

The Man-eater of Mfuwe

Narrative by

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Looking into the eyes of the Tsavo man-eating lions on exhibit in the Chicago Field Museum as a child led me on a pursuit that eventually put me face to face with another man-eating lion as a grown man. The exhibit fueled my appetite to learn more, but it never prepared me to be looking into the hungry jaws of another man-eater.

Having been born and spending my youth in Chicago, my father had a great deal to do with my developing interest in foreign lands, people and the flora and fauna. He began taking me to Chicago's museums and cultural centers, particularly the Field Museum, at a very early age. I recall as I entered the first time, seeing the elephant mounts at the end of the great hall. In wonderment I would walk around and around staring at them in awe, fearful of their size and long silenced power.

In the foreground, on the side of the hall, stood bronze castings of the warriors facing lions across the hall from them, with one of the lions beginning to move forward after a spear that had been cast had missed, and was stuck in the ground next to her'. I would stand in front of the lions and try to imagine what it would feel like to have nothing but a few seconds of time separating me from their wrath. This scenario intrigued me for many years. I would walk back and forth, stand behind one side, then the other, and muse to myself what kind of people and just what circumstances and motives would bring about such a confrontation. This has always been on of my favorite spots on earth. There was pride and a feeling of gratitude to be able to be in such a unique place.

I spent many afternoons at Chicago's cultural centers, yet the African exhibits in the Field Museum pulled me into their web, motivating me to dream of a lifetime of exploring the wilds of Africa. The museum was a great source of cultural awareness generally for me, but I was fascinated mostly by anything African. After Bushman died, after having seen him 3 or 4 times 'playing' and interacting with his keepers at The Lincoln Park zoo, it was a point of wonderment to me that he would be preserved at The Field.

This was the genesis of my keen interest and regard for wildlife, and soon after I developed an equally keen interest in understanding their environment. During my

boyhood years, when my mother took me to the beach, we would look into the crystal clear Lake Michigan water and see pan fish. We would swim with our eyes open. It was a beautiful natural resource.

I watched it deteriorate before my very eyes. Even now, vivid in my mind's eye is the day I looked across from the beach, saw the smoke for the Gary mills and heard my mother tell me the reason why the water was, 'dirty now' was due to them, and 'that's the way it is, maybe they'll do something about it'.

My family vacationed several times in the Wisconsin north woods not far from Canada, fishing and hiking. It was to me then still primitive and wild, at least there were numerous bear, and various small animals, and the lakes and creeks were a treasure. I loved the forests and the wildlife and the cleanliness of the natural environment.

Various related films on TV, TV shows and books and magazines engendered my interests. The films made by Osa and Martin Johnson of their African adventures and exploration were among my favorites. My mother and father always approved my watching them and encouraged me to pursue my interest in Africa. And everyone in Chicago watched Zoo Parade with Marlin Perkins. I read anything African voraciously. From time to time acquaintances traveled to Africa on camera safaris and once in a great while I'd even meet a hunter who had visited the Dark Continent.

By the time I entered high school I began to fear for the well being of the environment. I could never understand why it was necessary, for example, to obliterate what once was a beautiful natural creek in order for it to become what is now part of several different Chicago suburbs. I stopped taking for granted the Chicago area Forest Preserves as well. Yet I also realized the African environment too was in danger, much as our own here in America.

As a an active athletically inclined boy, I did naturally take for granted my youthful health, health that would be so necessary to hunt dangerous game and explore nature's rugged domain. Until June, 1954 when I contracted bulbar polio while on a vacation to Yellowstone Park.

A fellow Chicagoan who had interned at Cook County Hospital, and had seen perhaps thousands of polio cases, deserves the first credit for saving my life. I had become ill, and my parents took me to the Park hospital, an old, small bungalow built during the 1920's. No one could diagnose me. As events would be, this Chicago trained doctor happened to come to the hospital and walked by my room, stuck his head in the

doorway, and observed me. He immediately recognized the paralysis of my throat and mouth as being symptoms of bulbar polio, ordered a spinal tap, which confirmed his diagnosis, and thus I was sent on my way, but we knew not where. I do not know his name.

Literally hundreds of people in two states who worked to get me out of then a remote place and help us search out an empty hospital bed in the midst of an epidemic. Highway Patrol and police escorts lead us from town to town, trying to find a hospital that would take me in. All were overflowing until eventually we found the Children's and Polio Hospital in Helena, Montana. And the staff was wonderful there. They saved my life. During the three months I was bedridden, I often thought of what might become of my African adventure dreams as hospital staff and visitors talked about the great outdoors and the hunting and fishing they enjoyed. And always how pure their wild 'country' was. It was the year of the Salk Vaccine, but that happened in September, too late for me, but still, I had at least survived. I saw many children in the hospital my own age and younger who had not.

My health had thus become an overriding issue for me, and would remain so to varying degrees the rest of my life. With youthful resilience, after this near death experience, I determined to recover back to 'normal' no matter what the cost. With the help of two wonderful specialists in Chicago, Dr. Richard Hurd and Dr. J. Fischer, I was able to start over. Little did I know that this would lead me on a lifelong mission to keep myself physically fit and that this self-imposed regimen, which would become later more of a necessity, would prove to be of critical importance in far off future events involving life and death, and children, once again

As far back as memory permits, I always had an interest in target shooting. This drew me to develop what were natural skills in this area as an adult. After moving to California in 1967, I became associated with an organized shooting club and fortuitously for me, one of the instructors Robert Majares was, and as far as I know still is, a world record holder in a very difficult target shooting event. It was my good fortune that our schedules 'crossed paths' so to speak, enabling me to spend much time with him. He had hunted Africa twice, and had imparted to me much of what was required to become safely proficient with firearms. Later, I was fortunate to be educated by and later became friends with Mike Dalton and Mickey Fowler, men who had won world championships in other target shooting events and still compete internationally today. I became proficient with

many types of firearms and the shooting sports. Their training, education and dedication and expectations imparted to me gave me skills and knowledge at a level that would someday become a necessity, but not in the serene world of shooting sports.

