

MAN-EATERS OF NAINI TAL



The tiger sprang out in darkness from ambush at left side of road

The American professor turned against tigers the day he trailed a man-eater and found a Bengali boy's feet

By FITZHUGH TURNER

A MAN-KILLING TIGER, if he has time to eat you undisturbed, starts by tearing large mouthfuls of flesh from your buttocks and your meaty upper legs. Working with teeth and front paws, he next turns you on your back and goes into your viscera. He sorts out and devours your heart, liver, and other giblets before he consumes your intestines, or most of them. Then he eats your torso and shoulders, your head, which he cracks open to get at the brains, and finally your forearms, hands, lower legs, and feet.

The tiger's jaws are among the most powerful in nature. Short for better leverage, operated by great biting muscles, they are equipped with sharp-bladed cheek teeth designed to work like shears against the heavy bones of big animals. The tiger, a noisy feeder,

crushes your human bones as if they were straws. He devours them as he goes along, first licking them clean with his horny, rasplike tongue.

He may finish you off in one sitting, or he may cover you with brush and return in the evening for a second meal. In either case, when he finishes, what he leaves of you wouldn't fill a shoebox. The dismal remnants are cleaned up quickly and totally by jackals, vultures, and the other carrion-eaters of the jungle.

The percentage of human kills so completely eaten is low. Man-eating tigers often prey on lone travelers and village or forest stragglers, but they hunt mainly in populated areas where their kills are observed. Hindu custom demands that a corpse, preferably all of it but at least as much as possible, be cremated. So farmers or forest dwellers, often displaying great



Prof. Earl Leng frightened off tiger that was stalking a gardener only 400 yards from home

courage, gather to drive the feeding tiger from his victim, then collect the remains and carry them to a riverbank for a decent funeral.

It was the sight last year of two such partly-eaten victims that made a dedicated tigerphobe of Earl R. Leng, one-time farm boy of Williamsfield, Illinois, resident in India since 1962.

Dr. Leng (Earl has his Ph.D. from, and is a professor at, the University of Illinois) has been working and living at U.P. Agricultural University, situated in Naini Tal District of the north-Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. This is an American-aided institution, and Earl is one of several Illinois faculty members contributing American know-how to its program. His job is a satisfying one—teaching plant genetics and anthropology to India's farm leaders of tomorrow. But his daily life, and that of his neighbors, is complicated by the presence at and around the school of fauna not normally encountered back on Earl's home campus at Urbana, Illinois.

Earl several times has seen prowling tigers at his bungalow near university headquarters. Just recently, he frightened away a tiger that was stalking a gardener only 400 yards from his home. The neighborhood is beset by dangerous carnivora. In fact, U.P. Agricultural University for the past year and more has been the hunting ground of man-killing tigers in a concentration unprecedented in modern India.

Now man-killing by cats is nothing new in this district. Almost every year since anyone can remember, there have been such deaths. The famed Jim Corbett, who lived nearby, hunted down and wrote about individual man-eaters that operated here in the 1920's and 1930's. Peril from tigers—the startled, nursing, or cornered animal, or the odd man-eater—has been a fact of life for generations among the few farmers and the woodcutters who until recently have been the only inhabitants of this countryside. Occasional death by tiger is something people here expect.

But slaughter by a number of man-killing tigers, all roaming the same general neighborhood, is something else again, new and terrifying.

The big trouble started in late 1964 or early 1965. Around that time, at least eight tigers began to count man among their prey. They hunted an area about 20 miles in each direction, centering on and including U.P. Agricultural University and its 16,000-acre farm. From January through mid-November of 1965, the

period of this story, these tigers killed, and ate when they could, probably 150 men, women, and children—mostly men.

II

Earl Leng, now 44 years old, has never been an enthusiastic hunter. He killed some rabbits and groundhogs when he was a youngster in the farm country around Williamsfield (pop. 550), and he was rated a target-range sharpshooter in World War II, in which he served as a colonel in intelligence. But he had never fired anything heavier than a .30/06 rifle when he came to India. He came to India without arms and on principle was opposed to tiger-shooting. This perhaps reflected the gentle heart of Jacqueline Leng, Earl's English-born war bride, who is antihunting of any kind.

"I didn't see any point in decimating these magnificent animals," Earl said recently.

"But then a neighbor came to the house one day and told me a tiger had taken a man from the main road that runs through the university farm.

"My wife and I went with him to look at the body. It only takes the sight of a man chewed by a tiger to make a man a tiger-hater. The victim didn't even look like a human being.

"What really set me off, though," Earl continued, "was what happened last September.

"A father and his fourteen-year-old son were cutting grass for their cow within ten yards of the gate of the Bengali refugee colony down the road. A tiger appeared, grabbed the boy by the neck, and dragged him away into a field of sugar cane.

"I ought to have known better, but when I heard about it, I went to the colony, and we followed the trail on foot into the sugar. We didn't see the tiger, but we found the boy. All that was left of him was his feet and some bloody pieces of bone.

"I thought of my five American colleagues here, and our wives, and the nine American children, and my hundred and fifty associates on the faculty, and their wives and children, and our thousand students.

"My God," I thought, 'this could have been any of them.'

"It might sound corny, but I said to myself it was going to be the tigers or me. And from then on, I declared war on the university tigers."

III

Under India's system, the nation is divided into states and the states into districts. The supreme district authority, a sort of sub-governor, is called the district magistrate, and in the local scheme of Indian life, he is a very important person indeed.

At Naini Tal town, high in the hills above U.P. Agricultural University, District Magistrate Manik Wadhvani began to hear about the man-killing at the university. As the incidents piled up during 1965, he made it his business to take the usual actions in cases of this kind.

