

08. PARENTS ARRIVE TO BAMBURI IN AUTUMN 1966

We were back home at Bamburi on Sunday September 4, 1966 late afternoon and were happily acclaimed by our three servants: Karissa, Ngoa and Mwachiro. The later was a bit apprehensive as Knocker did not return from one of his usual «love safaris». However by some miracle the dog appeared an hour or so later and we were all happily reunited again. The only thing I was looking for was a good bath and go to sleep early. Tomorrow would start one of the most demanding times for me prior the definite leaving of Kenya sometime early in 1967.

The construction works were almost complete of Tanzania Portland Cement at Wazo Hill. We had to discuss the civil engineering project contract due to the delay of some four month before it could be considered as closed. The construction works at Bamburi Plant were in full swing now and I could bet that several problems had arisen during my 3-week absence. I should forget the construction of the President's house that must progressed faster than one would normally expect here in Kenya. We were anxious to learn about the date when my parents should arrive that could not be easy to learn about as they were supposed to arrive on a Yugoslav ship from Rijeka.

The sudden departure of Werner Smolniker due to his deteriorated health became the most unfortunate loss for our design team. Werner left Mombasa early August for a health checkup in Europe from that he never would return. Werner's health diagnosis of the lung cancer was definite and he died a few weeks after. We have lost an appreciated and good coworker and friend so his family left to Europe for good as well.



Vesna watches a tortoise crawling across our pathway during a safari trip.

Soon after our return from the safari Vesna had started her last term in the school year of 1966. She was supposed to sit for the final examination for "A" level certificate in November. We did not have any doubt about her success so Vesna would continue her education in a Secondary school in Europe. It was not clear where I would start my office work in Europe as Dr. Mandl had not decided about it yet. There were a few alternative places like Vienna or Munich or Lugano. The later option was almost out of question as the Parent company could not get a working permit for me in Switzerland.

After Dr. Mandl arrival to Bamburi in autumn this dilemma solved most unexpectedly when he announced the place to be Salzburg in Austria. Thus we could start the enquiry for Vesna continuing schooling as well as that she would have to learn German. This would be an entirely new language for her so we thought to get her into a boarding school for a short while at least.

Of course I could not spend much time about contemplating these home ideas as the design work load rested fully on me. Tibor Gaal proved to be a doing well replacement for Werner and he had helped a lot being an extremely fast draftsman. I had still a few predicaments with the contractor of Wazo Hill works. The Quantity Surveyors have submitted the final Works Bill. However the amount for a consequential damage for the loss of 4 months had to be discussed and agreed upon by the Contractor first. It was a rather delicate situation that could be solved by the Managing Director Dr. Mandl after all. In the meantime the construction work at Bamburi Works got up with great speed. Not by coincidence it was the same contractor like the one at Wazo Hill although with different site staff. The Clerk of Works Mr. Ted Hoskins was appointed to Bamburi work site and he became a great help to me. I have learned Ted's abilities during the almost 2 years of joint cooperation at Wazo Hill. He was a great help to me and I have learned a lot from him regarding the contract policy and international rules. Ted became a good friend of my family and enjoyed thoroughly chatting with Vesna that would improve her knowledge of English language and literature (Shakespeare!) as well.



Zvonko inspects construction of the sea-wall protecting President's Jomo Kenyatta garden.

I spent few hours touring several construction sites at Bamburi as the first object in the mornings. In the afternoon I visited the President's house site on Bamburi Beach sometimes. Yet I had to go there almost daily when Mzee Jomo Kenyatta was on the visit to Coast to be there at the agreed time to have tea with him. The construction there went well on and we got the roof on in September already. One day I noticed during my inspection of the interior a wide column midway of an arch that opened a broad view from the bar towards the Ocean. The contractor's manager told that he had to put thus "column" on the strict order of the President. With an unhappy face I went to see Jomo who was waiting for me with the customary tea time already. Without any introduction he said smilingly "I knew you won't like it!" meaning the "column". After a most cordial conversation the President jokingly said "Would you agree to reduce the column width to say 9 inches? Thus both of us would save our faces!" So it should have to be by the Presidential order.

A day or so later the President wanted me to construct a sea-wall along his property. We agreed that a wall was obviously needed here as the garden level was just some half meter above the beach sand dune. At high tide the waves would easily erode the garden and grass there too. I did not like the idea of erect a wall of large coral boulders that was the case at a few beach houses. One would require a very large number of boulders to be brought from the factory quarry. Not an easy task at all! I promised to have another thought about the construction method until Mzee comes here next time.

