no man had ever successfully done before. On their safari they had a helicopter and, because of it, brought back sights that few men have seen.

The safari was started by General Curtis LeMay, head of U.S. Strategic Air Command who has just been appointed Air Force's vice chief of staff, and Claude Hettier de Boislambert, president of the International Hunting Council. They met when LeMay ran the Berlin airlift and De Boislambert was governor of a province of the French zone in Germany. They shot boar and deer together, talked of an African safari.

When finally the time came, they invited Arthur Godfrey. An ardent huntsman, the CBS star is somewhat handicapped by a bad hip and suggested taking a helicopter to help him get about. Rounding out the party were Richard S. Boutelle, president of Fairchild Engine & Airplane Corp., and James Shepley, head of TIME-LIFE's Washington bureau.

The safari made camp in French Equatorial Africa, 500 miles from the nearest white settlement. The helicopter—flown sometimes by Godfrey, sometimes by a Bell Aircraft pilot—was used not for gunnery, which would be unsporting, but for taking Godfrey downwind to places where he could walk up to the game. Just as often, he and LIFE Photographer Sochurek used it to shoot with camera as they hovered just over the backs of stampeding buffalo and madly charging elephants (*see cover*).

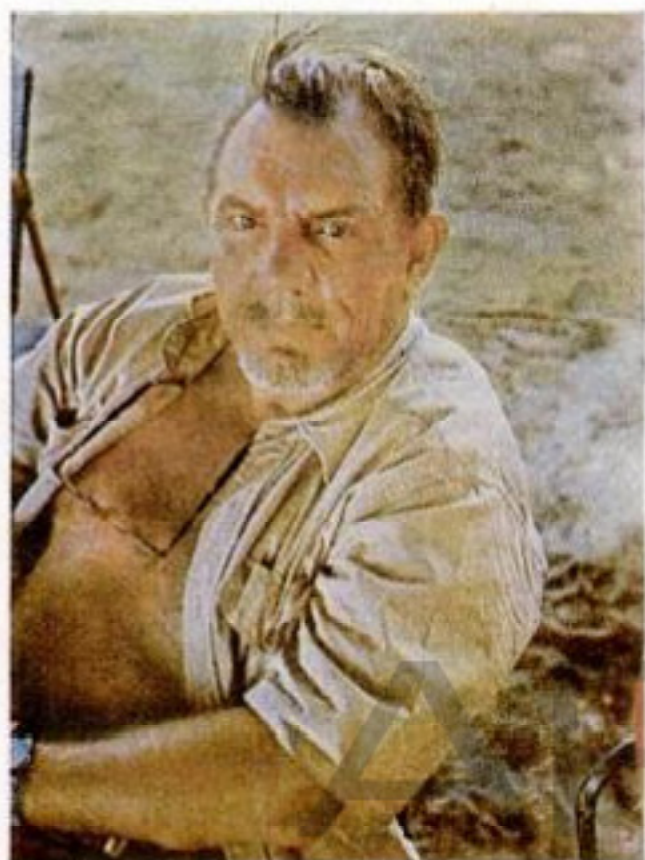
← **MASSIVE** herd of African buffalo, seen from helicopter, streams over plain toward water. Later in story the animals are shown close up.

IN HELICOPTER, which he has just landed at camp, Godfrey reports to LeMay on scouting expedition: he had spotted 200 buffalo nearby.