First, he announced a reward of 500 rupees (about \$105) to anyone killing a man-eating tiger in the area.

Second, he relaxed hunting regulations to permit the killing of any tiger, man-eater or not, found on the university farm.

Third, he instructed the district forester to move four working elephants to Rudrapur, a town near the university, to be held ready for a beat should a man-eater be located.

Finally, he sought the aid of the most experienced

MAN-EATERS OF NAINI TAL

tiger hunter in the entire area, Prem Ballabh Belwal.

Prem Belwal, stalwart and active at 69, is a land owner and timber contractor and longtime mayor and leading citizen of Ram Nagar, a town in the thickly wooded, low hills northwest of U.P. Agricultural University. Belwal's ancestors cleared 2,000 acres of jungle here, and Belwal has managed the land since a night in his boyhood when booty-seeking bandits axed his father to death at the family home.

Part of farm management in this region is killing off or frightening away animals—pigs, porcupines, and deer that ravage crops, leopards and tigers that kill goats and cattle. Belwal was 10 years old when he acquired his first weapon, a muzzle-loading shotgun like those still found in Indian villages. Bound with brass wire, firing black powder and homemade slugs or shot, these guns are the most efficient means known for so wounding cats as to make them turn man-eater. Young Belwal carried his muzzle-loader when he toured the farm by bullock cart or on his horse, but he used the gun only to get sambhar, hog deer or other meat for his family and the people of his village.

At 13, he acquired a regular shotgun, a double-barreled 12 gauge, with which he promptly killed his first leopard. A year later, he talked a departing British official out of a .405 Winchester rifle he still owns. By the time he was 18, he had bagged a dozen leopards and his first tiger, which he wounded from a machan and killed on foot as the animal was beginning its charge.

Jim Corbett, a generation older than Belwal, lived 19 miles away, and the two became colleagues. They first worked together in the early 1930's, when they organized a shoot for the British governor, Sir Malcolm Hailey.

"We were neighbors here," Belwal recalls. "Corbett used to come to Ram Nagar to discuss shikar with me,

and local problems in which he was interested. We met often at Naini Tal, and at his place, until he left India in 1947. His sister, Maggie, was a friend of mine too.

"Corbett was a dead shot," says Belwal, "but he was not interested in shooting tigers when I knew him, only man-eaters and wounded animals. I was with him on a number of shoots for visitors, but he did not himself hunt on these occasions.

"His real hobby was fishing, especially for the salmon of India, the mahseer. He was really an expert angler."

Prem Ballabh Belwal has had great experience with tigers; he knows their moods and personalities. As a boy, having fired at a big male, he watched the tiger pretend to twitch in its death throes, play possum for 30 minutes, then, tiring of the game, trot away unhurt after peering at him from one side of a bush and then the other.

The tiger, he says, is a gentleman—unless it has picked up the degenerate vice of man-eating. Prem Belwal has killed 71 tigers in his time, and more leopards than he has counted. But for some years, like Corbett, he has confined his hunting to man-eaters and wounded cats.

It was about one of the most vicious of the university man-eaters, a tigress, that the district magistrate wrote Belwal from Naini Tal.

"The animal has naturally caused panic in the area of its operation," the magistrate said in his letter.

"I shall be obliged if you will kindly take steps for the destruction of this man-eater, thus relieving the residents of the locality from the fear of this animal."

Now Earl R. Leng, the American novice at Phool Bagh (Garden of Flowers), near university headquarters, and Prem Ballabh Belwal, the veteran tiger-killer at Ram Nagar (Godtown), 20 miles away, do not know



Near Bengali colony, tiger grabbed 14-year-old boy as father watched, and dragged him into a cane field

MAN-EATERS OF NAINI TAL

each other, or did not at the time of this writing. Yet each set out in his own way to face the threat of the university man-eaters. Leng, a determined American scientist, would use unorthodox, made-to-meet-the-problem methods. Belwal, the seasoned Indian shikari, would use the proved, orthodox procedures of hunting tigers.

IV

To understand the situation at U.P. Agricultural University, you must know something about the terrain.

The locale is one small segment, about 20 miles wide, of a 20-mile-deep strip of tigerland running across India along the base of the great Himalaya Mountains. The segment in question includes foothills and the last, low-lying ridges, and the edge of the broad plain drained by tributaries of the sacred River Ganges. It lies, politically, in Kumaon Division of Naini Tal District of Uttar Pradesh state. Geographically, it lies some 125 miles east-northeast of the nearest major city, New Delhi. This, incidentally, is the general area of India in which Jack O'Connor, shooting editor of *OUTDOOR LIFE*, killed his first tiger (see "A Tiger Has Killed," *OUTDOOR LIFE*, November, 1955).

In the literature of natural history, this area is described by Jim Corbett in several of his books, notably *Man Eaters of Kumaon*, *Jungle Lore*, and *My India*. Jim Corbett National Park, a mecca for tiger-watchers, is not far distant, and Corbett's village, Kaladhungi, sits on the northern rim of the scene of action.

Kaladhungi's three miles of stone walls, built by Corbett to protect the village crops, are still in good condition. The Corbett's five-room bungalow is in dire-pair, but the shrubs planted by Corbett and his sister still bloom in the overgrown garden, and their mango, papaya, and banana trees still bear fruit.

After 20 years, Corbett's iron cot still rests on the veranda where he and Maggie received visitors—sick or injured villagers, or excited messengers reporting kills in the surrounding jungles. Kaladhungi is remote, at the junction of forest roads that few outsiders travel. Even so, the forest department has erected a roadside marker. All it says, or has to say, is, "Jim Corbett lived here." The longtime home of the great naturalist is vacant and silent, the nearest sound being voices down the road at the school Corbett built for the village children.