True to my promise I designed a new retaining wall made of prefabricated elements. The method consisted by the excavation of "columns" in sand down to the coral rock level under the protection of ø60cm concrete pipes. Pipes had to be filled with concrete adding some reinforcement caging. Thus the wall supports at 6m c/c would stand so that the sea waters could not move or corrode them either. The supports carried prefab concrete beams on top of which a low concrete wall had been cast into a shuttering of decorative prefab 60x60cm concrete slabs with washed face. The sea-wall was almost complete as one had to put on the prefab coping only when the President arrived next time. His amazement was genuinely great and he ordered the tea to be served at the coping ready section instantly. Sitting on the coping became a favorite place for the Mzee Jomo Kenyatta later.



The sea-wall is almost completed as viewed northwards on the Bamburi Beach.

I have to admit that this type of sea-wall was a brilliant idea of mine as it did not cost much to the Company as for material spent to produce it. The sea-wall held through many seasons of storms and high tides and I do hope that it is still intact there. People did ask me about the construction method and costs but I promised the President to keep it as a secret as long two of us are alive. Jomo really liked me and he proudly showed me the Flamboyant trees growing well at the road side front of his house. Ljiljana had sent Mzee tree shoots and Jomo ordered for each of these small trunks small hatched roofs to be made as for protection. The trees grew fast and reached well above the road site of garden 3m high wall of concrete block work in a few years already. This wall built in a rather decorative manner invented Mr. Fabrizio who was Chief of Works' Building Department.

On our return from the safari early September we found several letters from our parents and relatives from home. However the letters from my parents were a bit confusing and there was no confirmation on which Yugoslav ship they would board on as well as the

day of its departure from Rijeka. My father had stopped his lawyer's practice after more than 50 years of service some months ago. My parents' house had been sold too. They had to move their belongings and some furniture to my sister's flat or to a storeroom. Their new flat in Osijek had not been ready to move in yet. Their visit to Kenya would give them some time until they could move into the flat. A brief note informed us that my father had some health undisclosed problems.



Zvonko enjoys sitting on the completed sea-wall of the President's garden.

The letters were full of summer holidays events including the news that both houses at Starigrad on Hvar Island had been used by the families. Ljiljana's mother successfully completed rebuilding the new house at Franetovića Square so it was occupied like the old one known as "Vrba" as well. I have arranged with the Yugoslav Embassy in Nairobi to send the visas to my parents enabling them to travel to Kenya. The confirmation had been pending too. The Kenyan Entry visas would be issued on their arrival in Mombasa so we did everything one could under the present position. I got the confirmation from my bank in Mombasa that it executed the transfer of US\$100 to my parents too.



The arrival of ferryboat crossing the Mtwapa Creek that was close to our house at Bamburi.

As days passed we got the developed films with the pictures from our Uganda safari. Someway we were sad about the loss of many pictures on one complete film that had not been transported in the camera by my mistake. On a film the emulsion melted as the camera was exposed to sun obviously for a longer time most probably during the "mud trap" accident. Other pictures were fine but the loss of many dozens of them did

hurt my photographer's vanity. In the meantime I ordered wood planks from local hard wood to be cut to size and polished. The idea was to use these planks for making two large trunks in that we would pack our belongings when moving to Europe sometime early in 1967. I thought about using these nicely polished planks to create some furniture or shelves at our new domicile later.

We sent a letter on Sep 30 to my parents that would be the last one prior to their arrival. Yet there were no information about the ship they would board as well as the day of the departure from Rijeka Port. Nevertheless we started planning what could be of interest to them to visit in our neighborhood as well as which safaris we should undertake with them. Thus I have booked the unique hut of Kitani Lodge in Tsavo East to show them how one kept going on a safari in the earlier years. A day later mother's a short letter arrived sent from Port Sudan on Sep 25. They left Rijeka on Sep 20, 1966 and the expected arrival was set for the Oct 6. Unfortunately mother did not mention the ship's name in her letter.