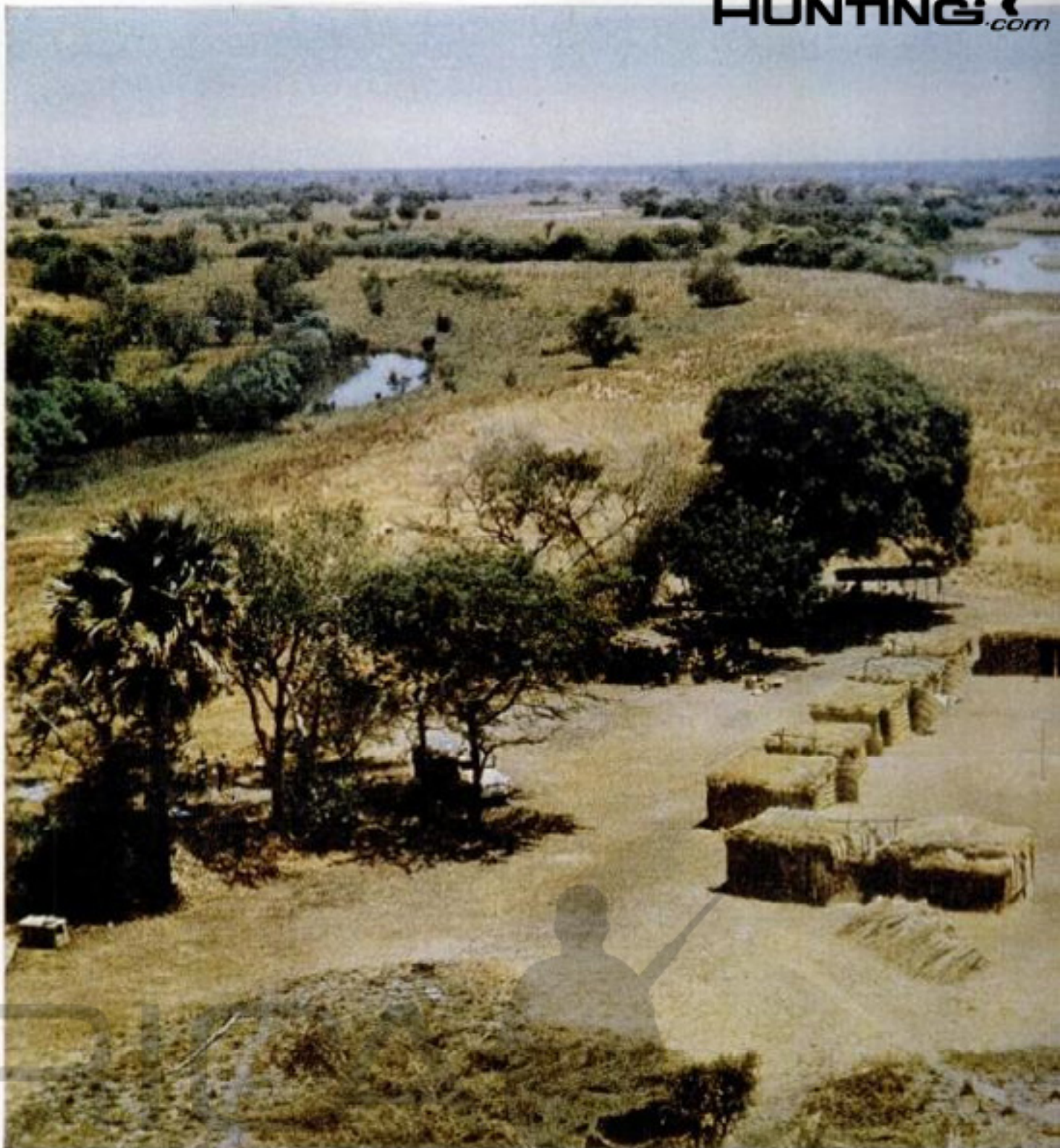
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HOST Boislambert has hunted all regions of Africa since youth, prefers colonies of his native France. He returns to hunt almost every year.



PLANEMAKER Boutelle of Fairchild stopped shaving as soon as he entered the bush. He liked being told he looked like Hemingway.



BASE CAMP on Aouk river was constructed of elephant-grass thatch. Night LeMay and Godfrey arrived an unseasonal downpour soaked huts and sent them scurrying to the back end of a truck. Complained Godfrey to LeMay, "So we don't need tents in the dry season?"





A grass-hut base in trackless wilds

As the safari's host, Boislabert chartered a light plane at Fort-Archambault, last sizable colonial outpost in eastern French Equatorial Africa. The region he searched, unlike East Africa where most safaris go, has long been regarded as inaccessible. In the rainy season it is a morass. Then it bakes in the dry season. Game concentrates around drying water holes, cooling in the 120° midday heat under thickets.

