THE JOURNEY ACROSS KENYA AND TANGANYIKA IN 1965

Part 2 of 2: Tanganyika

Keekorok Lodge was probably the most comfortable of our safari. There were single standing houses with two bedrooms each and a large bathroom with American-type installation. The wall base was built of formed natural stones on top of which were erected round cedar logs. The internal walls and the ceiling were also of boards, whereas the roofing was the usual thatched leaves. The only drawback was that the lodge did not have a good view. It was near a brook with a deep bed to which animals had to descend for drinking.



At left is of our room in the Keekorok Lodge the best on the safari. The Lodge nice swimming pool attracted most of tourists to relax and taking a quick swim as shown at right.

After we had brought in necessary luggage we went to meet the manager to learn about the rules we had to adhere to. He lived with his family a quieter life at this time then before. He knew the region well from his hunting days so now he went out on foot finding new ways to mark tracks for future tourists. Vesna could not wait too long and she went for a quick jump in the swimming pool. Soon she was back, shivering, as it was rather cool, mainly due to evaporation in the dry hot air. At present we were the only guests!



There were zebras, gnus and buffalos over the whole savannah horizon but a rain approached fast.

We left the lodge at 4:30 for our first outing, driving as told northwards, following our nose. It seemed that this game reserve had been the least devastated of all in Kenya as animal herds were mostly very numerous. We could approach any herd to a close distance, which allowed taking perfect pictures even of a single animal with my camera telescopic lens. Masai Mara Reserve had on record 32 species of mammals, of which we have seen 21 –

that was 67% - the maximum attained on the whole safari. The most numerous were giraffes, wildebeests and hartebeest, duikers, Thomson's gazelles and impalas, zebras and waterbucks, and of course, buffalos. The single buffalos were of an unpredictable behavior so we kept a safe distance from them. After we came to the airstrip it started to rain so we had to turn back for safety. The "cotton" black soil became slippery fast and it was high time to look for a dryer murram (red soil) path leading back to the lodge. On the horizon we saw a grey line that on approach turned into a huge herd of zebras counting say 450 or more.

The rain had almost stopped when we passed some groups of ostriches and giraffes. Sundown created beautiful scenery "spiked" with several dark giants of buffalos closer to the lodge. We found a buffalo scull with holes eaten by worms so we had to take it as a souvenir and loaded it on the roof rack. An askari stopped us at the lodge gate and politely asked us to return the skull to the place we found it. It was not permitted to take away anything from the reserve. Obediently we did as instructed but I was sure that we were neither the first nor the last who tried it!



The provocative finding! We had to return it to its right place though. At right the sun setting down – it was time to return to the lodge.

Dinner was nothing special, but although we could have eaten more, we were too tired to ask for extras. As there were no other guests to talk to, we were already in bed by 9:00PM. This was the happy time of any day we always would gladly agree to.

When morning tea arrived on our verandah at 6:00AM we got up with the usual protests. A baboon was barking angrily on a tree as a tall Masai ranger came to take us on a tour. He carried a rifle that Ljiljana did not like, and she asked that it be put away from Vesna, who was sitting behind Ljiljana on the rear seat. Vesna was not happy to be next to the ranger, whose body smell was a specific one known to us. Vesna took her notebook (her animal-counting diary) and asked the ranger if he could lead us to the lions that we had not seen yet. Ljiljana sat in the passenger seat with cameras at the ready so the ranger told me follow the track to a grassy plain. Before long we found three lionesses chewing up a wildebeest killed in the night. Undisturbed, they continued their bloody business, so we left them to search for more lions. Soon we found behind a bush two young lions resting. After a sufficient number of pictures we were ready to go on searching for more. A limping lion was the next spotted by

the ranger, and at close range we saw the lion in the process of marking his territory on a tree trunk.



Three lionesses munching on their night kill.

We came to the airstrip but because it was approaching breakfast time we had to turn over to another grassy track towards a group of 20 elephants. They did not take notice of our passing nearby and continued grazing intensely. Suddenly the ranger warned me to stop instantly and to switch off the engine. There in front of us was a single mighty buffalo bull with his head down, waiting. The Masai told us to be quiet and said to me, "Be ready to start and pull out fast!" He knew that bull well as being "kali sana" (very aggressive). When the bull turned away I got the command, "Go back!" and following the advice, returned to the airstrip.

Ljiljana wanted to take a picture of the landing aircraft so we moved aside into deeper grass and with a "Whoop!" stuck fast in a hole. I switched on the engine again and it still worked fine. [Note: The VW engine was in the rear and its power was transmitted straight to the rear axis only.] The passengers got out of the car to lift it a bit while I let the clutch out slowly so the rear wheels turned slowly, pulling us out of the trap. Driving with the utmost care and happy about the outcome, we were ready for a good breakfast!



A few visitors are embarking the CESNA aircraft on the airstrip near Keekorok Lodge.

After breakfast I dared to go out to look for damage caused by the accidental dip into a mud hole. The bumper had bent against the body and I could not open the baggage section in the front which was bent slightly upward. I drove the car to the lodge garage where a mechanic

performed a miracle with a few simple tools and his brute strength. He freed the bumper, pulling it off the wrinkled nose of the car, then with a wooden hammer placed several hard blows on the metal nose. At last we could open the baggage compartment again easily so I tipped him gladly. Back at our parking place, Ljiljana inspected the car and admired the repair work. The reminder of this nose diving was visible on the bumper, still neatly bent against both front mud breakers. This condition remained with our VW until we handed it over early in 1967.

Vesna collected several parts of the tape recorder that had fallen apart when the car dropped into the hole. Fortunately, nothing was broken or missing and I tested my last recording of the barking baboon made that morning. Happy with the outcome of the car "dip", we went to the swimming pool to relax and swim, surrounded by the vista of wilderness.

After lunch we went to our room to take a brief nap, dreaming about the new thrills that awaited us. At 4:00 another Masai warden joined us at the gate to accompany us to the Mara River. Never before and never again throughout the whole safari did we see so many animals clustered in big herds of hundreds! Vesna stopped counting and marked the number of large herds of zebras and wildebeests over again, giraffes, an abundance of gazelles, etc. We saw an uncountable number of animals all over the plain on the way to the Mara River's right bank.



The crocodiles bask in sun whereas the many hippos prefer the bath in the river. One hippo walked out eventually to show us its mighty body.