Mickey too had been hunting to Africa a few times, and as Bob and almost every person I knew who had been to Africa felt, was alarmed, dismayed, sickened even by the poaching, threatened extinction of many species, and the destruction of Africa's natural resources. As the public in general became increasingly aware of the horrible levels of poaching and the other elements destroying huge blocks of African habitats, I began to doubt that I would ever witness first hand the Africa that I had dreamed of as a boy. I never wanted to give it up that dream, but it seemed to be fading in my mind, unlike my warm memories of the exhibits at the Field Museum.

Events unfold and timing it has been long said by philosophers, is everything. The case of Man-eater of Mfuwe and me can be characterized by just an adage. One day, there appeared a window of opportunity for me to consider going on an African safari. If there ever had been a time, and the circumstances and the motives for me to explore the possibility of going to Africa to hunt non-endangered species, it had arrived that day. It was as if all my memories and experiences and desires and knowledge welled up into my consciousness, and confronted me with almost a challenge to 'do it'. Coincidentally, all the right ingredients were available to allow me to finally live out one of my life's dreams.

I made the decision to begin researching with various booking agents, companies and my experienced African hunting and touring friends. I knew that safari operations in many countries had conservation as their primary mission, which was my primary criterion to be used in selecting which operation I would select.

The Luangwa River Valley encompassed three large national parks, which surrounded and were adjacent to, large areas designated to be utilized as renewable resources by the rural populations. I chose the Malambo Safari Co. because it incorporated a conservation concept that utilized all natural resources according to a scientifically researched and approved basis.

Several European scientific programs in cooperation with various African governments had created a new socio-economic climate that had reversed the loss of wildlife through poaching in contrast to areas which had not implemented these pro-active programs. The Luangwa River Valley has benefited from one such project, the LIRD, or the Luangwa Integrated Resource Development Project. It was administered by the area's

Chiefs and respective ruling councils.

The area's population enjoyed one of Africa's highest rural standards of living. They took pride in resource protection, particularly against poaching, by participating aggressively in the wildlife protection programs, because they have a direct incentive from sustainable resource use. The positive effects on the wildlife population by 1991 were been stunning. For example, prior to 1987, when the program was initiated, a conservative estimate of approximately 3600 elephant a year were poached out of the Luangwa Valley. Since the program began, there have been no more than 120 incidents, with the herd growing by approximately 500 a year.

With income from the safari operation as a source of capital to establish an economic infrastructure, the area's citizens have built schools, clinics, a fishery, a furniture factory and roads. And, financed major additions to the armed anti-poaching units who were charged with combating the ivory and animal parts trade.

In other parts of Africa since, farmers have given up their low yield farms to convert them to regenerated wildlife habitats, because they can earn multiples of more money and will in continue to do so in the foreseeable from both conservation regulated safari hunting and controlled harvesting. The restoration of these habitats also generates growing tourist dollars.

Ranchers also learned to capitalize on the concept of making wildlife valuable, and some have converted vast tracts of contiguous private ranches from protected grazing land to wildlife habitats. These 'new' habitats are re-populated by transporting species, particularly elephant, from crowded to re-establish or to complement the surviving indigenous population.

SECTION TO COME

September 1, 1991, my first evening in camp afforded me the opportunity to meet a visiting lion expert from Japan. He had come with a single purpose, to study the situation and hunt down a man-eating lion. Earlier in the week while scouting among the villages with Game Management Scouts, they encountered three lionesses near a hut and he shot one of them. In the two preceding months five other lionesses had been killed in

the village areas outside of hunting concessions and of course the National Parks where hunting is prohibited. It was his opinion at the time that she was the man-eater. Despite the kill, he was returning to Japan not at all content the next morning. He knew that the man-eater was still alive since the sixth known victim of the Man-eater of Mfuwe had succumbed to the beast the very night before. I was very interested in the enticing conversation but I had no desire to become involved with the man eating problem.

The discussion was quite informative and intriguing though, with Charl attesting to the fact that every year for 10 years 8 maned lions had been taken out his assigned safari designated area. With the presence of additional numerous lions in and amongst the villages, there was no doubt in my mind I was in the center of 'lion country'. Some believed that the lionesses were part of a male man-eater's pride. Charl maintained that if that was so, the man-eater had witnessed the lionesses being shot, and this had probably made him even cleverer. The expert from Japan was not the first outsider to fail to kill the man-eater: a professional hunter by the name of Carr had also made numerous attempts to get near the man-eater, but the lion seemed to always run away and stay away from whichever area of the villages Carr was working. Pressure was building for a solution. Local officials were open to any help and suggestions to help extricate them from the problem. They had approached Charl and other professional hunters to get involved, but their commitments to their clients and other responsibilities made such diversion prohibitive.

Having made the 35 hour journey from Los Angeles to Kamana Camp on the Luangwa, I retired to my quarters and fell immediately asleep, as the bush came alive with noise that surrounded our open- air 3 walled straw huts. Up well before dawn, we prepared to begin exploring the concession and check for lion spoor at baits hung in a few locations several miles away. Greatly excited, I met the three trackers who would complete our 'team', Gilbert, Boniface and Ken, who had grown up in the area hunting for sustenance. Very familiar with the area, they would be working with us, at times with autonomy.