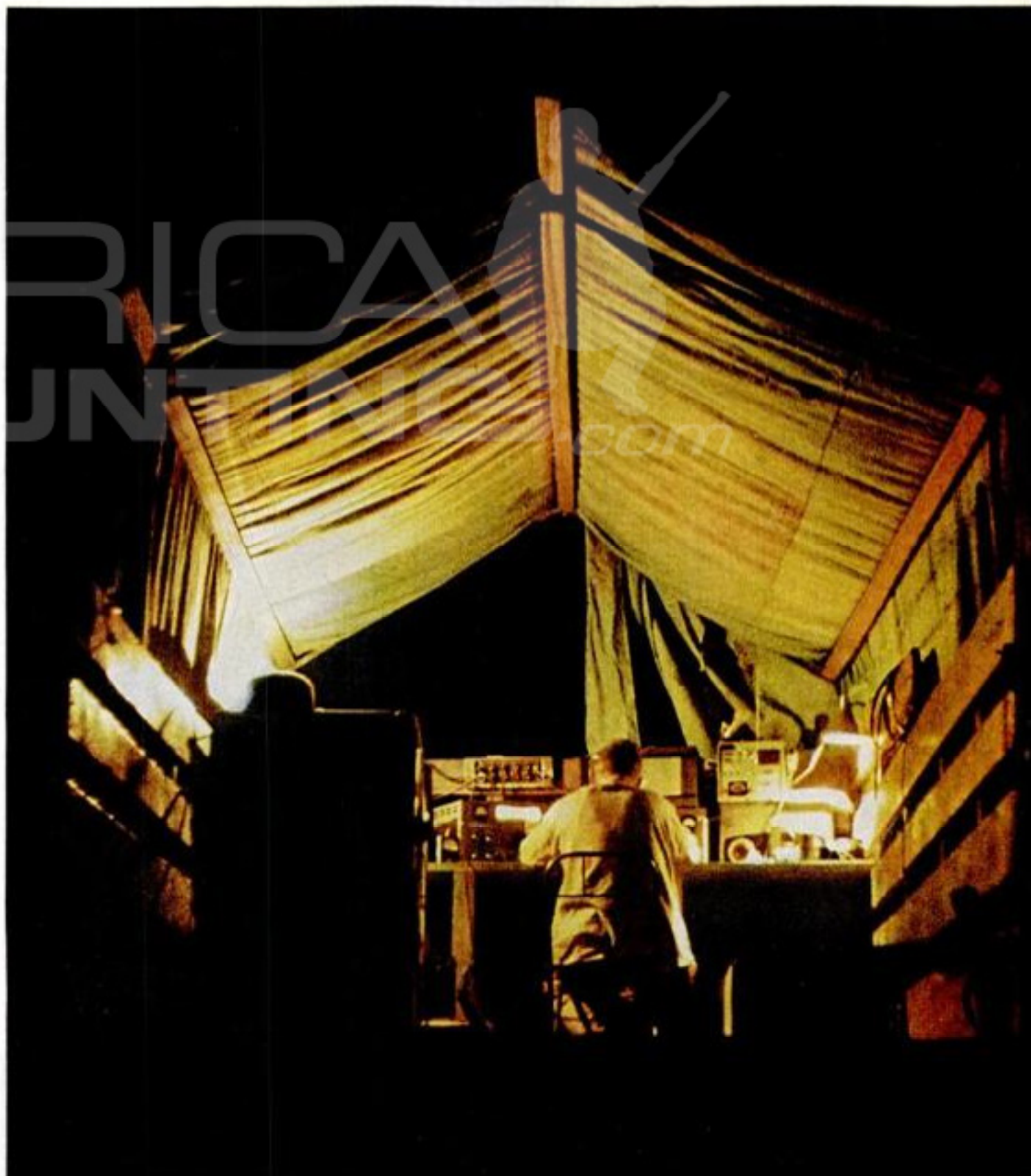
Selecting a site on the Aoûk river, Boislabert dispatched seven trucks and safari wagons. They went over dusty roads, then bounced through trackless country, 500 miles in all. Three days later some 200 natives of the Sara tribe, known to Americans as Ubangis, were set to erecting a grass village. Godfrey and LeMay flew to camp.

← **ON EDGE** of cot, pulled outside for cooler sleeping, Boutelle dresses as Godfrey snores under net. Each man in party had own hut.



CHOW HUT was social center of camp. By night members of safari restored body fluids lost to daytime heat with salted beer or vodka and fruit

juices, while Godfrey strummed his ukulele. Meals supervised by white hunter's wife were French style, the many courses ending with game.



