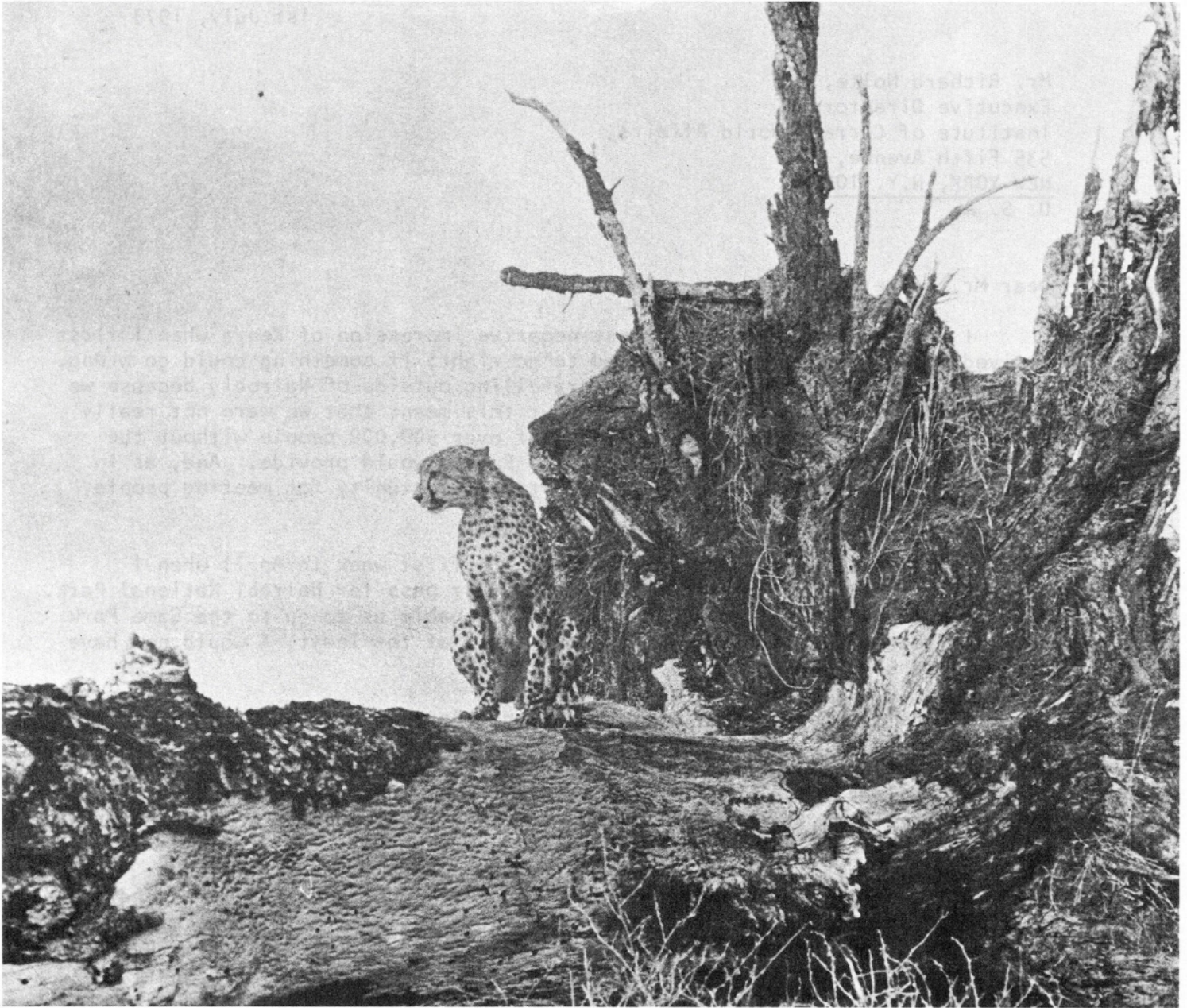


INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

RFS - 4

AFRICA: THE BUG THAT ALWAYS BITES



CHEETAH AT AMBOSELI

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

RFS - 4 AFRICA: THE BUG THAT
ALWAYS BITES

P.O. Box 14246,
NAIROBI
Kenya

1st July, 1973

Mr. Richard Nolte,
Executive Director,
Institute of Current World Affairs,
535 Fifth Avenue,
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017
U. S. A.