As we went about our business, Charl commented that I had slept quite well. My curiosity got the best of me and I asked him how he had come to that conclusion. He told me that soon after everyone turned in to their quarters, a group of hyenas started prowling around the skinning shed, seeming to enjoy every minute of it. Their hooting and howling continued intermittently for a couple of hours despite efforts to drive them away. Later a

baboon broke through the camp 'kitchen' door, and began thrashing everything he could get his hands on, making and apparently enjoying the noise he made with the camp's pots and pans. Last but hardly the least, about mid-night, a herd of elephants glided into camp and began ripping at trees eating and chomping and grumping and getting in each others way, possibly as they stripped the flower beds in the center of camp our camp about mid-night. The elephants were not less than 30 feet from every one of us during their raid. This went on I was told for another solid hour, as the entire camp lie awake, talking back and forth to each other from their individual quarters. Finally, after an hour of siege, the camp manager, an English lady named Joan, asked Charl to 'For God's sake do something'. With his 12 gauge shot gun, Charl ran out of his quarters shouting and began to shoot in the air above the elephants' heads. His actions worked, yet I made a mental note to myself that these animals in Africa were anything but shy. It was the last good night's rest I would salvage until I departed camp 2 weeks later.

After 3 days of wide exploration throughout the designated concession into areas that seemed under the conditions to be the most favorable spots for wildlife, following game trails and crossing points to the Parks, we found no indication that any mature male lions, were visiting inside our designated concession. We saw and observed many lionesses, and one or two young males, but no mature males. Even when we observed several lions at a time in early dawn hours skirting in the river boundaries of the national parks, none were mature males nor had manes. Incredibly, no Cape buffalo, common to the area were spotted either. A two year drought kept the Cape herds along with most species common to the area, were hanging back in the high water table in the Parks. We visited one Park briefly and indeed conditions there also were worsening as they had begun browsing. The Park bushes and trees were being stripped rapidly. The lions were crowding things over there, no doubt. At night we heard their roars, calls, and snarls mixed with occasional elephant squeals and trumpets. The leopard sawing was incessant, intermingled with the almost predictable hippo calls and hyena chatter close in camp. Despite my fears, I was in my dream world.

I pondered the increasingly frustrating situation. On the one hand, we could continue to work very hard in the heat and flies, until I was scheduled to leave and join Bryan Findlay-Cooper along with Charlie and Jerry to tour Bryan's southern Zambia concessions, Victoria Falls, and especially the Kfuwe flats with the famed Kfuwe Lechwe whose habitat and population Bryan was actively trying to preserve. On the plus side was

that other species were present, not in large numbers except for Impala. We did have success in taking 3, a sizeable Sharpe's Grysbok, a large Southern Greater Kudu running with two others, and from a healthy herd of about 50, 'record book' sized Cookeson's Wildebeest in that order. The trackers and Charl painted my face with the Grysbok's blood, a customary ritual with ones' first African trophy.

But it appeared that the prospect of even seeing a mature male lion during the next 11 days was bleak based on the signs thus far. The drought was almost two years old, and no seasonal rain was due for 3 months. When it would come, the camp would in all likelihood be washed out, as it had been each of the last 10 years. The chances of any cape herds migrating through our area before then remained slim.

Charlie and Gerry and two other PH's were also looking for lion spoor during their work and tracking. Close to the farthest border of the concession, devoid of rivers and creeks, they had found only lionesses drinking from a tepid, algae filled water hole. They spent three days observing the water hole, seeing different lionesses but without any sign of a male lion.

I kept reminding myself to heed the warnings of friends and others who had experienced rural Africa: Don't waste time. The Africa environment can be treacherous. Take advantage of every opportunity. Be extremely cautious. There will be many unforeseen pitfalls. It's easy for someone to come back at best disappointed. Don't hunt "cats" the first time you go...try a short 5-day trip the first time to just get adjusted to Africa. It's a long way away from home. Remember, anything can happen. Their words kept ringing in my ears. Almost as loudly as the ringing of silence from the noon day heat. Even the Tse-tse flies seemed to have taken a break from harassing us around noon.

On the other hand, although I had embarked on this safari full of fear and apprehension faced with countless unknowns, I finally decided that a rational man would make changes in the situation that might improve it, if it at all possible. Laying back onto my bed, with the wind blowing through the shady camp, drying up every little vapor of moisture, conscious thoughts of the man-eating lion started to meld with the others. Gazing with half closed eye lids out across the Luangwa the village area, I felt a sense of urgency, almost compulsion, to intervene. To not, would be irresponsible. The entire camp's priorities revolved around my decisions, and to continue on our path would be an exercise of my self-will and not be of service for the others in camp and for those in the villages. Despite good intentions, no one had been successful so far. In fact just the

opposite was true: villagers continued to be attacked and 6 lionesses had been needlessly killed. "To him who knows good and doesn't do it is sin" I told myself.

A look at the calendar and on the basis of what I'd experienced so far, particularly the obvious capability of my hosts, the impact of the drought conditions, and that my shooting ability was excellent so far, and despite being fatigued, I felt physically strong, I met late one afternoon with the camp PH's and taking the 'step into the unknown', I announced that I would go after the man-eater. He was after-all, a "large male with a huge mane" some of the villagers steadfastly maintained. We knew he was there, and didn't appear to be going anywhere else soon with the terror and evil he was perpetrating. We knew where the man-eater was, he was in the villages. Despite my own self-assurances I didn't feel comfortable with the decision. Three months earlier when I committed to this excursion I was sure, yet I chalked it up to the fable "that's what happens in Africa".

Charl and Willie had for some time very much doubted he was full maned if at all. They felt that some of the villagers had asserted this simply as a ploy to continue to induce hunters to come into the area to compete for his hide. Theories that the man-eater was a lioness based on descriptions of the man-eater given by many villagers that had been the premise of the Game Scouts hunts, lent credence to the theory that if a male, he was maneless. Very little was known about the specifics of the Game Management Scouts' activities involving the lionesses except for information given by the Japanese expert who shot the lioness.

Charl confirmed that my going after the man-eater would still generate revenue for the Project our being outside the approximately 5400 square mile designated area. And, if successful, it would solve what was the major problem of the moment for the local villagers, the Project Administrators and Game Management Scouts. It would give Charlie and Jerry more latitude in their efforts, as we would be working completely away from the concession area. It was sure to be risky I knew, but it had the potential solution for thousands of people and their children. Charl and Willie and I immediately, turned our attention to the unknown arena of hunting the man-eater.