From Kaladhungi south, in Corbett's time, the forest covered the low ridges and intermittent flatlands down to the plain and spread out over the plain for eight or 10 miles. Where the hills end, the bhabar begins. The bhabar is jungle, but when you think of jungle in this part of India, do not imagine lush, green rain forest with vines and crawling things. Actually, driving along a jungle road, you need only a small effort to imagine yourself in the woods of Virginia's pied-mont or maybe rural New England.

The forest is dense even in places, but really big trees—banyan, matchwood, and others—are scattered, and the foliage is largely bush, some of it thorny, and an infinite variety of small trees, almost all of which have some use.

One tree, for example, is chipped and boiled in jungle villages during the winter. It yields the astringent red dye which, added to betel, stains millions of Asiatic mouths. Wild plums grow in profusion.

Shisham, used for cart wheels and carved furniture, is felled as each tree reaches maturity. The Runi berry, which provided the orange powder your grandmother mixed to make white margarine look like butter, is harvested now as a dye for textiles.

The list is endless. And it includes bhabar, a thick wild grass cut for papermaking, which gives the region its name, and which competes with elephant grass along the water courses running into the plain.

A few of these streams run the year around, but most flow only during the monsoon rains from July to September. In either case, the water has cut long, twisting ravines, called nullahs, sometimes 12 or 15 feet deep, which the tigers use as concealed trails.

India's first tigers are supposed to have moved into the subcontinent in fairly recent times, from north-east Asia through Assam. As they fanned out and reached the bhabar, they found a cat paradise. Horned game—hog deer, sambhar, swamp deer, barking deer, blue bull, spotted deer—abounded, along with the tiger's ice cream and cake, the wild pig. Water was plentiful, and there was all the cover nature could provide.

Furthermore, man avoided the bhabar. For through all the centuries to the end of British rule in 1947, the bhabar was what Indians call black-fever country. Malaria scourged those who attempted to dwell in it. Land was cleared here and there, but most often it reverted to jungle as sickness took its toll among the farmers. Aside from the odd party harvesting forest products, the traveler along infrequent north-south roads, or the herdman driving cattle into the hills, few people were seen in the bhabar. Even hunters tended to shun the area, preferring to seek meat or trophy in the higher, healthier country beyond, where there were fewer mosquitoes and leeches.

Tigers thus came to flourish in the bhabar. The game moved into the hills or back to the flatland as vegetation changed with the seasons, and the tigers followed the game, waxed fat, and multiplied. Even today, they say, it requires only 600 or 700 acres of prime bhabar jungle to support an adult tiger at lush times of the year.

Tigers in this area grow to be the biggest in India.

V

It was a fateful day for the tigers of the bhabar, as it was for hundreds of millions of humans, when India achieved its independence in 1947.

The young nation began to cope with malaria. Help in men, materials, and money came from the U.S. In a few years, India all but eradicated the anopheles mosquito from a land that had endured 80 million malaria cases a year.

Simultaneously, the government undertook to resettle hundreds of thousands of non-Muslim refugees who had fled their ancestral homes in Muslim Pakistan.

And the problem of more food for an exploding population began to come to a head.

All of which led inexorably to tiger trouble.

With malaria no longer rampant, people could live in the bhabar. Huge land-clearing projects were started, and the virgin black earth, perhaps the richest soil in India, was set to growing bumper crops of wheat, corn, and sugar.

Paved and unpaved roads were pushed through the cleared lands and the remaining forest. To promote modern farming, U.P. Agricultural University was established in 1960—built with American aid and



Around villages, the Sikhs often shoot at tigers with muzzle-loaders, usually manage just to wound them

guidance, patterned on our land-grant colleges, partly staffed with American teachers, and situated on 16,000 acres carved from prime tiger country.

In the jungles around the university, thousands of people were put to work in a forestry program. As this is written, 100,000 acres in the area near Jim Corbett's home are being replanted with fast-growing saplings. The old jungle, an overgrown tiger haven, is being cleared. Great gangs of men and women are shipping out timber, pulpwood for paper, and cordwood for India's millions of annual cremations. Hundreds of men are engaged in building mud kilns on the spot, to reduce stumps and knots to salable charcoal.

As farmland has been opened, the government has moved in refugees to till it. A Bengali colony, made up of Hindu farmers and their families from distant East Pakistan, is thriving. Last year, however, it provided four human victims for the university tigers. Also near the university are villages of Sikh refugees from West Pakistan.

Sikhs are the people whose religion, a militant offshoot of Hinduism, requires the men to wear hair and beards unshorn. Some of the refugee Sikhs are from what, in British times, were called the criminal tribes of the Punjab. Peaceful farmers now, they lived traditionally by a combination of farming and banditry, and many of them have retained their guns.

The Sikhs use their muzzle-loaders to drive jungle predators from their fields. And so, as if the land clearing and thinning of their natural game were not enough to disturb the tigers, there has been indiscriminate shooting around the Sikh villages. Two of the university man-eaters killed in 1965 bore the scars of muzzle-loading guns like those used by the Sikhs.

It was the death of a turbaned Sikh farmer that was to put Earl Leng and Prem Ballabh Belwal on the final trails of their man-eaters.

VI

The number of people killed by man-eating tigers is unknown. There is no central reporting place in India where deaths are tabulated, and the only statistics are the estimates of various wildlife experts whose figures range widely.