Dear Mr. Nolte:

I must admit that I had a most negative impression of Kenya when I first arrived in February. Nothing seemed to go right; if something could go wrong, it certainly did. We did almost no travelling outside of Nairobi, because we were too busy coping with life here. But this meant that we were not really experiencing Africa. Nairobi is a city of over 500,000 people without the diversion that a relatively large city in Europe would provide. And, as in most urban environments, there exists little opportunity for meeting people, which means that life can be very boring.

Life started to change for me about the first week in April when I discovered that it was possible to obtain a car pass for Nairobi National Park. The car pass, which cost less than \$9, would enable us to go to the Game Park an unlimited number of times. I thought that, at the least, I would now have much needed diversion.

The unique features of Nairobi National Park have been described in innumerable guide books. They all describe how one leaves his modern hotel (Nairobi does have a Hilton for the fussy American tourist) and in fifteen minutes he finds himself surrounded by all the wildness that is Africa. However trite this must sound, one is in fact awestruck by being surrounded by "wild" animals only fifteen minutes from home or hotel.

Nairobi National Park is small - only forty-four square miles. There are no elephants in the Park, but there are many varieties of plains game, as well as lion, cheetah, baboon, vervet monkeys and jackals. There are also purported to be rhinos and crocodiles, although I have never seen them. And there are a couple of hippos.

The Park lies within the city limits of Nairobi, and, unlike most reserves and national parks in Kenya, it is partially fenced; only the southern boundary of the Park, along the Athi River, is unfenced. Game proof fences are on the three sides mainly to prevent the animals from wandering onto busy roads.

Our first trip to the Nairobi Park was rewarded by our seeing a lioness stalking an impala. Her mate was busy sitting under a tree waiting for his breakfast. A mature lion rarely hunts; the lioness is the hunter. Lions, unlike men, are merciful killers. They kill by breaking their victim's neck; he thus dies instantly. However, one should note some dispute about the exact method of the kill, for George Adamson (Mr. "Born Free") claims that lions kill

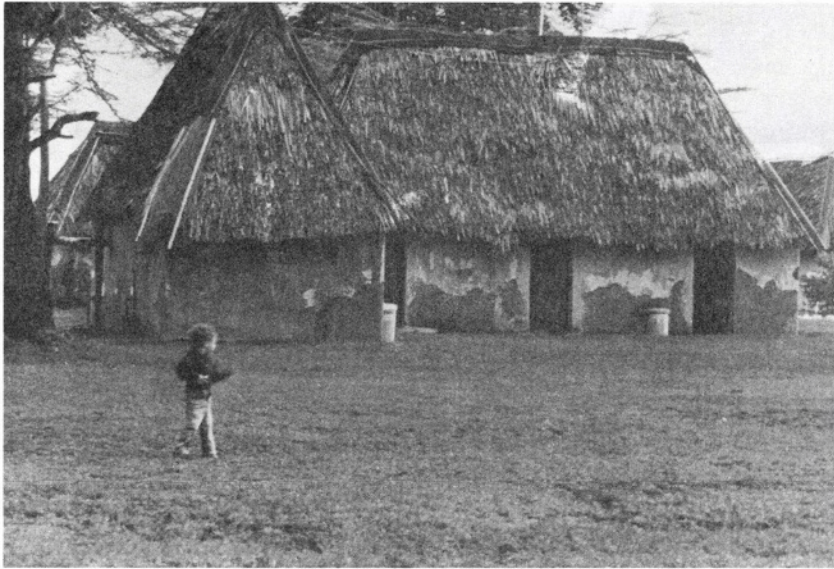
VIEWS OF NAIROBI GAME PARK



A WARTHOG AT HIS FRONT DOOR
AND
A GIRAFFE ON THE TROT.