During the next two days we the visited various villages where the lion had been seen. We listened to villagers' descriptions of him and his activities, and put together as best could be done, the latest pattern and whereabouts. At the same time, our trackers worked the area relentlessly. The man-eater's last victim from the village of Ngozo was an

adult woman named Jesleen. She had been the topic of discussions my first evening. Encountering the children's fear filled eyes, and after listening to each story from the terrified villagers, caused my paradigm to would shift slightly, generating a process that slowly allowed my mental state to change.

A day after the lion ate Jesleen, the lion was without question positively identified under macabre circumstances: he was seen entering the victim's house, and leaving carrying her white 'carry' bag full of some of her possessions! He went roaring about the village while the people banged on pots and whatever they could pound until he left. After this return visit to Ngozo, he was seen playing with the bag from time to time and a day later, it was found deposited in the dry Lupande River, about a mile from her house. Being the dry season, most smaller riverbeds were dry, and even larger riverbeds were dried up more so than normal due to the second year of drought.

Despite the conditions, the banks on the Lupande were lined with healthy full bushes and tall green grass mixed in with dried shrubs and trees. Safe viewing had to begin by walking to a point in the middle of the riverbed, down far away from the last known location. Village women would go in several small groups to dig down through the sandy riverbed about 3 feet to do their family's wash. When we arrived the closest group of women was more than a half mile from the victim's bag in clear sight of it. Even the hornbills lounging in the riverbed seemed to be giving the bag a wide berth.

That night, the lion had obviously toyed with the bag again, because the following morning his tracks led to its new spot a few hundred yards further up from its previous position. Each morning the villagers would take a peek at the bag's position in order to confirm that the lion was playing with it and moving it during the night. The village elders counseled and concluded that the bag was bewitched. The lion, they felt, was most likely a sorcerer, or if not a demon, at the least demon possessed.

The cat seemed to revel in agonizing the villagers. He appeared in Ngozo again, cavorting around with the white bag, seeming to be only interested in playing with it like a domestic kitten playing with a new found toy, or catnip! The cats harmless though disgusting escapade seemed to capture the imagination of everyone it seemed, in the entire North Luangwa Valley within "no time". The man-eater spied the adult male villager who discovered him, but did not persist in pursuing or harassing him. The man stated he was maneless corroborating earlier descriptions. We dubbed this escapade "the catnip episode".

One specific resident, a Game Management Scout, fearing greatly for his family's safety, had been continually on the look out since the cat's first victim nearly two months earlier. During our conversation with him, with his children huddling timidly around him while he spoke, he told us that he had seen the cat trying to sneak into their village from the tall gold grass surrounding his village clearing the very day before 'catnip' episode, and a few times since. From a vantage point on the edge of the river bank around 40 yards from the man's home, we could almost see the white bag's most recent position. Lion tracks were visible on the perimeter of his residence clearing.

Other villagers told us that they believed the white bag to be bewitched and that they would not dare go near it. The Game Scout led us down into the middle of the riverbed, and would only point towards the white bag. He stopped at that point and would advance no further. It was the most eerie sight that soon met our eyes as we began the following lion tracks in the Lupande with guns at hand: the white bag taken out of Jesleen's hut. When I first laid my eyes on that white bag, my blood seemed drain out of my body and to drop to my feet, and I felt a sinking feeling in my stomach. The searing heat seemed to dissipate, and my skin became cold. If what I felt was my blood 'running cold', then I want to keep it warm forever. This situation became a horrific 'in my face' reality. I realized I had not bargained for this state of reality nor did I really want it. There was no denying my feelings, but it seemed beyond my comprehension, and surreal. I wondered what had made me think I was ready for such a venture. I only knew I was never turning back.

With our guns ready, Charl and kept murmuring, almost as if to himself, "He's big. He's big" while staring down at the pug marks. The atmosphere was intense and grim in that riverbed, and it became deeper and seemed to try to almost overpower any thoughts other than those of fear. My companions had deep frowns, tight lipped mouths and glaring eyes. I asked Willie where he thought the lion might be as we cautiously strolled through this 'lion-annexed playground'. His feeling was that the man-eater could have been most anywhere: just behind the tall grass on the bank to our side, or 5 miles away. There was no telling. It was now apparent to me from their demeanors, that our trackers were not at all pleased with the situation. Gilbert avoided looking me in the eyes. Ken and Boniface became reticent.

After following the spoor from the white bag, which now we dubbed 'the lion's bag', it was decided to lay bait about 60 yards directly further up the Lupande from the bag

at the base of a small tree where the bank was about 25 feet above the river bottom. Blind site selection was easily done between trees about 50 yards from the bait. As sunset was fast approaching, we retired to camp. At dinner, the grimness of the situation was evident by the look on everyone's faces. The discussion was stern as to what we would need to do and what, the lion might do.

As we were retiring to our individual grass huts, Charlie's only direct comment to me for the evening was, "Remember to follow-up HARD as soon as you make your first shot." As I stood my rifle up against the straw made post next to me head, and dropped the mosquito netting over my bed, I was still in a state of disbelief at what I was immersed in. The cacophony of nightly rumbles, hoots, screeches, howls, roars and squeals and screams from out of the bush were barely noticeable to me. It was a night where I would fall to sleep and then re-awake several times, after which I would pray each time, until our pre-dawn wake-up call.

The next morning our trackers built the blind using grass cut by nearby villagers as their contribution to our effort. A hippo haunch was carefully laid at the base of the fever tree in the riverbed tree and covered with some shrub. It was completed by about 3:30 P.M. when we entered the blind, knowing that we could not leave until the next morning for it was too dangerous with cats and especially a man-eater, working the area to leave it at night. We had a clear field of vision approximately 60 in width to the bait in the riverbed, and on the opposite side we had the same with several yards of clear burnished ground leading up to the patchwork of shriveled scrub brush, thornbush and fallen grass that to distant huts.

