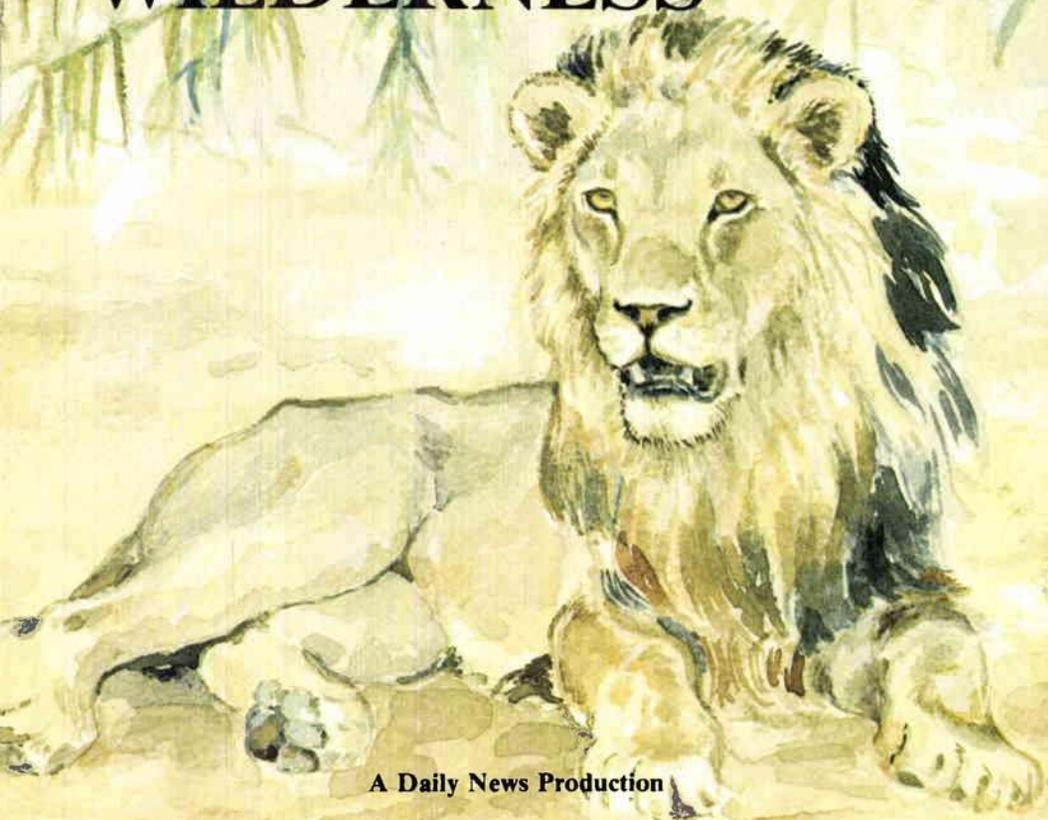


**IAN PLAYER'S**

**MORE FROM  
THE  
WILDERNESS**



**A Daily News Production**

# **Ian Player's**

# **More From**

# **the**

# **Wilderness**

**Proceeds from the sale of this booklet will go to  
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The Daily News Milk Fund.**

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**DEDICATED TO THE OLDER MEN:**

*Harry Player, Magqubu Ntombela,  
Jack Vincent, T. C. Robertson,  
Sir Laurens van der Post, Douglas Mitchell  
and Frank Broome.*

**WHO HELPED AND GUIDED ME  
IN THE LIVING WORLD.**

*Harry Player*

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## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Zoos needn't be hellholes	(November 8, 1979) 1
Sun, snow and sage in the Sierras	(January 18, 1980) 2
Bush life in the suburbs	(February 5, 1980) 3
As old as time itself	(March 19, 1980) 4
Thoughts on a glorious morning	(April 7, 1980) 5
Another turn of the wheel for the Zulus?	(May 7, 1980) 7
Suddenly the peace was shattered	(May 21, 1980) 8
The "father" of the board	(June 11, 1980) 9
Take to the trees	(June 18, 1980) 10
A lesson in my own backyard	(July 2, 1980) 11
Why I don't allow lamps	(July 21, 1980) 13
Happy settlers Down Under	(August 8, 1980) 14
A great drought	(August 22, 1980) 15
Where are all the young men going?	(September 4, 1980) 16
The croc's toothbrush?	(September 26, 1980) 18
A Magnificent Misfit	(October 29, 1980) 19
At one with the fish of the sea	(December 10, 1980) 20
A sprig of bracken	(January 16, 1981) 21
Who would've ever believed it?	(January 29, 1981) 22
Harmony People	(February 20, 1981) 23
White rhino horn?	(March 4, 1981) 24
Nature Drama	(March 18, 1981) 25
Delicate toehold	(April 8, 1981) 27
In the court of the forest king	(April 29, 1981) 28
Closer than a brother	(May 18, 1981) 29
Spirit of old Mashia	(June 3, 1981) 30
The Birdman of Jamestown	(June 24, 1981) 31
Noisome pestilence	(July 22, 1981) 32
Walk on the wild side	(August 19, 1981) 34
Magqubu's cooking pot	(September 9, 1981) 35
The lower orders	(September 23, 1981) 36
Reflections on a train	(October 7, 1981) 37
Inscription said it all: "Go tell the Spartans . . ."	(October 26, 1981) 39
The power of ideas for good or ill	(November 11, 1981) 40
The soul of Africa	(December 9, 1981) 41
January 22, 1879 — one man's story	(January 22, 1982) 42
Playful children of the sea	(February 10, 1982) 43
Reno now more than just a quickie divorce centre	(March 31, 1982) 44
Welcome home to Africa	(April 16, 1982) 45
Bond of peace — and concern	(May 17, 1982) 47

*(Dates when articles appeared in The Daily News, in brackets).*



**IAN PLAYER AND MAGQUBU NTOMBELA**

## FOREWORD

It is a great privilege for me to be asked to write a preface to this book, the second of Mr Ian Player's Daily News articles. I have known Ian Player for nearly 30 years and we have been friends all this time. My admiration for what he does for conservation in South Africa has grown over the years.

His knowledge of KwaZulu, and of the Zulu people has always placed him high as a conservationist while working amongst us for so long. His articles confirm this. There are many readers I know who have followed his articles for many years with great interest and who have learnt a lot from them. Ian Player is a brother of a famous South African — Gary Player, the international golfer. To those of us who are conservationists, Ian Player is one of the greatest South Africans of our time in his field. We, therefore, believe with all due respect to his famous brother, that in future, conservationists will know Gary Player as Ian Player's brother, and not the other way round!

I value my friendship with Ian Player who, with his lovely wife Ann, has travelled widely. I can never forget the South African team which included Ian and Ann Player and the famous Dr T. C. Robertson, which attended an International conference with us on game conservation in San Antonio, Texas, in the United States, in the early seventies.

Ian Player is a man of humility and, he has never hidden the fact that a lot of his vast knowledge of game and the Zulu people came from his companion Magqubu Ntombela. These two great gentlemen of conservation are as inseparable as "Juno's Swan". They have done immeasurable work for conservation and we owe both of them a great debt.

I would like also to commend Ian Player for allowing proceeds from the sale of this book to be used to help the cause of black education. There are many white friends who often ask me whether there is anything they can do to help blacks. Education is one of those areas of need, where opportunities for giving assistance are many. I thank Mr Player for setting an example by contributing to this cause. These articles are treasures, both from the point of view of conservation, and also of our folklore. For this reason it is a great pleasure for me to write this foreword for this book. I feel certain that all who will buy these books will have something which will be of great value not only now, but also for future generations.

### **MANGOSUTHU GATSHA BUTHELEZI**

CHIEF MINISTER: KWAZULU and  
KWAZULU MINISTER IN CHARGE OF THE  
BUREAU OF NATURAL RESOURCES

"KWAPHINDANGENE"  
MAHLABATINI, KWAZULU, SOUTH AFRICA

## Zoos needn't be hellholes

**ZOOS:** are they good or bad? This is a question guaranteed to start an argument amongst people concerned about the diminishing wild lands and wild creatures of the world.

Zoos go back 4 500 years in antiquity and provide for some city folk the only opportunity of seeing rare and exotic creatures from other lands. But if the zoo is not run properly it can quickly become a hellhole for its unfortunate occupants and a source of easy money for unscrupulous dealers.

In 1964 I made my first journey to America as a guest of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to publicise a film they had made in Umfolosi game reserve. I saw many zoos. The ones maintained by city councils were usually the epitome of mediocrity unless there was a strong director prepared to fight the bureaucracy. But when I walked through the gates of San Diego Zoo and saw the brilliant display of flamingo, the well-groomed keepers and neat grounds, I knew this was a different kind of zoo.

Years later when San Diego established its new open zoo of 2 000 acres at San Pasqual I made arrangements for them to have 20 white rhino which were among the first to breed in captivity. This was so successful, San Diego would now be happy to sell some back to Natal.

At San Diego I met Sheldon Campbell, at that time a stockbroker deeply involved



in conservation affairs. He later gave up his profession to become an outstanding writer of books on natural history and a devotee of the Zoo. His latest book, *Lifboats to Ararat*, tells the story of the zoo world and San Diego Zoo in particular. It is a fascinating, sometimes sad, sometimes horrifying and at other times hilarious account of animals and people.

There is the tale of a well-known veterinarian who on his first job responded to a call from a nearby zoo. He passed a caged female baboon with enormously swollen, tumescent, dark pink buttocks. As any field man knows

this is the signal of the female's readiness to acquiesce if any male baboon cares to respond.

To the vet who had never before seen the phenomenon the condition was one of "gross contusion requiring immediate surgical intervention". Needless to say, the old-time zookeepers scornfully related the story of "the durned scientist and the baboon" to anyone who would listen. San Diego is one of the best zoos in the world and it was paid a great compliment in its bicentennial year when Australia sent six koala bears there. They are now the only koalas outside of Australia.

Sheldon Campbell's account of the illegal trade in birds, reptiles and animals makes terrible reading. As animals and birds become more rare so the prices rise. Scarlet tanagers, birds no bigger than a mossie, could be bought ten years ago at 10 dollars each. On today's market they cost 150 dollars each. The one-horned Indian rhino has risen from 15 000 dollars to 45 000 dollars; the Javan and Sumatran rhino are beyond price.

In one instance a Japanese gentleman offered a list of 500 animals, such as the snow leopard, the lowland gorilla,

the Malayan tapir and the okapi. Many of these are banned from sale under international convention. He was asking 158 000 dollars for one okapi. Sheldon Campbell says, "Since at the time he didn't have any okapi he was willing to make what stock traders call a short sale, probably in the hope that he could pick some animals up in Zaire, where they reputedly could be had for 100 000 dollars a pair and turn a tidy profit of 216 000 dollars in the process.

In the United States the course of desperation reached its nadir with the incredible

tale of the Philadelphia Reptile Exchange, a story international in scope, both ludicrous and appalling, replete with its own small version of Watergate, and with a multiple death that had it happened to people instead of snakes and lizards would have been considered a most monstrous and reprehensible crime."

To learn more of this reptile Watergate you will have to read Mr Campbell's book. You will not be disappointed. *Lifeboats to Ararat\** is a most important book. It is easy to read and informative.

\*Published by Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London.

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## Sun, snow and sage in the Sierras

IN RENO, Nevada recently I was invited to talk on a programme at a radio station. My friend Bob Dill, a Korean war veteran and a man who knows the history of Nevada, drove me to the station. It was beyond the city limits on the edge of the desert.

We arrived early and Bob Dill suggested taking a walk. We followed a path that led to the hills. The wind blew from the snowy tops of the Sierra mountains and swept through the desert in gusts and eddies.

I could hear it sighing and souging across the hills amongst the green juniper and Ponderosa pines and over the rocky passes. By the time it reached us in the dun coloured sage lands it had lost none of its bite and I was glad of my overcoat.



In the distance there was a snowstorm howling across another part of the desert. It seemed incongruous that in a place so dry and in the summer so hot, snow could fall. On other sections of the Sierras the sun shone brightly with the snow glinting on the high peaks.

Before we had walked more than a few hundred metres Bob pointed out animal and bird tracks that led across the main path. Some were deeply rutted from the continual passage of field mice, jack rabbits, quail and deer.

I crushed a twig of dry sage and as the scent lingered in the air I reflected just how much romance there was associated with the word sage. It conjured up the saga of cowboys and Indians, the Pony Express and the covered wagons moving forever westward.

I remarked on this to Bob Dill and as we rested he talked about the history of Virginia City and how the silver mined from it virtually financed the construction of San Francisco.

He spoke too about the Paiute Indians who had lived in this part of Nevada for thousands of years. Their way of life had been shattered and the psychic shock of the white pioneers' technology was so disastrous that it was a relatively short time before the

whole fabric of the Paiute Indian existence fell apart.

But not before they had inflicted a major defeat on the whites.

In May 1860 a group of whites had been murdered at a place named Williams Station. Without bothering to determine the reason for the Indian attack, which was in retaliation for the stealing of squaws, white miners rode out for vengeance.

Carson City, Silver City and Virginia City all sent volunteers and 105 men in four companies were marshalled under Major Ormsby. The

men followed the Indian trail towards Pyramid Lake which today is a sanctuary for the pelicans that nest on an island.

The Paiutes knew the men were coming and they were prepared to meet them. As Ormsby's men advanced a thin line of braves appeared ahead riding along a ridge just out of rifle range. Ormsby ordered a charge and knew within minutes he had been lured into an ambush.

Paiutes rose from their hiding places and counter charged screaming and yelling, firing rifles and getting in close with tomahawks.

Ormsby was thrown from his horse and an arrow in the chest killed him. His men panicked and shrewdly the Indians exploited the rout and the whites were slaughtered.

As we walked back to the radio station for my interview I remembered the words of a Red Indian named Crowfoot: "What is life. It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is a breath of a buffalo in the winter time. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset."

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## Bush life in the suburbs

"YOU'LL never last in Durban," my friends said. Not only do we last but we have the best of two worlds, Stainbank Nature Reserve during the week and Karkloof in the weekend. Our tiny cottage is appropriately named "Emoyeni" after the wind that sighs through the bamboos and pockets of indigenous forest, a constant reminder of the wilder lands in the north where we once lived.

Bushbuck, the glorious animal of shadows and the night display themselves in open fields within a few metres of the road. Cars, trucks and motorcycles pass and people stand and stare but the bushbuck take no notice and move from one grazing patch to another, showing the startling black and white colouring under their legs. They are so tame that I have to think hard to remember when I last heard



one giving its dog-like bark of alarm, like those wary ones in Umfolosi when they scent a hunting lion or leopard.

One morning I stood watching a family group of buck, doe and infant when to my astonishment I saw Indian mynahs clambering all over them and acting as oxpeckers do, removing ticks. Parks Board officers found that this was indeed the case and it was not only the bushbuck that were deticked by these alien birds, but the zebra and impala too.

There are still remnants of cultivation on the old estate, pineapples, paw-paws and just beyond our front door a small field of mealies. The fruit attracts all sorts of birds, louries and starlings and black collared barbets whose characteristic call reminds me of long cool avenues of fig trees in the Zululand game reserves. Then English sparrows arrive, but their loud chirping is soon lost in the monotonous frog-like calls of the crested barbet.

Sitting outside the cottage one day I watched tiny frets swooping with a whirr of wings near the mealie field. A grey flash darted into the mealies and a vervet monkey emerged with a cob in its mouth. It ran off on all fours paying no attention to the outraged yell of a solitary African hoeing nearby.

In the summer the yellow-billed kites use the long bamboos on the entrance drive as roosting perches. There are moments in the day when the traffic noises are minimal and I hear the melodious whistle, the "inhloeeaaa" which gives them their Zulu name, ringing about the stone courtyard outside my office. Once three circled overhead, call-

ing and casting long shadows on the ground and at the same time a jet from Louis Botha came roaring overhead drowning out the kites' whistling, but the shadows of the jet and the birds ran together for a few moments, symbolic of man's imitation of birds for his knowledge of flight.

In the windless winter nights I can hear the zebra munching kikuyu grass and their deep yodelling calls mingle with the sirens of trains hurrying to Chatsworth. There are sounds too of surf pounding beyond the bluff and bushbabies screams rising to a crescendo. On

moonlight nights the nightjar calls "Good-Lord-deliver-us" in the tall trees, competing with the steady song of the crickets. There is a scent too of wild and cultivated plants, of animals, wood-smoke and mown grass. The giraffe that were recently introduced are settling down and I saw one briefly against a background of buildings.

All this should be incongruous but it isn't, it is a blending of the wild with the suburb, a subtle adaptation. This priceless gift of the Stainbank family to the people of Natal can never adequately be paid for.

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## As old as time itself



FOR 22 years while I was in the Natal Parks Board I kept a journal. Sometimes I cursed it because it demanded so much of my time. Famous authors have varied opinions about diaries.