There are, these people say, as few as 4,000 tigers left in India, or as many as 10,000—there were 50,000 a couple of generations ago. Of these, 16 to 40 man-eaters are at large in the nation at any given time, and these animals claim 1,000 to 2,500 human lives each year. Wherever the truth lies, it is not unusual, in a Delhi newspaper, to see a two-paragraph item noting that a tiger has been shot at such and such a provincial town after having killed, say, 215 people over a period of two years.

The number of kills ascribed to a particular man-eater is customarily computed by counting known deaths and multiplying by five. This has to do with the set-up of government but mostly with the fears, attitudes, and traditions of the people who provide the victims, India's country folk. Vital statistics are loosely kept, and there is no wildlife service as such.

In Naini Tal District, incidents of man-killing are recorded at the local police stations, but only when a kill is brought to the official attention of the police. Police stations are miles apart, at various towns. If some relative of a victim, or a conscientious village headman, feels that he ought to report a death, he may have to undertake a considerable journey, risking his own life by traversing man-eater country. So chances are he stays home.

Or it may not occur to anyone that a report should be made. Tigers are only one of the customary hazards of living, having nothing to do with crime, so why bother the authorities? The police, of course, know pretty much what goes on in their jurisdictions. But they don't record hearsay in the station log; they might be the first to agree that the rumored death by tiger of a low-caste and distant villager is not a matter requiring troublesome investigation.

Finally, Naini Tal District teems these days with itinerant farm and forest laborers, far from their families and with nobody nearby to care where they are. It is usual in India for a humble man simply to set out unannounced on foot for his home village miles away. A disappearance thus may go unnoticed by fellow workers. Remembering how completely a tiger devours a man, and how quickly the carrion-eaters dispose of what is left, it is probable that the univer-

The postman was making rounds on bicycle when a tiger killed him



sity tigers took many victims from among lone travelers, as well as among straggling farm and jungle workers.

There are three police stations in the university area, and they recorded 31 deaths by tigers during 1965. There thus would have been, under the formula, about 120 unreported killings, for a total of about 150 human lives lost to man-killers during the year. There may have been more. There may have been fewer. This account is confined to known, recorded events.

The serious trouble started, then, on January 30, when the death of a 17-year-old boy was reported to the police station at Rudrapur, a mile south of the university farm. The lad had been on his way to school, traveling between villages, when a tiger plucked him from the road.

The next recorded kill came on March 25, the victim a postman making his rounds by bicycle along the paved highway that traverses the university farm.

Early in May, the tigers turned to the university fields, and the tempo of recorded killings began to speed up. Some 2,000 laborers till the university's land, and high-growing crops offer good cover to cats.

Typically, a tiger lurked in sugar cane on the fringes of a party of workers, waiting for an opportunity to strike. The laborers had learned the hard way to stay together. But if some chore, or a call of nature, took a man a little way from his fellows, the tiger bounded in, snatched him by the neck, and carried him away.

A tiger kills a man differently from the way it kills an animal. If the tiger is a skilled hunter, he will

stalk a beast to within 15 or 20 yards, spring at it in a great, roaring dash, and seize it by the neck with his big canine teeth. Then he will twist it to the ground, using his front paws, his own weight, and that of the prey to break its neck during the fall. After a clean kill, a full-grown buffalo, heavier than an American steer, may be found with nothing but limp flesh and skin connecting head and body. The only marks the tiger makes in killing an animal are the holes left by the four fangs.

When man is the prey, the tiger, skilled or unskilled, stalks and dashes as with an animal. But there the resemblance ends. As Prem Ballabh Belwal describes it:

"Even a young or weak tiger can kill a man with absolute ease.

"The tiger knows this. And while he usually tries for the man's head or neck with paws or mouth, he will claw or strike or bite wherever he can get at his victim.

"It only takes, for a tiger, a ridiculously gentle blow to kill a man, or a slight pressure of the jaws."

On and around the university farm, the tigers hunted by day in the fields and by night on the roads. By September, a total of 19 human kills had been reported to the police. There was a man-eaters' reign of terror in the neighborhood.

"I love to walk," says Jacqueline Leng, Earl's wife. "In India, you walk after dark on account of the heat.

"But the only place we can walk is along the one lighted street at the university. And even there, we don't feel safe.

MAN-EATERS OF NAINI TAL

"We have jeeps, and houses we can close and lock. Even so, we've lived in fear. You can imagine how it is for the thousands of people who live around us without any such protection.

VII

It was September 18 when Earl Leng, the previously peaceful professor of plant genetics, turned against the tigers. This was the day he trailed the tiger into the cane and found a pair of feet, all that remained of the Bengali boy.

Jacqueline Leng tends to ascribe her husband's subsequent actions to his wartime training in military intelligence. But Earl says it is his experience as a scientist that formed the basis of his campaign.

"I'm a biologist," Earl said, "and I began keeping as careful track of the tigers as I would have kept records in any laboratory experiment.

"I established their habits of movement by tabulating reports from the villagers and farm people. I let it be known I wanted to hear whenever a tiger was seen or heard, or his pugmarks found, or a kill made anywhere around the farm. Reports came daily."

As Earl Leng studied his records, examined trails, and talked to the local people, he was able to sort out the man-killers from the rest of the tiger population. Earl was convinced that there were eight man-eaters.

Of these, seven tigers hunted most often on and around the western 8,000 or 10,000 acres of the university farm. Earl named these the Matkota man-eaters, after a university sub-headquarters called Matkota Colony. Matkota consists of a group of pink-painted homes, offices, and barns clustered at the edge of the paved main road about 2½ miles north of the town of Rudrapur.