That first evening was uneventful until a grazing hippo, took a long, deliberately slow approach towards the blind. I whispered warnings to Willie and Charl, who to initially ignored me until the hippo literally 'bumped' into the side of the blind nearest our heads, and apparently catching, our scent and did a quick hoppity-ski-and-a-jump away. The incessant insects and an occasional bat fluttered in and out of the blind. We were stirred three times by noises in the river. Once we saw that Willie viewed a genet visiting the bait, but the lion did not appear. However, in the morning our trackers found his tracks about 50 feet from the blind when they came to get us. And fresh pugs appeared at the white bag which again had been moved. He had come near the bait as well, yet he had stayed away. This lion was evidently quite cautious, and apparently was used to being around people.

After a brief stop at our camp, we grabbed some food and headed out to track and hunt all day. We took a Burchell's Zebra from a herd of about 200 and returned to camp. After discussions about what to do next with the man-eater at lunch, Charl and Willie to decided try something new: consolidate our bait at the tree with a few baits from several of the spots used by the Rangers and the Japanese researcher near other villages, a few miles away. This was a big project: we dragged these baits together, purposely going right by the 'lion's bag', and placed them next ours. Charl and Willie were sure this night would bring the final contact. I began to feel the pressure mount moment by moment. I kept asking myself the question: 'Is this really me doing this? My entire being was beginning to become separated from everything and anything else I knew or thought I was.

Once again, we settled into the blind at about 3:30 PM waited for a sign, any sign, of our man-eater. I was starting to feel exhausted from the time changes and from the lack of sleep since my first night's slumber. The unrelenting heat taking its toll, and I dropped off into what I afterwards came to call a 'blind sleep'- my eyes were closed, but my ears seemed to have acquired an ability to listen to each and every sound. I was in a parallel state of consciousness. It wasn't a half sleep or light sleep- or any kind of sleep I had ever experienced. When I asked Charl and Willie, they too described this mode of sleep, a sleep which they had long ago acquired.

During the night I was startled by a resounding sharp, 'CRACK!' above my head, in the small trees next to the blind. Instinctively I kept still. I slowly turned my head and rolled my eyes to my right and could see through the thin layer of elephant grass that made up the walls of the blind, two elephant legs, about 6 feet from my head. I rolled my eyes upward and I could make out an elephant, virtually standing over my head! He was feeding off a tree next to the blind. I rolled my eyes and head slowly back to my left to see if Charl or Willie were either signaling to me or had made a move. Catlike, Charl rose from a lying position and crouched statue-like in silence, and turned to face toward the tusker with his .458 in hand pointing upward. A few minutes of contented munching later, the elephant moved on silently. We settled back down to our 'sleep'. After this interruption, I found myself ignoring the grazing hippos, roaming hyenas and jackals with relative ease.

As the crimson dawn broke, we disappointedly waited inside the blind until our trackers Gilbert, Ken and Boniface came driving up from the village where they had slept. They told us that the lion had come through that village and listened to the commotion as

he had caught and eaten a bush pig near them, whilst we had waited in vain. All of us stood silent for a minute or two. I was thinking, how very strange it was that he could stay away from us. Charl breaking the pensive mood, while staring at the ground said: "This one's crafty. He's really a crafty lion." Then looked me in the eye and with dread and bewilderment stated, "He *knows* what we are doing."

Again we stood silent for a minute- each in his own thoughts, grimly pondering the situation. Brooding with the others somewhat, I decided that I was not in the mood to think for too long. We needed to get some water, and perhaps wash the dust and grime and 'whatever' I picked up during the night. Except the thought about, "Do I know what I 'm doing?" came into my mind

We were frustrated by this unseen menace. Perhaps after so little sleep, so much stress and with everyone's spirits sinking, I realized that the lion was taking us to a new level of mental conflict now, much more than physically. Possibly somehow even spiritually. As we drove among more villages we saw the people who were victimized and being held hostage by him. At Ngozo, we met Chief Kakumbi and Charl translated to me some of the accounts of the terror these people and especially their children had to endure.

My consciousness added a new dimension, which had been emerging almost without my realizing it: Outrage and anger. I was in a state of anger at the pitiful conditions many lived under, and the terror of the children, many of whom had a missing limbs, none of whom had shoes, all of whom had been protein deficient, and had been victimized by a myriad of diseases and wildlife. The children became my inspiration. This foul beast seemed to epitomize all of their hardships and sufferings. He had become an embodiment of evil, as he made prey of the weak and downtrodden.

Later that day I told Charl that the lion was beginning to enrage me. As we glanced at each other's bloodshot eyes, he nodded that he understood. Rage had taken a rightful place in my life. This was undoubtedly more than a simple hunt- it was a quest. The man-eater had become the center of all my life's purpose.

My adrenaline was peaking to a sustained level where there was nothing that could have added to the emotional intensity I was carrying as the fear and rage simultaneously competed for my attention. I resolved that I would have to focus on what I was going to have to do, moment by moment, day by day, to keep my adrenaline in control and let the fear and rage play out however it would. This was imperative in order for me to be

effective under any circumstances that might come down.

There was a great deal of discussion among all as we ate a late breakfast back at camp. Our spirits were low. Charl, Ken, Boniface and I went out hunting the rest of the day. It gave our minds a rest from the lion's challenge. This tactic helped lift our depressed state because it stimulated Charl to devise yet another new strategy: We would make a major change in the blind location, hang completely fresh bait and leave it vacant for a day or two. We felt that possibly the man-eater would get comfortable after not being disturbed in the presence of the new object in a 'new' location. Our trackers would build it, avoiding the possibility of the lion picking up our scent or hearing anything from inside the blind. The theory went that he would thus most probably be tempted to return the next day and to repeat an unmolested dinner, assuming he took the bait, and then we, would be waiting for him upon his return. Charl decided that we should move far away to another location since the lion obviously knew we were in that area. The site selected was about 2-1/2 miles from the Lupande, near two water holes where the lion had been seen drinking in the past. It was only a few hundred feet from the nearest of a large group of thatched roofed huts.