Somerset Maugham said that it was worthwhile periodically because it retained the freshness of the moment. I agree with him. A journal or

a diary is like a mirror too. It gives you an opportunity to release the creative juices as well as the vanity and spitefulness within yourself and re-reading it years later, you see the other part of yourself and you are pleased or horrified.

I was re-reading an old Umfolosi entry last week about a white rhino that was

dying on Mpila hill just below the present rest camp. I was glad of the record because it brought the whole scene back with great vividness. The rhino was a young bull that had been in a fight with an older bull. Magqubu and I went down to see what we could do. But the animal was dying.

The horn of an angry rhino can be a dangerous weapon. The young bull had deep gashes on the back legs and along the flanks but the brisket wound was the worst. Tortoise-shell ticks crawled all over the back and those in the soft flesh were horribly bloated.

As we stood watching its breathing became slower and more irregular but when the wind changed, carrying our scent towards the prostrate beast, it reacted immediately and knocked its head on the ground in an effort to get up. The grass had been flattened for metres around as it had rolled and struggled during the night. Rain started to splatter down, strengthening the smell of the dying beast. There was the odour of wet dung but with it was the faint smell of death, unmistakable to those who have once smelt it.

We discussed shooting the animal to put it out of its misery but something stopped me. Perhaps it was because I realised that under natural conditions this is how it would have died. Its fight with the other rhino and everything that led up to it was a perfectly natural incident.

For thousands of years long before man appeared on earth, ancestors of this animal were fighting and dying like this one today. Who were we to come along

and hasten its end. Man has interfered with everything in nature. This was a game reserve and this rhino had a right to die as its ancestors did.

As we stood in contemplative silence a monkey chattered loudly in the valley and a puffback shrike whistled. The wind grew stronger and roared through the trees and around the rocks, bending the red themeda grass.

The rhino died at sunset. We walked across the few metres separating us to look at it. It must have been in a momentous battle for its jaw was badly fractured too.

As we left I thought how in the darkness the hyena would lift its head and smell the decaying flesh. So would the jackal. They would come padding silently out of the

bush, slipping like shadows past tall trees to feed on the toes and other soft parts of the body.

The next day as the sun rose it would be the turn of the vultures, taking off into the thermals and circling until one spotted the inert form. Then they would swoop lower, circling and circling, casting moving shadows on the ground, their primary feathers swishing in the wind.

But the pied crow would already be there, strutting on the carcass and picking out the eyes. Later it would be the turn of the insects who would come to the feast and lay their eggs and a vast cycle would begin again, and continue along a path that man is only beginning to learn about.

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## Thoughts on a glorious morning

I HAVE recently returned from another visit to the Philippine Islands in connection with the conservation of the tamaraw, a diminutive wild buffalo on the endangered species list. One clear morning I flew with two senior officials to the island of Mindoro looking for areas where the tamaraw might still be surviving.

It was like putting parts of a jigsaw together. We landed on a flat ledge on one of the volcanic mountain peaks. It was a good feeling to be up there with country stretching in all directions and in the distance the shimmering dark

blue of the South China Sea. I was reminded of the poet — Blake I think — who wrote: "Great things happen when man and mountain meet, that do not happen when jostling in the street." It was a Sunday and a fitting moment to give thanks to the Creator just for being alive.

I could hear the "tintinriok" bleating song of a grass warbler and the deep bubbling call of the coucal. Pacific swallows flew low above the grass tops hawking insects, and down below in the depths of a green forest an animal screamed. These few moments of being on top

of the mountain was the kind of experience one treasures in the mind for a long time.

I thought how it was by the strangest set of circumstances that I had come to be in the Philippines involved in the tamaraw conservation. Old Magqubu once told me, "You do not take a step in life that the spirits are not with you." Who could then deny that on this glorious morning with a view that encompassed grasslands, forests, streams and rivers, that the spirit of General Lindbergh, the man who did so much for Philippine conservation, was not there watching our progress with the tamaraw. So in traditional Zulu fashion I thanked the spirits too.

Then the sound of human voices drifted down from above and I saw the tiny figures of the Batangan mountain people watching us. After a short while they began descending with enviable agility and grace. My companion Oscar Trinidad talked to them.

They were members of a group of about a hundred people who lived in the nearby mountains and there were others watching us, but afraid to come down. The three that we spoke to were a family group of father, mother and son. The man's name was Igme. He said they never went beyond "there", and he pointed to the next valley, a distance of no more than ten kilometres.

They gave us much information about the tamaraw and where we would be likely to find them. I enjoyed just looking at these people with their lithe well muscled bodies. They smoked tiny pipes and carried a smoulder-



ing log. When we left them and took off in the helicopter they huddled close together and waved to us. Soon they were tiny specs on the landscape.

I thought what an enormous gap there was between their culture and ours. Who were the happier people? Our ultimate weapon was the hydrogen bomb, theirs was the bow and arrow. We built enormous cathedrals to the glory of God and spoke to him only on Sundays. They were aware of God's presence all the time.

As we build bigger cities so more people want to go back and experience nature. Even the most urbanised city dweller clings to the earth.

You only have to look at the pot plants in the humblest dwellings in Manila, London or New York to see how we do not want to lose our roots.

As Olaus Murie said: "What if a generation comes along that does not know about original country, no longer experiences the yearning for wild country, for deep primeval forests, wilderness canoe country, high mountains, the wide expanse of desert?"

The concern for endangered species — the tamaraw for example — is also the concern for that wild part of our own nature. If we ever succeed in eliminating everything wild in the world, it will not be long before we too disappear.



## Another turn of the wheel for the Zulus?

ON AN evening when the chill wind of autumn swept down the Karkloof valley, I went to Magqubu's hut. He sat warming himself in his kitchen and smiled when I squatted near the fire to warm my hands. "In Zululand it is still hot but here the frost has already hit the grass and trees," he said.

We sat talking as we so often do when I return from a journey. I go to him because his sense of humour and common sense bring me down to earth. He told me what had happened while I was away. The girls had killed a big puff-adder near the wood pile. A cow had given birth and three fowls had been killed. "It's that chakide — the slender tailed mongoose. I want to kill it before it finishes off all the fowls," he said. I felt a little guilty because I had admired the small beast sneaking past the vegetable garden into the tangle of shrubs near the dining room. They are devils with poultry but they do so much good too.

There was a lull in the conversation and I watched the flames reflected in Magqubu's calm handsome face. The paraffin storm lantern spluttered and a piece of wet wood hissed. The wind rustled in the trees outside and a gust blew a goose feather into the hut. It fluttered to the floor and Magqubu picked it up.

He stared at it for a long time then he cleared his throat as he always does before an

important pronouncement. "A falling feather once decided a big battle in Zululand," he said. I grunted politely, wondering what was going to come next.

The old man began speaking fast. His Shakespearian Zulu was way beyond my limited knowledge but we have known each other for so long we have an intuitive understanding between us.

He told me the story of one of the biggest internecine struggles in the history of the Zulu people when Cetshwayo and Mbuyazi, the two sons of Mpande, fought each other on the slopes of Ndongadasuka hill above the Tugela. The throne of Zululand was at stake.

As he became more excited Magqubu gesticulated and mimed the warriors of Cetshwayo rattling their shields, stamping their feet and roaring out their war cries. Then he stood still imitating Mbuyazi's men and described how they were fewer in number but full of confidence.

"It was a cold wet day and wind dripped from the long grass. Now it is sugarcane that grows there," he said.

He showed me how Mbuyazi had a feather in his hair and a gust of wind had blown it away. For the men of Mbuyazi this was a bad sign and a muttering swept the ranks. Then Cetshwayo's impi struck and Mbuyazi's people were pushed down the slopes towards the Tugela. Women

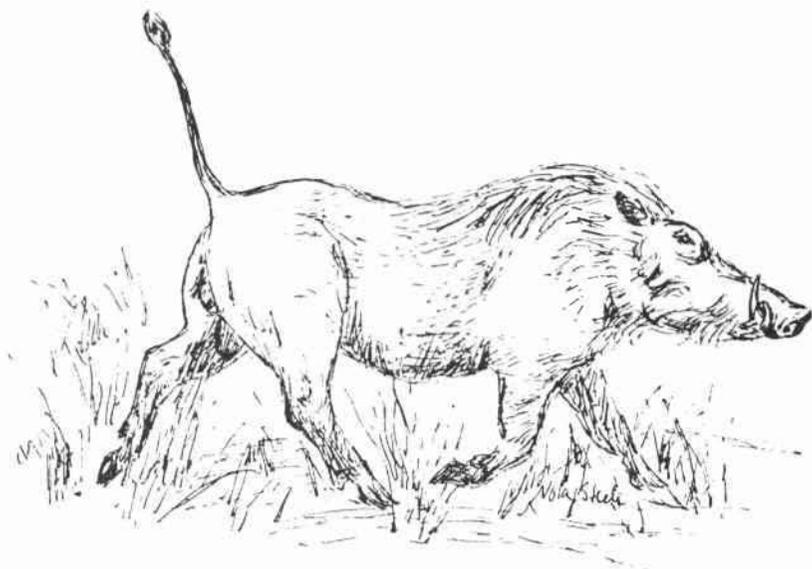


and children were slaughtered alongside their men. The assegai respected no one.

People jumped off the cliffs and tried to swim the Tugela. Many bodies were swept down to the sea and the sharks. For weeks afterwards the vultures fed. The small tributary leading into the Tugela on the Mandini side of the road became known as the Mitambo after the bones that were washed into it.

It was not necessary for Magqubu to tell me how one feather could do so much to decide life, death, the fate of a man and a nation.

As I walked back to the house in the dark I remembered that it was also on the banks of the Tugela river that poor Cetshwayo had received the ultimatum from the British, who in the end defeated and imprisoned him. For Cetshwayo, the wheel turned a full circle on the banks of the Tugela. Now perhaps the wheel is turning again.



## Suddenly the peace was shattered

I WAS in the Kruger National Park last week relaxing outside a rondavel overlooking the Sabi river. The winter colours are stealing over the landscape and on a slightly overcast day they can be compared to a New England fall. But here there is far more life than in America.

Go-away birds, the curse of the old hunters, screeched from the tops of mkia trees and purple-crested louries flew between the sycamore figs, brilliant red flashing on the underneath of their wings. Glossy starlings with vivid purple plumage strutted beneath a jet of water and drank from small pools. A troop of baboons walked across an open glade, picking up roots, overturning stones and tearing old bark from fallen trees in their search for insects.

I heard impala males blowing, snorting and giving their long guttural calls so typical of the bushveld in May. Impala does came down a game path which meandered through phragmites reeds to a sandbank jutting into the river. They approached the water nervously, jumping for no apparent reason, their legs splayed and their reddish-brown necks stretched to the limit. Their fear of crocodiles was not misplaced because earlier in the morning I had seen the periscopic eyes and tell-tale ripple of a crocodile swimming upstream.

A pied kingfisher hovered near the impala, black and white wings glittering in the early morning sunlight. Then it dived, and the noise of the splash was enough to send the impala into high leaps of

alarm and I saw bodies flashing through the green reeds until a leading doe halted and the rest turned and made their way back to the water. But the panic was infectious and time passed before the francolin stopped screeching and the reed warblers settled down. Then tranquility returned.

But this peace was shattered. The sounds of the wild were drowned as cars left the camp. People jabbered, children shouted and a group sang without tune to guitar music.

In my youth Skukuza had been a small camp in a vast wilderness. Now the staff numbers over 1 500 and their facilities — swimming bath, school, church and even a golf course — are like a suburb. Long lines of rondavels

accommodate visitors and the auxiliary services, the restaurant, self-service cafeteria and supermarket shut out the wilderness that people once came to see, hear and smell. The Kruger National Park is still a great place but thank God they have started wilderness trails because the big camps will soon become small towns.

We in Natal have until recently been able to look down our noses at this sort of development. But the bush

telegraph tells me that Hluhluwe game reserve is going to be re-built. I believe that all but essential staff should be outside the reserve, and so should any new rest camp. Let's leave the interior of our Natal parks free of suburban development.

Colonel Stevenson-Hamilton, the man who really built the Kruger National Park, wrote the following in his last report when he retired in 1947. "Posterity will know whether this generation used

its power to conserve this one remaining piece of unspoiled nature as it has always been, or whether it permitted it to be turned into a glorified zoological and botanical garden, dotted with scientific experimental stations of every kind, hotels and public recreation grounds, preliminaries to the liquidation of the last vestige of wildlife."

Let Natal take note: Peripheral development should be the order of the day.

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## The "father" of the board

I SAW Terry Wilks's biography on Douglas Mitchell so I bought a copy and took it to Southbroom for the old man to autograph. He is now 84 and the years have taken their toll but his arms are still strong and he goes into the fields every day.

When he speaks about world affairs and South African politics he is the equal of any of our politicians. His icy blue eyes bore into you as he expounds upon a point and his voice is as powerful as I have ever known it. He has a memory that younger men would envy.

Most South Africans know him as a controversial politician; a man who led the United Party in Natal, but there are other sides to Douglas Mitchell. He is a conservationist par excellence.

For the 22 years I was in the Natal Parks Board I saw Douglas Mitchell guide the progress of the organisation

that was his creation. Very little escaped those keen blue eyes. If he was in doubt about anything that was going on in the reserves he would get into his car and make an inspection in loco.

Once I took him out in a boat on Kosi Bay and he remembered an entrance to the top lake that I had long forgotten. Another time when he was over 70 he climbed onto a horse and rode with a group of us across Umfolosi game reserve to see for himself some disputed terrain.

He never drank or smoked and he has tremendous stamina. I remember in Ndumu game reserve when he was taken gravely ill and a doctor feared for his life. We radioed for an aeroplane and I flew out with him for Durban but we were forced to land at Hluhluwe village.

I got a car and drove him to the game reserve. He was semi-conscious but when we had travelled a short distance

inside the reserve he asked, "Where am I now?"

"Hluhluwe game reserve, sir," I said.

It gave him new life, he began a miraculous recovery and by evening he was sitting up and regaling us with tales of trading days on horseback in Pondoland. The stories were interspersed with hilarious snippets in Zulu which showed his sound understanding of the language.

In the book there is a story about Douglas Mitchell bringing the Prime Minister J. C. Strijdom and Paul Sauer and Blackie Swart to Umfolosi game reserve. Let me add the following to Terry Wilks's story.

Jim Feely and I met the party at the newly built Mpila rest camp.

"I want the PM to see white rhino," Mr Mitchell said in a stern voice.

"There has been a fire on Mtunzini and many rhino have left the reserve," I replied a little uneasily.

"Well get them back," was his curt command.

My heart sank and I said to Jim Feely, "Who the hell does he think I am, the bloody Pied Piper?"

We had game guards running all over the country and at the end of a day had shown the Ministers 80 white rhino. That evening Mr Mitchell took me aside and said kindly, "Sorry you had to be a rhino herdboys but we made some good friends for the reserves."

We had our disagreements and I fought back, arguing my point of view. In the board room it was an unequal

struggle but in the field where there was time to talk we seldom disagreed. He was one of the few Board members who understood why we wanted a wilderness area in Umfolosi. It was a concept that fitted in with his own philosophy.

In 1964 when I became Chief Conservator, Zululand, he backed me to the hilt and in 1970 against the objections of most of the Board he insisted that I go overseas to sell white rhino. I was suddenly a game ranger turned salesman. I was determined not to disappoint Douglas Mitchell

and in two months sold more white rhino than had been sold in the previous ten years. When I came back all he said to me was, "Good work Ian." From him it was high praise.

Finally another story told in the book which I'm sure Douglas Mitchell still chuckles about. Addressing a meeting in his constituency, he told his audience that while he was a man of peace, destiny had decreed he should constantly become involved in serious discord. "I must say," a voice mused loudly from the back of the hall, "you co-operate rather well with destiny."



## Take to the trees

WINTER is with us in the Karkloof and when the sun goes down it gets cold very quickly. I had helped Magqubu bring our few cows from the field and then sat talking to him in his kitchen. He cooked an evening meal of pumpkin mixed with putu.

As he stirred the three-legged pot with a wooden spoon he regulated his fire as well as any housewife with an electric range, then with everything to his satisfaction we got talking about his early days in Zululand and some of the dangerous animals, such as black rhino.

"Obejane. They are not animals you take any chances with," Magqubu said with feeling.

"You don't think they would actually kill people?" I teased him, knowing his reaction would result in at least one good story.

"Hau. Your memory is short," he snorted. "I do not remember you standing still when we were chased at Mpafa or on the Manzimbo-mvu, and there was that night patrol at Nqoloti when we went to listen for the first roars of the lion in 1958."

He leaned back against a bag of mealies which he had grown and reaped himself. "Of course they have killed and injured people. But the black rhinos that become really dangerous are the ones that have been injured by people like poachers who wounded them with the old muzzle loaders," he said.