The warden showed us the place to park the car near the river bank. We closed all the windows to prevent monkeys from inspecting the car interior. We walked behind the warden towards a bushy area on the river bank. He told us to keep quiet as there might be a buffalo hidden inside and he did not carry a rifle to scare it off - said smiling. The river was about 50m wide at this place with steep banks on both sides. The water level was low, otherwise there would have been a large number of hippos and crocodiles at the river bend. We found five hippos with one "toto" (small or young) but no crocodiles. This place was well known as the crossing point during the great animal migrations from Masai Mara to Serengeti and vice versa.

In the dimming light we drove on towards the lodge when Vesna shouted, "Rhinos! There! See!" I drove the car in that direction but the warden was not too pleased as he knew the animal. "Beware! Do not get too close!" as we approached a mighty rhino with her 1.5-year-old toto, which was also big enough to turn over a VW easily. Ljiljana was taking pictures from some 35m when the vast mama made the first step towards us (rhinos see poorly but smell perfectly.) The warden said, "Get out fast! Drive!" and I started speeding over the open

grassy plain as if we were being chased by devil himself. I hurried through grass, avoiding any small hills in it, hoping for no holes in our track. We scared several herds of gazelles, zebras, and hartebeest, making a detour around several buffalos, to stop just when we entered the lodge compound. It was high time as darkness had already set in.



Suddenly we found a rhino cow and her well grown up calf. Beware of!

During dinner the manager brought the good news that the road into the Serengeti was dry and open for traffic. This was really good news because the driving distance to our next stopover in Seronera Lodge was only about 165km. Two other routes were much longer. One of the choices led back to Narok and Loliondo into Tanzania, which was a 330km drive through almost desert country. The other one was over 400km and would require that we return to the main road near Nakuru, and from Kisii to Musoma on Lake Victoria in Tanzania West. With good luck we could make it, so we started from

About some 15km from the lodge we came to the Sand River with its shallow water. It was a risky crossing at low speed between rocks and we climbed the opposite bank at last. I followed a fresh route on an undulating terrain, passing close by several herds of zebra and gnus, some larger groups of various antelopes, and shy warthogs. Fortunately, there was no dust due to recent rains so we reached the River Bolongata that we had to cross in a concrete furrow with shallow water. We had to watch out for buffalos that we noticed crossing the river and continued along a path going up and down, one curve after the other, until we came to Klein's Camp. Here was the actual entrance to Serengeti National Park in northern Tanganyika. The park fees and rules were somewhat different in Tanganyika so we received several stickers for the car and a few pamphlets. The fees were paid per person per day, reminding us that were in a different state and regime.

The countryside became flattish and the earthy track was almost straight. We saw few animals on the way. After crossing a dry river bed at Nyabwitagi, we went around a stonecrushing plant and several huts for workers who were busy with road construction work. Now the road was flatter and its surface was of rolled crushed stone, so I could speed up. We passed several settlements like Nyabogati, Ruhoga and Banagi, and arrived at the Seronera Lodge at 12:30. At the entrance I had my first experience with speed bumps that were sometimes so high they scratched the bottom of the VW, despite driving at only 10km/h.

Our accommodation was a "rondavel" built in traditional African style with a round wall of concrete blocks plastered with mortar. The roofing elements of a rondavel are poles taken

from harvested tree limbs and cut to length. The roof covering was of thatch slates that were attached to the poles with grass ropes. Beneath the thatch there were many cobwebs and a fine mesh fabric hanging for the ceiling, partly covered with bits and pieces of grass. Inside the rondavel there was a large room with three beds with mosquito nets and a separate WC and large wash basin compartment. The floor was concrete, and our expectations sank to a low point.



Clouds gathered in the west on the way to Seronera Lodge in the Serengeti National Park. We arrived safely and settled in our "rondavel" (a hut) at right.

I tried hard to cheer up my girls so we went to get lunch. The cold buffet lifted our spirits a bit, as well as the sunshine brightening the dull ambiance. We bought a park map, but it was inadequate regarding orientation or information about roads or pathways. We were disappointed with the available comfort so our optimism sank a little. The best way out of it was to have a nap and to rest before we went out to cruise around the camp.

In retrospect, I believe that our mood has been influenced by the much proclaimed appeal of the Serengeti. Despite many scattered settlements for scientists and rangers, the park remained almost untouched in its nature. A great number of animals lived in this wilderness unmolested, and we were lucky to see almost 80% of its 35 larger species. It was here that we saw all of the "big five" elephants, rhinos, buffalo, lions, and leopards), as well as all kinds of antelopes (like Topi) and gazelles (like Gerenuks), including Grévy's zebra and lesser kudu, hyenas and jackals, cheetahs and wild dogs, mongooses, bat-eared foxes, etc.

In principle, we could approach close to most of the animals and in some cases with lions, to about 3m. The animals were used to cars moving around and between herds or groups and did not scatter at their approach. The moment we opened a door to get a better position for photographing, the animals would disperse instantly, so we kept to the car as we had been instructed.

After a while we had to end our first outing because dark clouds had gathered in the west, a sure indication that heavy rain was coming. I kept to the graveled road that had drainage ditches on both sides and did not venture onto the black cotton soil of the plain. Of course we had to avoid the Seronera River flowing next to the lodge site.

On our way we passed several kopjes, big outcrops of rocks, their surfaces partly worn away by erosion. The term "kopje" is commonly used in East Africa for the rocky outcrops technically known as "inselbergs". They consist of very old granite rock which, because of erosion and weathering, has broken up into rough and messy protrusions. A kopje stands out against the surrounding plain in the open grasslands all over the Serengeti Plains. The plains had been more or less leveled off by deposits of dust and ash from volcanoes of the Rift.



We approached a kopje only after a careful observation through a binocular.

The kopjes have their own range of vegetation and wildlife, which makes them into islands in the predominantly grassy plains. In the open plains, animals find little shelter from the sun or fire and flood. Kopjes often have a thriving cover of shrubs and wild sisal around their base, as well as acacia trees growing nearby that provides shade and protection for wildlife. The obvious dwellers of kopjes are the hyraxes, of which the rock hyrax is the larger and has brown fur. The bush hyrax's fur is grey and they like to climb up the acacias. Both species (the nearest living relative of the elephant) live close together in harmony but in separate holes small enough to keep out leopards, jackals, and lions, which often stay on kopjes to rest and/or for a better lookout. Mongooses also live in the vicinity of kopjes and we liked seeing them taking various postures and actions. There were three different species that were easy to tell apart, although Vesna tried hard to distinguish between the slender, dwarf, and banded mongooses. We got back to the lodge just in time as it had darkened and rain was threatening.

