



Why Africa?

BY BEKAH KLARR

**Stories from my
grandparents,
and more for my
grandchildren.
- South Africa, March 2016.**

When we think about Africa, what comes to mind? For many hunters, the mere thought of the world's second largest continent triggers thoughts of nostalgia and adventure - even among those who have never been there. There is something about Africa, or the idea of it, that resonates deep in the heart of hunters and outdoorsmen. As a kid, I remember being mystified by the stories and photos of my parents and grandparents' trips to various African countries. Mystified not by the stories themselves, although the stories were not short on excitement, but by the way my relatives told them; the gleam in their eyes, the thoughtful way they looked at the old photos, and the slight change in their voice like they were talking about an old friend they missed dearly.

Most of my grandparents are now gone and gone with them are stories of true adventures during a

great era of hunting. But the memory and the idea of Africa lives on in new generations of hunters. That special feeling of being in a wild, far-off land where animals and hunters have existed long before anyone could write about it. Perhaps now more than ever it is important to take the new generations of hunters to Africa. Yes, the times have changed. Wildlife management is of upmost importance now and the world's anti-hunters are ever ready to demonize hunters and continue to shut hunting down across many countries - at great cost to wildlife.

South Africa continues to adapt to the changing world around and within it. Massive tracts of open land where one can drive hours upon hours without seeing a fence or road still exist in this country. The heart of hunting traditions are still there and live on strongly in many hunting families



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here. One of these families are the Price's of eZulu/Swartkei Safaris.

After an eight year absence from South Africa we decided it was high-time for another family hunting trip. Expanding families and expanding education prohibited all of us Klarr kids from attending this year's trip but we still had a pretty good turnout with Gunnar & Louise, Bekah, and Sally Klarr. Along with Scotty and Jake Searle.

One nice aspect of hunting with the Prices is we travel to three distinct camps over the course of our trip with different terrain and hunting opportunities; a "bush camp" consisting of over 74,000 acres, a "mountain camp" high in the Winterberg Mountains, and a "coastal camp" on the beautiful shores of the Indian Ocean and the Puti River.

Our first several days were spent at the bush camp staying in Zingela Lodge. Our head PH, Charles Price, divvied everyone up into groups of two and off we went. Sally and I knew we were in for an active two weeks when our Fitbits clocked us at over five miles of hiking the first day! We never once walked on roads either - I still think our PH was out to kick our butts into shape!

Each day, we all came together midday for lunch whether in the field over a huge brai or back at the lodge with a kitchen full of wonderful cooks. All of the support staff were some of the most genuinely hospitable people I've ever encountered. Each lunch and dinner as the "teams" came in it was great to watch the excitement on everyone's faces as they could barely wait to get through the door to tell what





they had seen and the great hunts had that day. Breakfasts were early but delicious and if your PH asked for an exceptionally early start (as ours often did!) a nice boxed breakfast was always ready to go.

One exceptional hunt that I'll never forget was late in the day at the bush camp. Sally had been searching for a good Eland and finally we came across a small group while out on a hike. My parents had decided to tag along with us that afternoon as a storm was coming in and we thought we would just go out for a quick look. With my parents watching from the truck through binoculars, Sally, our PH Matt, and I stealthily stalked this small group of Eland. We knew at least one bull was pretty big but they were walking along the side of this huge hill at a steady clip so it was hard to get a really good eye on them.

With the storm moving in quickly, we had lightning all around us - and were carrying our rifles! My mom said later that she almost made the tracker radio our PH to bring us back. Luckily she didn't, and luckily we didn't get hit by lightning, and on and on we chased these Eland around this hill. Sally got on the sticks once but they never stopped to present her with a shot. So on we went.

After about an hour of belly crawling and half-standing running, the Eland turned and went straight up to the top of the huge hill and out of our sight. Matt turned to us and asked if we were up for a run up the hillside. The plan was to book it straight up the hill as well and see if the Eland were hanging out on top. If they had gone over the other side we would call it a night (darkness was not far off and the storm was all around us). Never ones to turn down a challenge, Sally and I immediately agreed to the plan.