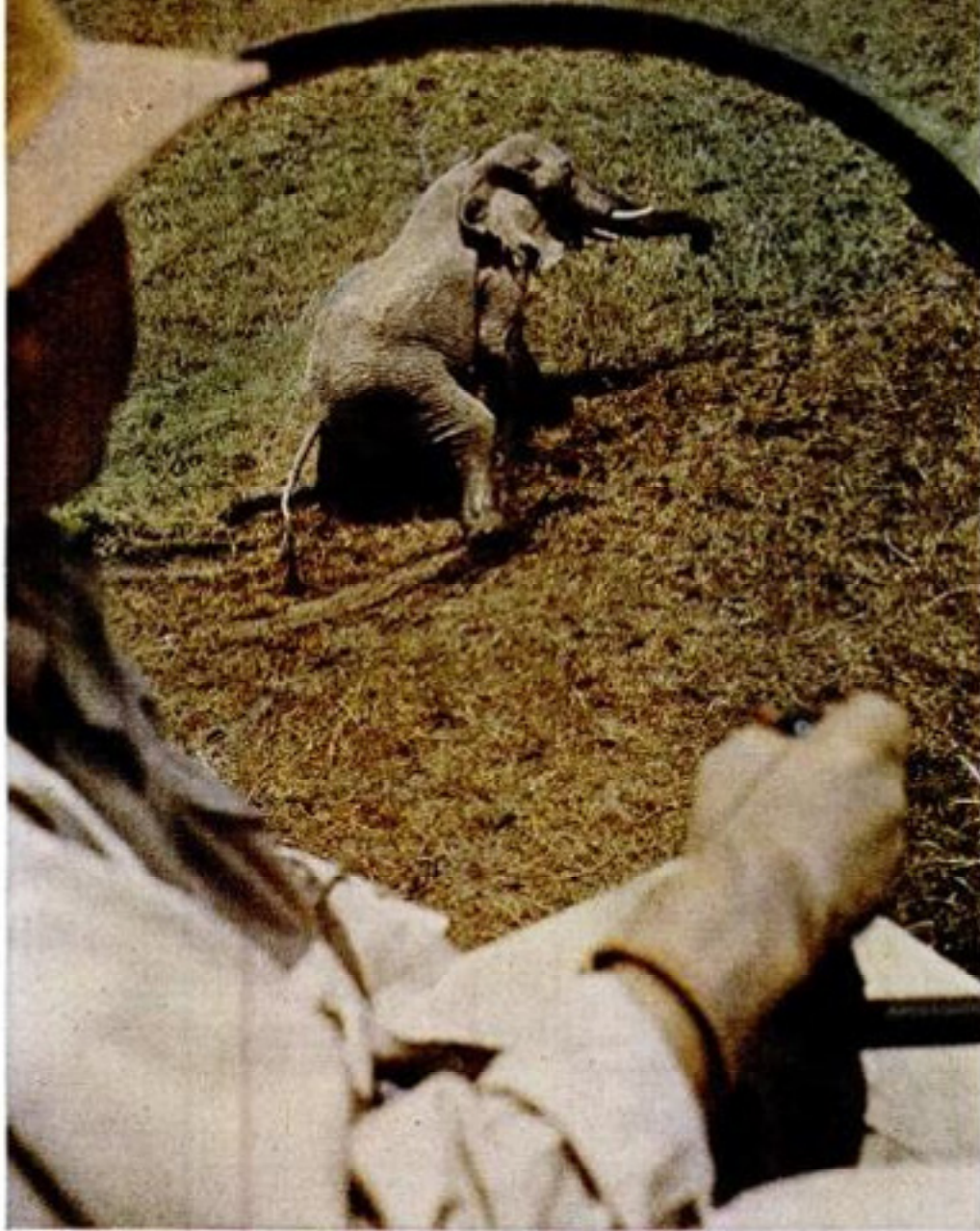
HAM STATION was brought by Godfrey to broadcast for his radio show. His remarks were rebroadcast directly to U.S. audiences. The

recently developed "single sideband" equipment easily reached receivers in U.S., making it possible for members of party to phone home.

SAFARI CONTINUED

ELEPHANT, chased by the helicopter, runs from the frightening noise and sight. Then, with an agility almost incredible for a six-ton beast, it makes a skidding turn while on the dead run.

AT BAY, the elephant stands ready to meet the strange enemy which is hovering only a few feet above its head. In the bush, the elephant is unaccustomed to being put to flight by anything.



Perils and beauty in close-up views

The helicopter safari members soon found it was as exciting to watch game from aloft as to hunt. So long as the helicopter hovered above 1,000 feet, the whirling beat of its rotor did not disturb game. Families of elephants ambled toward water. Great herds of buffalo grazed. Flocks of lovely birds flew below and a hundred hartebeest could be seen straggling from a water hole, joined by delicate kobs *de buffon* and stately roan antelope. From the copter a hunter with a quick eye might catch an occasional tawny flash of a pride of lions or the darting leap of the leopard.