There was a small museum, sponsored by New York Museum, the best part of which was the presentation of the annual migration of hundred of thousands of Burchell's zebra and wildebeests (white-bearded gnus). Now in August the herds were moving into the northern Serengeti around Grumeti and the Mara River, going into southern regions of the Masai Mara Game Reserve. In November the herds would start moving south into the Serengeti plains and towards their most eastern grazing grounds around Olduvai Gorge and Lakes Masek and Ndutu. The annual peak of reproduction of gnus and zebras occurs there as the herds find the fresh grass in the rich soils of Ngorongoro. The herds stay around this region until about March, when they start moving westwards towards the western corridor. They reach it in the Grumeti-controlled area by June and July, following the availability of grass, and start a new annual migration.

In the museum were several chests with large drawers marked with the name of the caches they contained. Vesna opened every single drawer, meticulously inspecting each, and found dozens of preserved bodies of birds and small rodents.

It was time to go dinner in an open-air restaurant that had a thatched roof. We were not surprised to find crumbles of it in our dishes. It started to drizzle, cooling the air nicely, but it was not possible to sit around a fireplace in the open. So we returned to our rondavel and by 8:30 were in our beds under mosquito nets. During the night we could hear a concert of various insects, including crickets, rustling in the thatch, accompanied by the rain. Quite a

symphony of noises compared to the roaring of lions and other loud animals. However, we slept well secured under the mosquito nets.

We got up shortly before 7:00 a.m. and had breakfast before going out with the idea of visiting Lake Magadi, some 25km south of the lodge. I drove fast, knowing this earthen track from the day before, but stopped soon after we left as we came across a group of 12 grownup lions with four cubs. Two men riding bicycles passed us, not bothering about the lions resting in the grass some 5m off the road. Two other men walked by, and we thought it necessary to draw their attention to the lions, but they thanked us and walked on. Could we get out of the car to get closer to the lions to take pictures? We did not try it though, and drove in the direction of Lake Magadi.



We found a great many flaminogs at the Lake Magadi but one could not get closer to them. Ljiljana takes pictures whereas Zvonko records the sounds.

Vesna spotted two lions lying in the grass so I left the road to get closer, but they did not like our approach and got up, moving into deeper grass. Ruefully I turned back onto the road and soon after, we arrived at the lake. The water level was low and we could get closer to the birds as they were less wary than those on Nakuru Lake. We could approach them up to 15m, making it easier to take pictures of the flamingos, ducks, and other kinds of swamp birds nesting here.

It was getting warm so we drove on through low grass, zigzagging between low bushes, some of them thorny. We scared some gazelles and hyenas resting in the shade so we got tired of watching. Suddenly I spotted an animal on a low branch almost above the car and shouted, "Leopard! Leopard! Take pictures!" My two girls were almost asleep and did not believe it at first, but the beautiful cat got up, stretched, slithered slowly down the trunk, crossed the road 5m in front of us, and disappeared in the deep grass. Thus it happened that no picture was taken to prove that we have seen our first leopard, which was really a beauty. We returned to the lodge disappointed by our search for a leopard that moved right in front of our nose. What a shame!

After lunch and a good rest we had forgotten the bad luck of our first encounter with a leopard. As usual, we drove out at 4:00 o'clock with the idea of looking for Roan antelopes near the Banagi Hills, the only place they could be found in the Serengeti. I chose a closer route below the Nyaraswiga Hills, where we found two lions having big problems with their digestion. We watched them and Ljiljana thought that some castor oil could help them, but how to explain that to a lion? We could not stay long as some heavy clouds came up in the west and it looked like trouble if did not get onto firmer ground. Luckily, we got on the main track below the Banagi Hills and I drove toward the lodge as fast as possible.

The rain started and I drove on, changing gears between first and second without using the brake. At a curve, the car caught in a washout on the road and slid sideways, being stopped

by a bush. I started the engine, slowly releasing the clutch so that the front wheels gripped and the car moved back onto the road easily. We managed a few smaller hills and were back safe to the lodge in a real downpour.



A lonely lion rests under a tree and yawns probably missing a good company.

We really worried how our friends the Sachses would manage because of ominous clouds over the Sabora Plains northwest of the Seronera. We expected them to arrive from Musoma on Lake Victoria and Ushashi, following the only road to Serengeti along the Grumeti River. However, in that direction it looked as if the end of world were coming. There was nothing else to do but to have dinner and have a bath in separate bathtubs outside our rondavel.

The weather on Wednesday was beautiful. We started to drive closer to the lodge and went across the Seronera River's left bank, where we did not find any lions. So we returned and went over to the right bank, and soon we came across a lonely lioness bellowing yearningly. Before long, another lioness came out of the bush and they exchanged catlike greetings with purring and licking. It was the right scene for taking pictures and sound recording until both got up to walk off on the road. We followed them at a reasonable distance as they went the same way we had come from. In the following few hours we pursued this couple of lionesses without watching for the time. By now we had learned that patience and not forcing the time was the right way to view animals in their wild environment.



We found a lions' pride getting up to stroll over to meet another group of.

After a while we noticed the lionesses getting off the road into the high grass. I left the road at a more suitable place but lost the couple for some time. On a meadow with shorter grass, I moved parallel to the lionesses' direction until we spotted a lion and two lionesses waiting for "our" couple. After the standard greeting procedure, all five got up and ambled slowly off. We drove on at the same speed, getting closer to them without disturbing them, although the gap now and then was less than 5m. One or the other lionesses turned her head to look at us as

if saying, "What are you here for?" and marched on unperturbed. Nobody cared for time as we were approaching a cluster of trees where another group of one lion and three lionesses was resting. It was a great scene of greeting, after which all nine cats got down, stretching before lying in the deep shade. Soon all of the lions were asleep so it was time to leave them in peace.



The remaining group of lions' pride follows up the alpha lioness that met another one at right.