Two of the Matkota tigers, Earl found, hunted together. Now any Indian farmer, living as he does in the daily presence of tigers, can examine the pugmarks and often tell not only the sex and approximate size and age of the tiger, but also what it was doing—whether hunting or just traveling—when it left the prints in the dust. The pugmarks confirmed what eye-witnesses reported: these animals were an old tigress and her nearly-grown female cub.

The other Matkota tigers hunted singly. Contrary to tiger custom, however, they seemed to be sharing the same general territory or competing with each

other. The consensus in the neighborhood was that the Matkota tigers might mostly be related, maybe cubs of different generations of one or two tigresses, driven by the peculiar prevailing conditions to operate in the same countryside.

In the eastern half of the university farm, apart from the other tigers, hunted the eighth one—a big male.

"During this time," Earl Leng said, "I believe I knew where most of the man-killers were twenty four hours a day.

"But of course tigers cover a lot of country in patrolling their beats, and I was always twenty four hours behind them.

"One thing I found is that the tigers all moved around their beats in a clockwise direction. They would hole up in the forest north and northwest of the university. When it was time for another meal, they would circle through the forest, come down one of the ravines into the university farm, then move through the fields in a wide curve.

"They were trying first for game or stray cattle, and mostly this is what they killed. But if they didn't find an animal, in their hunger they'd take a man."

During September and well into October, Earl Leng hunted almost every night. Sometimes he sat up in a machan built into one of the isolated trees on the university farm, with a buffalo calf tied below as bait.

Sometimes he would tour the farm roads by jeep, in an area where he expected one of the tigers might be. Many times he came home late at night for a sleep, then went out hunting again in the early morning.

"My husband was going mad," Jacqueline Leng describes it.

"He couldn't think about anything else. He wouldn't listen to anybody. He spent all his time working out the pattern of the tigers' travels, or going out to hunt. He made me a tiger-hunting widow for days and nights on end."

VIII

On cleared land a couple of miles west of the university farm is the farming village of Chhatarpur. Chhatarpur is the home of Man Singh, father of four, a retired noncom of the Indian army and proud owner of 16 acres—a stable plot for an Indian villager.

On the morning of October 14, Man Singh awoke

Tigers often lurk in sugar cane, awaiting a chance to make attack on farm worker



MAN-EATERS OF NAINI TAL

before dawn, for he had a trip to make. He had sold a cow to a man who lived 40 miles away, and this was the date set for him to collect the money.

It was to be a long day, and Man Singh wanted company. He asked his next-door neighbor, Dalip Singh, to go with him. Man Singh, 48, is a clean-shaven man of the Kumaon hills and a Hindu, while Dalip Singh, 12 years older, was a bearded, turbaned Sikh from the Pakistan Punjab. The two were fast friends, so Dalip Singh assigned the day's work to his grown son, Darshan, and set out with Man Singh in high spirits.

They hitched a ride on a bullock cart two miles on a dirt track to the university's Matkota Colony, and then along the paved road 2½ miles to Rudrapur, the sizable small town that serves as a trading center for the area. Like everything man-made thereabouts, Rudrapur is new-built. It has shops, temples, a police station, and many homes. But you won't find it on a map of India published prior to 1960. It is, nonetheless, a thriving community and the hub of one of India's many country bus systems.

At Rudrapur, the two men took a bus and went on down the highway toward the city of Rampur, where Man Singh found his customer and collected his money. It was dusk when the return trip brought them back to Rudrapur. At the bus station, the friends discussed whether to spend the night in town or go to their village, 4½ miles further on.

Dalip Singh, a sturdy 60-year-old and a labor contractor as well as a farmer, had business to attend to. He felt he had already been away too long.

"We will go home," he said firmly.

A usual form of transport in this part of India is the cycle-rickshaw, a bicycle-pulled contraption that, with some squeezing, can accommodate two adult passengers. There were rickshaws at the bus station. But the drivers, one after the other, refused to take Dalip Singh and Man Singh to a destination out of the safe precincts of the town.

"The tigers are about," they said in explanation.

It required 15 or 20 minutes to find a driver willing to pedal them to Chhatrapur. After the customary bargaining, a slight young man named Halim Habub, who had worked for Dalip Singh in the past, undertook to pedal the two to their village, 4½ miles out and a lonesome 4½ miles back, for a somewhat inflated price on account of the danger. The agreed fare was 10 annas, or about 13 U.S. cents.

"I at first refused to take them to Chhatrapur because of the tigers, and it was already dark," Halim Habub said later.

"But we were friends, so finally I consented to go.

"We left Rudrapur bus station about seven o'clock. When we came to the petrol station at the edge of town—where the tiger attacked the attendant some months ago—we were stopped by a police constable, Harprashad Sharma. He advised us to wait until daylight.

"But Dalip Singh was determined to die that night. He said, 'I do not fear the tigers. We will go.'"

The paved road runs north from Rudrapur, enters the university farm after about a mile, and after another mile and a half comes to Matkota Colony, where the dirt track turns off to Chhatrapur. As on most Indian rural highways, there is only one lane of pavement. The paved strip is flanked by wide, well-packed earthen shoulders, with a bushgrown roadside ditch on each side. Beyond are crop fields.

Along this road by day travels the rich pageant of Indian highway traffic—laden bullock carts, occasionally a camel or an elephant, horse-drawn buggies, donkey trains, herds of goats and cattle, people on foot, people on bicycles, people on horseback, people being pulled in cycle-rickshaws, and now and then a car, a motor-scooter, a jeep, a bus, or a gaudily painted truck.

By night, the traffic has thinned, but there normally would be late pedestrians moving in groups, bullock carts headed for market towns, and travelers on bicycles or in cars. In this time of tiger trouble, however, the road was all but deserted, and Halim Habub could stick to the easy central paving as he pedaled Man Singh and Dalip Singh toward their village.