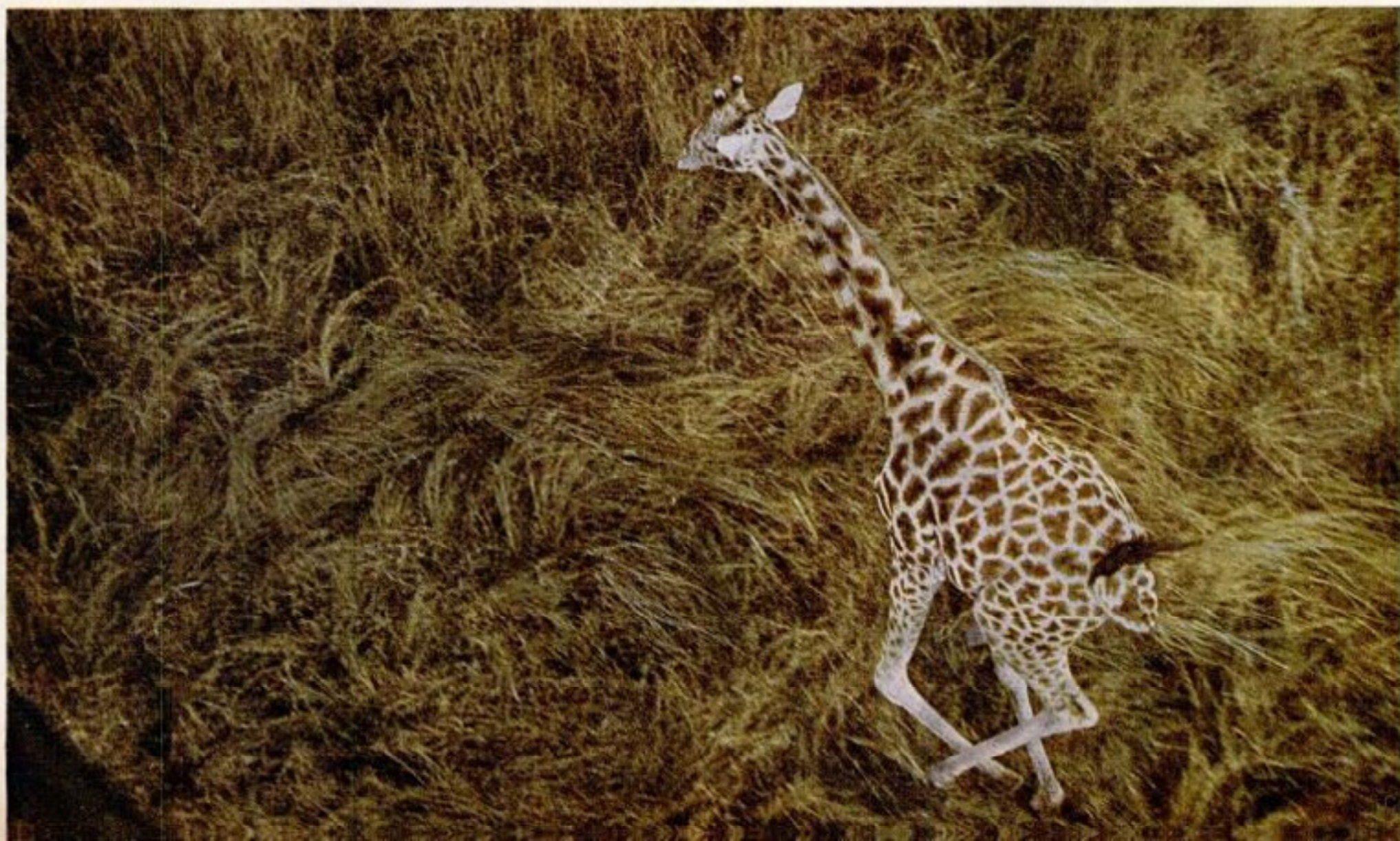
Dropping down to within a few feet of the ground, the helicopter would startle giraffes into flight. And sometimes it would come close up to the fearsome sight at left. Few men have looked into the red eye of an angry elephant and lived to tell of it.



WHITE EGRETS form a snowy pattern on the lush green of the grass along Aouk. Africa's birds delighted the safari in their variety and

abundance except when they drifted in large flocks toward the rotor and threatened to down the helicopter in the bush.

GIRAFFE swallows ground in his stride. A sometime prey of the lion, the giraffe has learned when frightened to run first, look later.



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HERD OF AFRICAN BUFFALO SEEN FROM 30 FEET STAMPEDES ACROSS PLAIN. THE EARTH SHAKES AS 1,200-POUND ANIMALS DASH AT 30 MPH. BUFFALO IS



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PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS AND WILY WHEN WOUNDED, SOMETIMES STALKING AND ATTACKING HUNTER WHO COMES STALKING UP FOR THE KILL.