While wearily driving between points, out of curiosity, I asked Charl: "Oh, by the way, what about that elephant last night?" With resignation, he replied, "That was bad. If he'd caught our scent he would have stomped." A deadly situation, yet neither of us had been phased by it. Nothing else now mattered except our adversary. Everything else was incidental. We saw lion here, lion there, everywhere a Man-eating lion. He was the center of our thoughts, actions, and the shaping of our attitudes.

Charl also said something that proved to be a most accurate prediction: he felt that since this lion was extremely crafty, he would not ever permit us to see him while he was standing still. He would be moving whenever or where ever he was if he finally decided to let us see him. He told me that I should expect to have about 2.5 seconds, maybe 3 seconds, at the most, to make my shot and again, he repeated that the lion would be moving. He looked intently, searchingly into my eyes and said, "You've got to make this shot Wayne. No matter what you think of it, make it. We need to take this lion". My replied: "I'll make the shot". We agreed that when the time came, I would shoot and Charl would be ready for a follow up immediately with his.458 regardless of any follow-up shot by me. Where, when, under what circumstances, who could guess or know.

The next day the new blind was built on level ground and brand new bait was hung

on a tree about 60 yards away. Young village boys stood barefoot watching us, asking many questions while we worked. I took a picture of 4 of them in a group posing while holding my .308. It was heart –rendering. The oldest, a 14 year-old had only one arm. We also were given more news of our man-eater: the day before, he had tried to pounce on an unsuspecting 14 year old boy, living nearby who, while visiting a wait-a-bush, heard a noise in the bushes as the lion stalked him. Without a second thought, he turned and sprinted back to his home in a heated race with the big cat. Somehow he beat him to his roundoval by a few seconds. He had literally slammed the door in the lion’s face! The time was about 4:30 PM. The lion hung around as the barricaded neighbors shouted and made whatever noises they could to try to drive him away. A large number of people now knew the lion on sight. He was without a mane, a fact already accepted by us.

Long before now the lion’s presence seemed to exert a power unto itself, and had begun to permeate our entire beings. All of our talk, thoughts and actions for those days had focused on him and his challenge to us. We acknowledged the pressure, especially with so many watching who had failed, from the Game Management Scouts and the from local governing tribal councils, but it was inconsequential to us. The local authorities had instituted a 5 P.M. curfew for a large area encompassing approximately 65 square miles; most of the villagers obeyed. On the way back from the villages to our camp, however, we saw many were venturing out past curfew. Apparently they must have been thinking, “It won’t be me. It will be the next person who the lion eats”. Even so, the entire region took on a somber atmosphere with so many curtailed activities.

We were all near exhaustion. Sleep was out of the question: it was simply futile to try. I had come to hunt, and it was this very fact that we perhaps we clung to, and acted out, in order to convince ourselves that he was not controlling our lives. So, during the day when we had time not devoted to tracking and preparing for the lion, we would try to give ourselves an emotional break and occupy our minds by tracking other animals as far as we could into the designated areas. After riding our adrenaline all day, at our camp dinner that night, conversations were short. It was then that I posed a question to Willie, a question that I probably should have asked earlier. “What, I asked, would happen should this lion decide to come into the blind and confront us?” Willie’s response seemed so logical that it made perfect sense to me and so it put me completely at ease about such an attack. He said simply: “If he comes into the blind, there will be 3 guns waiting for him and he will be killed.” With that I never gave it a second thought. But he apparently did give it

many thoughts himself, as he later told me he never would close his eyes because he held that to be a real possibility with this lion being a man-eater. He didn't want to give him one instant of advantage.

Ironically, Charlie and Jerry, experienced just such an attempt 5 nights later about 60 miles from camp. It was only a clever ploy by Simon the PH with them, who, staved off what would most certainly have been a very ugly incident. From their report I realized that lions who come into blinds are not such a simple matter for the occupants.

After another fretful night in bed, shortly after sunrise the next day we scouted the new bait and the area around the new blind. The man-eater had come to the bait, had torn off parts of it, and we could see where he had lain to eat in a footpath used by the villagers leading to a small creek. It appeared he may have taken a nap in the path as well. I stopped to take a photo of one of his pug marks next to my foot. As I snapped the shutter the camera froze. My view through it was black. The camera had broken!

The snap of the shutter seemed to still be snapping like a whip in my head. I took this incredible event as possibly a sign from The Lord. Staring at the pug mark, I thought it meant "Lights out!" But for which one of us? For me or for the lion? I wouldn't accept the thought of it being me. Charl and Willie didn't seem at all comfortable with what had just happened. In truth neither was I. All three of us didn't want to talk about it. It was almost as if we all accepted that it was an omen. The villagers said the lion, after all, was a witch or a demon. Who knew what it meant? Only time would tell.

So far the new plan was working to perfection. During that day our talk was of anything other than that of the coming evening's work. It reminded me of a baseball team' dugout when their pitcher has a no-hitter in his sight. Don't hear, don't talk, don't think it. But, I was thinking about it and I felt the others were as well. We craved relief from the shroud of oppression that had seemed to somehow smother our spirits since we first intruded into the man-eater's affairs. We knew he could be seeing us at any time, and we *felt* him, whether in his 'hunting area', or returning to camp several miles away. It was as if a spirit was around, watching us continually. By this we felt that we had come to know this lion in a most strange way and peculiar.