VIEWS OF AMBOSELI GAME RESERVE



BANDA WITH TWO LEGGED ANIMAL(EDWARD SPITZBERG)

AND

FOUR LEGGED ANIMAL (RHINO) WITH BANDAS IN THE
BACKGROUND



OTHER RESIDENTS OF AMBOSELI



A YOUNG LION ON THE PROWL -- NOTE THE GROWING MANE

AND

TWO BUFFALOES OBSERVING CURIOUS TOURISTS



by strangulation.

We have now been to the Nairobi Park many times. I, personally, am never bored by going there. One always anticipates seeing new things. Maybe today I will see a cheetah running across an open plain at sixty miles an hour. Or maybe I will see a pride of lions working as a team in order to kill their prey. I may even be among the fortunate few to see a rhino in the Park. Even if one doesn't see the unusual, there is always an excellent chance of seeing zebra, giraffe, ostrich and of having a troop of baboons surround and climb on his car.

The animals are certainly the first sight that attract the visitor or new resident of Africa. They are beautiful. But, perhaps most importantly, they are more understandable and more familiar to the European than are the local people.

We have now made two major trips outside of Nairobi: one has enhanced our love of the animals; the other has brought us a better understanding of the people.

The last weekend in April saw the Spitzbergs three embark on their first safari. We all wore our recently purchased and very new looking safari outfits - in spite of a fetish not to look like tourists - because one needs a combination of light weight but long clothing to protect oneself from sun and mosquitoes. Early Sunday morning we started off for the Masai Amboseli Game Reserve near the Tanzanian border in Southern Kenya. We knew that since we were going in the rainy season the game would be dispersed, but we each had great hopes for the trip. I wanted to see cheetah. Irv hoped to see rhino and elephant. And Edward, content to be going on a trip in his new safari clothes, had been promised he would see elephant. He therefore referred to Amboseli as the "Elephant Game Park".

The road to Namanga, on the border, has been recently blacktopped (tarmac for the British or colonial reader) and is quite good. It is an interesting road because it passes through the dispersal area for Nairobi Park and Masai country. Wildebeest, hartebeest, zebra and other plains game can be easily seen, as well as the Masai with their cattle. The Masai are a very independent, pastoral people, who have been successful in maintaining their traditional life style as nomadic herdsmen and sometimes marauding warriors.

At Namanga we entered the Amboseli Game Reserve. A Game Reserve is not a National Park; this area is administered by the Masai themselves and many Masai still live within the boundaries of the Reserve. The Kenyan Government wishes to extend the boundaries of the Reserve and make it a National Park. The Masai do not wish to be moved to even more arid land and will not sell the land to the Government.

From Namanga we travelled over a dirt road for about fifty miles to Ol Tukai, a swamp with beautiful views of Mount Kilimanjaro. We spent the night in a banda there. A banda is a small hut-like structure, usually made out of mud and grass; but for tourists there is some reinforcement and the unusual addition of a bathroom. In addition to the banda, there was a kitchen room apart from the building itself with a wood-burning stove for cooking meals.

After lunch and a short siesta, we hired a ranger and went out to look for game. The rains had indeed dispersed a great deal of the game - the

animals spread out, because they have water over a very wide area - but we were lucky enough to see two elephants and three rhinos as well as lions and plains game.

Our night in the banda was not completely uneventful. We first had to convince Edward that sleeping under a mosquito net was not so bad. Then some time during the night we were all awakened by a strange noise which we finally identified as the snort of a warthog outside our door. Edward of course had to be reassured that there was no way for it to get through the door and his mosquito net.

After an early breakfast we went for another game drive. We saw three magnificent cheetahs. Cheetahs are beautiful animals, sleek and proud. They are reputed to make the best pets of all wild cats, but one would need a lot of land to enable them to take their morning walks at their cruising speed of sixty miles per hour. The cheetahs provided a rewarding finale for our visit to Amboseli.

On the way home we asked Edward which animals he had enjoyed the most. We made the mistake of asking the question just after passing Masai manyattas (groups of houses and livestock enclosures). Edward's response - "The cows." Oh well.

A week after returning from Amboseli, we set off on a safari to Kisumu on Lake Victoria in Western Kenya. The road from Nairobi to Kisumu goes through beautiful and varied country. We travelled through the Rift Valley, the gigantic crevice which runs through much of East and Southern Africa, and then through the former White Highlands, the lush area which the colonials appropriated solely for themselves and which was and is the basis of much bitterness on the African's part, past Naivasha to Nakuru.