It was a moonless, starlit night. The rickshaw had gone more than two miles, and was coming up on Matkota Colony in the university lands when the attack occurred.

"The tiger sprang out in the darkness from the bushes on the left side of the road," Halim Habub said.

"Dalip Singh was sitting on that side. The tiger, growling and roaring, leaped up and took him by the head with its front paws. It happened so fast that Dalip Singh had no time to scream. He didn't make any sound at all when the tiger dragged him away into the night.

"The fierce charge knocked my rickshaw over, and I jumped free. So did Man Singh. We shouted. Then we righted the rickshaw. I cycled as fast as I could to Matkota, two hundred yards farther on, where there were lights."

Dalip Singh's friend and fellow passenger, Man Singh, bears scars of the tiger's attack—deep punctures in his back, where the bared claws seized him momentarily.

"It was very dark," Man Singh remembers.

"But I heard the tiger in the bushes beside the road, and then I saw it.

"I thought it was going for the driver in front. I still think so. But I think the rickshaw was moving fast enough that the tiger landed on us instead.

"I yelled, and then I bent over forward as the tiger sprang on to us. The tiger's right paw struck my back, and I felt the extended claws dig into me. I thought I was being killed, but then it let me go and seized Dalip Singh by the neck. Its breath was terrible.

"Dalip Singh and I were sitting close together. It was bending over that saved me. After it clawed me, the tiger pulled Dalip Singh backward out of the rickshaw with such force that his body hurt my side.

"All I could see after that was Dalip Singh's white shirt moving along the ground while the tiger dragged him across the road and into the field.

"Just then a motorcycle came along the road. Its engine was very noisy, and I think it was this that scared the tiger away from Dalip Singh's body. Otherwise he would have been dragged farther, and he would have been eaten.

"Then we picked up the rickshaw and drove on to the colony and raised the alarm."

At Matkota, the 35-year-old superintendent of that part of the university farm, Amar Singh, was awake in his house, unaware of anything amiss.

"This fellow Man Singh came excitedly to this place in a rickshaw that evening and said a man had been killed by a tiger," the farm superintendent recounted.

"I didn't believe him. Everybody was talking about



The tigress stood there watching us. Our mashan was so low that she might try to get at us. Just then I fired

tigers, and I thought he was making up a story for some reason. I told him so.

"He said, 'Please, see the claw marks on my back,' and he was indeed bleeding, and his shirt was torn.

"So I sent him to the hospital in a jeep. And I got a farm truck and a driver and fetched my gun, and we went immediately to the spot.

"I saw the dead man in the lights, and then, about ten feet from the body, there was the tiger, looking at me. It was the old tigress that has been doing a lot of the killing around here.

"I had LG's in my twelve-bore, and I fired at her. But I missed, and the tigress went away.

"Then the people came, and the police, and we took Dalip Singh's body to his village and told his son."

Amar Singh, as it turned out, hadn't completely missed the tigress; pellets from his shell hit her in a front paw, but without doing much damage. The farm superintendent was to have another brush with the killer that night.

It should be remembered that Dalip Singh, the victim, was a person of some prominence in the area. So at 8:50 p.m., when word of his death reached Rudrapur police station, Sub-Inspector Sarindra Kumar Singh went quickly into action. He got a doctor, and they drove out to Matkota.

"We found the body of Dalip Singh in a field thirty paces from the highway," the policeman reported.

"In dragging him, the tiger had dislodged his clothing. I found his trousers and shoes in the roadside bushes and his turban five or six feet further on.

"We made a record of his wounds.

"On the left side of his neck, which was terribly torn, there were claw marks. These were the deep wounds which caused his death.

"On the right shoulder, at the back, much skin and flesh were torn off, with signs of teeth and claw marks.

"The tiger's claws made deep slashes at the back of the neck. There were three claw marks on his right forearm, where Dalip Singh apparently tried to fend the tiger away, and claw marks also on the left upper arm. There was much blood on his face and body."

Hunters who have skinned tigers can testify to the strength of the mighty muscles that power the forepaws, and the length of the razor-sharp, extendable claws. After the first long moment of terror, and a probably involuntary effort to protect his head with his arms, Dalip Singh appeared to have died very fast.

IX

Amar Singh, the farm superintendent at Matkota, has had many brushes with the university tigers. Once recently, only the arrival of a noisy group of villagers saved him from a man-eater that had him cornered, unarmed, on the road near his farm. He is a veteran shotgun shikari, and he understands tigers.

So after taking the Sikh's body to his village, Amar Singh returned to the scene of the attack.

"I knew the tigress was hungry," he said. "And I guessed she had been frightened away by the people who came, and didn't know the body had been removed. I expected she might come back to try to find her kill.

"So I took the farm truck out again, and stopped it in the sugar cane near where we had found the Sikh. We turned out the lights, and I got into the back of the truck and waited.

"About one thirty in the night, I heard the tigress come back. I put my light on her, but it was too far for my shotgun. She crouched there watching me, and I tried to whisper to the driver to start the truck and move closer.

"But he was asleep, and by the time I could wake him, the tigress went away."

The killing, 200 yards from the home where he lives with his wife and children, was too much for Amar Singh to stomach. So he began making his own plans to hunt man-eaters and teamed up with a faculty instructor.