On the way back we met another car, so we told them where the lions were and they told us where we could find cheetahs. We drove on through low grass, startling some hyenas or warthogs, and scaring several gazelles. One of the latter rushed away, stopping at a safe distance to watch us. Vesna pointed to a young one lying almost invisible in the grass. We followed the lions from the Masai Kopjes to Loliondo Kopjes, and then moved towards Simba Kopjes until we got to the main road. As we were told, we found the couple of cheetahs waiting for us, almost posing for picture taking. The whole morning we wandered freely over the meadows, despite high grass here and there. This freedom of movement was the most enthralling experience we had there.



The lions' pride found a good place in shade to rest during the day's hot hours.

As our friends the Saches had not arrived after our morning adventures, we went on with the now standard routine: have lunch and a rest before going out in the afternoon. We were repeating the journey towards Masai Kopjes when somebody noticed something dangling from a branch of a tree next to the river. I did not heed the meter-high grass and entered it, not able to see anything below the car hood, just to get closer. With cameras ready, I saw my goal as the dangling tail of a leopard, when another shadow got up slowly as we came

closer. Yes, there were two leopards watching our slow approach. Ljiljana was taking pictures and I tried hard to drive the car making the lowest possible sound. However when the space was about 10m, both leopards got up, stretched, and slid down the tree like ghosts and disappeared into the high grass, never to be seen again.

The commotion of barking baboons brought me back to the reality that I had to get the car out of the high grass. My only thought was how to get out using the same way we came in. At last we returned safely to the firm road and Ljiljana commented, "If I had suggested that you drive into this high grass, you would have said that I was crazy! True?"



We spotted the leopard descending from the height of a tree at left. At right is the sleeping leopard we took a picture on another safari.

Night was approaching and no sign from our friends yet. We were in the dining area when a muddy VW rushed in and Christa and Gerhard got out, totally exhausted and unnerved. Their travel story was hair-raising, particularly as they had come in on the same road we had driven in the rain the day before. Coming from Uganda, they lost two hours waiting for the ferryboat at Kisumu that sailed to Musoma. After disembarking at Musoma, they continued driving through Ikiza to Ikoma and the Serengeti entrance, where it started to rain all their way. Later a storm hit them as they helped another car out of mud. They arrived here totally exhausted. We wished them a good warm bath and a long rest until we met them in the morning.

In accordance with our schedule, we left the Seronera Lodge on September 2. The lodge service was the least pleasant of all we had visited up until then and the food in the restaurant was not as good we had had before that. It was time to say goodbye to the Serengeti, where we have seen many animals and had some extraordinary encounters.

A bit later that morning we started with a lot of optimism the 160km drive towards the Ngorongoro Crater. Our friends were ready early enough, so we showed them the road we had followed to the lions' pride yesterday and the tree where I missed the leopard. Later they told us that they found the leopard on the same tree and took pictures of it. We proceeded towards the Simba (Lions') Kopjes and found a scuffed huge lion with a lioness resting next to the road. A bit further beyond this couple rested another lion, probably the opponent of the battered one.

There was not much to be seen on the way to Naabi Hill Park Gate. When we left the Serengeti's good roads and came onto a bad section of some 65km that was the new road to Ngorongoro. With speed down to 30km/h, I tried the old road, but that was a real disaster as

it contained a new kind of a trap: an old rut filled with dust. When I got into one of those, the car got a shock that hit us into the marrow, but Ljiljana yelled, "Push on!" Soon after that we read on a board with faded letters: "4.5ml to Olduvai Gorge", so I turned on a track leading into a dusty meadow.



We descended to the bottom of Olduvai Gorge where a warden explained about the work in progress. At right Ljiljana and Vesna observe found objects and an open "work face" in front.

Unexpectedly Vesna called, "My shoe laces are wet! Something is running out below my seat." I stopped instantly to find the reason. By Jove, the battery had overturned again and I saw a hole under its fixing place. A stone had hit the steel floor plate where it had corroded after a similar mishap in Tsavo East, when the battery got loose from its strap. I lifted the battery aside and with newspaper soaked up the acid and washed the wetted area afterwards. I closed the hole with a thick rubber piece so I could strap the battery in its place, happy that the battery was undamaged. I started the engine and hoped that the rubber would seal off the dust and protect the battery from another similar strike. In a short time we met the warden of the Gorge, who offered to be our guide into the archeological sites there.

Some years ago, Professor Leakey found the jawbone of "Homo Zinjantropus" (1.75 million years old) here, and the skull of "Homo Habilis" (younger by about one million years) some 50km upriver. The Kenyan guide spoke excellent English and led us up and down the steep footpaths, explaining with many details the way to search for fossils. Olduvai Gorge is a deep canyon ("duvai" means river and "ovai" is grass with thick leaves liked by the rhinos) with five exposed prominent layers down to the lava layer of Ngorongoro eruption of long ago. The whole Leakey family, parents and three sons, found some 400 fragments of Zinjantropus' jawbone that took 18 months to be glued together in 1959.

Often the guide pointed to fossils sticking out of the almost vertical canyon walls. He also pointed out the danger of erosion caused by Masai herds coming down to drink. It would be essential to restrict the access to these archeological sites, particularly by cattle and goats, by constructing water-retention basins for them. The guide, impressed by our interest (probably also by our good tip), gave us a rather sharp stone of opal (good to strip skins) and a piece of lava stone from the present river bed.

I had some problem to start the engine again and then drove up and down the 150m- to 200m-deep canyon until we came out on the old road climbing to the Ngorongoro crater. We went on through a deserted countryside to reach the Olbalbal Escarpment, with a splendid view of the Lemagrut extinct crater. Was there any vapor coming out of the crater vent? The grade became steeper and the car crept up from curve to curve in first gear at about 10km/h at full power. Suddenly the engine coughed ... and stopped instantly. I pulled the handbrake on and there we were, halfway into the next climb between two curves.

What looked like a compact road surface was actually fine sand ash in which there were no ruts – just a plain surface without any cohesion. Vesna and I got out of the car and Ljiljana took the steering wheel, ready to start the engine. Then she started it and slowly disengaged the clutch, while Vesna and I stood on the rear bumper to increase the rear-wheel traction. When the car started moving just a bit, I pushed off with one leg, and then stepped off to push the car forward. With our combined efforts, Ljiljana got the car moving up to the next curve, stopping there on a flat section. I opened the rear cover over the engine to adjust the air intake valve on the carburetor. Immediately the engine worked better and we reached the rim of Malanja Depression, where the grass was on fire. Of course, both girls started teasing me, saying the "vapour" from the Lemagrut extinct volcano was actually smoke from the fires set by the Masai to burn dry grass. The Masai lived in bomas (hamlets) there and set fires to encourage fresh grass to grow.