Now we were certain that they would arrive so I contacted the Agent of the Yugoslav shipping company in Mombasa. He promised to let us know when any Yugoslav ship should be due to the Kilindini Harbor instantly. In the meantime Ljiljana started the in house preparation for the accommodation of my parents. Few days she got a real "shock" in neatening the guest's room for a one-day stay of the director Mr. Bridle of MOWLEM contractor. He was due for talks on finalizing the payments for the contract of Wazo Hill Works construction.



The ferryboat crosses Mtwapa Creek by man-power. The men pull on a chain spanning the creek.

Ljiljana found a large number of gecko's eggs under the pillow so she suspected Vesna to behind this nonsense. Truly later Vesna admitted collecting the eggs out of WC void covers shaking them out from two holes in the underside of it. The geckos were a real nuisance as they would lay their eggs at every warm place even in the refrigerator cooling grille that had to be dismantled for cleaning. Geckos' droppings spoiled the tables or plates or even food if left unprotected. Once we collected the geckos in a bottle with a wide opening that I took to release geckos on the factory greens or at its farm. Yet the number of fallen of tails was amazingly large every time. It made me sick getting rid of the "wreckages" from the bottle somehow. Believe it was not a pleasant job so we stopped this pursue after a while.

Vesna got an aquarium as the present for her birthday that had to be kept clean so it was Ljiljana who ultimately had to control the "business". The number of fish species

was relatively small consisting mainly of guppies. This kind of fish produces a large number of offspring but the elder ones eat these youngsters thus controlling the own population to a certain extent. There were animals to look after like the 4 guinea-pigs named Romeo, Pip, Dappeldy and Appledy as the only female of. The four pigs moved freely at the grass rondo of the round-about surrounded by low bushes at the house front. Knocker liked leaking them of thus amusing himself with for a brief time. Yet the dog was extremely good to find guinea-pigs at their hiding places in bushes when one had to put them into a "safe" box for the night. Later in the year Vesna would give away all her animals including the aquarium when it became sure that she should leave Kenya for good. The handing over to a school friend say of an aquarium or guinea-pigs etc. was obviously a standard procedure.



Vesna holding all of her four guinea-pigs for a show.

The days dragged on until on Thursday Oct 13 when the Agent called that a YU-ship was due to Kilindini later during the morning. Ljiljana rushed to the port in our car and I ordered another vehicle for me from the plant garage. It was almost midday when we met at the said quay but there was no sign of any ship entering the Kilindini Creek. At last the Agent appeared and apologized for he misinterpreted a message as for a YU-ship. The later one was due at early afternoon and he promised to call us when the ship reached its berthing place. We would have enough time to get from Bamburi to the Port as the custom inspection would take a few hours anyway. Thus we returned home to have our lunch and wait for the next news hoping that this time it would be correct.

After lunch I went to the office where I was met by a number of people to deal with the construction problems. At the meeting peak the Agent called saying that the YU-ship was at the quay and that the custom officers had just went in. It was 14:30 when I rang Ljiljana telling her to drive straight to the harbor where I would join her sometime later. The conference made me rather nervous but after I managed to be there around 16h driving another car. I saw my parents as they were coming down from the ship in the company of Ljiljana and Vesna. I got Ljiljana's stern view and understood her anxiety

about my late coming but everything turned fine at last. After a happy welcome greeting it was decided that I take the luggage and my mother joined me on the way to home. We were all reunited at our house in Bamburi at 16:30 and there was no end of my parents' marveling sighs what they have found here. Father was too happy to have the firm ground under his feet at last so he started walking around immediately. My father Zlatko was a well-known stroller at home. There he went out for an hour walk mornings and evenings often disregarding the weather to my mother's dismay.

My mother kept a diary throughout their whole sea voyage so we would grasp with time that it was a great adventure for them. For first time in their life they traveled such a long trip on a cargo ship that it was. The ship left Rijeka on Sep 20 at 17h and the first stop was at Catania (Sicily) on 22nd where they went out for a long walk through the old city. They reached Port Said on 26th and my mother described to us in details the passage through the Suez Channel later. My father did not like the voyage throughout the Red Sea as he was sea-sick most of the time despite taking pills. Then the ship had to discharge some freight at Port Sudan prior to continue for Aden. From Aden on my father had been rather handicapped by sea-sickness. The worth cruise part for him was when the ship left Aden on Oct 6th and until it reached Mombasa on Oct 13th.