He described how these black rhino crossing a footpath and smelling a human would actually follow the scent and pad quietly along behind the unsuspecting victim. "They have good hearing too," he said and explained that was why he strongly disliked people talking on trail.

A really *kwaai* black rhino might lie in wait and charge at the last moment giving the trail party no time to get behind a tree let alone climb one. But the majority of black rhino would run from the scent of humans, or if they charged, a loud enough noise would make them turn.

"But if it keeps on coming," Magqubu smiled, "you had better be up a tree."

Then he told me a story about a black rhino in the Hluhluwe game reserve in the early 1920s that had given him and the head game guard Mali Mdhletshe a lot of trouble. He said it used to come almost every night to their camp just as it was getting dark and charge them, scattering pots, blankets and clothing. They reported it to Vaughan Kirby the game

conservator at that time, who pooh-pooed the story and accused them of exaggeration.

Magqubu and Mali Mdhletshe got so tired of being chased that they built a platform in some trees and a rickety ladder to climb up to it every night. Then on one of his periodic patrols to the reserve Vaughan Kirby walked to the camp they now called "iStairs."

In the afternoon Vaughan Kirby pitched his tent, put up his stretcher and prepared to settle down for the evening. As it got dark the two game guards climbed the ladder to their platform. Vaughan Kirby rejected their invitation to join them with a laugh and a reference to panicky old women.

"We had no sooner laid out our blankets when we heard ubejane snort across the valley," Magqubu said. Slowly the black rhino came towards the camp, pushing over saplings and feeding on snapped branches.

"Mfoholoza was now in the tent and we heard him lie down. We warned him again

but he just laughed." Magqubu said. "When the rhino was about 30 metres away it realised that Mfoholoza's tent was there. For a few minutes it was quiet."

Magqubu cocked his head and imitated the rhino slowly sniffing the air. Then it came. *We mame*. The feet pounded on the footpath and Mfoholoza heard it crashing towards him."

Magqubu giggled as he described Vaughan Kirby's ungraceful exit. The rhino stopped at the tent and with quick movements of its head uprooted the pegs, smashed the poles and ripped the canvas.

"What about Mfoholoza?" I asked.

"He was hiding behind a tree swearing at the ubejane," Magqubu said wiping tears from his eyes as he laughed remembering Vaughan Kirby's language. "After that we had no trouble because whenever Mfoholoza was in doubt about anything we told him, we reminded him of the ubejane at iStairs."

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## A lesson in my own backyard

MY neighbour Ian Forrester 'phoned me one weekend from Durban and asked me to take a message to his induna. It is always a pleasure to go to "Ehlatini". I believe it is one of the finest houses in Natal.

It is a stone and thatch house situated on a small

plateau in the Karkloof forest and was originally built for Punch Barlow then bought by Ronald Butcher and is now owned by Ian Forrester. No trees have been cut down for "the view", a most unusual phenomenon nowadays. In spring when the azaleas are in bloom there is a marvellous

display of colour against the dark green forest. Every American friend I have taken to see the house has immediately wanted to buy it.

I took Laurens van der Post there and he sat silently near the guest house staring across the valley to the forest. Two male nsimango monkeys were giving their booming calls and the sound echoed all around us. Vervets chattered in the distance and Cape robins sang. Laurens said it was like listening to a symphony concert only more moving because of the greater variety of sound, and with the forest acting as a huge amplifier.

As I went to my car Magqubu greeted me. I suggested he came with me, and he agreed but said we should walk not ride. "You see nothing when you drive," he said with undeniable logic. So we began walking. I was busy with my own thoughts and took little notice of the old man until I realised I was missing out on a remarkable natural history lesson.

"Look at this," Magqubu said pointing at a tiny trail across the road. "These are ants. They have found something dead." He searched in the grass and there was a dead shrew swarming with ants.

"You see that plant," he said. "We Zulus in the old days used to make tea from the leaves."

We reached the bottom of our drive and he stopped for a few moments and listened. "Do you hear the nhlava — the honey guide?" he asked.

"No," I said.

"Well he called so there must be a hive near here." He looked around and pointed



into the sun. "Nango. There they go," he said.

I stared in the direction he pointed but saw nothing. Patiently he kept on pointing until I too saw a bee flash past and go into a tiny hole in an old gum tree. Magqubu took me closer and said, "Now smell." Sure enough there was the heavy scent of honey. He sang out the praise names of the honey guide.

"You are the bird that calls a person to accompany it to honey. You also call the honey badger" (and here Magqubu imitated the hissing clicking call of the ratel.) "Inside the honeycombs are the grubs that you like and we and the honey badger help you to get them." The old man sang a little then danced

and stamped his feet and shouted out, "We know that if we take all the honeycombs, the next time you will lead us to a black mamba or a black rhino."

He smiled and we walked on, he pointing out the delicate spoor of a grey duiker that had crossed the road the previous evening and the wide marks in the sand of a passing puffadder. When we reached the forest we walked in silence until he saw a tree which he said was an important one. "This is the tree that fulfils the same function as the mpafa tree in Zululand. It is with a branch of this tree that the local people go to fetch the spirits of their relatives who have died away from home."

Further along the path I heard a brushing sound and I stopped. Magqubu said without hesitation, "It is the nsimango monkeys moving through the forest." "But how do you know?" I asked. "Well they are heavier than the nkau," he said. He saw

the doubt in my eyes so he motioned me to sit and we waited until the forest was still. Then there was a slight sound and Magqubu nodded his head towards a big tree. I watched it carefully until a dark grey tail flicked. It was the nsimango. The old man

just smiled when I shook my head in amazement.

I delivered the message and we walked home with Magqubu humming a song he used to sing as a herdboys. I had been given a lesson in my own back yard.

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## Why I don't allow lamps

ON trail when night falls I am often asked "Why don't you have any lamps?" and I tell the following story.

This is a wilderness area where man should only walk, canoe or ride on horseback away from the sights and sounds of human installations. It is our job to try to keep it as wild and primitive as possible — hard work in this twentieth century where the battle cry of humanity is development.

Now if I allowed a storm lantern in the camp it would mean having to carry paraffin in every time we came. People would soon become irritated and ask why a drum could not be brought to the camp. So a 44 gallon drum would be rolled down the river and everyone would be happy for a while. But when it was empty another one would have to be brought and people would say, "How silly it is to roll it down the river, why don't you construct a small road, just a track, and bring it in by vehicle."

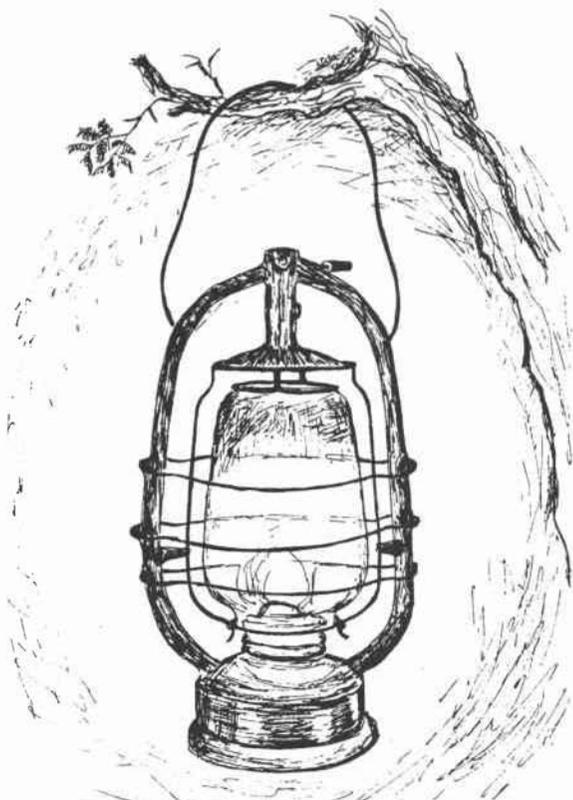
So this would be the next step.

Then someone would ask, "These storm lanterns don't give much light and seeing there is ample paraffin why don't you have a little engine,

with just enough horsepower to light six electric bulbs?"

So an engine — only a little one — would be brought in and there would be more light in the camp.

Before long another person would say, "It seems so silly sitting on logs around the campfire, what harm would a few deck chairs do, as long as they were green and fitted in with the environment. We



would be able to read in comfort late into the night and not have any of this keeping watch alone. And we could have a guitar and sing songs around the fire. It would help to drown out the noises of the lion and the rhino — which can be jolly frightening.”

Later, someone would say, “Only bringing seven people on trail is a bit mean. Why don’t you double the number and all those who can’t walk too well could be brought by vehicle, along the little dirt road, offloaded a hundred metres from the camp so they have to walk the last bit and be in keeping with the wilderness atmosphere.”

The pace starts to quicken.

“You can’t have people going behind trees and bushes, it’s very unhygienic and also the thorns scratch which makes it uncomfortable. Why not a little pit drop latrine with a wooden seat to fit into the environment.”

So a lavatory is erected. Soon there would be complaints about the smell and a nice red brick building would arise in the bush, plastic seats, white walls and waterborne sewerage.

“Well, seeing that we have a lavatory,” a newcomer will say, “why on earth do we have to sleep on the hard ground, with smoke blowing in our faces and all those ants and other nuns running over us in the night. It’s dangerous, snakes could come too, why can’t just two little rondavels be built, one for the men and one for the women. Very simple in style with camp beds and some nice rugs to add colour to the drab bush. A radio and gramophone should be installed because people are getting tired of guitar music and songs around

the campfire. Now, there should be no television set, that really would be carrying things a bit far.”

Years pass and there is a big camp with restaurants, supermarket and swimming pool. It boasts of sleeping a thousand people a night and tarred roads have been constructed so no one is bothered by dust.

Now comes the final act. Someone says the camp is too big and sprawling, and it costs a lot of money to maintain. Buildings should go upwards and not be spread around. So plans are drawn

up and thought is given to the birds and the animals and the wilderness atmosphere. At last the big announcement and headlines in newspapers: a 40 storey building is to be built and in order that it should be in keeping with the wild atmosphere it will have a thatched roof to preserve the rustic appearance.

This I explain, is the reason for not allowing lamps.

Is all this improbable? Wildly exaggerated? Not on your sweet nelly it isn’t. A skyscraper with a thatched roof is planned for the north coast. How soon before it’s the game reserves?

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## Happy settlers Down Under

AT THE end of the World Wilderness Congress in Cairns I flew to the Northern Territory with Roger Whiteley, a former MEC in Natal.

Soon after taking off the dense, lush rain forest where clean streams cascaded down into the deep blue of the Pacific Ocean gave way to the hard leaf forests of Northern Queensland. These spread like a green sea dotted with rising kranztes that glow red in the morning and even- ing light. It is under the overhangs of these kranztes that a wealth of aboriginal rock art lies, much of it yet to be seen by white men.

We flew for hours without seeing a sign of human habitation then Roger clutched my arm in great excitement. “Look,” he said. I looked out

of the window and saw the thin brown ribbon of road. “The road?” I asked. “No, no,” Roger said. “There’s a car on it.”

Australia is a big country.

In the early 1800s a few Indonesian buffalo were introduced into the Northern Territory by passing Asiatic fishermen. It was a release into an ideal habitat, a hot, humid land of riverine forests, wide rivers and swamps that stretch from horizon to horizon. It was peopled by scattered tribes of aborigines, by the wallaby, the kangaroo and the dingo, and there was nothing to stop the increase of the buffalo. In the swamps, billabongs and rivers, the giant saltwater crocodile that grows to a length of 10 metres took a few animals but it was insignificant predation.

Today no one knows exactly how many buffalo there are but the estimate is a million or more. Over 15 000 are shot each year and the meat is used mainly for pet food. From the air, parts of the landscape look like craters of the moon because of the huge wallows made by the buffalo in the dry periods, when they move in their hundreds of thousands to the shrinking pools of water.

It is the policy of the government to wipe out the buffalo because of the damage they are doing to a fragile ecosystem, but when I looked at the vastness of the country I wondered if it would ever be possible to eliminate them altogether.

Everything in the Northern Territory is on the macro scale. A young policeman I spoke to said that he personally was responsible for 4 000 square kilometres with only two aboriginal trackers to help him. In one aboriginal reserve of over 2 000 square kilometres there are only 60 people.

The aboriginals are a gentle, spiritual people still immersed in their history, called by the poetic name of "dreamtime." Many of their myths and legends are strikingly similar to those of our bushmen and African people. Fire is said to have been discovered by a bird or an animal who knew its value and hid it from all the other creatures.

Eventually it was taken by trickery and then a huge runaway bushfire spread from one side of the land to the other. In this way the use of fire by man became universal. Because the dead have no fire, it is in the darkness that the spirits live and aboriginals



will not walk in the night without a fire stick.

The country is much like parts of Africa so it was not surprising to find an ex-Rhodesian, Rob Mann and his wife Wendy running a hunting safari 400 kilometres south of Darwin. To begin with the local Australians laughed at their efforts but now hunters from all over the world come to bag one or two buffalo. What the Australians regarded as a pest, Rob

Mann has turned into an economic asset. Germans, Swiss, Scandinavians and Americans are jetting in and paying over 4 000 dollars for a week's hunting. No more than 75 buffalo are taken off the land in a year, but it brings much needed money into the territory.

The Northern Territory government is backing Rob Mann and a new industry, an African export run by white Africans, has taken root.

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## A great drought

THE other evening I sat beside the fire talking to old Magqubu about drought. Our water supply has dwindled to a trickle and the soil in the fields is baked hard by the sun. For the Karkloof this is most unusual. Magqubu spoke about the great drought in Zululand of 1931-32.

"It was so dry," he said, "the cattle of Chief Mtubatuba were brought from the eastern shores of Lake St Lucia to the Ongeni hills between Hluhlwe and Umfologi game reserves."

This is where Magqubu's family had their kraal. His father and grandfather were born there and it was where Magqubu had hunted, or herded goats as a young boy. He knew it intimately.

"But what about nagana, the tsetse fly?" I asked.

"It was there," Magqubu said matter of factly. "Chief Mtubatuba had the choice of letting the cattle die of hunger at the Lake or taking a chance with nagana." He then gave a lengthy resume of the history of cattle in the area from the rinderpest of 1897

to the time when successive nagana attacks wiped out his family's herds and they were reduced to getting goats.

"We planted our mealies and mabela in September 1931 and there was no rain. By January 1932 the ground was bare and the cattle dying. People began dying too because of starvation, they did not have the strength to fetch water or even wood to make a fire. Then there was a plague of fleas. They came in their millions — you could not walk anywhere. They swarmed over the ankles and bit deep into the flesh. In the night we had to be careful when we slept that they did not crawl into our mouths."

"What about the game?" I asked.

"They died out," Magqubu said. "Waterbuck, buffalo, warthog and white rhino suffered most. I saw thirty dead white rhino and many more horns were brought from Umfolosi to Mtwazi (Captain Potter) at Hluhluwe. Mountain reedbuck and common reedbuck survived on



the hills because there was grass. It was at this time that some white rhino moved from Umfolosi to Hluhluwe game reserve. They came along the hills from Sitole to Ntabamhlope and Nombali."

The old man was quiet for a few minutes then he said, "Other things happened too. In January or February 1932 I was preparing my breakfast at Hluhluwe and was about to put some meal into a pot of boiling water when it suddenly rocked violently

and the cat ran out of the hut." He imitated how he had staggered out of the hut and seen people falling and groping on the ground, yelling and shouting. "The trees were shaking and water in the Hluhluwe river moved backwards and forwards. There was a loud clicking sound under the ground and the game ran everywhere, calling frantically."

This was the great earthquake that left many reminders on our Natal landscape.

"In December 1932 it rained," Magqubu said. "But there were no cattle left to plough the lands, so the people used hoes. Mealies and mabela were planted and by March they had ripened well and we all spoke of a good harvest."

Magqubu was silent and he stared into the fire as though it would bring back the hard memories of those days of the 1930s.

"Yes," he said slowly. "We spoke of a good harvest. Then the locusts came."

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## Where are all the young men going?

LIKE thousands of other parents in South Africa we welcomed our younger son back for his first leave from the army. The days passed all too swiftly and then it was time for him to go back.

I sat with him in the old market square in Pietermaritzburg while he waited for the bus that would take him to his camp. We laughed and joked about his experien-

ces and compared them to my own, but the pain of parting was unspoken. I thought of him as a tiny child as he toddled on the banks of the White Umfolosi trying to imitate warthog. His first schooldays were in a rondavel at Hluhluwe. Outside was an erythrina tree with bright red flowers that the bushbuck and duiker came to feed on, a sight the children never tired of watching.

I remembered him going to prep school, excited yet afraid, then it was high school. Each time he returned bigger and with more confidence. Now he was in the army.

The bus came and I watched him walk across the square, his uniform fitted his tall frame and in the short time he had been away his shoulders had broadened. Soon he was out of sight but beyond him I saw in silhouette the war



monuments of the Langalibalele, the Anglo-Zulu War and two world wars, stark reminders of our history.