The Ngorongoro Crater traveler's map shows most of the important data.

After we circumvented the Malanja valley, the road went up but not for too long, and we reached the rim of the Ngorongoro crater (the highest point at +3.190m). Happily I drove straight to the ESSO petrol station to fill up the battery and the tank. It was 2:45 p.m., quite a long time for the torturous ride for that "Pony" (the new nickname for our VW Beetle). No need to comment on the road condition - the vista was overwhelming all around the crater rim and down to the bottom with Lake Magad, and all over, many small dots of larger animals amassing. Right away we forgot all the problems and troubles we had undergone when we moved into our well-arranged room. We booked into the Crater Lodge located at the crater's southern edge. From our room we had a brilliant view over the whole crater, under a clear blue sky with the long shadows of the setting sun spreading slowly over the floor. It was an absolutely marvelous sight!

After booking into the Crater Lodge, the serviceman brought live coals and made fire in the open hearth in our room. He told us where we could get more firewood as it would get rather cold in the night. After we dressed in warmer clothing, there was enough light to go for a short drive, so we drove along the East Rim Road. The crater floor was already in shade at 5:30. After about 10km we came to the outlook point next to a small pyramid that was the tomb of Professor Grzimek's son.

Above the west crater edge we could recognize the extinct volcanoes of Oldonyo Olmoti, Embakat that had a lake, and Lolmalasin, the highest. We continued along a dry path with many curves until we reached Baumann's Point. (Baumann was a German who first brought livestock into the Ngorongoro crater.) It was high time to return because the car lights were not in order, and I heard a strange noise coming from underneath the front end now and then. At last we got to the lodge, crawling at 15km/h in the dim light beam. Our friends had arrived not too long before and were in the process of putting up their tent. After friendly greetings and exchanging stories of our recent travel experiences, it was time for dinner.



Open fire in a hearth warmed up cozily our room at the Crater Lodge.

The dining room and the bar were in one building, constructed in the same way as the guest houses. In the middle stood a large fireplace, with big logs to heat the whole room. Its chimney was in the hollow column built of local rock that supported the conical roof of the building. It was cozy inside and the nicely-arranged tables in the dining section were inviting. The food was excellent and we enjoyed the perfect service. This place was the best we had visited up until then - or were we just hungry?

We went straight to our room after dinner and invited our friends to come to our room to have warm baths. Vesna had a small room for herself, linked by a corridor to our larger room, with the bathroom available to both. It was not long before Vesna was deeply asleep. At 8:45 our friends arrived and Christa went to the bathroom to have her bath first.

Gerhard was telling the tale with many details of how they got from Olduvai up to the crater. I was getting nervous when Christa did not come out of the bathroom for a long time. Then Ljiljana heard a dull thud from the bathroom, and knocked on the door. There was no answer, so she opened the door and found Christa lying unconscious on the floor. Together we lifted her and carried her out of the bathroom, put her on the bed and covered her with a blanket. The fresh air from an open window cooled the room instantly, but Christa remained unconscious. She was tired and had collapsed from the heat in the bathroom. She breathed faintly and her pulse was weak, so Ljiljana was slapping her gently. In the meantime, I pulled her hands up and down and massaged her feet to bring her back.

All the time I was wondering what kind of the medicine would stimulate her heart and breathing. At last, Christa opened her eyes and looked confused by what was going on around her. She took a few gulps of coffee and nip of rum that Gerhard brought, but it did not help much as she complained about pains in her chest. Then I remembered my tablets of ASMAC that I took for my asthma attacks at that time. I gave her half a tablet that really worked wonders, as within half an hour Christa was breathing normally and color had returned to her cheeks. Soon she became fully aware and dressed in her training suit. She bundled in blankets and went to sleep in a field-bed that Gerhard brought to our room. Then he went to sleep in their tent, also exhausted from vainly trying to find some medical help at the concierge or an empty room for his sister. Ljiljana brought in more firewood as a slightly-open window made it quite chilly inside. At last we got to bed at nearly midnight, much later than our recent routine.



We rather enjoyed our meals at the pleasant dinning room of the Crater Lodge.

Next morning started dull and cloudy, and the lack of sleep made us bad tempered until an elephant walked in front of our verandah. This brought back our wits and I urged all to get breakfast as fast as possible. I booked a Landover for an all-day ride with lunch included for 8:00 o'clock to take us down to the crater floor. The driver-guide suggested an early start, so we left the lodge at 8:20 without the Saches, who were regrettably late.

We followed the West Rim road we had came in on the day before, passed Lerai village, and soon got to the Oldonyo Seneto drop. This was the steepest path I ever thought of driving as we made 600m of descent in 20 minutes. We had to hold hard to our seats so we would not drop out of the car, but when we reached the floor, we became aware of the crater's great size. Its diameter was 16km and its walls height varied between 400m and 800m in some places. The tour started along the right track, bypassing a boma (unpopulated and now used for movies) and soon passed through the Lerai Forest.

On the way out of the forest, we passed by a few elephants (mother with young ones only), proceeding towards the dried-out hippo pool to Magad Lake. The lake water was at a low level of about 10m, whereas it went up to 25m during the flood period. A group of nine hippos was basking inside the lake, but we could not get too close to them due to mud. However, there were large herds grazing nearby, mostly gnus, zebras, hartebeests, all kind of gazelles, and impalas in hundreds. Our Landover did not bother them at all, and gnus ran around just for fun.

We were five in the car that had a hard roof with two large openings so we could take pictures out of them by standing on the seat. With time, it became "unexciting" driving amid

dozens of various kinds of herds, with here and there a few giraffes. Then the driver said, "In front is a rhino!"



In the Crater one finds male elephants only whereas females stay outside of with their young ones.

The crater edge rimmed by clouds with blue skies above on that beautiful morning could be the setting for the most exciting event of our safari, I thought. The white dots on the rim marked the lodge houses, and a grey dot some 200m away in opposite direction, the rhino. The driver approached the resting monster to within about 30m and stopped, switching off the engine. The animal did not like that and got up slowly and moved in the opposite direction. The driver switched on the engine and started to pursue the rhino, keeping to a distance of 30m. Suddenly the rhino turned aggressively towards the car, closing in fast. Ljiljana and Vesna shouted: "Take pictures!"

