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TANZANIA:

Chief Ole Dorup

There's a Lion in the Gents!

A Mother's Dilemma

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CHIEF OLE DORUP

by Brian Hesse

(From *The Just Now News*, the Cowabunga newsletter)

Chief Ole Dorup's hand paused on the bleach-white elephant skull. An indiscernible emotion flashed in his eyes.

And then the moment passed.

Removing his hand, he adjusted the red blanket wrapped around his shoulders, picked up his spear, and we once again began walking. Later, as we sat on the edge of the Great Rift Valley above Lake Eyasi, I dug into my backpack and pulled out a boxed lunch. In spite of my hunger, in deference to Tanzanian customs I first offered my food to my Maasai acquaintance. "*Ninakula kwa ng'ombe — bass,*" he stated. Literally translated: I am eating from cattle only. Not an unexpected response, I thought, considering the Maasai are "people from cattle", venerating the very animals which have traditionally sustained them physically as well as spiritually.

"My cattle should be nearby," Ole Dorup offered. "I had the children take my herds there this morning." He raised his walking stick and pointed northeast, toward the cloud-draped Ngorongoro Highlands.

"When you were a boy, is this where you watched your father's herds?" I asked.

"Yes," Ole Dorup responded, adding, "I have lived, and will live, my whole life here -- just like the elephant we saw earlier. In fact, as a child I spent many care-free days in the company of that wise, old bull, each of us watching the other as I tended my father's animals. I enjoyed those days, and him, very much."

With that, Chief Ole Dorup smiled ever so slightly. He had a familiar look in his eyes -- a look I now knew to be of quiet nostalgia.



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THERE'S A LION IN THE GENTS!

by Clayton Freiheit, Denver Zoo

(From *The Just Now News*, the Cowabunga newsletter, Second Edition, 1998)

Seronera Safari Lodge, built in the late 1960's, is imaginatively designed and sited around a large kopje so as not to intrude on the natural landscape. It is unfenced and wildlife abounds in the area due to the nearby Seronera River which offers water year-round. Rock hyrax, agama lizards and baboons are at home at the Lodge and several years ago I drew the drapes in my room to find an adult cheetah standing outside the window only a few yards away!

The Lodge's bar and dining area is handsomely integrated into the builders; it is reached by a series of wooden stairs and landings and steps hewn into the rock. This is African lodge ambience at its best!

While our group was having dinner, a spectacular thunderstorm occurred which lasted for over an hour and made an after-dinner drink in the nearby lounge with its wood-burning fireplace seem like a fine idea. By 10:30 pm, two of my friends and I were the only customers left and we decided to turn in.

As we descended the stairs and approached the last landing overlooking the reception area we could see a number of the Lodge Staff peering anxiously below. We were soon warned, "Don't go any further *Bwana*, there's a lion in the Gents". Of course I had to see this, so I went to the front row to observe. Sure enough, a few minutes later, out of the open doorway of the men's room strolled a full adult lioness! She looked up at the crowd and was obviously both confused and angry as she hurried through the Lodge lobby and out the front door. What a fantastic *T.A.B.* ("That's Africa, Baby") and great adrenaline rush, something I hope for on every Safari.

As the three of us carefully walked back to our rooms we were both amused and thrilled by the experience. Over breakfast the next morning, as we recounted our adventure to the rest of the group, the waiter gave us the sequel to the story. After she fled out of the reception area, the lioness circled around the back side of the kopje and climbed up the outcropping where she entered one of the bar's open doors and strolled through the lounge before exiting through another portal. We had another adrenaline surge as we speculated what might have happened if we had decided to have another drink. What was the lion doing? My guess is that she was searching for a dry place to lie up for the night after the severe rain storm and our paths happened to cross. Memories such as this are what good Safaris are made of!



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A MOTHER'S DILEMMA

by Nancy Cherry

(From *The Just Now News*, the Cowabunga newsletter, First Edition, 1999)

The dilemma originated in an opportunity to photograph adult lions. The Driver stopped the Land Rover on the road as our cameras zoomed in on a small group of females about 20 feet from the road. We were standing in the open hatch peering out one side of the vehicle when two of us heard a tiny noise on the other side. No, nothing on that side. But then we heard again that small mewling noise. So we looked closer -- and sure enough, there was a baby lion! As we "glasses" the cub (safari speak for using binoculars) we saw more movement, eventually finding three small cubs. They were not easy to see as they were well concealed in the "scrub bush" habitat we were in (Ruaha National Park, Tanzania). The cubs were too well camouflaged to photograph so we spent the next few minutes quietly moving back and forth from one side of the vehicle to the other.