I sat for awhile by myself and asked the question that parents have been asking since time began. How many more generations before there is true peace among men?

All that evening I asked myself the question. Why do we kill each other, when will there be no more wars, when will there be real peace?

From this same Market Square my great-grandfather had left in 1856 with a troop of Natal Carbineers to chase after the unfortunate Bushmen in the Drakensberg. A great uncle had also left from here on the Langalibalele rebellion expedition

in 1873 and had ridden with the Carbineers up the Hlatimba pass and along the berg trying to stop Langalibalele from escaping to Basutoland.

My grandfather had been here too in the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 and gone north to Fort Pearson and then to the battle at Inyezane. He was here again in the South African War. My mother's brother had been killed when he was 19 in the mud of Flanders in the 1914-1918 war, and cousins had died in the Western Desert and Europe in 1939-1945.

I had gone myself at 17 to Italy and seen cities ruined, people starving and thousands of white crosses in war cemeteries of young, wonderful soldiers full of the zest for life who did not return to the beloved homeland.

Generation after generation has marched against each other armed with stones, then spears, then bows and arrows, then guns, then cannon and now the ultimate, nuclear warfare. Even this is no deterrent and we continue with our small wars. Once we hoped that when women became rulers there would be peace. But has this too proved to be an illusion?

In 1941 when Europe was burning and the armies of the world were locked in desperate battle, Carl Gustav Jung wrote the following from his home in the high mountains of Switzerland: "One must never look to the things that ought to change. The main question is how we change ourselves."

Here, I felt, was the answer to my question.

## The croc's toothbrush?

FROM all over Africa there are stories about the crocodile bird. It is said to live near the crocodile and act like a toothpick, keeping the teeth free of pieces of meat or fish, an intriguing story recorded in early Roman and Greek literature.

Many of the early white explorers in central Africa claimed to have seen it among the crocodiles on the banks of the great rivers.

In my early days in Zululand I was always on the look out for this mythical bird. I was relieving a ranger on Lake St Lucia in 1952 and patrolled the many rivers leading into the lake in an old leaking wooden clinker built boat.

At the mouth of the Mpate river I could always be sure of seeing a group of big crocodile in the shadows of the mangrove trees. They lay with their yellow mouths open and white teeth glinting menacingly. I watched day after day but saw no birds come to pick their teeth.

Higher up the lake on the eastern shores I searched for the fresh water inlets that were fed from the Magazamo swamp and the pans. Crocodiles always congregated here because although they could survive in salt water, they needed fresh water to drink. On one long sandy beach fringed by dune forest I saw some birds near crocodile nesting grounds.

These were the water dikkop whose high pitched wailing whistles warned the crocodile of approaching danger and the crocs would imme-

diately slide into the water. The female crocodile while lying on her nest of eggs would chase the monitor lizards off as they came searching for her buried eggs or those of the water dikkop that nested nearby. But I never saw the water dikkop pecking at any teeth.

Two years later I was in the Ndumu game reserve with my friend Ken Tinley. The Pongolo and Usutu rivers rise in the mountains and flow across the plains below the Lebombo mountains then meet inside the Ndumu reserve. In flood months they spill over their banks to fill the great pans of Nyamithi and Banzi, providing a wild and beautiful habitat for birds, crocodiles and hippos.

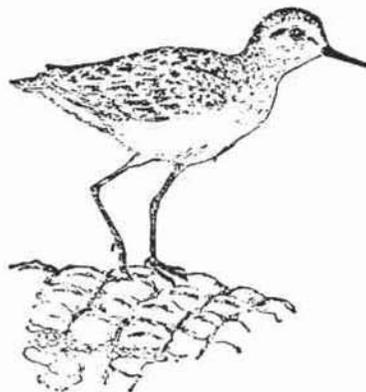
Ken and I were catching tiger fish one morning as the mists rose above the fever trees. I saw a water tortoise waddle out onto a sandbank. I idly focused my binoculars and at that moment a common sandpiper with its characteristic bobbing walk went to the turtle and pecked at something. I excitedly pointed this out to Ken and

we watched the bird picking leeches off the turtle's neck. This immediately posed the question: Do crocodiles have leeches too?

We were out early the next morning, a cold drizzly day not good for crocodiles, but the sun came through the clouds later and the crocodiles did the high walk onto the warm sandbanks. All day we watched sandpipers feeding nearby. At dusk one sandpiper dashed towards a crocodile, stopping to pick up something from the ground.

I moved forward for a better look and all the crocodiles except one slid into the water. The remaining one had a black spot on its throat and I saw it drop to the ground. I ran forward and yelled with excitement, the croc nearly did a back somersault with shock. We picked up the black object. It was a bloated leech.

Two years passed before I actually saw the common sandpiper picking leeches off a crocodile near its mouth. Is this little wader the origin of stories that have come down the centuries?



## A magnificent misfit

MANY great men stand out in the pages of history of the United Kingdom. Political leaders like Churchill, explorers like Captain Cook, writers and poets such as H. G. Wells and Rupert Brooke.

But some of the most fascinating men were the misfits in British society. One was Colonel T. E. Lawrence, romantically known as Lawrence of Arabia, who led the Arab revolt in World War I. Another was Archie Belaney who became a member of the Ojibway Indian people of Canada and was known as "He who walks by night, Grey Owl."

I can remember as a young boy on the Transvaal highveld lighting a candle in the early hours of the morning to read another chapter of one of Grey Owl's books before having to get up and go to dreaded school. Books like "Pilgrims of the Wild," and "Men of the last Frontier," enthralling stories of the wilderness of Canada.

From the first to the last page I was in those huge jack pine forests of Canada. I saw the giant moose, heard the blue jays chattering and in the distance there was the wailing cry of the loon. I heard the wolves call too, their deep, wild and melancholy howls echoing along the ridges of tall hills.

And in my mind's eye I saw the Northern lights and the Red Indians with feathered head dresses dancing to the tapping of the tom-toms. So great was his power of description that when I actually visited Canada I felt as though I had known it all before.



Grey Owl learnt his field craft from the Ojibway. He could shoot, trap and hunt better than most men and earned a hard living moving long distances from one hunting ground to another.

He married an Iroquois Indian girl named Anahareo. One day a wounded lynx crawled away from Grey Owl towards Anahareo. He quickly killed it with an axe but when he looked into the eyes of his wife he saw the same dumb misery he had seen in the eyes of animals dying in his traps.

Later they rescued two beaver kittens and this was the turning point in Grey Owl's life as a trapper. The

beaver kittens that were like the elusive spirit of the wild lands charmed Grey Owl and Anahareo with their antics. Grey Owl became a champion of the beaver, and just in time because they were on their way to extinction.

From trapping, Grey Owl turned to writing and his prose and story telling ability swept the English speaking world. He was in great demand as a lecturer and his thrilling voice brought the wilderness and its creatures into the lecture halls filled with people hungry to hear him. He appeared at Buckingham Palace and told entrancing stories of the beaver to the King, the Queen and the two

Princesses, one of whom is now Queen.

Grey Owl died in 1938 at the age of 50. Within weeks there were headline stories in the Press of his not being an Indian, and he was called a fraud and a hoax. It was true that he was not pure Indian and had emigrated to Canada from the town of Hastings as a boy, but he adopted

Indian ways. They accepted him and he turned his back on the past.

He lies buried at Lake Ajawaan and was taken to his grave over the ice on a sled drawn by two horses. His epitaph is his writing, and the beaver. He wrote the following about the two beaver kittens when they went back to the wild. "And at last we knew they were

gone forever, into the darkness from whence they came, two random spirits from the land of the shadows that had wandered in and stayed a little time and wandered back again, that had passed like the forgotten winds of yesterday and vanished like the figment of a dream."

These are not the words of a man who was a fraud and a hoax.

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## At one with the fish of the sea

WE established our capture base camp at a small village called Ligaya. It means Happiness in Tagalog, the lingua franca of the Philippines.

To get to Ligaya from San José was impossible by road. Big rivers like the Lumintao, the Busuanga and the Marakot come roaring from the high, jagged mountains into precipitous gorges and on to rapids that surge and boil over enormous boulders.

The rivers widen when they reach the steamy plains and become part of a dark green mosaic of rice paddies that stretch from the base of the mountains to the sea. It is only possible to cross them by vehicle at the height of the dry season and that was still two months away.

We took what is known as a pump boat from San José and sailed northward along the western coast. Early in the day the sea is as calm as Midmar dam on a May morning, and there is just enough wind to keep one cool. The hot sun beating down on the paddy fields creates a humidity that is stifling. It was pleasant to



squat on the deck of the small boat and glide through the deep blue water of the South China sea.

A shoal of porpoises broke the surface near us and I saw their black bodies flashing in the morning sun as they heaved themselves in and out with such effortless grace. Fish swam in tight swirls and jumps to get away from the porpoises who went down into the blue depths then came bursting to the surface again. They came within touching distance of the boat, the younger ones shooting under

the boat as though in a kind of game.

It was such an unusual experience for me that I sang out to the lovely creatures that I wished I could swim with them. The old Filipino boatman smiled and said the porpoises understood.

Boats pattered out from the shore, loaded with white fishing nets, or filled with young men, beautifully built with big chests. They were divers. They had already been down onto a reef and they laughingly held up some huge dark green crayfish. I mimed eating one and patted my stomach in a satisfied way. This amused them hugely and they continued waving until we were out of sight.

Two hours had passed and the hot sun had cleared the heavy mists from the forests and mountain tops. Nonnie, the boat operator, pointed to a saddle between two ranges that were covered in dense forest. "Tamaraw, tamaraw," he said again and again in Tagalog.

This was where we would be going the next day. It would be a three hour walk from

the base camp over paddy fields, then eastwards up the Marakot river to a penal colony called Pusog. Our kit and food would be taken by caraboa — the Asian water buffalo — dragging a wooden sled. These animals could plod at a steady pace. All this I learnt from Nonnie.

Shortly before midday we reached Ligaya and beached

our pump boat on a shingle shore. Two nipa huts made of hardwood, bamboo and rattan constituted the base camp. The huts were on stilts which allowed the air to circulate freely. By sunset I was on my stretcher watching the night fishermen pushing their boats into the sea. I intended to sleep well because I knew

the next few days were going to be hard.

As I was dozing off there was a knock on the door and a child gave me a note. It said "P.A.R. Signal No. 2. Mindoro". It was signed by my friend Al Speleski who was half Pole and half Filipino. I had no idea what it meant. It would have to wait until the next day.

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## A sprig of bracken

STEEP hills rise behind our house in the Karkloof and I walk along them frequently with our dogs at heel. The hills are covered in bracken that is green in summer and turns gold in the autumn. I will never again pass this plant without thinking of Alan Paton.

In his latest and I think one of his greatest books he writes that when he is dying, he hopes a sprig of bracken will be put in his hand. It is symbolic of the midlands of Natal and would bring back memories of the great white mists rolling down the green hills where crowned plovers call out to each other. It would bring back memories too of kloofs, streams and waterfalls, the barking bushbuck and the tiny mpithi.

In *Towards the Mountain* I saw the inner Alan Paton, the man who has an overwhelming depth of feeling for our land and the people. He grew up in Pietermaritzburg and there are some hilarious accounts of his first days at school and an encounter with a drunken British Tommy. He hides nothing and speaks as freely about his early sexual experiences as he does



about politics. I could not put the book down and he had me alternating between tears and laughter, deep depression and great anger.

Many of his classmates left their mark on the land but

Alan Paton became the world figure. Once I was travelling by train between New York and Philadelphia. There were no seats so I shared my suitcase with an elderly lady. She was a school teacher in

New York state and spoke about *Cry, the Beloved Country* and the impact it made on her class.

In Washington DC, a Senator asked me in anger why we did not listen to Alan Paton. "He is the voice of white conscience," he said. In San Francisco a television executive told me that Alan Paton could appear on any national news programme he wished, at a moment's notice too.

On my last journey in the Philippines I was asked by a man in a remote mountain village if I could get him a signed copy of any of Alan Paton's books. Western countries have honoured him with doctorates but I suspect that it is here that he would most like to be appreciated.

Diepkloof, that once formidable reformatory, was transformed by Alan Paton's humanity, humour, courage and outstanding administrative ability. What he recommended and personally carried out was revolutionary, and one reads holding breath, waiting for disaster. But it doesn't come because Alan Paton's faith in the inmates is rewarded by their intuitive understanding of what he was trying to do.

Years later he went to the United States to visit similar institutions and his description of the one in Atlanta makes grim reading. The Americans would have benefited by trying his enlightened Diepkloof methods.

In the Diepkloof story there are insights into his marriage and the staff that worked with him, magnificent men like the African, Moloi, and Engelbrecht, the tall Afrikaner whom Alan Paton praises as the two main co-architects in

the rebuilding of Diepkloof. Politics are there too, and the moving account of his journey by oxwagon to the great Voortrekker commemoration in 1938.

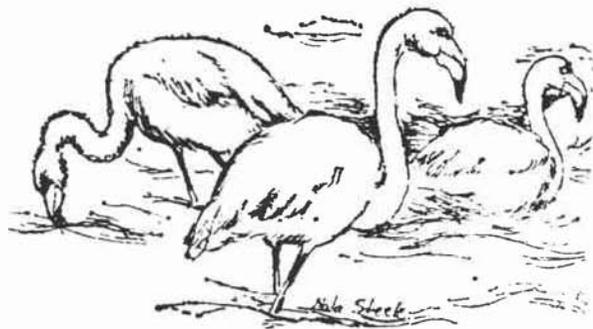
He writes: "It was a lonely and terrible experience for any English-speaking South African who had gone to rejoice in this Afrikaner festival . . . It is an irony that it was my sympathy for the renaissance of Afrikanerdom that

enabled me to escape from the narrow British nationalism of God, King, and Empire, only to find that Afrikaner nationalism was just as narrow."

*Towards the Mountain* is a book of great honesty, without bitterness, written brilliantly by one of those very rare men who have a scientific mind and the soul of a poet. I cannot wait to read the next volume.

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## Who would've ever believed it?



THE early Portuguese explorers who sailed around our coast called Richards Bay, Rio dos Peiscos — the River of many Fish. I found it that way when I was stationed there in 1953.

I love fishing and in the evenings I would walk to the bay to fish with light tackle on the incoming tide. The great, deep green rollers surged into the mouth bringing grunter, salmon, kingfish and yellowfin bream. I seldom failed to catch something for

my supper. It was sport at its best — exercise, enjoyment and provision of food.

I lived first in a tent then moved to a hut made of planks and timber washed ashore from passing ships. The roof was thatched with reeds and a haven for green scorpions, spiders and other insects. But it was luxurious compared to the tent. In the early morning the surrounding dune forest was filled with the song of brown robins and in the distance there were

the plaintive whistles of green-shanks on the bay shore.

As the sun came up in a red ball over the ocean horizon I would take my spinning rod and fish from the beach for shad or some other edible fish. Every day was an experience. Bird migrations moving up and down the coast and something different happening in the sea; big shoals of mullet jumping in the shallows, or porpoises racing down the waves, cruising sharks and at certain times millions of small prawns being washed up. But I had to work too.

Every night my Shangaan netting gang and I were out in clinker boats dragging nets in the zosteria sea grass for prawns. Mosquitoes by the thousands sucked blood from exposed flesh. There was the constant fear of crocodiles and sharks, of hidden holes and sting rays.

It was two men to a shrimp net and in the darkness we kept contact by whistling to each other. Nips of cane spirit and hideously smelling zolls of brown paper and pipe tobacco kept the men going. Each haul brought in a mass of tiny fish and sometimes enough prawns to fill a jam tin.

It took ages in the light of a storm lantern to sort the prawns from the sea grass and throw the small fish back. The bay with its reed beds, mangrove swamps and mud banks was a huge nursery and it was at night time that one saw the variety of water life.

After breakfast I worked with the mullet gang, catching the blunt nosed silver fish for bait for visiting fishermen. This was the rhythm of my days and I became part of the seasons and the weather. In holiday times visitors came

from all over South Africa to fish, to swim and some to enjoy the natural world of flamingo and pelican, and the flocks of terns and gulls.

I was transferred to other reserves in Zululand but I never forgot Richards Bay. Years later I received an instruction to meet Douglas Mitchell at the bay. He arrived with Ben Schoeman and I learnt the Minister was looking for a new port. It could be either Kosi Bay or Richards Bay. Those of us who loved the wild Zululand prayed that neither would be suitable. But progress was on the

march. Another two years passed and one morning I was 'phoned by Percy Jerome, the ranger in charge. "There are over thirty fish eagles circling over the bay. Do you think it is a requiem?" he asked.

The thought of those circling fish eagles haunted me for years. Of course it is unscientific to think they knew what was coming. But then no one would have believed that one day a huge pipeline would be planned to carry poison into the sea. Will we ever learn that what we do to the sea and the land we do to ourselves?