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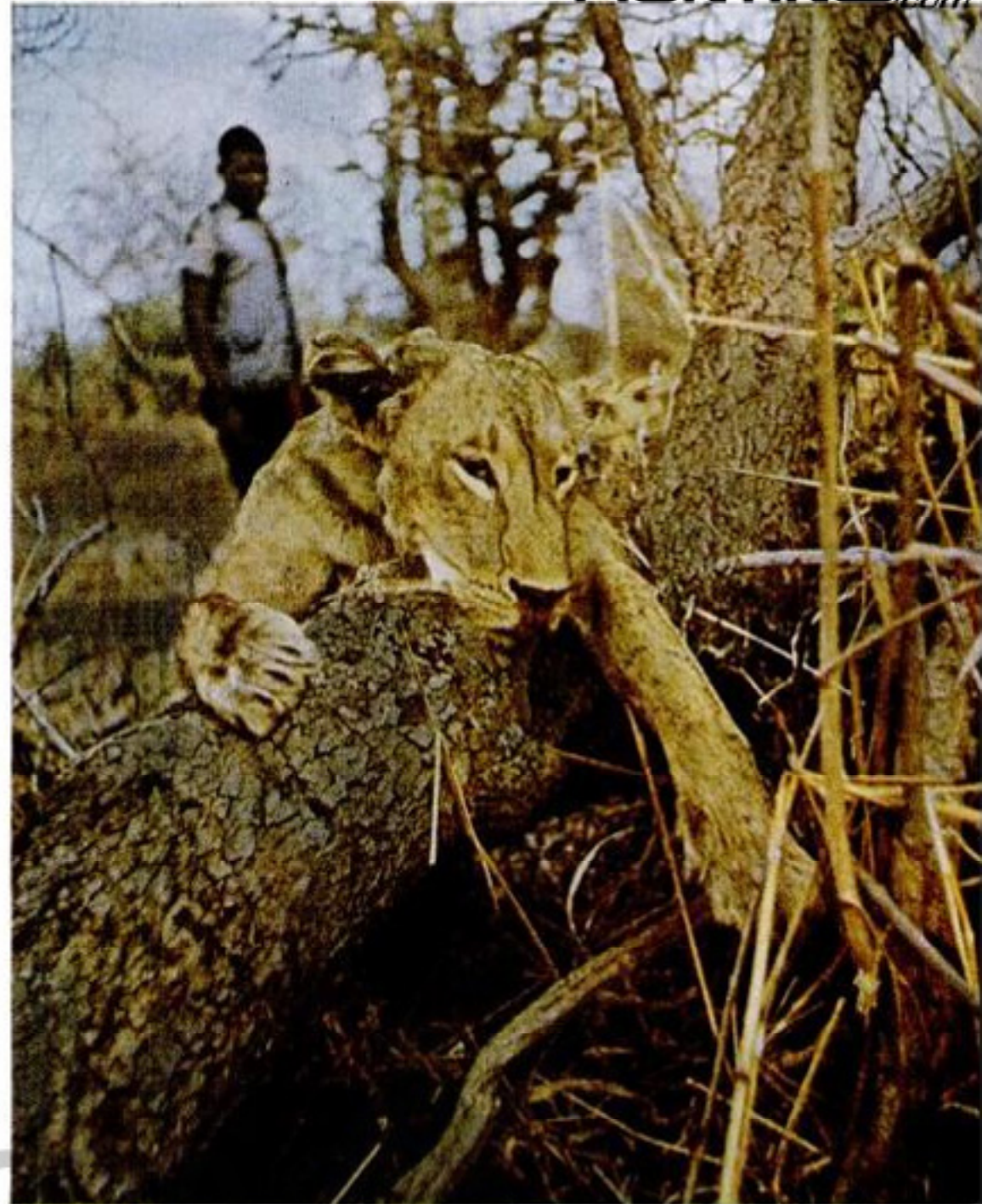


LEOPARD shot by Godfrey was first Warden Michel Anna (*right*) had seen taken by nonprofessional hunter in years. The leopard is wariest of African cats and a chance at one is pure luck—which Godfrey had.

Godfrey and a big-cat bag

In spite of his physical handicap Godfrey turned out to be the most successful hunter. Aggressive and emotional, he kept at it until he got one of almost every animal available in the area on his license. Then he would often feel sorry that he had shot and killed. In addition to the only two big cats taken on the comparatively short (three-week) safari, he bagged a hartebeest, a waterbuck, wart hogs, kobs, a damaliscus, as well as a hippo. Even a buffalo and an elephant fell to his rifle and he drove himself to walk distances as great as a mile from the helicopter.

The copter also increased the hunter's hazard. Once, after landing Godfrey and Boislambert near a herd of elephants, the copter took off. The sound agitated the animals until they thundered to where the men crouched behind an ant hill. Godfrey shot a bull, then fired into a foot-thick tree trunk to distract a rampaging cow. She whirled and uprooted it as a child pulls up a dandelion.



LIONESS is draped over a log where trackers dropped her preparatory to skinning. She was taken by Godfrey near water hole where he and a professional hunter had established a small overnight advance camp.



← **HUNTER'S** close-up of a young waterbuck is seen through scope of an aluminum rifle developed by Boutelle's company for airborne operations. Having served as photographer's subject, waterbuck got safe passage.

CARCASS of lioness is assaulted by vultures. The obscene birds appear from nowhere and consume the average-sized animal within hours. Usually they feed on the leavings of the lion's kill, not the lion.



TRACKING an elephant, Boutelle (*next to last*) follows gun bearers and trackers. They had found footprints, now find fresh "sign."