Lake Nakuru is a National Park and reputed to be the home of over one million lesser flamingoes. The shoreline was very low on the day we were there, so we couldn't really get close enough to see them well.

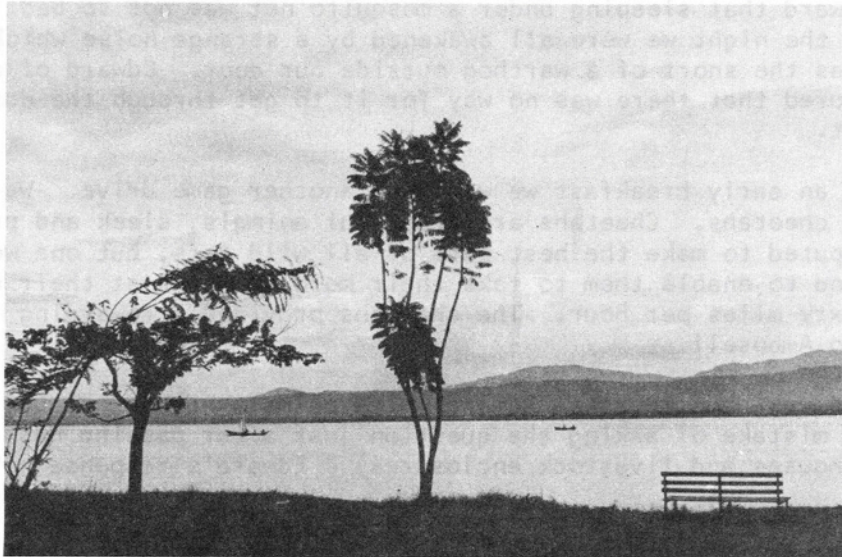
From Nakuru we headed west on a very good road to Kericho, which is in the midst of the Brooke Bond Tea Estates. Kericho gets much rain and is quite lush and green. We stopped for lunch at the Tea Hotel, which was built as a way station by Brooke Bond.

The road from Kericho to Kisumu is through beautiful, rolling hills, that are heavily populated and extensively farmed. Gradually one descends through the hills to Kisumu and the proud Lake Victoria.

One can't help but feel excited when first seeing the source of the Nile, this magnificent Lake. One knows the emotions of both Speke and Grant. The temptation to go to Jinja, the actual source, is great; but then one remembers that Jinja is in General Amin's Uganda and that a dam hides Ripon Falls, which makes one content just to be able to see this spectacular Lake.

Kisumu is a sleepy little town that offers little to the tourist in the way of conventional amenities. There is no short boat ride on the Lake, no museums, no animals. Water sports are impossible due to the dangers of bilharzia and crocodiles. There is the Hippo Point, but seeing the nostrils and eyes of these shy creatures is not an exciting way to spend a day.

