

Introduction

The Africa, as I knew it, is slowly passing into history. It is with great sadness that I look upon the many changes that modernization, technological advances and globalization have made to my beloved country. Friends and family have repeatedly urged me to write about my experiences in the African bush. Originally I was reluctant but as I watch the passing of an era, an urge has come upon me to recount the past and share my many experiences with those who are of like-mind. I never had a desire to be one of the Great White Hunters of Africa but I was born with the necessary instincts and proficiencies embedded in my genes. My playmates were the young black boys of rural Africa, who taught me everything I know about bush craft – tracking, stalking, spoor¹⁾ recognition, bird and game identification, edible plants, and so much more. You name it, they knew it.



Over the years many people have touched my life – too many to name. I would be remiss however, if I did not mention my hunting buddies who share these memories with me – Rhone Haarhoff, Kosie Laubscher, Manie van Zyl and in later years, Hugo Moolman. As Shakespeare so aptly put it:

“The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried, Grapple them to your soul with hoops of steel”

It all occurred many years ago and I may not have gotten everything exactly right so what follows is just the stories and happenings of long ago that I have tried to remember as accurately as possible. My apologies if I have failed to give honour where honour is due or have not gotten a story or incident quite straight. Also, forgive me my sentimentality as I comment and relate my experiences. I have grandchildren who will never experience an African night out in the bush, listening to the roar of the king of Africa as he proclaims his territory or hear the cough of a leopard in the long grass as he stalks his prey. They will never experience the primeval fear of man for claw and fang as the dark surrounds them and they huddle closer to a fire. It is gone forever – so to them and the generations that follow, I dedicate my story.

This is not a book about hunting but rather an expression of my love for the African bush, its deserts and dunes. At the same time I make no excuse for having been a hunter. I am a son of Africa, formed by my environment, the animals and the peoples of the land. Writing this book is my attempt to celebrate the many years that I spent wandering the African veldt²⁾ and the countless campfires enjoyed alone or in the company of good friends. To the sound of crackling hardwood flames, the distant grunt of a lion or the lonesome call of a jackal, many an unforgettable hour was spent watching the evening shadows draw close around our fire.

After a hard day’s hunting with many miles covered on foot, it is utter bliss to wash off the dust under a primitive shower and to sink back in a camp chair with glass in hand and to feel the tiredness flow from your body. With a couple of drinks under the belt, your stomach invariably reminds you that you haven’t eaten all day and that you must turn your thoughts to more mundane matters.

Camp menus can vary considerably, depending on the duration of a hunt and the particular

circumstances prevailing at that moment in time. In this modern day and age hunters stay in luxurious hunting lodges or in self-catering chalets with all the necessary mod cons. Such was not the case in the era I am writing about. Our stove was a campfire from which hot coals were raked and our cooking was done in three-legged cast iron pots³⁾. Anything more would have been too heavy and cumbersome to transport over the long distances and indifferent roads that we had to travel to get to our hunting grounds.

Most of our hunting was done in the red dunes of the Kalahari or the Mopani Bushveld of Northern Namibia. From very basic fare like rudely scorched liver and potatoes baked in hot ashes, our recipes gradually evolved to the stage where we were not ashamed to invite guests to our table. I was fortunate to have a hunting companion who not only liked doing the camp cooking but who also had a flair for developing recipes that added variety to what would otherwise have been boring camp fare. I hope to share some of them with you along the way.



I have hung up my guns now, but the memories of those years will always remain with me. To Rhone Haarhoff in particular and my other hunting buddies in general, I wish to express my thanks for the happy and absolutely memorable hours spent in their company.

I am reminded of a quote I read long ago: *“If memories are the bundles of sticks we collect in our youth to fuel the fires of our old age, then fortunate is the man who has been diligent in his gathering.”* (Anonymous).

Weidmans dank!

1)

 [The tracks of a wild animal](#)

2)

 [the wide open rural landscape](#)

3)

 [<= See more about the potjie](#)

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