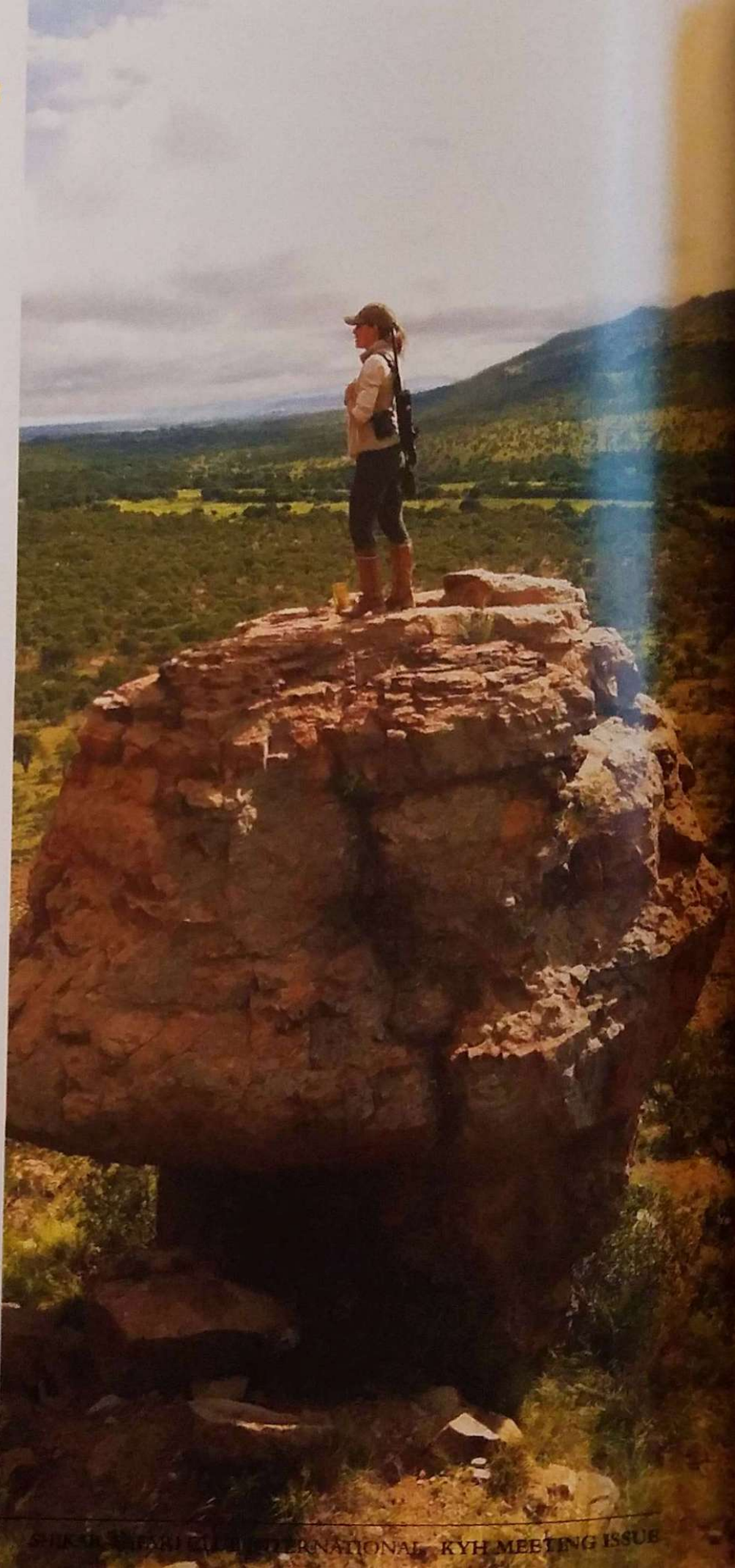
So off we went and straight up this cliff we ran.