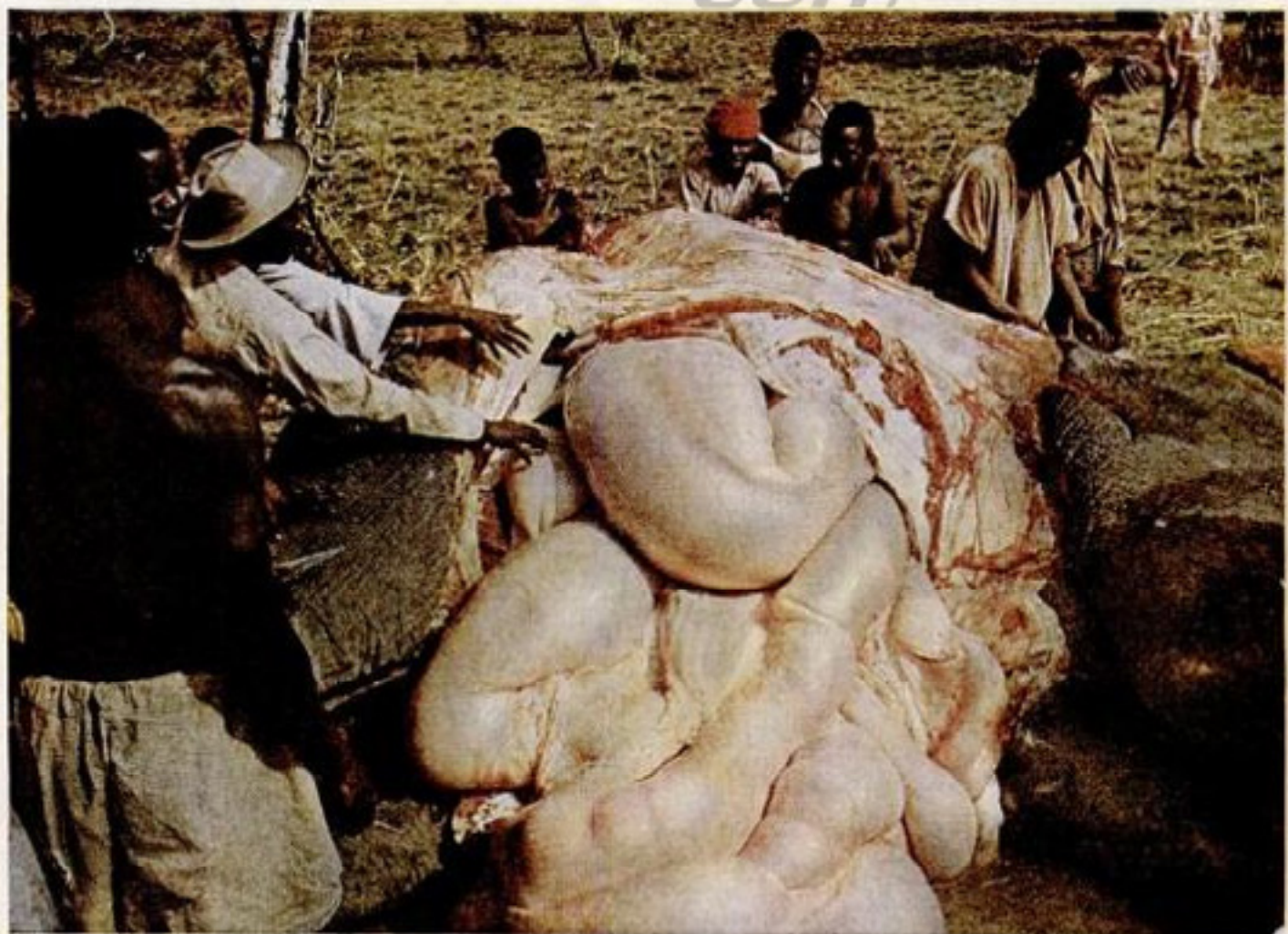


LOOMING suddenly up ahead is the quarry. The trackers have frozen, then dropped back, leaving Boislambert and LeMay to face

the hulking forms. To kill the elephant surely it is well to come up within 30 yards as General LeMay and Boislambert have done.