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## Harmony people

ONCE the bushmen were everywhere. I have seen their faded paintings in odd caves, overhangs and rocks all over Natal and Zululand. Sometimes on moonlight nights in the veld one is aware of their presence as though they are reminding us of what we did to them.

Whenever I have visitors I take them to Giants Castle because it is an easy walk to the bushman cave. The last steep stretch leaves you a little breathless but you can rest and look around at the hills and listen to the soft whistles of red wing starlings, and the bark of baboons ringing through the krantzes.

Inside the cave it takes a few minutes for your eyes to adjust to the shadows, then you see the art glowing on the rocks and you are transported into the world of the bushman artist by paintings of the eland, the pale yellow



and white colouring camouflaging it as it does in the veld. The stance of the animals is perfect. As your eyes become more accustomed to the gloom so more animals seem almost to leap out from the rocks: a lion walking in its characteristic way, a snake

coiled and a frieze of mysterious hooded figures.

In the nearby cave on the eastern side the Parks Board has constructed an excellent exhibit of a bushman family.

One stares, expecting the composition of figures to move or talk at any moment. All the artefacts of their life are here, the bows and arrows, the digging sticks and a scraping tool to soften the skin of an animal kaross. The experience is heightened by sound recordings and a good commentary on a tape recorder.

The anthropologist Elizabeth Marshall called the bushmen "the harmless people." They made little impact on the landscape and left behind a few artefacts and their lovely art as reminders of their presence. When white and black men encroached on their hunting grounds, the bushmen were forced to retaliate. They stole cattle and horses. Expeditions were led against them, they were called savages and were hunted and murdered ruthlessly.

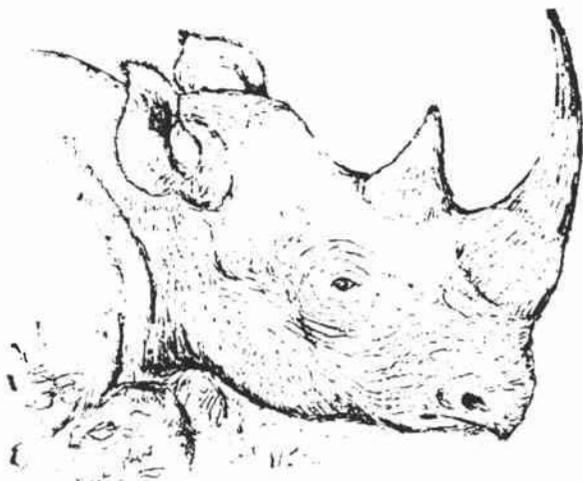
They had lived in this land for centuries, a hunter-gatherer society, singing their songs and dancing their dances and the artists amongst them painting. Sir Laurens van der Post, the author, is one man who looked deep into the soul of the bushman and he wrote, "He and his needs were committed to the nature of Africa and the swing of its wide seasons, as a fish to the sea. He and they all participated so deeply of one another's being that the experience could almost be called mystical."

Today none survives in Natal. What of the land with which they had once lived in such harmony?

Forests plundered and rivers running red with mud. Hillsides scarred and eroded. Sewerage pipes pouring into a sick sea. Square buildings and acres of concrete. Mickey Mouse figures on beachfronts. Animals and birds behind bars in zoos. Sea

creatures incarcerated in concrete pools performing like trained clowns for audiences who have had little chance to know anything better.

The bushmen would be entitled to ask, "Who are the savages?"



## **What have WW2 black market cigarettes and ageing oriental gentlemen got to do with the price of white rhino horn?**

I WATCHED the TV news item of the burning of rhino horn at Pilansberg Game Reserve and wondered, like many thousands of other people, what was the purpose. The official explanation was that by depriving the market of rhino horn, the rhino would be saved in Africa.

I disagree. Let me tell you why.

A long time ago I was a 17 year old soldier in Italy with the 6th South African Armoured Division. We were often lectured by very senior officers on the evils of the black market and the severe penalties we would incur if

we indulged in it. We were even threatened that our pay books would be looked at to make sure we drew money. None of my mates or myself fancied DB but those of us who did not smoke or eat chocolate or had access to silk stockings from girl friends in the Naafi said to hell with the penalties, and we traded freely.

I remember seeing one of the senior officers who lectured and threatened us about the black market doing a little deal one evening in the Galleria in Milan. Later when I saw the girl he was with I realised that economic pressures forced him to break his own regulations because that girl obviously had most expensive tastes.

So we poor troopers went on dealing, selling cigarettes, buying eggs and one or two other things. Everything continued to go well until cigarettes came on the open market for the Italian public. Our sales dropped and soon we had difficulty giving

those old fat strong Springbok cigarettes away.

Some guys turned to taking petrol but hiding a four gallon jerry can in the back pocket is a little more difficult than hiding a packet of cigarettes or two silk stockings. But then petrol became more available too and by the time I left Italy the golden days of trading were over. It was back to the pay books and getting 400 lire to the pound instead of the true rate of 800. This was a sore point with the troops which was expressed politically in 1948. The black market was my first real lesson in life about supply and demand.

But back to the rhino horn.

Burning it is not going to save any rhino. It is going to condemn them to death. The answer is to flood the market with rhino horn and if some wide boy can manufacture a substitute and mix a little fly with it so that his product sells faster to ageing oriental gentlemen, well more power to his elbow. In the mean-

time establish a legal market and sell every rhino horn possible and encourage game farmers to buy more rhino.

All the techniques for immobilising the animals are at our disposal and the horns can be cut off from time to time because they grow again. That R12 000 (it was a lot more really) that we saw go up in smoke could have been a nice down payment on a bit of land and more room for rhino and more horn on the market.

I remember a time when white rhino were extremely expensive on the zoo market. A pair from Uganda sold for R20 000. We in Natal led the way and sold white rhino everywhere. It didn't take long for the price to drop when big zoos and drive-in parks had the animals.

I know because I went to Britain, Europe and America selling them, and to begin with it was like selling cigarettes on the black market in Italy in 1944.

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## Nature drama

MAGQUBU came to me. "There is a big snake in the bushes near the vegetable garden," he said.

"Did you see it?" I asked. "No, I could smell it," the old man said. He saw the sceptical look in my eye and smiled his patient smile. "Have you forgotten those mambas in the bush near Mpisaneni hill in Umfolosi?" he asked. I looked blank. The old man smiled again, with a trace of irritation this time.

"It was that hot day when

we were chasing the cattle from those squatter people on the Hlungwana and Mtunzini. We passed the anthills in the bush where the mambas live and you said you could smell them. Of course you were much younger then," and he laughed.

Now that the old man reminded me I remembered the mambas in the anthill holes. In the early morning or late evening one could be almost certain to see them, the long black bodies slithering so

ominously and so effortlessly that it was difficult to stop the little shiver and tingling in the scalp that a snake can evoke. Somewhere in the long past of man he must have had some bad moments with the reptiles.

Magqubu stood patiently looking at me. He knew I was thinking and the politeness so characteristic of his race now forbade him to speak. I remembered a dank smell about those anthill holes and the bush.



"Yebo Magqubu. I remember now — there was a smell," I said.

"Good," the old man replied. "That's how I know there is a big snake near the vegetable garden."

Months went by and occasionally Magqubu spoke of the big snake but no one ever saw it. My wife heard it late one evening moving through the branches.

Puffadders and night adders are common in the spring but are generally harmless, and only once did we have a dog bitten. Boomslangs frequently made raids on birds' nests in the orchard and on one occasion I surprised one about two metres long passing through from the orchard to the wattle plantation. It stood up, curious and suspicious, to look at me. I kept my distance and marvelled at its grace when it dropped and slithered off. I told Magqubu about the encounter and he said: "Ah that's a small one. Wait until you see the big one."

Then one morning in the early spring when the spotted

weavers had begun to make their first nests, I heard the frantic call of a toppie. I said to my wife, "The toppie has spotted a snake."

There is an urgent ring in their call that is unmistakable. Other toppies began calling insistently. Then I heard the high pitched chatter of a sunbird, another sure sign of a snake about. Birds began calling from all parts of the garden and two red winged starlings landed on the kitchen roof and sat giving their throaty alarm calls. By the time I had washed and dressed and started the water boiling for my coffee in the kitchen, all hell was let loose and birds were coming in from every direction. Drongoes, paradise fly catchers and weavers were going mad. There was something special happening.

I got my field glasses and walked outside. Our small group of Africans had already gathered and they pointed to the top branches of the tree near the vegetable garden. With birds coming in like attacking spit-

fires I found the snake in my first sweep. A black headed oriole sat screeching at it from a few centimetres away and a tiny sunbird swooped in, its wings brushing against the body of the snake. It really was an enormous boomslang, as thick as my wrist and it looked three metres long. This was undoubtedly Magqubu's "nyoka nkulu."

We watched the natural drama for most of the morning and it was more exciting than any TV spectacular. My African friends eventually asked when I was going to help the birds and shoot the snake. The thought had crossed my mind and I was tempted. But I took no action and by evening it had gone and the birds were quiet.

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## Delicate toehold

FOR the conservationist, Hong Kong is no paradise. It is a bustling noisy city filled with hard working people and administered by a group of brilliant British civil servants.

When you first arrive it can be a frightening place. A stream of humanity moves in crowded streets jammed with traffic. Every face looks the same. High rise buildings line the bay and glow like giant white mushrooms on steep hillsides.

It was a relief to get into my room at the Regent Hotel that looks out onto Victoria Bay. The hotel is built right on the water, so no one can obstruct the view — and this is rare in Hong Kong. I was too tired to go out and brave the streets and the mass of people so I sat in a comfortable chair and looked at the view. Ships of all kinds moved to and fro across the harbour. Luxury liners, junks, sampans, destroyers, old sailing ships, dredgers, hydrofoils and police boats splashed their way across the choppy water. Clouds drifted overhead and the colour of the water continually changed from light to dark green and various shades of blue.

A fishing boat pattered past and anchored almost in front of my bedroom window. Two men deftly lowered some nets, trawled for a short distance then hauled the nets up and I saw fish flapping on the deck. A knife flashed and the fish were scaled and filleted then dropped into a bamboo basket. The men worked in unison, wasting neither time nor effort.



On the bridge of the boat I noticed a bowl of fresh flowers and a kumquat tree, the miniature fruit glowing in the sun. It seemed quaint to see the flowers and the tree on a fishing boat, but I remembered that as I was being driven to the hotel I had seen a young Chinese man contemplating an azalea flower in a tiny garden.

He had a look of concentration on his face that reminded me of a story of C. G. Jung who said that he once had a talk with Hu Shih, one of the foremost modern Chinese philosophers.

Jung said, "I noticed he was completely exhausted after two hours although I had confined myself to a few simple questions concerning specific points. It was as though I had asked him to bring me a blade of grass and each time he had dragged a whole meadow for me." The oriental looks at the totality and this is one of the fundamental differences between eastern and western people.

The heavy fog began to lift on the surrounding hills and a pale sun showed through, turning the water of the bay into a different shade of green.

I got my binoculars out and looked at a flock of gulls, sleek and shining in the sun. They circled above a fishing boat, feeding on scraps of fish.

In the distance a solitary black kite soaring in a thermal was attracted by the screams of the gulls and swooped towards them in a long dive then circled with them. There was little else of the natural world except a pair of English sparrows that hopped along a nearby pier. This bird is ubiquitous because it adapts so well to the concrete structures and cities of man.

At nightfall, buildings were ablaze with lights and the combined effect is one of the most spectacular night views in the world. I went to bed early and was awakened before dawn by the deep blasts of fog horns. I looked out of the window and had a grand view of that lovely ocean liner Queen Elizabeth II sailing into harbour. What a wonderful sight it was with the early morning light glinting on her funnels. I watched her dock then left for the airport, for I was bound for the Philippines and a long trek into the hills of Mindoro.

## In the court of the forest king

OVER the Easter weekend my friend Maurice Mackenzie telephoned me. "Let's go to the yellowwood tree and have a talk," he said.

I wondered which tree Maurice was talking about because there is more than one yellowwood in the Karkloof, but I held my peace and went to his farm, Yarrow.

From the old farmhouse we travelled for half an hour by Land Rover, then parked it and walked into a small glade, the remnant of a large indigenous forest. Maurice nodded to the left and there was the yellowwood. I stared at it in amazement. It was the biggest yellowwood I have ever seen. Maurice who is over 1,8 metres stood against it and spread his arms. It would take three men of his size to get their arms around it. The tree was a good 75 metres tall and the branches stretched out into the sky. It was a blazing hot day but in the shade of this enormous tree and the surrounding indigenous vegetation it was cool and the sun's rays were tempered by the overhanging foliage.

I was reminded of the giant sequoia trees on the coast and in the mountains of California and how the early American Indians worshipped the trees and called them the old men of the forest. Looking at this great yellowwood filled me with the same sort of reverence.

I was reminded too of the atmosphere I had experienced years ago in some of the great cathedrals, the Doumo in

Florence, St Patrick's in New York, and St Pauls' in London. The difference here was that there was no background hum of traffic, only bird calls and the chirruping of crickets. As Maurice and I talked we instinctively lowered the pitch of our voices. It would have been sacrilege to speak loudly in the shade of this old giant of the past, and disturb the peace.

I thought how much the world had changed since this tree had first nudged its way through the soft earth, perhaps 300 years ago or more. It was growing when the explorer Captain Rogers was writing his descriptions of Natal in the 1690s. Listen to some of his remarks.

"Great part of the country which respects the sea is plain, champion and woody . . . Neither is there any want of water, for every hill affords little brooks . . . The savannahs also are clothed with kindly thick grass . . . The land-animals of this country are lions, tigers, elephants, buffaloes, bullocks, deer, hogs, conies etc. Here are also an abundance of sea-horses . . .

"Elephants are so plentiful here that they feed together in great groups, a thousand or fifteen hundred in a company. Mornings and evenings they are seen grazing in the savannahs, but in the heat of the day they retire into the woods, and they are very peaceable if not molested."

By 1850 when my great-grandfather from Gloucestershire landed in Durban there were still elephant in Natal but the great slaughter had begun and the idyllic land described by Rogers was changing. My forefather passed through the Karkloof on his way to Rietvlei to marry an Afrikaans girl and by this time the tree was a good size and towered with others of its kind in the forests.

But yellowwood had become a prize and was used for wagon kists, flooring and big kitchen tables. Farms had been allocated and the pit saws were at work in the hills. Yellowwood and stinkwood giants crashed to the ground. Somehow this great tree escaped, or perhaps someone felt it should be spared, but history continued to pass it by — the Karkloof men riding to the various South African wars, then the wars in the great sodden battlefields of Europe.

Today the yellowwood is one of the last of the great trees. The elephants have gone, the forests have been denuded, the rivers run red with soil, 30 kilometre traffic jams clog the roads, the population of South Africa doubles every 20 years. Mankind still plots wars, we have reached the moon and now stare hungrily at the stars.

It is no wonder that Maurice and I spoke in subdued voices. We were in the presence of an aged remnant of the forests of long ago. It had seen so much.

## Closer than a brother

MAGQUBU and I climbed the hill on the edge of the Karkloof forest and sat in the warm autumn sunshine, talking about old times.

"This is the time of the year when the poaching really starts," the old man said. In a few phrases he made a vivid word picture of men stealing through the bush armed with spears and guns, dogs padding with them.

"Every year in the old days someone was injured or killed. Looking after the game was not an easy job. We were few and the poachers were many. You really had to believe in the work. Game guards could have no friends," he said, and then told me the story of Mankekentshane and Mali Mdhletshe, two brothers who were game guards in 1916.

"Mankentshane was the induna of all the guards and he sent Mali and myself from Umfolosi to Ndumu to patrol the reserve. In those days we had to walk everywhere. It took us a day's walk to Mkuze game reserve. We followed the paths over the hills and valleys of Hluhluwe then through the dark Uvive forest where we had to keep our eyes and ears open for the black rhino or buffalo. From there we followed the ancient Zulu footpaths leading to the Lebombo mountains. We slept the night at a game guard camp near Nxwala hill."



The old man paused to point out a grey duiker grazing on the green grass of last year's firebreak. "Mpunzi," he said in his matter of fact way. "Yebo," I said, urging him to return to the Ndumu story.

He described leaving the camp and walking with Mali to the Mkuze river past the thornveld of the Makatini flats towards the Pongolo river at Otobotini drift. "That was a place for the izinkonkoni (blue wildebeest). All day we saw them and heard them calling to each other. The veld was alive with other animals too, Zebra and impala, steenbuck and rietbuck.

It was like that until the nagana campaigns."

He then digressed at great length and told me how the game was shot and left to rot on the veld during the tsetse fly campaigns. No game guard was allowed to take even a fillet back to his kraal. I listened to it all then he said, "But you want to hear about Mali.