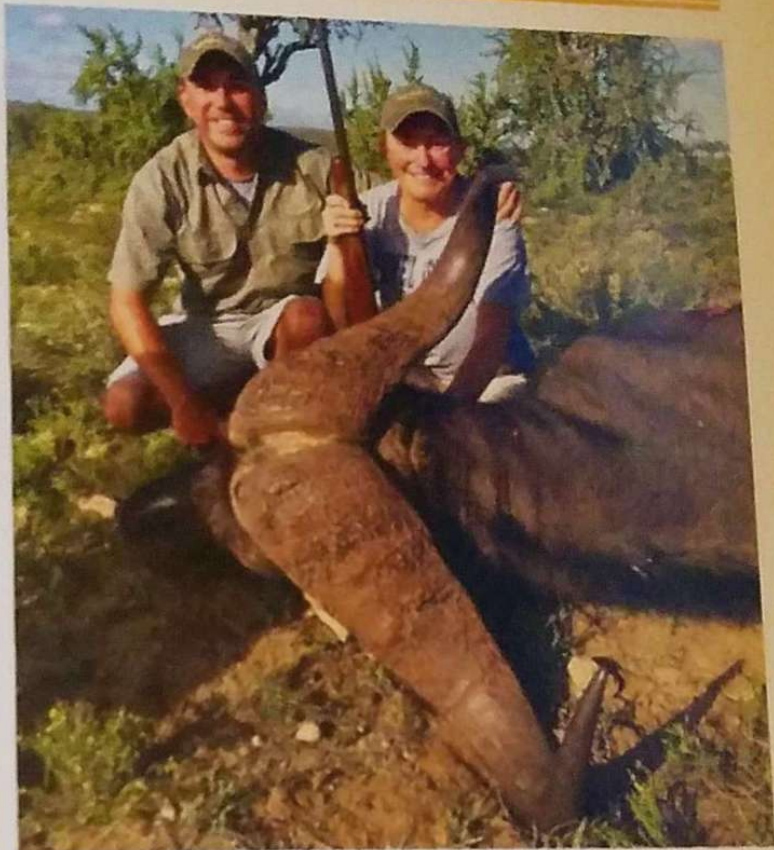
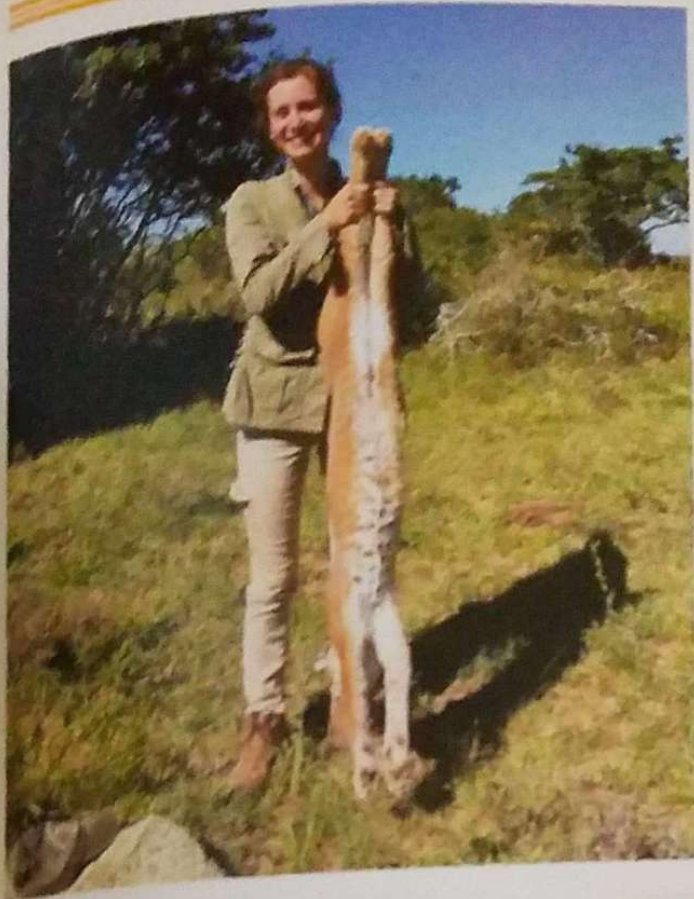


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My parents watched from far away as we tripped and scraped and clawed our way to the top. The very moment our eyes peeked over the plateau we spotted the Eland grazing on the top. We were still on the steep hillside and were absolutely and completely out of breath. But we knew this was our one chance for a shot so Sally rested her rifle (a Blazer R8 30.06 borrowed from the author) on the sticks, PH Matt stood immediately to her right and I stood right behind her pushing my back into hers to try to give her a little more stability. She rested only a moment before squeezing the trigger.

PH Matt thought the Eland was down but we didn't know for sure. You know Eland, they can take a mortal shot and keep going for a long time. Their body mass gives them amazing living power. After running up to the top and looking around for a few moments there he was - stone dead with a shot to the heart. A one shot Eland on the top of a high hill with our parents watching the whole thing. They hiked up and met us at the top with some jackets and beer. Both were greatly appreciated! The challenge then became how to get this massive bull down to where a truck could get to it as there was no way any vehicle could get to where we were. A few calls on the radio and trackers and helpers from nearby came flooding in. Even another PH who was off-duty came to help in his flip-flops (which broke right away). My parents went back to camp and Sally and I stayed to see the animal get off the hill. We helped as best we could which







was a great team experience. When we finally got into camp late in the night we had a hot dinner waiting for us and stayed up late around the boma telling the story over and over. The whole thing was one of those "great days in Africa".

Our two weeks there were filled with stories like this. Adventurous hunts, great camaraderie, breathtaking landscape, and perfect hospitality. Watching my parents hunt a giraffe together, Scotty taking a great Cape Buffalo, hunting for the elusive Blue Duiker (and miraculously getting one!), Jake making 400+ yard shots, checking out ancient cave art made by the earliest hunters, the list goes on and on. Although various schedules back at home prevented us from doing much touring in South





Africa after the hunt, we all agreed it was by far one of the best trips ever.

I think I am finally beginning to understand why Africa was so special to my grandparents. When they would look back at their old photos and tell us the old stories of their many trips, they were reminded not of all the details of each trip, but of how those trips made them feel. You cannot forget the feeling of being in a wild place with wild animals, far from home with the ones you love. And now too I am reminded, just as grandparents and parents before me were, of that special feeling every time I think of Africa.

Unending thanks to my parents, Gunnar & Louise, for inviting us on another amazing adventure. Aunt Scotty and Jake for each being you and for being the best travel partners ever! And my sister Sally for being a great hunting companion and even better sister. (I'll run up a mountain with you any day!) And finally, to the Price family and whole team at eZulu/Swartkei Safaris for continuing to raise the bar on hunting and hospitality in South Africa.