The daily routine changed significantly at our home now. I could not deal with it due to my heavy workload at the factory. So it was to Ljiljana to coop with all daily tasks and she had tried hard to keep my parents happy and safe in the new surrounding that they were not accustomed too. One of the first problems was the ants that my mother abhorred thoroughly. The insects discovered father's diabetes so the next morning there was an "invasion" around his night-pot. Mother Charlotte or briefly called Šari was disgusted about this scene that Ljiljana solved by spraying. Mother had been impressed by Ljiljana's attitudes and methods dealing with such natural "disasters" to those we were used to at least.



Zvonko's parents enjoy bathing in shallow sea during a low tide.

Father got up early and had breakfast with us for the first time. He recovered well after those ordeals during the ship voyage. He had started his routine walks twice a day almost from the very beginning of their stay. We tried hard to impress on him not to walk through the bush and not to trespass gardens on his strolls along coast. Somehow it was difficult for him to comprehend to walk on the beach only. However that was not possible all along the Bamburi Beach particularly during the high tides. Then he had to

wander along the pathways that connected the various houses standing at the beach. Mother was rather anxious that Zlatko returns around 9 AM latest. Also she looked that father keeps on a hat for protection of his balding head. Of course when father came back he was dehydrated and hungry again. Thus he had the second breakfast after that he lay down for an hour or so. In the afternoons we sauntered together when I returned from the office mostly after 5 PM.

Sometimes my father had been tempted to pass through a garden when he noticed that he could not return by the beach. With time some neighbors learned about father's habit and invited him for a drink or so. As my father did not speak English so he would not understand the invitation. Yet with German speaking ladies or passers by it was no problem for him to communicate. Of course with the native Swahili he just could not start anything although the Kenyans he met were always very kind to him. My parents were known to be "Mzee sana" (= very old) soon where as our servants told Ljiljana that we are "Mzee kidogo" (= a bit old) only.

One afternoon I went to see the President on my usual control tour of the construction his house. During our common tea chat Mzee Jomo said to me suddenly: "Tell your father that he can pass in front of my garden at any time. I have instructed the guards accordingly." At first I could not understand how Kenyatta could recognize my father at first view but then he explained that it was the facial similarity of us two. Later at home I asked my father what had happened at the beach that morning. "Well" he said "I was stopped by a soldier aiming at me a rifle wanting me to stop my walk on the beach". Then the story went on as an old Kenyan came out and started talking to him in English but father did not understand what it was all about. After that the soldier saluted and father could continue his stroll on the beach to and fro.

On the next passing by this old man just waved to him friendly. I had to laugh aloud and said: "Father you have met the Kenya President his Excellency Jomo Kenyatta. You have his personal permission to stroll on the beach in front of his house and the soldier would salute to you too." The epilogue of this encounter had been described in the main local newspaper in Osijek a few years later. The mother sent us a full page from the "Glas Slavonije" (= Voice of Slavonia) with an article titled: "Our prominent citizen met the President of Kenya on his walks along the Coast of Indian Ocean". The author praised father's daily walks through the City of Osijek throughout over more than 50 years.



We visited our good friends de Villers to show Zvonko's parents another beach part at Nyali.

Mother wrote letters home in weekly intervals as well as to her friends. In each letter she mentioned that they go swimming every day. Of course father accompanied her in these swimming sessions although he had to rest an hour or so after returning from the morning walks. Zlatko did not keep too much to the ordered restraints regarding the walking time as well as drinking enough of liquid. However both my parents enjoyed thoroughly the swimming or basking in shallow pools at low tides. Klocker was their regular companion staying with in the sea for long times often. One day the dog stepped on a sea-urchin and came home limping badly. Ljiljana took a papaya fruit, cut it half removing the seeds formed it to suit on Klocker's paw. The dog patiently limped away carrying the papaya half bound to his paw. Few hours later the papaya was gone and the dog disappeared following one of his "love calls".

We were invited to an Indian wedding in the Shankardas family. Shankardas' daughter would marry a groom also from the Mombasa Indian community. We were a good customer at Shankardas senior shopkeepers who sold records and children's toys. Ljiljana had accepted the invitation and thought that it would be a perfect occasion to introduce my mother to the Indian customs.



Two pictures taken during the wedding ceremony at Shankardas' house. Left is the introducing of the bride and the feast with bride and groom sitting at right side.