Charl, Willie and I returned to enter the new blind about 3:30 P.M. that day. Gilbert, Ken and Boniface made arrangements with villagers to stay in nearby huts. If the man-eater was wounded and escaped death from our initial attack, Gilbert would be the lead man to track him until the lion decided to fight it out or became weak so one of us could put him down. It was too revolting a scenario for us to even think about as a possibility, but we knew we had to be prepared for it. I was hoping the lion would show up soon, and give us an easy shot and allow an early camp celebration.

We waited, talking in whispers, calmly, even lightheartedly, but we were afraid to talk about the lion. After about 45 minutes Charl suddenly raised his finger to his lips indicating silence. He had spotted some movement in the tall grass near us. Peeking intently through the blind's grass walls he detected parts of a lion's body as it moved. He indicated that the lion was circling the area in the tall grass not more than 40 feet to one side of the blind. We kept quite still and quiet from that moment on. We all were suffering from days of sleep deprivation, and one of my greatest concerns had been the possibility that one or more of us would pass out asleep. Despite the intensity of the situation, I feared that this could happen in a moment of deceptive calm, when physical exhaustion and a mind assaulted by overwhelming emotions, especially in unyielding heat, together seem to fulfill the old saying that 'the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak'.

Charl and I both could snore if we dozed off, and I had asked him if one of us to fall asleep and snore at the wrong moment, could it warn off the man-eater? Charl said he thought it would not as this lion was used to being around people,

especially in the middle of the night. He would have heard and become accustomed to human sounds and it might only enhance our chances of him viewing the blind as "just another house". Still, even before I asked the question I knew the answer in my heart was: to stay alert. As we waited and hoped, I prayed a silent prayer. I found myself fighting off attacks of dozing, and I know I succumbed to one as dusk began to envelop us.

It was seemingly in the next moment when I saw Charl standing and motioning for me to get up! I jumped up with my .375 H&H and looked through the blind window. Willie whispered: "See him? He's behind the tree!" I didn't at first because the lion was approaching from far behind in a straight line with the trunk of the tree from which the bait he'd partially eaten the day before hung, thereby masking his movement. Our pre-conceived image of him didn't suffer any as he used this tactic. From my view of the lion's body movement from behind the cover of the tree trunk, he wasn't walking calmly as I had seen many other lions walk as when undisturbed. He was in a quick stride, almost trotting. Reaching the tree, he then stepped out from behind it to our left and I saw him for the first time-he was huge! He trotted right past the bait and turned his face to the blind and snarled. He knew we were there. And as Charl had accurately predicted would be the case, he was moving and picking up speed. We would never see him standing still. At least not alive.

Extending his legs he gave me a full broadside view of his body. I scoped onto his stomach at first, but bearing down I jumped the cross hairs and caught up to below and back of his left shoulder, about "1/3 up and 1/3 back" as he began to take his first leaping step in a full run. It was a perfect sight picture! As I continued sweeping with him, I allowed sub-conscious control as I squeezed the trigger and heard the sound of the hit, a "wok". Suddenly an orange flash next to me extended towards the lion and I knew Charl had squeezed off a round. I know I heard the blast of his rifle, but the sound was as silent as the scene in my scope. I immediately re-chambered as the lion continued to sprint like a greyhound for cover into the elephant grass out of my vision. We listened to him crashing through the dry grass for a few seconds, and then, just as suddenly as he had appeared, the noise of his last 'charge' ended. What came next was a low gurgling, burping sound, the sound heard when a lion succumbs to a lethal blow, and then deadly silence.

The Man-eater of Mfuwe's reign of terror ended on September 9, 1991.

What I had just done and seen was not a dream, but I was not quite ready to totally believe it, even though to me it was more like a dream come true. Charl looked at me and said: " We're going out to check the lion." I'm not sure why, yet I stood there, savoring the moment. Despite the relief and elation, I still strangely held onto the state of mind I had just prior to killing the lion. It lingered on as the fear continued to assert itself.

The Land Rover could be heard approaching through the dry bush driven by Gilbert, Boniface, and Ken. They heard the rifle blasts and were speeding to our sides, not knowing what to expect. Greeting them as they drove by me, they continued up to where Charl and Willie were approaching the dead man-eater, which was around 40 yards from bullet impact. When they reached them, Gilbert stood over the carcass and began singing the "The Kunda Lion song" in a clear, beautiful, strong voice: "Moto-moto anamata, Nkalam sa funna nkondo" translated: "Fire, Fire Young Man, The Lion does not want a War". As I walked forward, the trackers ran to me and hugged and kissed me with their congratulations. Ken repeated gleefully: "I say today you get your lion". We were all overjoyed it was over. Yet, I believe that I was perhaps more relieved that we didn't have to track the man-eater's blood trail with darkness falling.

As darkness was now masking the surroundings, the skyline in the distance was lit up all around by orange light. The villagers were setting bonfires in celebration! They had heard Gilbert's song! Voices began ringing out from the darkness from all directions accompanied by drumbeats. Shouting was back and forth and singing came from all sides. We could see no one. It was as if hundreds of people were conducting a private opera. With the orange glowing halos in the darkening skyline of tall grass as a back-drop, we stood in silent isolation with the dead man-eater. It was a moment of exquisite uniqueness. I stopped and stood to savor the scene and cement it in my memory.

It seemed too soon when the echoing voices transformed into a huge circle of people converging on a point in the headlights of the Rover. As I approached, I saw Charl was standing next to the rover. Rapidly a crowd of children swarmed at one point in the vehicles' lights and I watched as they were spitting, and from their body movements, striking and kicking toward the ground. They were casting out their fear and rage on the dead lion! The noise grew as

many more people arrived. Charl stood as if transfixed; his eyes reflecting empathy, wonderment and appreciation. He seemed at a loss for words. Equally in awe, I milled around watching the crowd.