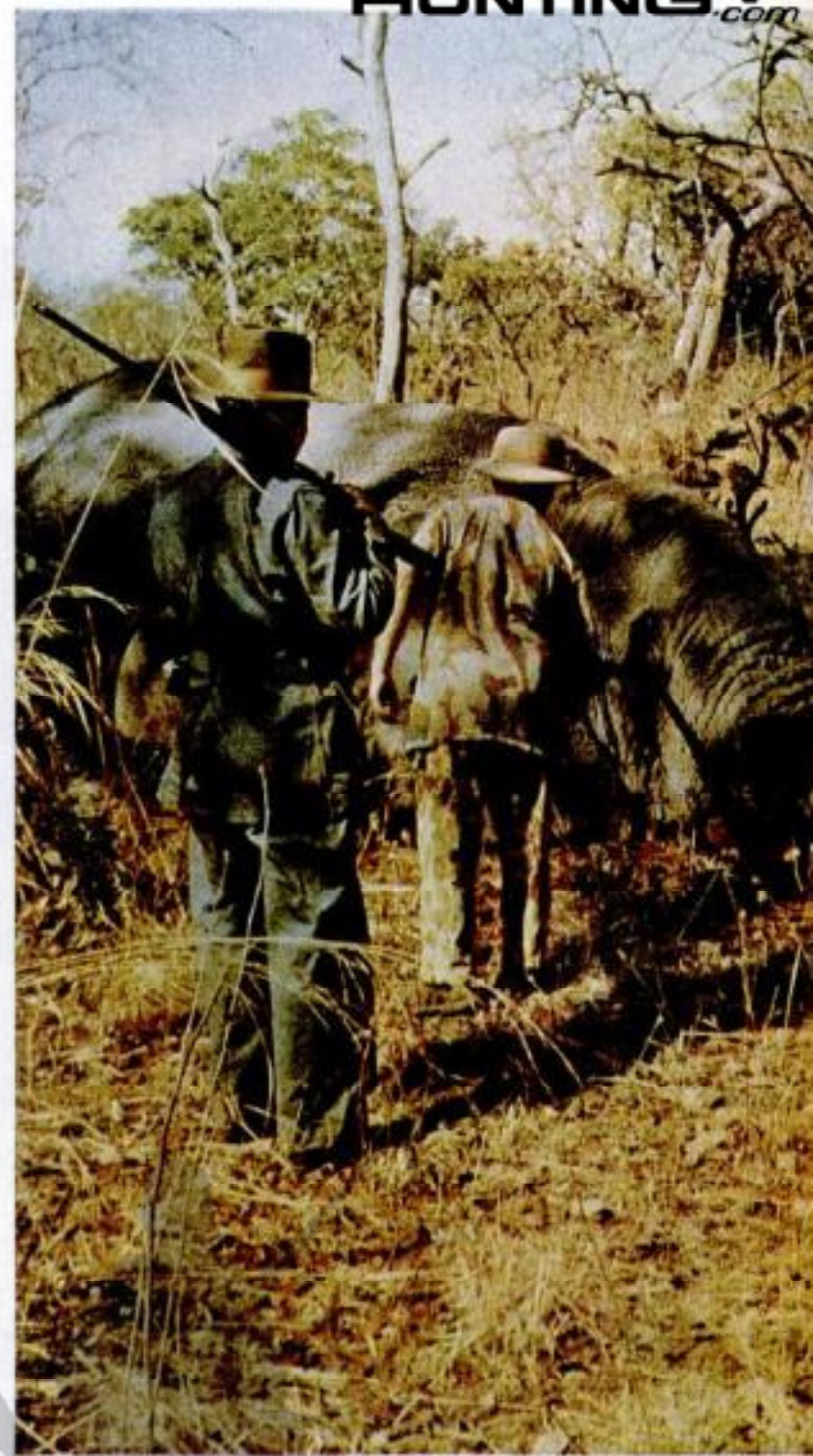
GODFREY'S elephant was a good bull. Impressed, he touches it tentatively. He told radio audiences he cried after he shot it.



CUTTING an elephant, natives slit it open and pull out entrails. An elephant kill delights natives to whom it means rare meal of meat.



The elephant's brain lies low in his great skull and the proper point of aim depends on its angle from the hunter. Here the bottom of the huge



LEMAY'S elephant, a six-tonner, is poked in eye with gun by Bois Lambert. Gun is loaded in case animal should still be alive.

ear hole is the target. LeMay pulls up his .378 Weatherby Magnum, aims at the elephant at left and makes a clean one-shot kill.

Bringing down dangerous giants

Curt LeMay at one time or another had hunted almost everywhere except Africa. For him the safari was an experience to be tackled with the same thoroughness that made his command of SAC an Air Force legend. In perfect physical condition, he took to the bush like a professional hunter, trailing buffalo and elephant for hours and even days. His guns were always carefully oiled. And his famed cigar almost never left his lips.

Best of all he loved to stalk the elephant, the animal which commanded the most respect among native trackers and game wardens. In the elephant's presence they continually tested the wind, were sharply alert, urged extreme caution to ensure that the first shot did its work in the brain. For all members of the party there was a common sense of relief when the awesome bulk of a six-ton behemoth kneeled to the shot.



CARRYING the elephant carcass, men lug the heavier parts while women tote the rest. The elephant is butchered on the spot and

natives start gorging themselves on the meat while the butchering is still in process. Hunters take home hoofs and tusks as trophies.



ANXIOUS, LeMay scans the sky for helicopter scheduled to pick him up in the bush. As daylight fades, he has lighted fire to guide pilot.



ON A LATE RETURN TO THE BASE CAMP, BELL PILOT BILL GALLAGHER SETTLES EARTHWARD

Sweating out the helicopter's return

Helicopter operations were risky at best. Landmarks were very few. The safari's base camp could be picked out of the background only a few miles off. Most of the time the helicopter was flying over country where there were not even native villages. Had the engine quit or had Godfrey or Bell Aircraft Pilot Bill Gallagher lost the way by only a few minutes, the helicopter very likely could not have been located.

There were no serious incidents but there were some anxious moments. Once a brush fire set by LeMay guided the helicopter to him just as darkness was setting in. Another time Boislambert, forced to land in the bush, luckily found a trail that took him to a village. And an anxious few hours at base camp, with flares lighted, was ended only when word came that the overdue copter had managed to make an advanced camp.



FRETTING, Godfrey nervously puffs cigar, waiting word of helicopter which had been forced to land deep in Ubangi-Shari. It was still too far from camp for its improvised, short-range radio to send message.

WORRIED, Warden Michel Anna peers past flares for helicopter which was supposed to reach base camp that afternoon. But night fell and it did not arrive. Finally the message came: it had landed in bush for the night.



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