LAKE VICTORIA COUNTRY

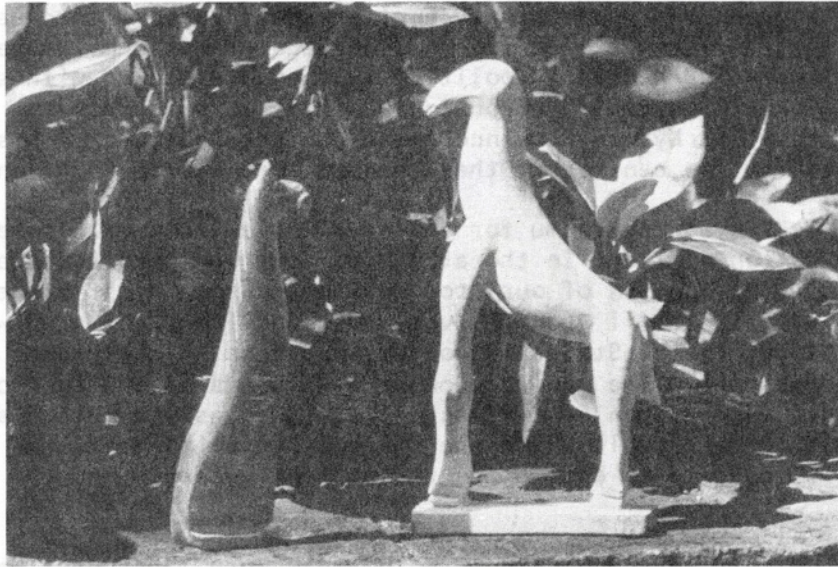


HIPPO POINT ON KAVIRONDO GULF
AND

OUR KISII STONE CARVER AT WORK



CRAFT AS ART



THE KISII CARVER'S SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATIONS
OF AFRICAN ANIMALS

AND

A BUST OF A TRIBAL ELDER



What Kisumu does have to offer is simple but wonderful: its people. The Luo are the second largest tribe in Kenya. They are not Bantu, but Nilotes; the only Nilotes in Kenya. They are a warm, friendly people, whose second language is more often English than Swahili. Swahili is a Bantu language and consequently English seems to come more easily to the Luo. This difference of tribe and language group seems to have also made the Luo very independent: politically they are viewed with suspicion by the dominant Kikuyus in Nairobi - indeed it is said that the President is afraid to visit Nyanza Province along the Lake because of his distrust of the Luo. But we can report that the Luo were extremely friendly to us.

We stayed in Kisumu for two days while Irv participated in a seminar for education officers in the area. On our way home, we again stopped at Kericho. The purpose of our stop was to buy some Kisii stone carvings and beaded stools. Kisii stone is very soft and light coloured with pink highlights; what in the States is called soapstone. Some pieces are beautifully marblized. The man who does the carvings at the Tea Hotel is more than just a craftsman - he is an artist. He has won numerous awards for his work, which goes well beyond the stereotyped animal carvings of the city markets. We came to admire the talent of the carver and the quality of his work.

We left Kericho and headed toward Nakuru. Just past Nakuru are some prehistoric sites: one Iron Age at Hyrax Hill and another Stone Age at Kariandusi. The site at Hyrax Hill is much the larger. It contains a fort, 13 dwellings, and a burial ground. The Hyrax Hill site had a strategic location in the area, commanding a beautiful view of Lake Nakuru and the surrounding Rift Valley countryside.

Kariandusi is much smaller. It is about 10 feet by 60 feet. Hand-axes are left in the position in which they were found by the L.S.B. Leakeys, husband and wife, Kenyan archaeologists. Our guide told us that Richard Leakey, their son, plans to return to Kariandusi when he has fully excavated his present site at Lake Rudolph.

The most important effect of these expeditions for us has been that they have given us a love of Africa. Some close friends who have lived or travelled in Kenya and other parts of Africa told us before we came that we would love Africa, that one never forgets it, nor can one get over the desire to return. Joseph Thomson, the first European to reach Lake Victoria via Kenya expressed the feelings of many of us who have been bitten by the Africa Bug:

I am doomed to be a wanderer. I am not an empire-builder, I am not a missionary. I am not truly a scientist. I merely want to return to Africa to continue my wanderings.

Sincerely,

Bobbi Spitzberg
BOBBI SPITZBERG

VIEWS OF HYRAX HILL



THE IRON AGE DWELLINGS

AND

THE FORT WITH A VIEW OF LAKE NAKURU



THE LIFE OF EARLY MAN

WORK -- THE TOOLS OF
STONE AGE
MEN AT
KARIANDUSI



PLAY -- THE GAME OF
IRON AGE MAN
(BAO OR ITS
PREDECESSOR)
AT HYRAX HILL

DEATH -- GRAVE AT
HYRAX HILL



Received in New York
on July 16, 1973

CAUTION

YOU ARE LIKELY TO MEET DANGEROUS
WILD ANIMALS ON THIS TRAIL. PLEASE
PROCEED QUIETLY AND WITH CAUTION
YOU PROCEED AT YOUR OWN RISK. THE
NATIONAL PARK ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE
FOR ANY EVENTUALITY

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

RFS - 5 A VISIT TO TSAVO AND THE
KENYA COAST