The animal got so close that all I could see was his rear with its lifted tail. The animal was trying to attack the car, which moved in circles for a while until the rhino gave up, turned away, and rushed back towards the lake. For the rhino the chase was over! Our driver explained that driving in circles and decreasing the radius made the rhino tired. With time, it would certainly give up running after the car. Well, that was good to know, yet one should have a 4-wheel-drive car on a flat and firm surface.



This rhino ment it seriously! Get away from here!

The driver climbed a small hill in the crater named Oldonyo Osilale. From it we had a perfect view over dry Lake Magadi and the grassy or bushy land all around it. It was still cool and we kept our leather jackets on for a while. We drove down to follow the bank of the Oljoronyuki

River. The driver made a lot of noise with the engine, explaining that he was looking for lions in the thick brush that was 1.5m high. The car went easily through these growths that reached over the engine bonnet, leaving no trace of its passage. On the Upper Drift path we passed through some smaller clearings, in one of which two mighty lions appeared. We had never seen such strong majestic lions. Their almost black manes and their fur color blended into the surrounding. The lions walked fast, looking back at us angrily as if saying, "Leave us in peace. We have something important to do!" Then they parted, so the driver followed one at short distance for a while until both vanished in the bush.



We saw these rather magnificent two lions with black mane during our In-Crater tour.

The car returned to the place where we saw the lions and nearly drove over a pride of four lionesses with four cubs, each of slightly different ages. Some cubs hid in the bush but the lionesses did not move, keeping to the shade of their resting place. After enough photos were taken, the driver returned to the thicket to meet another Landover driver and exchanged information of observations made. Our driver told us that our seeing a pride of 22 lions had been something like "hunter's luck". There are days where one cannot find any of the lions, even after hours of searching.

It was getting hotter during the ride along the outer circuit, over the ruined farmland and along the Munge River, watching numerous zebras and gnus, etc. We climbed the Engitate Hill to have another view, but it became too hot and dry for the animals and us too, so we returned to the bank of the Munge River, looking for a shadowy place. It was 12:30 when the driver found a place with low grass under a large tree, where he handed out the picnic lunch. It was time to doze for a while after everybody's needs had been satisfied.

At 2:00 o'clock everybody got into the car to continue the ride back and forth through high grass and around thick bushes without leaving any trace of our passage. This ride was to be remembered as miraculous.



The young lion is not alone just it has to get up to join his pride resting in the shade at right.

Slowly we approached the inner circuit; we came upon a pair of rhinos - a mother and her almost- grown-up son. We got within about 30m and took photos, but the animals did not move because the heat was overwhelming. At last our driver turned towards the lake to show us the crater flamingos, which were a bit bigger than the lesser flamingos we had seen at Nakuru and Magadi Lakes. The air was hot and dry so large herds of zebras, gazelles and gnus did not move, except for few giraffes or warthogs running away from our moving car. We saw a larger group of waterbucks close up when crossing the Seneto Stream, but after that the circuit closed as we reached the Lerai Forest.



We came quite close to this female rhino with its almost grown up calf.

All the passengers, the three of us and an English lady who joined us instead of the Sachses, were exhausted. Our driver asked if we would like to return to the lodge, and we all agreed to his proposal. The road out of the crater was mostly cut into the rock face, and was even steeper than the morning descent. The four-wheel drive car made it in first gear all the way up, and it was almost impossible to take photos while standing and looking through the opening in the car roof. Ljiljana was interested in the thick forest flora, the interwoven lianas, fantastic ferns, and moss hanging from branches. After we got out of the crater we had some spare time to do whatever we liked.



We had to say "Goodbyes" to the Ngorongoro Crater after all.

Ljiljana went around collecting plant shoots she wanted to transplant to her garden at Bamburi; I checked why the car was making such a strange noise the day before and found that a spring shock absorber had got loose. A bolt had broken and the spring made a loud clang when the wheel hit a pothole. I could not get any help in the lodge garage, but they told me of a place where I could ask for help on our way to Manyara the next day. After that we washed and cleaned the car, grateful for its dependability despite its many problems.

After a good dinner, the clear fresh air, fatigue and excitement, we were happy with our safari so far. There was a full moon that night and the Pony glistened in the dark in front of our dwelling. I wondered if this would be the peak of our adventure.

On Saturday, September 4, we left Crater Lodge at 9:20, driving slowly and avoiding potholes as much as possible. The view into the crater was partly restricted due to morning fog. At first the road leads downward through thick forest until we came to the cultivated flat lands. In some fields it was corn harvest time, and on others, cattle were grazing in great numbers.

I had been told to look for the farm of Mr. Neuuby, who had come from South Africa, and found it easily. We were greeted by Mrs. Neuuby and their four children, and she promised to send their mechanic as soon he came for lunch. In no time an Indian came in and took the car to the workshop. It took that pleasant man a good hour or so to make a temporary repair that should hold until Arusha, where I would go to the VW service in any case. With hearty thanks to the farm owner and the mechanic, we continued our journey towards Manyara.



This was the view from our room in the Hotel Lake Manyara with the lake in background.

The macadam road turned into a murram, where we got a lot of dust when overtaking slower vehicles on the hills. After one such hill, we got to the top of a curve with a lookout from where we could see the whole of Lake Manyara. Shortly after, we saw a sign pointing left to the Hotel Lake Manyara, where we stay for only one night. The hotel stood at the rim of a rock face some 200m high, and from our room we got a splendid view over the whole lake stretching almost below.

We were in time for lunch after this short ride of only 55km so we went to the restaurant first. We liked the meal and I ate too much, probably because I was no longer worried about the car. We went to the pool to cool down and relax for a while. The pool was 10m from the rock ledge and we could see up and down the Rift Valley as far as the horizon.

We hired a VW-Kombi car for three of us and left the hotel at 1:15 to visit the Manyara North Park, which stretched along the western shore of the lake. The park was 45km long and was squeezed between the escarpment and the lakeshore. From the hotel a steep road lead to the park entrance, where we visited a small museum. In Tanganyika (later Tanzania) there

were many small museums sponsored by visitors from the UK and USA as "Friends of animals".