"Where we crossed the Pongola river, it was this deep," he said. He pointed to his chest and spoke about the danger of being taken by a crocodile. They followed the river path that meandered through the sycamore figs and the pale fever trees to the Mfongosi stream, then again due north to Ndumu.

"In every pan there were hippo and crocodile and the amaTonga people caught many fish with their fonya nets. The country was kind to its people," he said. "And then you reached Ndumu," I said, interrupting him. He stared at me with those old eyes of his and laughed. "Not yet. We were walking, not riding in a car."

In detail he continued his story, imitating the bird and animal calls, describing the trees, the grasses and the plants. It was like watching a film with one man taking all the parts and doing the sound effects as well.

"By the time we reached Ndumu we were very hungry. Our pay was three pounds a month and we had no money left. There were many impala inside the reserve and that afternoon Mali Mdhletshe took a .303 and shot one. In the evening Mankentshane arrived."

Magqubu was silent as he always is when he is about to make a dramatic point. Then he said slowly, "Mali was Mankentshane's brother and they were close, but when he asked who shot the buck and Mali said he had, Mankentshane took his handcuffs and snapped them on his brother's wrists." Magqubu imitated the noise of metal handcuffs and the look of astonishment on Mali's face. "Yes, Mankentshane had arrested his own brother and he took him to Ingwavuma and laid charges against him," Magqubu said.

Game guards should have no friends and you could only be a good guard if you would arrest your own brother or father. Mankentshane was such a man."

## Spirit of old Mashia watches over them



ONE of the old timers who fought for the wildlife of Zululand was William Foster, the stepfather of the talented painter Barbara Tyrrell. His father had come to South Africa with Cecil Rhodes and he was born in the Umlaas Road district.

He was an outstanding Zulu linguist. I once asked Magqubu how Mashia (Foster's Zulu name, after his thick black eyebrows) spoke Zulu. "Like us," came the immediate reply.

When I first arrived at the Umfolosi reserve, Willie Foster as he was affectionately called, was the game supervisor, a special post created for him after a lifetime of devoted service. He lived in a rondavel in the tsetse fly camp below Masinda hill. It was at the end of the tsetse fly shooting campaigns, a

sad episode in the history of wildlife. Willie Foster had done his best to stop it but had failed. Thousands upon thousands of head of game were wiped out and left on the red earth of the thornveld.

Another old Zululander told me that during the shooting he remembered going to Masinda camp and talking to Foster because he wanted Foster to go into the Umfolosi reserve with him. He said that Foster stood looking towards the reserve, the wind blowing through his grey hair. Then Foster spoke and said, "I am sickened by the slaughter of the animals and the stupidity of the people who authorised it. I never want to go there again for I would like to remember it as I always knew it, pulsating with life, alive with game."

But eventually he did go back into the reserve and I remember him sitting at a waterhole for a whole day waiting to see the few animals that had escaped the systematic shooting, or those that had migrated from Hluhluwe game reserve.

During the slaughter the white rhino had been spared because of its endangered species status. Willie Foster never tired of the sight of the great grey beasts coming down to drink or wallow in the thick mud as the Zululand sun blazed out of a cloudless sky. He would speak with great affection about the different animals that he recognised — cows with curved horns, or bulls with deep scars on their chests and flanks from fighting. There were calves too with an ear or a tail missing. Foster knew them all.

He was a man of many interests and a wonderful story teller. I was with him once when his truck got stuck in the sand. He made a fire, boiled a billy, and he talked until the early hours. He had a dour sense of humour inherited from his Yorkshire forebears and one story he told me kept me laughing for weeks.

"There was this senior official in the reserve. Everybody disliked him because he was so stingy. One day this official and I were walking through the reserve to pay some game guards at the Nqabaneni camp. We were following a rhino path and came upon a big dung beetle pushing a ball of fresh dung. The official was fascinated and he stood watching the beetle with great interest. When the dung beetle came near the man, it stopped roll-

ing the ball and tried to roll him. You can't fool a dung beetle," he chuckled.

Foster was a kind, hard-working man who towards the end of his life summed up his own philosophy.

"I was always taught to respect women. I regarded them as superior to me. Men were made to do the rough work. Women are the angels of the world, they have so many more difficulties to contend with. Bless them."

Some of his last words to me I will always remember. He said, "I have served my country long and I think efficiently and honestly." Ask any old Zulu game guard and he will tell you that this is true, and that Mashia's spirit like that of Mali and Mankentshane Mdhletshe, Captain Potter and Vaughan Kirby, is guarding the game reserves.

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## The Birdman of Jamestown

MAY 1964 was a cold month in New York. I remember it well because it was the first time I visited the United States. In 1963 I had helped M. G. M. make a movie in Umfolosi Game Reserve and they had invited me to America to publicise the film and visit some of the National Parks.

From the wilds of Umfolosi to the pandemonium of New York was an alarming transition. My hotel overlooked Central Park and on the first evening I took a stroll in a cold biting wind into the park.

The place was deserted. It was a great relief to get away from the crowds that moved like a relentless sea along the pavements of the icy streets.

The following noon there was a lunch at the Yale Club and it was there that I met the most famous ornithologist in the world, Roger Tory Peterson. He was a tall, grey haired man with a kind face and a most mild manner.

I had to make a speech, my first in America, and on this occasion, to a most distinguished audience of naturalists, businessmen, politicians and film makers.

I was extremely nervous. The biggest audience I had ever addressed was the Mtubatuba Women's Institute, and that had been a frightening enough experience. I expressed my concern to Roger Tory Peterson. He asked where I came from and when I said Zululand, he at once began talking about the birds of the world and ornithological literature.

He knew a hundred times more about South African birds than I will ever know. I told him about my walk in Central Park in the cold of

the previous evening. He laughed and said: "Only naturalists and foolhardy people will brave the dangers of Central Park in the dark. Dangerous forms of humanity lurk in bushes and amongst the boulders."

When I stood up to speak he smiled at me and nodded encouragement. I gave one of the best speeches of my life and the M. G. M. agent responsible for me asked where I had trained. He looked a little puzzled when I said Mtubatuba.

I was reminded of this incident when my good friend Dick Morrell of Pietermaritzburg handed me a book\* the other day called "The World of Roger Tory Peterson", a biography of the great ornithologist.

At the age of eleven, birds took over Peterson's life. His family were Swedes who came to Jamestown, a city founded by English landed gentry at the foot of the rolling hills of the Alleghenies. The prejudice against the Swedes was bad. A friend of Roger Tory Peterson recalls: "We were sons of Swedes, first generation Americans, called Green Swedes because we weren't supposed to be smart enough to peel bananas before eating them." There were signs saying 'No Dogs or Swedes Allowed' and public places with posters 'Only English spoken here.'

Rogers father and sister worked in the clothing mills before they were ten years old. People in those days carried their children to the mills when the snow lay deep on

the ground. The children worked for ten hours a day and were lashed with the cat o' nine tails if they slowed down. It was against this background that Roger Tory Peterson grew up.

When his mother presented him to a new minister of their church she proudly told the padre that Roger was interested in birds and natural history. The pastor frowned and said: "Well, that makes for unbelievers." Fortunately not all the reverend gentlemen of Jamestown had this view, and another pastor recalls Roger arriving in church late, his clothes muddy and shoes dirty.

He was heard to whisper apologetically to his mother, "I'm sorry I'm late, but the birds were singing so beautifully." His mother replied: "Yes Roger, and God made the birds too. Now bow your head and fold your hands."

He once ruined his father's precious five dollar gold pen when he drew a banded purple butterfly. But the sketch won a prize in a contest sponsored by the Buffalo Times. Peterson became not only a great ornithologist but probably also one of the finest bird artists. In this book are some outstanding colour plates which demonstrate this wonderful man's gift. If you are interested in birds, or in people, there is much in this book to interest you. It gets to the heart of the man.

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\*"The World of Roger Tory Peterson", by John C. Devlin and Grace Naismith (Times Books).

## Noisome pestilence

I READ with great sympathy the complaints by flat dwellers on the Snell Parade about contraptions planned for the beachfront.

No one will want to deny the young their pleasure, be it water chutes or dodgem cars, and nor will any reasonable person deny the right of the entrepreneurs a chance to make money. But surely in these advanced years of the 20th century we can plan properly and cater for the wishes of the whole population.

It is now most difficult to find a quiet place in the city. One cannot even escape into the churches. Noise has become so overwhelming it is seriously affecting our lives. There are jack hammers on the streets, motorbikes, buzz bikes, and cars without exhausts. Musical instruments with high-powered amplifiers add to the noise. Day and night the volume of noise is increasing.

The ears of many modern musicians are hopelessly damaged. The average city person's hearing is being severely impaired. I have observed this over the years on Wilderness Leadership School trails. It takes a good day of walking in the bush before people begin to hear a leaf falling or the whistle of a greenshank on the muddy banks of the river, the tapping of a woodpecker, an eagle screaming in the sky, or the snort of a wildebeest and the yodelling of a zebra. I have to stop the trail and bring attention to the sounds. I have seen people concen-



trating really hard to hear. They were pathetically keen to be able to tell the difference between one sound and another.

Even at night when they sat alone at the fire doing their hour's watch, they heard little going on around them in the bush. I have been woken by the persistent coughing of a leopard, but the person on watch hadn't heard a sound. I have lain in my sleeping bag watching people staring intently into the fire, oblivious of lions roaring on a distant ridge. It takes an average of three days before they can begin to differentiate between one sound and another.

They exclaim with admiration when Magqubu, who is 81, not only hears all the sounds but interprets what they mean. He has interrupted trailers talking to say that the lions are going to roar. He heard the sharp alarm whistle of a reedbuck, or the warning snort of an impala. The pitch of the

sound is enough to tell him that the antelope know a predator is near. Once he stopped a trail and said that we were near a python. A few minutes later we saw an enormous python sunning itself in a glade.

"How did you know?" I asked. "The monkeys told me," he said. He had heard and interpreted the chatter of vervets on the high branches of a green sycamore fig tree. His powers of observation and deduction and a lifetime of experience gave him all the clues. But it was his hearing that gave him the initial tip.

Alas, even the wild areas are not sacrosanct from the invasion of alien sounds. Low flying aircraft survey for metals to be torn from the guts of the earth. Railway engines pull long lines of trucks filled with coal for export. (Can we expect a shortage of coal?)

Heavy lorries passing and the increasing human population add to a disturbing

cacophony. Soon it will be only the distant oceans where man can have some peace, and then he will have to be on a small yacht. Noise and more noise is the disorder of our lives. It not only damages our ears, it destroys our concentration and sears our souls. Its impact is having a deep and lasting effect on the human psyche.

But, flat dwellers, be comforted by Carl Gustav Jung's remarks. He said when writing to a friend who had taken on the task of reducing noise, "You will be depriving all those nobodies whom nobody ever listens to, of their sole joy in life and of the incomparable satisfaction they feel when they shatter the stillness of the night with their clattering motor-bikes, disturbing everyone's sleep with their hellish din. At that moment they amount to something. Noise is their *raison d'être* and a confirmation of their existence."

## Walk on the wild side

BOB Aldworth is a big man in more ways than one. Physically, he is 1.98 m tall and weighs 118 kg. In business he runs Barclays Bank empire in South Africa. I took him out recently on a Wilderness Leadership School trail. This was his fourth trail in as many years.

We parked the vehicle, loaded our backpacks and followed Magqubu down a rhino path that led to the Black Umfolozi river. It was a glorious bushveld winter afternoon. A smell of ntombothi smoke hung in the air and a grey dust rose at our feet as we plodded along the path.

I encourage silence while walking. Magqubu knows this but his lifetime in the bush makes him acutely aware of all that had happened on the path over the past few days. He carries a small three-legged pot in one hand, a pack on his back, a rifle slung across his shoulders and a cane knife in his right hand.

He uses the cane knife as a university lecturer uses a pointing stick. The blade glints in the sunshine as the old game guard, now in his 81st year, indicates hyena spoor, a tree browsed by a kudu bull, fresh white rhino and porcupine dung, a guinea-fowl feather, a scorpion's hideaway hole, a trail of termites and in a distant tree a batuleer eagle.

Within a quarter of an hour we reached the dense vegetation lining the river bank. This was where the lions gathered. Magqubu's whole attitude changed. He ceased to point anything out



and he walked with far greater caution, his old grey head turning from left to right like a searchlight at sea. I heard him breathe deeply. "Each animal has its own smell," he says. He has proved it to me repeatedly.

"Wildebeest," he would whisper as we went through thick bush, or "buffalo", or "zebra". With lion, even a layman would not make a mistake. The only difference is that Magqubu knows within hours how long it is since they were there. The trail party felt the tension and feet found their way without tramping on dry sticks or crackling leaves.

Magqubu hesitated in front of a dense patch of green phragmites reeds, then carefully parted them and stepped quietly onto a bush-buck path and quickly led us to an open grassy glade beneath towering fig trees on the banks of the Black Umfolozi river. Green pigeons called and there was a wail from trumpeter hornbills as they passed in their characteristic flopping flight overhead. The transition from the acacia and ntombothi bush to the openness of the river was startling. It was a good feeling, too, to be able to see hundreds of metres ahead.

Magqubu pointed and we looked up to see three huge

buffalo bulls lying on the golden brown sand near the main flow of the river. I knew Bob Aldworth liked photographing buffalo, so I pointed to them and to his camera. He slipped his pack off and he and Magqubu moved silently in the shade of the sycamore figs in the direction of the buffalo. They came back ten minutes later. Bob was smiling broadly. "Great pictures," he said. "You should have seen the dust fly as those buffalo got up and ran."

It was only half an hour since we had left the vehicle and the semblance of civilisation but I could already see the difference in Bob Aldworth. He was relaxed and had a sense of freedom about him. What was it that made him unwind so quickly? The smell of lions and the buffalo on the sands were part of the answer.

So was the fear of a black rhino coming charging out from the dense bush, ready to kill any human that stood

in its path. We were in the wilderness and here each man was alone with his fears and his hopes. Forty-five minutes had passed since we left the vehicle. "It doesn't take long to unwind here," Bob Aldworth said.

As we walked on towards our camp for the night I had a feeling of sadness. South Africa was running out of land where you could walk among the big game.

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## Magqubu's cooking pot

MAGQUBU walking with rifle over his shoulder and carrying a small three-legged cooking pot is a familiar sight on Wilderness Leadership School trails. I know that pot well and have eaten putu and meat from it many times.

The pot is often the cause of much comment and sometimes amusement by the trailers, but to Magqubu it is a treasured possession and his care of it has become a ritual. After cooking it is washed then wiped with just the right amount of animal fat and put away. For most of his life Magqubu has cooked his own food for two main reasons: religious and survival.

He is a Shembe so any form of pork or its byproducts are taboo. His strict Zulu



discipline over other guards and his arrest of many poachers that have at times ended in death have made him many enemies. They don't bother him, they are a fact of life. But revenge could be fatal.

"You white men know nothing of poison. If someone wanted to kill me and used one of our plant poisons no one would ever know why I died. I intend to live until my time comes too," he added emphatically. So wherever Magqubu goes so does the little three-legged pot, even to the smartest hotels.

Once we had a blazing row over that pot. It happened some years back when we had an unpleasant encounter with lions on a trail. Magqubu had put his pot down and unslung his rifle as we retreated from a pride of lions. We were in thick bush and the pot was left behind as we moved away into a clearing.

When everything had quietened down Magqubu said he was going to get his pot. I said irritably, "Forget about the damned thing, it's too dangerous in there. I'll buy you another." A somewhat typical white man's reaction I suppose. "Ca," Magqubu said, the word exploding from his lips. To argue with him would have been hopeless, to order him unfair, so I pleaded. "Your life is too valuable, you still have so much to teach us all."

He was adamant. It was his pot and his life and no true Zulu was afraid to die. He walked off into the bush and I heard the lions coughing as he approached. Not a nice sound. He was back in ten minutes with the pot and we walked on as though nothing had happened.

There are many lessons to be learned from that little pot. Once Magqubu was shining it carefully and he said, "What are you people doing to money? You see this pot," and he tapped it for emphasis, "I bought it in 1958 for five shillings. Today a new one costs four rand. Why?"

He expected a one sentence answer. I had to shrug my shoulders. I know that it is inflation, but how can you explain something you don't understand yourself, particularly if your knowledge of the language is limited. "What are we doing to money? — Magqubu, I don't know," I answered.

That night in the bush there was another lesson

which I notice every time I go out with him. The trailers gathered a pile of wood and set about making a huge blazing fire, which was absolutely unnecessary. I pointed to Magqubu and said, "Watch how he does it." He gathered a few sticks, made a small fire, cooked his whole meal in the pot then got one ntombothi branch that would give him light and keep him warm for the night.

I have often lain in my sleeping bag on a trail where one takes the minimum of possessions and wondered whether most of our problems did not lie in our mania to acquire too much. What, for example, would Magqubu do with two pots on trail?