A very old woman approached Charl and asked him who had shot the lion. I couldn't actually hear her above the crowd noise, but I saw him point at me from across the dust filled circle of celebrants. She looked at me for a moment, then back to him for confirmation, and with her cane in her hand, she limped over to me to, took my hand, squeezed it hard, and looked fiercely in my eyes and said, "Zikomo kwambili", which means "Thank you very, very much". This was considered by those present to be great honor granted me from one held in high esteem. Charl later told me when he recounted her greeting and thanks that this was the most dramatic moment for him throughout the entire experience.

After her recognition, countless others their hands to me in thanks as I walked around the crowd. Finally I looked warily at the Man-Eater of Mfuwe. He lay almost as if he were asleep. Yet I could not bring myself any closer to him and remained 25 feet away. Suddenly a story my friend Mickey told me years earlier came to me: He told me that he heard that when one first sees the lion he is hunting, it looks gigantic. And then, after shooting it, the lion immediately looks much smaller. But as the hunter approaches the dead animal, the lion grows in size with each step, until he regaining its true size at the very least in the eyes of the hunter.

It took me 30 minutes or more before I could bring myself to go up from behind, and touch the Man-eater of Mfuwe. My camera had broken when I had photographed the lion's pug mark next to my foot earlier in the day. Charl had brought his along-and it also refused to function as well. Was this a curse from the beast? It didn't matter to those of us who were gathered there. After all the best picture is the one that remains in a person's heart.. Villagers carried me on their shoulders around the crowd in celebration. Numerous songs were sung, speeches made with countless expressions of individual thanks. To name all would be difficult, yet one of many individuals who stand out in my memory: was the Project Assistant School Principal who thanked me profusely, honoring my mother for "birthing" me. He said that he had to once wait for 17 hours to leave his hut because of the Man-eaters activities. Gilbert sang 'The Lion Song' again and again. Willie came alongside me and suggested I listen carefully, since the

only time the song is sung is when a lion is killed. It is believed by the Kunda, that if it is sung when a lion has *not* been killed, whoever sings the song will themselves soon be killed by a lion.

After expressing my gratitude for the kindness and honors bestowed on me by the villagers during their celebration, our party returned to camp with the Man-eater of Mfuwe in our Land Rover. With our companions and our camp staff we continued the celebration under a bright starlit sky. After the celebration, our skinners cut open the stomach of the Man-eater of Mfuwe to look for identifiable human remains. This was a critical part of the celebration and of the official recognition of the victims. It was required because the Kunda, as well as many other African tribes, believe that if any human remains are found, at least part of them must be buried with a proper funeral, otherwise the deceased will not enter heaven or the equivalent of 'the happy hunting ground'.. Finally, about 6 hours after firing the shot that killed him, I was able to bring myself to touch the lion's head.

Around 3 A.M., as we were wrapped it up for the night, I saw Kathryn, an Oxford University wildlife researcher, who was working at the Project's Kwange Culling Station, with the Game Management Scouts. She had enjoyed the celebration. As I prepared to retire, and take the Man-eater of Mfuwe away for the night, she stood motionless staring at him from the corner. I walked over and asked her if she had a chance to go up and inspect the lion, at least touch the man-eater. "No, not yet,..but I will.." she murmured. Indicating that in a minute the chance was about to be gone forever still did not persuade her to move. She just kept staring at him and repeated that she 'would'. Finally, I asked this woman, who had lived for four years in the bush, if she would like to walk with me up to the dead man-eater. She said "OK", but only after I took her hand in mine would she step forward with me to 'meet him'.

Man-eaters die hard.

Charl told me he had never seen anything like what had transpired. None of us had. The next morning, Willie came up to me and confessed, smiling broadly, that he had made up his mind would never put his head down or doze off, because he was extremely fearful, "that this lion, being a man-eater, just might decide to creep up and suddenly come into the blind". He too said the events were amazing and would never forget them. "You watch", he said, "when

you get back to LA, you'll be asking yourself, 'Did I really do that?'"

No human remains were found in the man-eater. Charl's shot had nicked his left rear ankle, tearing away a noticeable patch of skin and flesh. His back bore the scars of the beating by the crowd of children just hours earlier. He seemed to be a most normal dead lion. The lion measured out at 10 ' 6" by Charl's measuring tape. 'His' white bag remained undisturbed out of respect for Jesleen, however, it probably disappeared with seasonal rains that came a few months later.

After a short 3 hours of rest, I returned to the scene of our triumph. The blind's grass and bamboo poles had been salvaged by the villagers. Searched the ground, I found my spent cartridge casing from the lethal round taken by the lion. It seemed to reflect my energy level. The landscape now seemed uncharacteristically placid and lifeless, the way my mental and emotional state felt. Everyone in camp said I had been "Africanized". More "Africanizing" challenges came and went with their sudden danger, lethal threats, and uncertainty. Still, none were as "Africanizing" as the moment Charl presented me with the Man-eater of Mfuwe's *floating bones*. Taking them into my hands, my heart throbbed and I felt a familiar rush, almost as if he still lived.

Somehow, for me, he always will.

Epilogue:

Two days later, I had the honor of being presented to the area Chieftainess, Cheiftainess Ensefu. There were numerous congratulatory calls to the nearest phones in Mfuwe from officials including the Norwegian Director of the Project, the Game Warden of the Mfuwe Command, and Zambian newspapers carried the story. Some were relayed by radio to us. We were given the wonderful opportunity to promote the concept of the LIRDOP conservation program and similar efforts not only in Zambia, but all of Africa.

I remain honored beyond measure to have taken the Man-eater of Mfuwe. I am exceedingly grateful for the opportunity that was given me and the

teamwork of Charl Buekes, Willie Cloete and our trackers Gilbert, Ken and Boniface. In keeping with LIRDPA goals and purpose, I had not only taken a fine trophy and benefited its cause, but also had rid the people, children especially, of the reign terror of the Man-eater of Mfuwe. An experience I never even thought of being a possibility let alone reality.