The whole event has been rather colorful and many Indian customs were absolutely new to my mother of course. She enjoyed it thoroughly and talked about excitedly when they returned home. Ljiljana knew about the procedures as it was not her first Indian wedding she attended to. We have had quite a number of friends within the Mombasa Indian community like our dentist, a medical doctor who helped Ljiljana with her ears, a few shopkeepers where Ljiljana was buying various articles for our household.

Now 44 years reading mother's letters I have to smile in about her descriptions of the beach and the channel up to the riff some 300m away at our place. Mother had misinterpreted coral sand for small pebbles but she was full of amazement about anything she found in the channel or in the grass during low tides. Father did not like strolling through shallow waters but preferred bathing in a pool left by the retreating sea. Of course Klocker was most of the time with the my parents yet Zlatko liked more being left alone in a "bathtub" as long as the water did not get too hot.



Knocker accompanied Zvonko's parent whenever they went to the beach. At left mother found a place at neighbors seawall and father went out with Ljiljana to the reef to look how she collects shells.

Our small dinghy could not take all of us so we walked mostly out to the reef through shallow waters and just swimming a short distance across the channel. Of course we had carried all some rubber shoes, hats having shirts on but my father disliked such dressing so he did not join us. In principle my mother had been akin of the sea where as the father preferred walking on the solid ground ... even through stranger's gardens. Mother had a lot of dilemma to control father habits and seeing that he does not overdo himself physically.



At calm sea we just tried to use our dinghy without Knocker to get out to reef but to no prevail.

We have tried to show as much as possible to my parents during their stay. As one of the first thing we went on a Saturday to the factory and I lead them through the best possible way not to tire too much. They had never seen a cement factory from the inside and all the machinery working almost 24 hours through without stopping. Even the cement bags loading went on during the visit and they were astonished with ease the workers stapled the bags on pallets.

Since the beginning of my parents' stay we have arranged with them as many as possible excursions or safaris. One of the first safaris had been to Tsavo East National Park that we started with two cars. Ted Hoskins (*1902) who was as old as my mother offered to take her and Vesna in his Ford car on Saturday Oct 22, 1966. We entered the Park at Buchuma Gate and continued via Aruba Lodge to Voi where we had lunch at Park Inn. Mother enjoyed the ride in Ted's car and Vesna astonished her with the sightings and knowledge of animals' and birds' names almost like a lexicon. Ted told us

later that Vesna's English has been just superb and few days later he presented her gift a book with Shakespeare's dramas as well as poems in an abbreviated form though. Father rode in my car and Ljiljana played a perfect guide explaining many details. Zlatko was particularly amazed with the size of elephants' "balls".



No wonder that elephants' "balls" are so big had found Zlatko, Zvonko's father, when he saw a large group of Tsavo East elephants a few moments later at right.

On rainy days we sat often on the verandah listening to music either from records or tapes. The two loudspeakers used for both equipments gave an excellent HQ and stereo sound. I would turn them on rather loud as there were no neighbors to disturb and the living room gave a perfect echo too. Yet on a Sunday Nov 20 we all got up at 4AM to visit the Shimba Hills in Kwale District at South Coast. I got a more comfortable car a FORD for five of us from the Garage Pool. I could drive rather fast as there was hardly any traffic through Mombasa. We did not have to wait for too long for the Likoni ferry to take us across to the South Cost. The murram road was good enough so we made a good progress and turned of the main road to Kwale village. Soon we were in the Shimba Hills Reserve still without a gate entrance where I took the track to the Giriya Point. We arrived just in time for the sunrise and it was a majestic sight as the sun got out the Indian Ocean at far horizon. We were absolutely lucky to experience these moments.



Zvonko's parents visit Tsavo East National Park on their first safari. At right Ted Hoskins next to Vesna kindly offered to help us with the transport.

After a brief snack I turned the car into the Reserve interior where we saw several giraffes, some gazelles and a herd of Sable antelopes as the local favorite. We entered

the short tropical woods to look after elephants but soon a tree trunk stopped our progress. Everybody got out of the car and with joint effort - particularly my father's strength – this obstacle had been removed. After we got to the other end of the forest I turned back when we hardly noticed a few elephants deep in the bush. Leaving the Reserve I drove straight down to Tiwi village and to the "Two Fishes" rest house on the coast. Here we had a well deserved swim and the lunch later. We walked together on the Diani Beach up to a small brook next to it Vesna run to the abandoned Diani mosque. My mother did not like the many trails that Vesna explained to be of snakes and lizards. After a pleasant lunch the company had been grateful to the driver to bring them to Bamburi sound and safe but rather tired. Next to me my father snored happily most of the way home. Thus ended the safari with earliest start we ever have done.