Throughout the park we had to cross several streams with names like Mto wa Simba (lion), wa Kirurum, Mkindu, Mchanga (earth), Msasa, Chem Chem, Ndala (sand), Bagayo, Endebash, Arai, and Maji va Moto (warm spring). They sprung out of the foot of the escarpment and the park flora was rich with several large trees in a dense forest. There were several places where visitors could sit to watch the animals, or have a picnic at a few places with tables and benches. Imagine this in the middle of the wilderness!



The Manyara North National Park was "famous" where lions rest in trees.

We stayed in the park until 6:00, moving to and fro and enjoying nature: the mixture of forest with open meadows, and the "Kombi" car pushing through high grassland, provided one knew where the route was. From the hotel we had seen large buffalo herds, and in the park we met a few of them at a rather short distance of 15m or less. The buffalos were particularly large bodied and certainly more docile than we have experienced before.

There were plenty of noisy monkeys feeding in trees or on the ground, like baboons, or velvet, and blue. Impalas, Reedbucks and Bushbucks grazed in the meadows, and Klipspringers rushed away into the forest. The park was known for its lions in the trees but we had not seen any until the driver said, "Sir, there is one above us." I leaned out through the roof opening and was confronted by a lion resting on a branch and watching me from less than three meters. Unfortunately, the branch was in the way of taking photos, so I opened the sliding door, took pictures, and closed the door fast, saying "Asanti sana!"

When we got back to the hotel, it had filled up for it was a weekend. The new visitors were in the company of the state's vice-president. The quiet in this modern hotel built of concrete blocks was over. After dinner we sat with a few travelers whom we had met here and there moving in the same direction. The night was rather noisy and we could not sleep well, and the same the Sunday night too.

We stayed at the pool, lazing around and talking with a few other guests on safari. This Sunday was the last of our leave so we decided to rest without using our car, which badly needed a thorough checkup before starting the long drive home. Another noisy night passed, but on Monday morning at breakfast the hotel looked almost deserted as the vice-president's guests had left very early. Obviously the party had a good time, considering the number of empty beer bottles, etc.

Christa and Gerhard emerged later so we exchanged goodbyes as they intended to return to Mombasa traveling the same way as us. I did not know how much time we would have to spend in Arusha to find a VW service station to undertake the repairs.

We left for Arusha, about 100km away, at 11:00 on Monday, September 6, as I thought we would make it in two hours. The first section of 50km was a macadam road to Makuyuni, and I drove slowly to avoid unnecessary strain on the damaged shock absorber. Later on the tarmac road I would have liked to speed up, but the engine made 100km/h on descents only. I got anxious, sensing that something was wrong with the engine too. The Masai cattle herds next to the perfect road stirred up so much dust that I had to slow down. On the horizon Mount Meru appeared as we got closer to Arusha, and we could see large coffee-bean plantations spreading on the mountain slopes. We arrived at Arusha after 1:00 p.m. so I had to wait until 2:00 when the VW service workshop would open.

My only worry was the car now, not knowing how much time it would require to complete the repairs. We had another 75km drive to reach our next target of Momella. Ljiljana had tried to get some fresh food at the market but everything had closed by midday, so our "iron rations" helped to overcome our needs for lunch again. The service workshop opened at 2:00 o'clock and I was told that they would finish the cleaning and greasing in about a half hour or so. When the mechanic hoisted the car, he saw the exhaust pipe fixing was loose again, and my desperation grew. True – the bolt made by the Indian mechanic had held, as he had said, up to Arusha.

It took a full hour to find a correct bolt to fix the exhaust pipe. After 4:00 the car was lowered and the bad light bulb changed for a new one. The engine started with some difficulty, so another mechanic stopped the process and looked at the air filter. What a mess in it – no oil, but just a hard oily cake. So they started cleaning the air filter, checked the spark plugs, and adjusted the carburetor. After a successful test run, the car was handed over to me shortly after 5:00 and we could continue our ride at last.

From the pleasant city of Arusha we drove in the direction of Nairobi on a tarmac road, and turned right at Oldonyo Sambu on macadam. Despite the delay, we had stunning views of Mount Meru and Kilimanjaro, lit by late afternoon sun with no clouds in a blue sky. Was there anything more beautiful, I asked myself, despite the steep road with many curves needing my full attention?



At left Ljiljana observes through a binocular the Kilimanjaro and Meru Mountain is in background. Vesna compiles her daily animal records before going to dine in Momella Game Lodge at right.

We often asked ourselves whether the last or previous experience would be the peak of our long safari. Would our last stop at the Ngurdoto Crater National Park be what Sir Julian Huxley said: "The small jewel between national parks"? Already on approaching Momella Game Lodge we had forgotten all the problems we have had as we drove the last few kilometers by the setting sun. The mighty Kilimanjaro peak with the white ice cap was still lit to the left of the road that twisted through the shadowed forest. I turned off to the road to Moshi at Ngare Nanyuiki onto an earth track, making the last 12km in twilight, with Mount Meru in the background looming dark with a rim of red light. The scene was so awesome I almost overlooked a small sign reading: "Welcome to Momella Lodge – 1km." I had to drive back a bit and on a path came to a clearing with a building that looked familiar. We saw the Sachses putting up their tent nearby, so we waved, and a few German shepherd dogs came out to greet us.

The lodge buildings had been constructed for the making of the movie "Hatari" ("Danger") and "Sammy Goes South". We were the only guests and got one large banda, a round building with a conical roof made of leaves. There were three large rooms with enough beds and a comfortable bathroom. Ljiljana did the unpacking so I took a warm bath (gas heater!) first and dressed in warmer clothing. Vesna went to befriend the dogs and came back with two of the five to our banda.

After some time we were ready for dinner and with some expectation went to the restaurant banda. The lodge owner was Hardy Krüger, a German actor who had played in the movie "Hatari". The food was good except that we were served the same soup three times and the meat twice. A larger number of guests had not arrived so it was necessary to eat what had been prepared. After dinner we sat in front of the TV but I got fed up with the poor reception so went to talk to the Sachses about the next day's itinerary. We were in bed by 10:30 - a bit late but everybody slept well in the new surrounding.

We were ready by 9:30 a.m. according to the agreed time but the Sachses were nowhere to be seen. We started, taking the wrong direction first, but I turned around and got to the park entrance soon after. After a brief drive we came to Lake Ilkekotoito that had several places where we could stop to enjoy nature. Kilimanjaro was in clouds but sunlit Meru was just grand.



The Kilimanjaro as seen from the Ngurdoto Crater Park with the Kibo summit from the South.