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## The lower orders

THERE were two important events for me recently. Alan Paton told me to go and see the film "Breaker Morant" and I read Michael Green's column about crocodiles at St Lucia. What is the connection? Well it has to do with obeying orders.

"Breaker Morant" is a superb film. But why is it the Australians who make a film about our South African history? What is wrong with our own film industry that it cannot mirror incidents of historical interest or the great conflicts and challenges existing in our multiracial society?

The Australians who made "Breaker Morant" had an astonishing eye for detail. The scenery was meticulously picked for its similarity to the Northern Transvaal. Speech, buildings and uni-

forms were faultless and even the songs of the birds, with a nightjar calling on a moonlit night, were correct. The story raised deep confusing emotions and each phrase of the actors touched on truths that humanity has had to face throughout its history. Australian independence and sense of humour helped to relieve moments of intense tension.

Again and again as the film unrolled, one was returned to the terrible dilemma of war and the correct moral course of action for the individual. Everyone in the theatre knew it could have been their son or brother husband or father. By the end of the performance a girl in front of us was sobbing her heart out and I had difficulty in controlling my tears.



As we drove home scenes in the film recurred and then I remembered the crocodiles and a moral dilemma I once faced over orders. In 1957 following a crocodile attack, a great public outcry arose fanned by all sorts of elements, including political desperadoes who hoped to benefit by having a nature reserve turned into farm land.

The Parks Board of the day was placed under continuous pressure and against strong resistance from many of the staff a resolution was passed that any crocodile near the camps was to be shot but we knew that for every one shot another would take its place.

We also believed that there was a fundamental principle involved. If animals were shot because they might be dangerous there was little hope of maintaining a park as a wildlife sanctuary.

But public opinion was so overpowering the Board was forced to act. I was instructed at a board meeting to take action. To disobey could have meant dismissal and the end of a career, while to obey

would have meant a tortured conscience.

In desperation I phoned the most senior staff member. "You will kill crocodiles between such and such a point and only when you have the time," he said. I then phoned Frank Broome, the judge, and a member of the board I greatly respected. "Drag it out," was his terse reply. I knew they were on my side.

But public bloodlust demanded carcasses and a special ranger was employed to kill crocodiles. I issued him with a rifle with no

sights, a lamp with weak batteries and a boat that leaked and I was as unhelpful as it was possible to be. Five crocodiles were killed then the uproar gradually died down. I worked hard to get Pressmen to see our point of view and then crocodile stories ceased to be news.

In time the value of crocodiles in the natural scene was appreciated and years later Tony Pooley was given permission to start a crocodile farm. Natal led South Africa again, this time in research and re-establishment of the reptile in the wild.

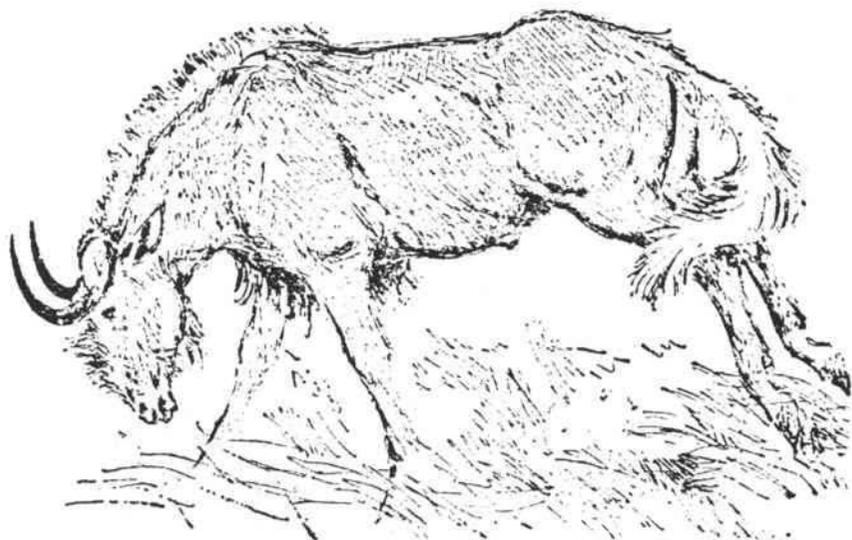
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## Reflections on a train

RECENTLY I was invited to speak at an international Rotoract convention in Van der Bijl Park. The organisation paid my ticket so I took the Drakensberg Express which is normally out of my price range. It is a luxurious train with polite staff, good food and coupés to oneself: the SAR at its best.

I woke in the early spring dawn of the highveld and from my window saw the first light strike the kopjes of white

granite that dot the landscape before Heidelberg. From the air conditioned compartment I then saw the peach trees, pink with new buds, the long rows of freshly ploughed land and the black-shouldered kites perched on telephone wires. I mused on my speech and wondered whether to tell the delegates what had happened on the flat plains that we today call the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.



It was T. C. Robertson, South Africa's most knowledgeable conservationist, who told me about the explorer and hunter Cornwallis Harris who met a party of boers on his trek into the interior in 1836. Harris had with him one of the first rifled barrelled firearms in South Africa. He told the boers he could shoot an animal at 100 metres. They laughed at him and said privately, "Die Engelsman is mal." Their weapons were still the old voorlaaiers, the muzzle loader or mqonqo as the Zulus described the gun in their onomatopoeic way.

Harris rode out onto the veld with the boers and shot a black wildebeest at a range no one imagined was possible. "Dit is nie die Engelsman, dit is die geweer," they said. Everyone knew no Englishman could shoot so well. They clamoured for his gun, offering to exchange a wagon and a team of oxen.

I thought too of telling the delegates what Donald Mor-

ris, the American who wrote *The Washing of the Spears*, once told me on a cold drizzly night at Nqutu about the time of the mfecane (the crushing).

It all started when Tshaka rose to power and displaced a minor chief named Matiwane who in turn went over the Drakensberg and displaced adjoining tribes.

It was like a billiard ball cannoning off two others. Soon the whole highveld was in flames and in the grips of an orgy of killing. A million or two million people died in that terrible massacre on the highveld. The carnage left a completely depopulated land and made it possible for the trekkers to move into the hinterland. Prior to this the northern thrust hovered on the Fish river for over a hundred years, unable to move forward because of the nguni people.

This bloodied removal of people is more than likely the reason for the existence of the vast herds of game that Harris

and the trekkers encountered as they moved through the sea of grassveld. Man is the biggest predator. Remove him and the game multiplies at a phenomenal rate.

The convention was over and I returned to the Natal midlands, once more in the luxury of the Drakensberg Express. As darkness settled over the highveld we reached Standerton and on the platform a great company of black people stood silently watching the train. I sat in the warmth of the dining car, a plate of good food in front of me and a glass of expensive red wine in my hand. I should have been happy and contented. But I wasn't.

I remembered the mfecane as I watched the black people looking in to the luxury of the dining car where there wasn't a black face to be seen. I wondered if a historian of the future might one day record that a single incident, like a lighted luxurious saloon car, had set off the second mfecane.

## Inscription said it all: 'Go tell the Spartans —'

I REMEMBER as a young soldier in September 1944 hearing of the paratroopers landing at Arnhem and how hard they fought for that bloodied piece of land. When I was in Holland recently I took the opportunity to see for myself this place of a bridge too far.

I left my hotel at the village of Lage Vuursche on a morning when the sun shone like that in an African spring. The flat fields of rye grass had herds of Holstein cattle strung out like beads of black and white pearls in the dark green pastures. There was the scent too of rich black soil that tractors turned for winter crops. Magpies, gulls and lapwings followed the plough and fought for the exposed grubs.

I passed villages and towns where houses sparkled in neat rows and tiny gardens were still ablaze with flowers. The main roads had adjoining "fietspads" and people from six to eighty were on bicycles. The Hollanders must be one of the fittest nations in the world. It was good to be in a place where people still counted and the motor car was not king.

I stopped at Oostebeek, one of the important British Army cemeteries of this area. An avenue of rhododendrons, their buds just closed, bordered a pebble path leading to the entrance. Inside the gate

was one of the most lovely and well cared for war cemeteries I have ever seen. Autumn was already here, but striking red and yellow roses were blooming, some falling in profusion over the long silent rows of white gravestones.

I wandered slowly down the lines, looking at the names of those who had fallen, their ages and their regiments. The Green Howards, the Highland Light Infantry, the Royal Artillery and grave upon grave of the parachute regiment. Men from 19 to 29.

Inscriptions from mothers, fathers, wives and children cried out in words cut into the stone. A mother wrote: "Forever, in my memory you'll remain. My heart is broken." A wife had engraved: "He leaves a gathered radiance, a width, a shining place under the night."

I walked on, knowing that among the graves of paratroopers there would be an inscription that summed up the spirit of those red bereted men who so courageously hung on to impossible positions against a foe of equal determination and courage.

I found it on the grave of Lieutenant Clarkson who fell on September 22, 1944

aged 22 years. It was an epitaph for all the paratroopers: "Go tell the Spartans that we lie here obeying their words." A connecting and deeply symbolic link between that small group of men who held the pass at Thermopylae and this generation who tried to wrest what was then a little known bridge at a town called Arnhem.

I heard the song of a black-bird in the rhododendrons, and in the high oaks above me there was the clatter of pigeon wings and the whistle of a thrush. Life does not stop for a rest. It goes on and takes us with it. But I wished that all those who wanted to wage war could walk here and read the inscriptions and see the damage that goes beyond the grave.

In a special corner of the cemetery there are the graves of the Polish forces. The nation we went to war for but it still struggles for freedom. A Mirage jet from a nearby NATO airfield screamed overhead, shattering the silence. In a distant field I saw the khaki figures of young Dutch national servicemen on parade. I wondered what those who lay here dead in this lovely cemetery of Oostebeek would wish? Surely, they would cry out for peace.

AS a small boy I remember being taken by my mother to a cupboard where she took out a large bronze plaque and carefully polished it.

"Today is the eleventh of November," she said. "It was on this day at the eleventh hour that the Great War came to an end. This plaque was sent to us after my brother was killed at Delville Wood."

Today 61 years ago the Armistice was signed and the battlefields grew eerily silent. German, Brit and French met and wondered what it had all been about.

The scale of the fighting that took place is too much for the imagination. It was a war of attrition in the trenches, where the capture of a hundred metres with the loss of 50 000 men was hailed as a great victory. In the battle of Verdun alone there were 500 000 killed, 800 000 mutilated and a 100 000 ground into the soil.

It was a war where poisonous gas was used for the first time. Mustard gas drifted in clouds, seeping into dugouts and choking men to death.

It is a war that has become symbolized by a single flower, the Flanders poppy. It is this red and lovely flower that grew in shellholes, abandoned trenches and muddy fields where friend and foe lay within touching distance under the earth. It grows today amongst the sea of white crosses in the war cemeteries of Europe and is immortalised by the words of John McCrae: "We shall not sleep though poppies grow, in Flanders fields."

It is strange and ironic that out of the horror and carnage of this war came

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some of the loveliest poetry in the English language. The beauty of the words of Sassoon, Grenfell, Owen, Auden and Rupert Brooke will live as long as there is human memory. Of all the poets it was Rupert Brooke who wrote the most compelling poetry. He was known as the handsomest young man in England. To have him at a party was the dream of every hostess, and to have him as a lover the dream of every girl.

In 1915 the Dean of St Paul's read a war sonnet of Rupert Brooke and he was famous overnight. He was en route to the great battle of Gallipoli when he contracted septicaemia and died. Winston Churchill was First

Lord of the Admiralty and he sent a signal to his brother, Major John Churchill: "Endeavour if your duties allow, to attend Rupert Brooke's funeral on my behalf. We shall not see the likes of him again."

Rupert Brooke was buried on the island of Cyprus. A companion wrote: "We buried him the same evening he died, in the olive grove, one of the loveliest places on this earth, with grey green olives round him, one weeping above his head, the ground covered with flowering sage, bluish grey and smelling more delicious than any other flower I know. No more fitting place for a poet could be found than this small grave." The nation that mourned the passing of Rupert Brooke knew he was the symbol of his generation.

I read recently what that wise old man C. G. Jung had to say in 1934 about the 1914-1918 war. It is as pertinent today as it was then.

"It is the psyche of man that makes wars. Not his consciousness. His consciousness is afraid, but his unconscious, which contains the inherited savagery as well as the spiritual strivings of the race, say to him, 'Now is the time to make war. Now is the time to kill and destroy.' And he does it.

"The most tremendous danger that man has to face is the power of his ideas. No cosmic power on earth ever destroyed ten million men in four years. But man's psyche did it. And it can do it again.

"I am afraid of one thing only — the thoughts of people. I have means of defence against things."

## The soul of Africa

I WAS at Ndumu game reserve in 1954 when someone sent me Laurens van der Post's book *Venture to the Interior*. I remember starting to read it one evening and as I read on my heart was beating with excitement.

In those days we only had candles and storm lanterns which attracted swarms of mosquitoes, moths and a great variety of beetles. While hippo snorted and grunted as they left the Pongola river on their way to feed on the grass covered mud flats, and Tonga drums thudded in the night, I read on. This book had come from the depths of Laurens van der Post's unconscious which over the years had absorbed so much of the mystery of Africa. I remember finishing the book when the hippo were returning to the river before dawn. As I snapped the book shut I said to myself, "Now I know what Africa is."

So many people have written about this continent, but they have been surface stories, theirs missed that deep mystical beat, like the thudding of those Tonga drums and the relationship between man, beast, bird, insect and tree. His book inspired me and I thought it was because I was of Africa too, but millions of people who have never been near Africa were similarly inspired.

I did not meet Laurens van der Post until 1970 when I had been sent to the United Kingdom to persuade the London Zoological Society to buy 20 white rhino for Whipsnade Zoo. T. C. Robert-

son who had grown up with Laurens van der Post gave me a letter of introduction. It was the beginning of a long and for me most rewarding friendship.

We have made a television programme together in Zululand and it was an experience in itself after the day's filming to sit at the fire and listen to him talk, of the Kalahari, the war, the jungles of Java, incarceration in a Japanese P.O.W. camp, and C. G. Jung. When he was released from the jungle prison camp he went straight back into active service on the staff of Lord Mountbatten. There were not many men in World War 2 who survived a P.O.W. experience, particularly with the Japanese, then went back on active duty.

This says more about the character of Laurens van der Post than anything I have heard or read about him. His forgiveness of his captors is a further dimension of this remarkable man.

Laurens was a personal friend of Carl Gustav Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist who is I think the genius of this century. In his book on Jung, Laurens van der Post made people aware of the greatness of this man and his contribution to the world. It goes far beyond a biography and is in fact the story of one of the most important friendships in Laurens van der Post's life. I read the book at a time of personal difficulties that seemed insurmountable. It not only raised me from the "slough of despond" but put me on a new path. It helped me to give direction to the Wilderness Leadership School and my

colleagues and I began to turn it into an inward-looking outward bound organisation.

When I was in the United Kingdom recently I spent a few days with Laurens van der Post and his wife, Ingaret, in London and at their cottage in Aldeburgh. There is an old fisherman's tower on the shingle beach and it is in one of its tiny rooms that Laurens van der Post has written so many of his books. Long ago I used to get a request from him each year for some flamingo feathers. Nick van Niekerk the warden at Lake St Lucia would pick up the best fallen feathers, give them to me and I would send them on to the United Kingdom. Laurens had an arrangement whereby he paid the owner of the tower one flamingo feather a year as rent.

It was a great experience for me to see how Laurens fitted into London and the English countryside just as well as he was at home in the wilderness of Umfolosi game reserve. In the establishment of Great Britain there is no one of any note that he does not know, and many of them were in the P.O.W. camp with him. But the ordinary people in the street and the cab drivers know him too from his many television films and they greet him with great enthusiasm.

Laurens once told me that he had 13 books in mind and as he finished one, another would take its place. In 1977 and again in 1980, Laurens played a vital part in the two world wilderness congresses

and his speeches to the delegates in Johannesburg and Cairns will never be forgotten by those who were there. I always felt guilty about taking him away from his desk, so it was a relief to hear that he was writing another book.

When we left Aldeburgh

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and travelled to London on a bright October autumn day he was carrying a suitcase full of manuscript. I knew him well enough not to ask him what the book was about. But a new book is coming and there are many of us who can hardly wait to see it in the bookshops.

and had the renowned John Dunn as one of his hunting tutors. He was a friend of the sons of Bishop Colenso and Sir Theophilus Shepstone, so he learnt to speak Zulu, and he had a passion for natural history. He returned to England in 1870 and joined the British army.

His journal story starts in 1878 when he heard of the impending war in Zululand. Because he could speak Zulu so well he was given a staff officer's job with Commandant Rupert Lonsdale of the Natal Native Contingent.

Before leaving London, which he describes with charm, Harford kitted himself out for South Africa. Among other things, he bought a special pair of porpoise hide boots. There was a fascinating sequel to this purchase — you can read about it in the book. One of the boots survives in Mrs Daphne Strutt's local history museum in Aliwal Street, Durban. The original manuscript of his journal can be viewed too.