**We saw a large herd of Sable antelopes in Kwale Game Reserve at Shimba Hills.
At right antelopes are at run.**

When Ljiljana went shopping to town my mother joined her making sure that Zlatko has returned from his morning stroll and had his 2nd breakfast before he went to rest. In a few cases Ljiljana showed her the Mombasa surrounding so they went to Mazeras to view the Botanical garden there that had several mighty King's palm trees too. Mother really panicked when Ljiljana showed snakes found in the garden. On an occasion a young black mamba slipped down her arm. Karissa our house servant did not want to kill it as he said "I am a Christian – I don't kill!" – stayed alive. The next snake was a puff adder that René Haller came to catch for the new terrarium he was putting up.

Early December Dr. Mandl returned to Bamburi. He had some important news for us about the decision of the Parent Company CEMENTIA HOLDING AG in Zurich. Their new design office European office would be established in Salzburg. The idea was that I should organize and lead this bureau for the design of cement works and for industrial usage of cement. We are supposed to move to Salzburg as soon as possible depending upon the required accommodations have been set up. Essentially I should stay for the opening ceremony of Wazo Hill Works at Dar-es-Salaam early in 1967. Also all major buildings should be finished for the Bamburi Works extension well under way now.

Since the arrival of Mandl's my father got a new conversation partner. Mrs. Annie Mandl often came later in the morning for a coffee chat sitting on the verandah. Annie liked Ljiljana's Turkish coffee so my father joined them getting up from morning after-walk nap. Zrinko, well known to 1st officer of m/s "Jelsa" brought many newspapers that made the father happy as he was missing the Croatian papers. Schaudernas' small daughter Sybille called my mother "OMA" (= abbrev. grandmother in German). The girl would often join my mother when she saw her coming down to the beach. Their house was almost on the beach so Sybille just could not wait until "OMA" appeared. Thus my

mother had often a company on the beach as well as Knocker following them every where.



**Father Zlatko walked out to the reef during a low tide.
In background far away one sees the “smoke plume” of the Cement factory.**

My parents really enjoyed eating tropical fruits that we got plentiful. The best of them liked the pineapples that came from Dr. Mandl's garden that he had started at Kikambala just across the Mtwapa Creek about 1km north from our house. The sweet and ripe pineapple weighed 4-5kg so we had one fruit for a few days. Due to rather strong rains the roof started leaking in Vesna's room and I got the repairmen out instantly. They made the repair fast including repainting the stains within a day. My mother could not understand that such a speedy work accomplishment. She did know that I was in charge of the Building department – thus their “Bwana kubwa” (= Big boss).



Zlatko and Knocker accompany Ljiljana going out to the reef to collect shells.

We had been invited regularly by a few closer friends probably it became more often during my parents stay. Obviously one had to reciprocate such invitations so Ljiljana had been rather busy preparing the food our local guests preferred. Mother was of good help to her but such pleased my parents a great deal as they were not used to it at home anymore. Vesna finished her lower grade schooling being second in her class again making the “Level A” Certificate. We could start considering to which school she goes once we would be in Salzburg. As Vesna did not speak any German we thought about her staying in a boarding school in Salzburg for the second term of the school year 1966-7 at least.

Vesna went to the beach with my parents followed by Knocker at times for swimming. My father was somehow disturbed when Knocker met some other dogs on the beach that lead to some minor fights in some cases. This remained him when he walked our Doberman "Peggy" mornings or evenings in Osijek. He had to intervene when our dog caused some "dispute" between her male followers. After strong protest I agreed to take my parents out to the riff in our boat that was more like a nut shell. Somehow it worked but we had to board the boat in two groups – one included Knocker.

Any onlooker would smile smirk at our trials to get the boat through surf waves. However all trials were successful at the end. It had been an enjoyment of riding in a nut shell keeping the balance particularly with father's weight of over 120kg as passenger. Yet all of us were good swimmers that included Knocker. On the other hand the sea was not deep in the channel.



We stopped near Roaring Rocks on the way to Kitani Lodge on Tsavo west National Park. Ljiljana took this rather rare picture where Zvonko is on it with his parents and Vesna.