There were not many animals around apart from some giraffes and gazelles as we were late.

The road was built on lava or volcanic tuff, and there were many curves and steep sections. I had a real tough drive at low speed of 25km/h. We had to stop often, get out of the car, and stand or walk around enjoying the pristine natural tranquility. After we passed by Lake Longil we had to get through a shallow part of the Jamara River to climb to the crater.

The distances in Ngurdoto Crater Park were short compared to the other parks we had visited before. Thus we arrived after a short but steep climb through a "tunnel" cleared in the tropical forest at a small outlook point on the crater's edge. The crater had an area of 53 square kilometers and its floor some 200m below had a small lake that was not accessible. The crater walls were covered with thick forest in which many animals were moving around. Vesna looked through binoculars and started recording the animals: herds of buffalos, many zebras, several elephants, and a rhino taking a mud bath in the lake. We had a wonderful view in all directions, including majestic Kilimanjaro, where only small clouds whisked by. The nearby mighty Meru was in the rear of us, so both mountains loomed above in full midday sun. Why was it that the view of Kilimanjaro stirred such emotions in me, I wondered. Was it that in my mind's eye I linked it with the small photo of Kilimanjaro printed in my geographic schoolbook? Yes, I was deeply impressed by that view!

Ljiljana's statement woke out me out of my reverie: "I am so happy that we came here!" Truly the visit to the Ngurdoto Crater Park was to be the crown of our long safari in the summer of 1965. We sat there at the crater's edge in the shade of tall trees, looking around at a chain of small lakes whose water shimmered in the midday sunshine. Looking at a map, we read the names: Sanijo, Longil, Ilkekotoito, Small and Big Momella, Lulusia, Lekandiro, and the last one, Kasare. We stayed there in the tranquility that was disturbed only by birds singing, insects buzzing, and vultures' exclaiming. The quietness was overwhelming. What blessed moments those were!



Zvonko sits on the brink of Ngurdoto Crater at left. At late afternoon Ljiljana poses at the shore of a nearby lake at right picture.

Before leaving this attractive place, Ljiljana and Vesna went looking for plants that could be transplanted to the garden in Bamburi. This was Ljiljana's favorite passion – she was a true Taurus woman by birth and by nature.

I saw some monkey moving through the nearby trees and went to see what they were doing. To my amazement, the monkeys had white tail and face markings that were characteristic of a Colobus monkey. When I went after them, trying to take pictures, the monkeys disappeared in the trees down in the crater interior. Those Colobus monkeys differed in a few details from those we had seen at the Coast, but they were of the same species. It was lunch time and the drive downhill was easy, so in no time we were at the Jamara entrance. We met the Sachses, who had taken another way to the crater's edge. It was steep and the outlook point was at a lower level, but they could not see into the crater due to thick branches. Nor could they see the mountains because they were shrouded in clouds. Who gets up early grubs two lucks, as the Croatians say ... and is sleepy all day.

After lunch with a repeat menu, we took the last chance to get into the pool as we had done in all previous lodges. It was a little bit strange bathing as the water contained a lot of diluted caustic soda, which gave the water a soapy feeling.

At 4:00 PM we went out to tour around all the lakes we could. We did not meet many animals in the park because they had been decimated in the past. We saw one hippo in Lake Lekandiro. We decided to go down to Lake Ilkekotoito to wait for darkness, expecting animals to come to their watering place. At dusk they arrived: bushbucks, reedbucks, duikers, and graceful woodland giraffes. In the trees rattled velvet and Sykes monkeys; zillions of crickets chirped. Then a loud "prfpuff prfpuff hoo-hah hoo-hah" cut through the darkness. The lake surface rippled and nine hippos started their evening rite some 50m from our place. I made my last sound recording and it was high time to leave the place. These last 45 minutes were the peak of our journey on this long safari and of the day we spent in this small jewel between national parks.

Wednesday, September 8, 1965 was the last day of our holiday. At 9:30 we left OI Balbal (Masai word for Momella) and OI Rigirik (the lodge place) after Vesna said goodbye to all five dogs. I had rushed my folks as the journey was long - some 435km - so we said farewell to the Sachses, who intended to travel a different route anyway.

We returned to the main road Arusha - Moshi, passing through thick forests and cultivated fields for the first 15km. We got to Moshi before 11:00 and stopped for Ljiljana to purchase some fresh fruit for our lunch. Vesna bought a book and put postcards with stamps in a nearby postbox. After a short respite, I pushed Pony at 110km/h on the good tarmac towards Voi, and at Taveta, we crossed the border into Kenya. At once we noticed a larger number of policemen and armed soldiers along the road. We had to make several meandering rides between spiked boards. It was a strange feeling because in Tanganyika we had seen hardly any policeman along our route.

The road surface varied so I have to adjust the speed accordingly, particularly when at Mbuyuni Gate I had to pass through Tsavo West N. P. At Maktau we left the park and after Bura Mwatate, continued a winding and steep road with the interesting Taita Hills on our left. Pleased with Pony's performance, I decided on a short stop at Voi, where we arrived at 3:00. Half an hour later we started the final leg to Mombasa. I pushed the car to its maximum speed of 115km/h on the good tarmac road, mostly descending, when at Mazeras everybody in the car exclaimed, "Sea in front!"

It was about 17:30 when we passed through Mombasa and over the Nyali pontoon bridge. Before going home I went to the factory to pick up the accumulated post, but somebody had taken it so there was nothing else to do but GO HOME FAST! Would Knocker be waiting?

We returned home safely at 5:45 and found everything in good order but Knocker was not there. I believe you will understand what followed after so there is no need for further description. Knocker would come later because he was on a love safari somewhere in the neighborhood.

Here are some statistics about our journey across Kenya in 1965: In 20 days we traveled a total of 3,877km without any defects on the tires or the engine, but had some obscure

mechanical problems. We used a total of 415lt of normal or super fuel for an average of 10.7lt per 100km. That was about 13% more than I had anticipated due to the use of first and second gears on certain sections and the choked filter and carburetor on extreme dusty roads. Our VW car - aka Pony - had more than 80,000km on its odometer already. I was unkind to the garage supervisor by installing items that were not VW original parts.



Our dog Knocker was not at home when we arrived but came in miraculously later in the evening. Knocker accomplished one of his "love safaris" in the nearby native's village.

* * * End of Part 2 of 2: Tanganyika * * *