X

On Sunday, five days before the rickshaw killing, a farm laborer had been stalked, killed, and partly eaten in one of the university fields. Earl Leng, de-



Tripathi came on grown cub by tractor, then dismounted and shot at range of 15 yards

voting every possible minute during those weeks to his pursuit of the man-eaters, went to the scene of that kill. He followed the tiger's trail about 60 yards through high elephant grass when he caught sight of the big cat. But the tiger was wary and disappeared in the grass before Earl could raise his borrowed rifle, a scoped Winchester .375 Magnum.

"I sat up over that kill all Sunday night," Earl said later. "But the tiger didn't come back.

"Next day, Monday, I was busy at the university and couldn't hunt.

"On Tuesday, I tied a buffalo calf at a place where the tigers habitually cross the paved road. I sat up all night on a machan over the bait. But no tiger.

"On Wednesday again I couldn't hunt, but I kept track of the tigers. Then on Thursday night, a man came to the house and told me that the Sikh had been pulled from the rickshaw. Went out next morning to join the pursuit of the man-eater.

"King Mahendra of Nepal was on a visit to India at this time and was on a tiger hunt nearby. The authorities had provided 19 elephants for the royal hunt.

"They brought the elephants over to where the rickshaw had been attacked, and started to beat through the fields. I tried to tell them they were in the wrong place, but they wouldn't listen to me.

"For I was pretty sure I knew where the tiger would be about then.

"Nobody had seen the grown cub all this time, but it was clear to me that the tigress who killed the Sikh was the old one who hunted with her grown daughter.

"I knew a lot about these two animals. And I knew that they customarily holed up in the jungle just above the university farm.

"When they came hunting, they moved east through the forest, then south down a ravine for three or four miles into the farm. Then they turned and circled west, crossed the paved road at Matkota, and moved north along another ravine to the jungle they'd started from.

"These people and their elephants were beating near Matkota, where the tigress had killed the night before. They should have been working several miles farther along her route.

"But I couldn't get it across to them. So finally I

left the elephants. I got Harold Walker, and my Indian friends Tripathi and Sher Mohammed, and we went to work to set up machans in what I figured was the right area, north of the university, for the tigress to be hunting that evening."

Harold W. Walker, 40, a newcomer to U.P. Agricultural University, is an American with a vested interest in ending man-killing there. Native of Blacksburg, Virginia, an extension farm-management specialist at Blacksburg's Virginia Polytechnic Institute, working in India for the Ford Foundation, Walker has with him his wife, Frieda, and three boys and three girls six to 14 years old. It is a sizable brood to watch over in a neighborhood infested with man-eating cats.

"Harold carried the spotlight, and I had the borrowed rifle," Earl Leng continued.

"Getting organized took us most of the day. It was an hour later than I wanted it to be when we hid our jeep in the sugar cane and went up into the machan I'd chosen. It was a good hide, in a peepul tree."

Leng had contrived a classic machan—simply a charpoy, or Indian string bed, light and strong, forming a solid enough shooting platform when tied into the branches of the tree.

"We hadn't eaten," Earl said, "so as soon as we got settled in the machan, we broke out some Viennasausage sandwiches.

"The sun was setting. I was half-lying on the charpoy, with Harold behind me. It was two minutes to six, and I'd just finished my sandwich when the tigress came.

"Harold saw her first. He nudged me.

"'What the hell is that?' he whispered. Then:

"'God! It's the tiger.'

"My back was to the tigress. I managed to turn fairly quietly. That bloody tigress looked as big as the side of a barn. Even so, she was ninety yards away.

"I couldn't get the rifle around past Harold, and I must have made some noise while I was changing position. The tigress stood there watching us through the leaves. I could see her eyes shifting from us to the buffalo calf we'd tied beneath the tree, as if she was sizing up her chances of killing the bait and wondering what we could do about it.

"Or maybe she was figuring whether to try for one

MAN-EATERS OF NAINI TAL

of us instead of the calf. The machan was low enough that she could have reached us if she'd wanted.

"But I guess she concluded it wasn't worth it, for she turned to walk away. Just as she turned, I fired.

"I had the crosshairs on her right shoulder. The bullet, I found later, hit a hairbreadth lower than I intended, but it was enough to smash her shoulder and send her sprawling.

"She rolled away from us, thrashing around, roaring, tearing up the bushes and raising hell.

"I reloaded, held the scope on her, and fired again at about a hundred and twenty yards. The bullet hit her in the neck and stopped her dead.

"It was a miraculously lucky shot, considering the distance and the light. To show you how dark it was, Harold had to use his spotlight a few minutes later so we could get down from the tree."

There is a popular, erroneous belief that man-eating cats are invariably mangy creatures. Earl Leng's tigress, like most man-eaters, had a glossy enough coat, which is being cured at this writing. Eight feet 10 inches measured between pegs, she will make Earl a handsome trophy.

Inside, though, she was indeed mangy, as Earl's autopsy showed.

The old tigress was past the stage of being able to reproduce. Her heart and her lungs were ridden with parasites. One of her canine teeth had been broken off. Her right forepaw was deformed from an old muzzle-loader wound. And she carried in this same paw five fresh LG pellets from her encounter the night before with Amar Singh, after she had killed the Sikh in the rickshaw.

Both of her back legs bore the scars of old wounds. In one, Earl found a long-embedded homemade ball from a village gun.

"She was obviously a veteran target," Earl said.

"Also, at the time I killed her she was very hungry, and had been for a long period. There was absolutely nothing in her stomach or digestive tract. The villagers value tiger fat as a remedy for rheumatism, but we couldn't find enough fat on her to fill a test tube."

XI

The tigress' grown daughter remained in the neighborhood after her mother was killed.

"People kept seeing her," Earl Leng said. "It looked like she was lost without her mother, and also that her mother hadn't trained her very thoroughly.