Everybody had been waiting for me to have a snack when I returned from the office on Saturday Dec 11. Soon I was ready to start our ride to Tsavo West N. P. in a larger car that I got from the Garage pool. Ljiljana has prepared our standard safari utensils like shovel, linen and tools as well as food for two days and water in a gallon container. Together we checked everything prior to packing all into the car. We had added a few towels to our necessities, cloths cum some warmer pullovers. Mother was rather excited doing her best to pack things for them in accordance Ljiljana's list. We would stay overnight at Kitani Lodge where the visitors should be self-supporting except for bedding. I booked for us the "Shelter lodge" two houses each with a large room and 3 beds as well running water in a lavatory with WC. These huts were refurbished original shelters in the early days of safari tourism situated in a natural surrounding. Kitani was located almost at the south edge of Kuku Plains reaching to the foot of Kilimanjaro.



Late afternoon we arrived to the Kitani Lodge (rear side view) in Tsavo West National Park.

On way I did not waste much time except for fueling so Father could stretch his long legs. We entered through Tsavo Gate and reached Kitani Lodge by 17:30 just in time to obtain “green packages” from the store. A servant accompanied us to the Shelter houses and arranged the beds with beddings from the green packages. He set fire in the one of the cooking places and under the drum for shower hot water. Later he came to lift the drum so one could take a warm shower in an enclosure next to it. We got four kerosene lamps that the servant lit as well as the sunset set in fast. Ljiljana prepared food with Mother’s help and soon we set midst of the wild nature dinning on goodies we brought with us. As there was no fridge Ljiljana made some fresh tea that we were used to drink on safaris. Father preferred cold tea from a thermos we brought for him.

The huts built of wood rafters had a thatched roof in that a lot of creatures (“dudus”) moved making quite a racket in this stillness. There was a net spread underneath the roof but it was inevitable that some dust fell through mesh. Although warned about this Father did not want to use the mosquito net being afraid to entangle him in it. Later the table had been cleaned and cutlery stored in wooden box by the servant. He lifted the drum with warm water by a pulley high enough to have a shower and left wishing us good night. Soon we went to beds pulling over our beds the mosquito nets and had fallen asleep soon. Mother told us next day that she could not have a deep sleep due to the constant shifting noises. Also as Father nervousness reacting to all those strange sounds that they were not used to. In principle it was a rather quite night with hardly any animal’s noise moving close to the huts. However in that stillness one could hear a lot of sounds of animals’ call and shrieks.



The parents relax with Ljiljana where as Vesna feeds birds and ground squirrels. This scene was at the front of Kitani Lodge after we returned from the early morning outing.

We woke up at 6 AM and found that had put fire in the hearth already. The tea was ready soon and supposedly we had to take a small bite before moving for an outing. Yet the scene was too overwhelming for the early risers forgetting their stomach at first. Many animals moved at Kuku plains like giraffes, some gazelles and zebras when the Kibo peak appeared above the low layered clouds. Mother came out holding something entangled in her vest from that Ljiljana untangled a bat with some laughter. Father's unhappy face was a warning that something went wrong during the night. His blanket became wet he felt unhappy about it. It was not his fault but the water filter leaked and a puddle created under his bed.



Vesna had been feeding a ground squirrel and few birds at the Kitani Lodge.

After we solved all confusions I offered Mother the binoculars to scout the Kibo peak. Yet she disappointingly saw clouds only so I told her to put on her glasses and look above the clouds. Then astonishingly she exclaimed "Oh, there is Kilimanjaro – just so very close. I searched for it with the binoculars!" Truly the mighty mountain stood almost in front of us with Kibo white peak lit by sunrays. The very splendid sight!



Pictures taken along the route in Tsavo West National Park. In background left were Kamboyo Hills where as the Kilimanjaro just came out poking out at right picture.

Then we drove out up to a small hill with the Poacher's Lookout on top of. The ranger greeted us respectfully being the first visitors and invited my parents to look through a

large telescope. The ranger pointed them to larger groups of elephants and buffalos as well as a group of rhinos. In the meantime clouds cleared and both peaks Mawenzi and Kibo of the immense Kilimanjaro came to full view. An absolute spectacle!