Then, very deliberately, one of the adult females stood up and started walking towards the road. She passed right behind our vehicle without so much as a glance at us, despite our cameras clicking. Into the scrub bush she went and picking up one of the cubs by the scruff of the neck, returning to the road, and starting to move away from us down the road. It was a delight to watch: the cub was dangling from her mouth, swinging as she walked, and looking totally lifeless. She went about 50 yards, then turned off the road into the bush.

Immediately our attention was devoted to the two remaining cubs playing in the grass. They looked for all the world like two domestic kittens and it was hard to imagine them growing up to be carnivorous hunters. I had a sudden anthropomorphic moment while I imagined raising an adorable lion cub. The thought stopped abruptly when I remembered the long, lithe, muscled body of the mother of these cubs. In fact, about that time she came back down the road without the cub and approached the two left behind. She picked up one by the neck and immediately the other started crying (not mewling) and raising a fuss. So she dropped the one in her mouth, picked up the other and started back to the road. Naturally, the one now left behind let out pitiful cries so she turned back. What a dilemma! Just then another female entered the scene and came up to lick the crying cub. Immediately the mother dropped the cub in her mouth and made a very threatening growl at the other adult female, who then backed off. After seeming to ponder her choices, the mother firmly picked up one of the cubs and walked down the road with it. The one left behind just simply cried until the mother came back for it.

I never had triplets, or even twins, but as the mother of two children 18 months apart I can relate to her dilemma of making choices. It all happens so fast when you're on Safari watching the scene play out -- everyone in the vehicle is happy because we understand this sort of maternal behavior. But what was the mother lioness thinking? Did she worry about the first cub, left alone up the road away? Or did she worry about the

last cub, alone and crying while she transported the second? Or did she think "cubs will be cubs" and everything would sort out as soon as the family was together again?

My curiosity about lions led to some reading upon our return to the USA. Lionesses in the same family have a strong bond — even to the point of nursing one another's offspring. But, under no circumstances will a mother let another lioness carry her cubs. That at least explained the mother's savage rejection of what appeared to be an offer of assistance from another pride female. But it did nothing to alleviate a mother's dilemma.



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TO THE ROOFTOP OF AFRICA -- KILIMANJARO!

by Gary K. Clarke

(From *The Just Now News*, the Cowabunga newsletter)

The first time I saw Kilimanjaro I couldn't believe it. The snow capped summit had been shrouded in clouds for three days. Just a few hours before we were scheduled to leave the area our guide shouted, "There it is!"

I quickly turned and scanned the distant horizon, but couldn't find it. Frantic that I might miss it before the clouds closed in, I asked the guide, "Where?"

"Not there", he said, pointing to where I was looking. "But there", as he raised his arm to an almost vertical position.

I gasped as I saw this huge flat-topped volcanic cone, suspended from the heavens, disjointed by the clouds from the base below. And I knew then that someday I must climb the highest mountain in Africa.

I didn't want to climb it because "it was there", but because I wanted to stand on the roof of Africa.

Hans Meyer was the first person known to successfully scale Kilimanjaro, and he did so 100 years ago -- in 1889. To climb Kilimanjaro is to pass through seven life zones, from tropical rain forest to permanent snow cap; from the equator to the Arctic circle, all on a single mountain.

Though not a "technical" climb, it is rugged. Narrow trails, huge boulders, deep mud, marsh land, slick rocks, exposed tree roots, mountain streams, loose scree, and ice present a diverse challenge.

And, the weather gods test you to the limit: heat and humidity, heavy rain, pelting hail, boiling sun, freezing cold --sometimes all in one day. Crossing the "Saddle", or High Desert Zone between Mawenzi and Kibo Peaks, equates to intense desolation and solitude.

In January of 1989 I fulfilled my goal by attempting to climb Kilimanjaro. The climb took six days and was the most glorious and the most horrible experience of my life -- both at the same time. While consuming 4,000 calories a day, I lost 12 pounds in 6 days. I fell numerous times, was battered and bruised, and lost my toenails.

At the 15,000 ft. rest hut, my body was beyond its capabilities, primarily due to lack of oxygen and high altitude sickness. As I attempted the final ascent in the darkness of midnight, it felt like I was breathing through half a lung with a plastic bag over my head. Every several steps I had to stop and rest, sometimes passing out momentarily while leaning on my walking stick. During our climb we learned of the deaths of two people and watched in silence as a body was carried down the mountain past us.

Eventually I made it to the top, much to the delight of my guides and climbing companions. But on the descent I collapsed from sheer and utter exhaustion, and had to be carried the rest of the way by the rescue team.

I turned 50 on the mountain and although I stood on the Roof of Africa, I did not conquer Kilimanjaro, I conquered myself.

"As far as one can see,
as far as the entire world,
high and inconceivably white in the snow,
shines the summit of Kilimanjaro!"

-- Ernest Hemingway



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