Harford described a wonderful scene of the Natal Native Contingent crossing the Buffalo River. He writes: "The men forming the chain clasped hands and the moment they entered the water they started to hum a kind of war chant . . . The sound that this produced was like a gigantic swarm of bees buzzing about us. And sufficient to scare crocodiles or anything else away."

After the battle of Ulundi, Harford was one of the party sent to search for the unfortunate King Cetshwayo. His description of arriving at Chief Somkele's kraal is very moving. So is his story about one of Somkele's warriors

## January 22, 1879

### — one man's story

I REMEMBER taking Donald Morris around Zululand in 1963 when he was doing the final research for his book, *The Washing of the Spears*. We stood on the edge of the Nqutu heights and looked down onto the plain of Isandlawana.

It was autumn and the red grass was golden yellow, like a bushman painting of an eland. There was a sniff of smoke from the first grass fires and yellow-throated longclaws rose from the tall grass giving their prolonged trilling calls.

Slightly to the west was the gaunt stony kopje which had impassively watched the slaughter of the British by the Zulus, and all around it the white stone cairns glowed in the soft light, marking where desperate redcoats fell on that fateful day of January 22, 1879. It is truly one of the most impressive battlegrounds in the world and no one who has any sensitivity is not moved by it.

Donald Morris sighed and said how he had been longing to see Isandlawana and now at last he was here. He had first read about Rorke's Drift in a children's book when he was ten years old.

We talked about books and he told me how he had struggled to find personal stories of those involved in the Anglo-Zulu War. He mentioned George Mossop's book, *Running the Gauntlet*, the only personal story of the retreat down Hlobane Hill. And he spoke too about the journal of Colonel Henry Harford, C.B., at that time an unpublished manuscript.

You can imagine my pleasure when I saw that this journal\* had been edited by Daphne Child and published locally. It is a simple, factual narrative of a young man's adventures in war.

Harford emigrated to South Africa from England with his parents when he was twelve. He lived on the Stapleton estate at Pinetown and grew up a young Natalian. He learnt to ride and shoot

who had been at Isandlwana. The man had eleven bullet wounds. He said, "You fought well and we fought well." Harford said that there was "... no animosity, no revengeful feeling, but just the sheer love of a good fight

in which the courage of both sides could be tested ..."

and understanding and look hopefully to a joint future.

Today is the anniversary of that battle and we the descendants of those who fought there can clasp each other's hands in friendship

\*Zulu War Journal by Col. Henry Harford, C.B., edited by Daphne Child, published by Shuter & Shooter, 1978.



## Playful children of the sea

I READ the other day of a porpoise that had died from eating garbage. The death of this porpoise or dolphin as they are also called, was on my mind for days. It somehow epitomised the whole story of the tragedy of litter and pollution.

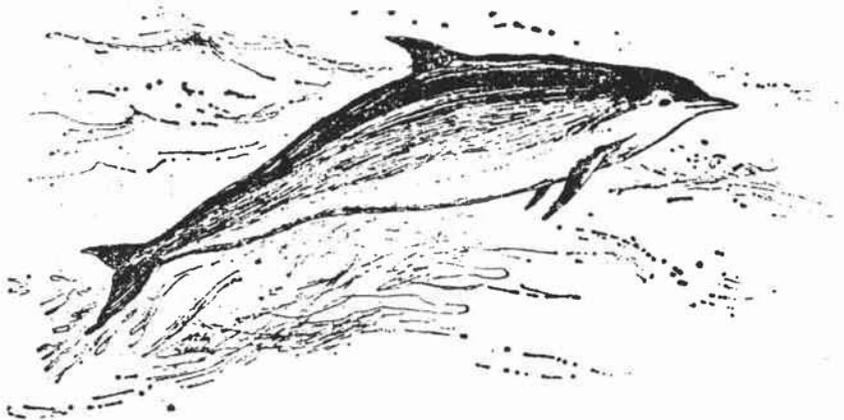
Hardly a day passes without our reading about oil spills, or effluent discharge which kills birds, thousands of fish and other sea life. We get hardened to it and think little about the poisoning of our world. So too with the litter and filth on our streets. It lies there rotting and stinking but we pass it without a thought. It has become part of our lives and we shrug our shoulders and say there is nothing we personally can do. It takes an incident like the story of the unfortunate dolphin to remind us of the effect on other life.

Anyone who has lived near the sea will have seen the porpoises in the waves. Sometimes on calm summer days I have seen them leaping playfully out of the water, their bodies glistening in the sun or racing down the waves like young surfers on a board, only so much more agile. In the Philippine Islands, travelling from Mindoro to some of the small outlying coral islands in the South China Sea, I have had porpoises round the boat all day, cruising underneath or racing ahead and leaping out of the clear water, playing like children, their black bodies changing colour in the different depths of the sea.

In ancient times the dolphin was revered by man. They are part of the myths of Greece and Rome and one sees their leaping forms carved on stone and cast in

bronze. There are stories about them keeping shipwrecked sailors afloat or driving sharks away from life rafts. Even very recently there have been similar incidents off our own coast, and people have sworn that it is the dolphins who have saved them. They are creatures of great intelligence and I remember watching some being filmed in Miami, Florida, during the making of one of the most popular television shows in America, "Flipper." It was uncanny what they could be taught to do.

Many scientists of course have studied them, but in my opinion John Lilly really understood and loved the dolphin. He quickly discovered that human beings are so arrogant that it was difficult for most people to even entertain the idea that there might be superior



beings swimming around in the sea. There was one occasion in 1955 when John Lilly and his fellow scientists had a weird feeling that the dolphins were mimicking their speech and laughing at them.

Lilly studied dolphins for many years and came to the conclusion that he had no right to hold them in a concentration camp for his scientific convenience and he decided to let his captive dolphins go.

On the day he arrived at this decision his favourite dolphin decided to commit suicide. Five more committed

suicide within the next two weeks. They had reached the end of their tether.

Lilly said he would only continue working with dolphins if he could have a place by the sea where dolphins could come and go as they wished. He would then like to have a family with young children who could learn to play and communicate with young dolphins. This made sound sense to me because children, like dolphins, would do things in an unquestioning way.

We have become witnesses, accessories and perpetrators

in the steady degradation of our planet. We are almost coldly indifferent to the lovely natural life that is becoming snuffed out all around us. Our world does indeed become more silent and poisons are poured into the air, the sea and on the land. Will we in the end choke to death on our own waste?

Laurens van der Post told me what an old Free State hunter had once said to him: "Laurens, when the last man departs from this earth, the animals, the birds, the fishes and even the insects will breathe a long sigh of relief."

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## Reno now more than just a quickie divorce centre

I WAS in Reno, Nevada a few weeks ago and spent a day walking about the city. It was bitterly cold and windy and dark clouds threatened to bring more snow to the surrounding hills which were already covered in deep glistering drifts.

In the main street flashing garish signs advertised gambling casinos and there was a banner that proclaimed "The biggest little city in the world."

One becomes a little bemused. I walked down a pavement and saw one building

that housed a casino, a funeral parlour, a drug store, a coffee shop, a jeweller and a wedding chapel in that order. Above the gusts of wind I could hear the sound of gulls and the honking of geese, coupled with the wailing of police sirens and the long

mournful blast of a Southern Pacific Railroad engine and then the traditional clanging of bells as it approached a crossing.

All sorts of people jostled each other on the streets, holiday makers, gamblers and some who were in Reno for a quick divorce. And it is with divorce that Reno has become indelibly linked in the national consciousness.

Founded in 1889 to encourage rural development, Reno became a dusty one street dorp with saloons, hurdy-gurdy houses, gambling halls and hotels. It remained virtually unknown except as a place to strike out for the gold and silver diggings that prospectors kept finding.

Then at the turn of the century an ex-Broadway showgirl named Laura Corey, the wife of the president of one of America's largest companies, US Steel, was sent by her husband to the remote Reno. Laura Corey had instructions to stay six months and sue for divorce. Mr Corey thought the obscurity of Reno would ensure secrecy. But Laura Corey was an articulate, courageous woman who spoke out about her plight and it excited the sympathy of other women. The divorce resulted in a two million dollar settlement and every major newspaper let America know the result.

An enterprising New York lawyer, W. H. Schnitzer, saw the possibilities of great business and made the long railway journey across America from New York to Reno.

He stayed long enough to pass the Nevada Bar exams then returned to New York and advertised in newspapers, magazines and theatre programmes. Unhappily married

rich women flocked to his office. It was a sell out. Other lawyers saw the possibilities and Reno was made.

In 1920 the film star Mary Pickford came to Reno to get a divorce. She bought a house overlooking the Truckee river and whiled away the six months residence requirement, attracting great publicity. From 1929 to 1931 a serious drought hit the cattle and sheep farmers. There was a bank collapse and Reno was in serious trouble. Divorce came to the rescue. The state legislative acted decisively by reducing the residence period required for a divorce to six weeks. An uncontested divorce trial now required about five minutes of court time. It became very big business and the city coffers were filled again.

Today there is a lot more to Reno than just divorce and gambling. Its educational system is one of the best in the United States and the

university has excellent agricultural and judicial courses. There are art galleries and museums and an active opera guild. I saw a performance of *The Barber of Seville* which was as good as, if not better than, anything I had seen in Europe. At Harrah's Gambling Casino there is the biggest collection of veteran cars in the world.

Reno has also become a popular convention centre and the day I was there Sugar Ray Leonard fought Bruce Finch in a title fight. A few years ago Ian Smith paid his first visit to America. He had been invited by the Mzuri Safari Foundation, a group of wealthy west coast hunter-conservationists. I was there when ex-President Ford came to talk to the same group.

The biggest little city in the world is not a misnomer and Reno has come a long way from being a dusty little dorp.

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## Welcome home to Africa

I AWOKE in the early hours of the morning when I heard the swishing sounds of an animal walking through the Black Umfolosi river. The moon had gone down and I stared out into the darkness, wondering what animal it was.

My trail companions with the exception of Magqubu slept heavily and I could hear them murmuring in their sleep. In the faint light of the fire — only one ntombothi

log was burning — I saw Magqubu raise himself onto one arm, and he too stared at the river. Then he looked at me, shrugged his shoulders and mouthed in Zulu, "I don't know." He dropped back onto his sleeping bag and within seconds was asleep.

I walked to the edge of the camp and listened intently for more clues about the animal that had waded through. Often one heard a bank collapsing, but this had been a

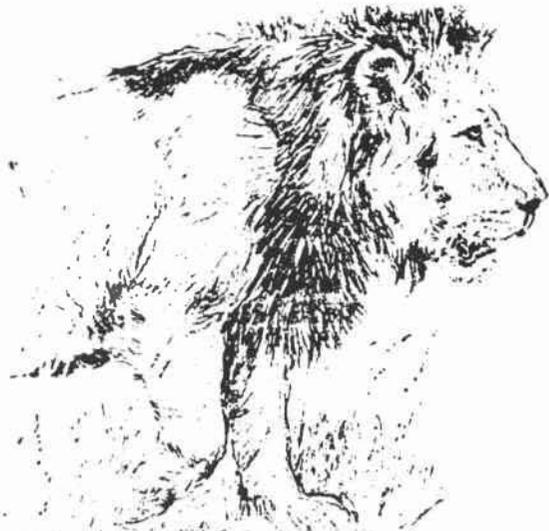
different sound. A soft swish, swish, swish as though the animal had been delicately picking up its feet.

Earlier in the afternoon we had seen one large old black crocodile catching the last rays of the afternoon sun, its jaw half open and the egg yolk colour of its throat shining ominously. That crocodile could easily pull in a full grown kudu, so anything crossing over was taking a chance.

Not long ago I had heard a duiker scream as a croc grabbed it at first light. It is only this kind of sight and sound that makes one realise how dangerous it is at the river's edge. Yet it is a lesson few trailers will learn. They think that to be grabbed by a croc in half a metre of water is simply an unlikely story. It is only those of us who have spent some time of our lives in the bush who know how cunning the crocodile can be.

I thought about this and other things as I continued to listen for a clue. Three different kind of owls screeched and whistled in the night. A bushbuck barked faintly in the reeds at the bend of the river. Tree frogs whistled and there was the deep croak of a bullfrog. Figs plopped out of the tree and fireflies shone with green luminosity.

I had been away in America and Europe for six weeks — another world of snow and ice and howling winds across the prairie and desert and in the gaunt mountains of Scotland. The bitter cold of a northern winter had chilled my bones and stiffened my muscles and overcrowded cities had dampened my spirits.



So it was good to be back in Africa and feel and hear that deep pulsing of the old continent. And it was here in the little wilderness remnant of Umfolosi that I could get to grips with the country and myself again. I had sweated and limped into the Amatsshenyana camp in the late afternoon, dumped my haversack and lain back as others lit the fire and made tea.

The smell of the wood-smoke and the perfumed whiff of acacia flowers worked miracles on my morale. Was it not the Arabs who said, "Once you have tasted the waters of Africa, you must return to have your fill thereof."

My musings were stilled by a soft but unmistakable cough. It was a lion on the sandy bank no more than 60 metres away. I could not see it but I knew that sound.

For a moment the bush was hushed as though in anticipation. There was a booming, shattering roar that reverberated down the river, echoing in the groves of sycamore figs and smashing against

the granite cliffs. The ground seemed to shake and there was more than a flutter in my heart. The lion roared again and again and the whole earth seemed to be full of its sound, then for a few moments it was still.

I heard Magqubu say in firm tones, "Nkosi". The King. This was the beast that had crossed the river and when it reached the other side, it had no doubt peered intently at the sleeping forms beside the fire and wondered perhaps at the man animal.

A minute later another lion took up the refrain and roared in unison with the one on the beach. Then a third on the hill to the south of us began his song and my ears rang with the sound. My companions moved nearer to the fire and put on another log. They were men from the city but their reactions were age old.

For an hour there was a full chorus of lion roars, one to another, and sometimes two at a time. I was back in Africa and what a welcome it had been.

## Bond of peace — and concern

I REMEMBER being on a trail in the Umfolosi game reserve when the threat to the reserve of the proposed dam was at its height. A farmer, an artist, a chemist and a Catholic priest were with Magqubu and myself.

At the end of the trail, which was memorable for what we had seen and for the warm friendly discussions we'd had around the campfire, we talked about the dam. The priest reminded us of Christ's words: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name . . ." We then prayed together under a big acacia nilotica.

Natal robins sang in the riverine forest, cisticola fluttered in the reeds and an old buffalo bull waded through the brown water of the Black Umfolosi river. We had all realised that further talk and protestations were pointless. We had done our best and now had to hand over to far greater forces than man. I walked out of the wilderness area with a happy heart.

I had the same feeling last month after attending the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly Prayer Breakfast. It is a day when all races meet in one room as human beings, not categorised into blacks, whites or browns. A cross section of this great country of ours is always there: businessmen, politicians, civil servants, newspaper editors, school teachers and religious leaders.

When I arrived I was aware of a strained atmosphere among men in the lobby but that was soon dissipated in

the breakfast room. I saw men who had moments before been antagonistic were now talking animatedly and laughing.

There was a strange sort of magic in the room, a relief that for one day of the year you could be yourself and not someone of a particular colour. The master of ceremonies had a nice sense of humour and made gentle fun of some of the people at the head table.

When breakfast was over there were scripture readings. Then we listened to Mrs Zwane singing and to the choir of the Chesterville Secondary School. Music has no barriers and it is not surprising that this choir has received so many invitations to perform. They are young people with remarkable talent.

Towards the end of the morning the Chief Minister The Hon. M. G. Buthelezi, addressed the gathering and spoke of the fellowship at the prayer breakfasts over the past eight years and how they had enriched his life. He compared the prayer breakfasts to the relief a glass of cold water would give to a thirsty pilgrim walking through a desert.

He talked too of the agony of living in a society as far as the issue of finding accommodation with each other is concerned. He quoted General Hertzog's words in 1926 when the General said that the instinct of self-preservation was above even Christian principles.

"In a way we all seem to be bogged right down in those 1926 elusive marshes of

General Hertzog. The problem is how we can overcome these very human problems of fear . . ." the Chief Minister said.

He spoke about the Buthelezi Commission report. "As we pray together today," he said, "Let us ask God to guide us towards a formula for fundamental and peaceful change in South Africa. If it is not the road spelled out by the Buthelezi Commission which we are to walk at this time, let us pray to the Almighty for a solution which will ensure that as members of the South African nation we are enabled to find each other before it is too late."

The morning ended with everyone singing **Nkosi Sikelela 'iAfrika**. The words and music come easily to the lips, for we are part of Africa. All of us have deep roots here. I remembered the trail in Umfolosi and the priest reminding us of Christ's words: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name . . ."

There could not have been many people who walked out of that prayer breakfast who did not believe that we could and must find a way to live in peace.





Noja Steele