On the way back to lodge we went to see the Mzima Springs the source of Tsavo River. At these springs starts the water pipeline for the supply of Mombasa with drinking water. We waded the short distance quite freely to the pool but my parents more impressed by the board warning about crocodiles etc. I believe that this wilderness scene was too much for them to feel easy about. Happily we returned to the lodge for a good breakfast commenting excitedly on what we have seen.



At last the parents saw Kilimanjaro peak appearing above clouds at the Poacher's Lookout.

To parents' surprise birds fluttered down on the table the moment Ljiljana spread various foods for our breakfast. Vesna notice a few ground squirrels rushing to and got up to feed them with crumbs she gathered from food-box. Mother was so much enchanted with this scene that she just could not stop chuckling whereas Zlatko would not understand what is going on. He wanted just to get his food in peace. Later we returned all lent things to the Kitani Lodge store and left it driving another route on the way back home.

I drove in the direction of Kilaguni Lodge passing the Five Sisters lava fields. On the way we spotted many various antelopes and gazelles, zebras and buffalos making Vesna active counting and dotting into her notebook. My parents were enchanted with the Kilaguni Lodge setting that included a swimming pool, a nice restaurant and a large verandah with a view to a water hole. There were high mounted flash lights to show animals coming to the waterhole as well as a leopard coming for bait on a tree trunk. We showed my parents the room where we stayed in this lodge a few times. We had a lunch here and paid the bill that obviously shocked Father.



We showed the Kilaguni Lodge to Zvonko's parents where we had lunched prior to driving home.

At the leaving of Kilaguni I heard Zlatko saying "I understand that it would be too expensive if we have stayed in this lodge". Later Mother wrote in one of her letters home to Osijek that the Kilaguni Lodge was for the wealthy people only. What they did not know and I did not tell them was the fact that the charges for the Shelter Lodge at Kitani were almost the same as in Kilaguni. We wanted to present my parents the ways of old style safari accommodation that included the self-supplying and the experience of sleeping a night in an almost untouched wilderness. I hope that their reminiscences have been pleasant despite some hardship they had to go through including a less quite sleep in a hut with thatched roof full of life. Yet the sights and the adventure they have had were certainly worth my expenditures – believe me Zlatko, my dear father.

I choose another route to return to the main road for Mombasa. At leaving Kilaguni I got a tip where lions have been seen recently and following the direction I noticed several vehicles queuing not far away. As were last in the queue it took some 20 minutes until we were close to the group of a huge lion and 4 lionesses. I wondered why Mother does not take her camera yet she complained that there is no film in it. I had placed a new film into that old camera belonging to Boris. He was parents' son-in-law and his camera needed the classical adjustments for any picture. Mother had to put her glasses on to make an adjustment and then took them off looking through viewer. For Mother an extremely dull process true. Now she was happy about my help and made several pictures of lions at a distance of say 3-5m only. We had to reprimand Father as he "roared" like a lion to get the attention of the beast. Truly the lion rotated his head, yawned showing his mighty jaw and then put it down between his paws. Leave me alone was the message yet Vesna had to tell her grandpa not to disturb the animals in future - please.



Father's "encountered" a young lion that snarled back during our visit to Tsavo West N. P.

After that encounter we passed Roaring Rocks known for the echo a certain position and continued to Kalenga Valley Circuit. Out of nothing just behind a curve a huge elephant stood across the trail. Although driving a low speed say at 35km/h I braked fast and switched to return gear instantly. This elephant was not too good natured as his huge ears waggled earnestly. We waited for a few minutes when this mighty animal decided to give us the free passages moving towards Tsavo River close by. Relieved I got out of the Circuit and soon the murrum trail came close to Tsavo River following it to Tsavo Gate. Unexpectedly Vesna shouted "Rhino, rhino close at right!" I certainly did not expect to get so close to a rhino just shortly before of leaving the Park. Yet this huge animal stood there stock-still at some 10m viewing in our direction but obviously not recognizing us as a target.



It was the sensation when a rhino appeared a few moments before we left the Tsavo West.

After several moments of absolute stillness of all my passengers few recovered fast and took pictures when I started the car as it was high time to move on. We reached Bamburi as the last sun rays got behind Mariakani hills. This safari to Tsavo West would certainly remain in our memory as the most unforgettable ending without any

hitches – at least for us safari oldies. The coming weeks and months would be extremely hectic for sure. Christmas is in about two weeks, parents would leave within a month or so and we are going to leave for good Bamburi and Kenya in almost two months from now on.

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