"Three nights later, she came on a buffalo calf in a field and didn't seem to know how to kill it. All she could do was maul the calf's back legs so badly that it died next day."

R. L. Tripathi, 30-year-old farm supervisor at the Munshi Land Institute adjoining the university, is one of the two Indian friends who helped Earl Leng get his tigress. He is a little fellow, five feet two inches tall, but he has the courage of a bulldog and, says Earl, he tracks animals like a bloodhound.

"After one of the October kills, Tripathi followed the trail of a tiger and its victim six hundred yards through thick sugar cane, and then two hundred yards down a brush-filled ravine. The tiger could have charged him any moment. He finally found the dead man where the tiger had tucked the body under an overhanging bank."

Tripathi made it his business to take care of the cub before she could start killing people on her own.

"He picked up the trail after she had mauled the buffalo calf," Earl related.

"He tracked her on a tractor.

"When he came up on her, he dismounted and killed her with a twelve gauge shotgun at fifteen yards."

XII

Two of the man-killers were eliminated, but the terror continued. On October 25, and again on October 30, farm laborers met death in the university fields.

Meanwhile, Prem Ballabh Belwal, the veteran of 71 tigers, and his 27-giger son, Anand Belwal, were looking for man-eaters.

The day Earl Leng killed his tigress, the Belwals, looking for the same animal, picked up the track of a male tiger. They found its trail in the farm lane that Leng's tigress had traveled the same day—a dirt track running into the university farm from the place on the highway where the rickshaw was attacked. From the pugmarks in the inch-deep dust, the Belwals estimated the tiger's size, accurately as it was to turn out, at eight feet nine inches between pegs, and its age at three or four years.

Prem Belwal, adding up the evidence, guessed that this was an earlier cub of the Leng tigress, that he had learned from his mother to include men among his prey, and that, having grown to maturity, he was sharing his mother's grounds, hunting independently.

Now if you believe Jim Corbett was infallible, you may want to argue the idea that man-eating tigresses train their cubs to kill humans, or at least that cubs continue to kill people after having left their man-eating parents.

But few naturalists agree with Corbett on this point. The author of the Bombay Natural History Society's authoritative Book of Indian Animals, S. N. Prather, says that man-eating can be passed on from parent to offspring. "A cub," he says, "taking to man-eating from its parent's example, may retain the habit throughout life."

Prem Ballabh Belwal, who has lived among tigers since boyhood, holds the same view. He has seen tigresses training their young to kill animals. One day he lost seven cows to a mother that was demonstrating proper attack techniques to her young ones. Man-eaters, he says flatly, do train their cubs to kill people, and the cubs often continue as man-eaters.

Having identified his tiger as a sometime man-killer, Prem Belwal settled back in the classic tradition of the Indian shikari to wait for a kill. But events anticipated him. On November 8, at his home in Ram Nagar 20 miles away, he received a telephoned report that the tiger again had been seen near Matkota Colony that day.

Early next morning, with his son Anand, Belwal drove down to Rudrapur in search of further news. They were at the police station, talking with Sub-Inspector Surindra Kumar Singh, when they saw a farmer bicycling in a great hurry from one of the Sikh villages near the university farm.

Incidentally, the multiplicity of Singhs in this narrative is unavoidable. Singh, to an Indian, means lion. The name, attached to a man, means lion strength or lion heart. (Unlettered Indians, when they use the English word lion, actually mean tiger or any big cat.) Indians of many castes and communities in this part of India, and all Sikhs, are called Singh, which is a name as common as Smith or Jones in the United



At climax of hunt for their man-eater, the Belwals used four elephants furnished by forest department to eliminate the scourge

States. None of the Singhs of this story are related, so far as the author knows.

The Sikh on the bicycle, then, was Ujagar Singh, headman at Bindukhera village, a place $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Rudrapur in the direction of Matkota Colony. Ujagar Singh was pedaling to the police station to spread word that the tiger—the one Belwal intended to kill—had walked through his village that morning, looking very much as if he wanted an animal or a man to attack and eat.

The Belwals put the headman in their jeep and drove to Bindukhera. Waking cows and buffaloes had trampled over much of the tiger's trail, but Prem Belwal found pugmarks leading out of the village and going nearly a mile across grazing land into a field of six-foot sugar cane.

In the cane, Belwal lost the track. He began to circle the field to the right, and his son Anand to the left. When they met on the opposite side, neither had found tracks leading out. The tiger, they concluded, was holed up in the sugar.

The field in question is rich lowland, actually a shallow valley a quarter mile across, formed by a loop of the small Dimiri River. The stream's banks are maybe 12 feet high on the outer rim of the bend, about four feet high on the inner rim, and the valley floor is about eight feet below the level of the surrounding terrain. Woodcutters, when they cleared the jungle here, left dhak and other trees standing along the river, and a few in the open land.

Prem Belwal expected the tiger to remain in hiding until evening. So he and Anand returned to Rudrapur, arranged to use the four elephants the forest department had stationed there for just this purpose, and sent the big beasts on their way. Then they collected their gear, inspected their rifles, and went back to their tiger.

A walking elephant's speed, through open land, is under two miles an hour. It took the animals a couple of hours to reach Bindukhera. Their arrival generated

great excitement in the village, for a Sikh religious festival was in full swing that day. About 4,000 men, women, and children were gathered from the surrounding countryside.

When they heard what was afoot, all 4,000 tramped out to the natural amphitheater of the tiger's field. There, using the high outer bank of the stream as vantage point, they squatted on the ground around the valley, for all the world like stadium spectators at a sporting match. In a grim way, that was what it was about to be.

The dhak trees were too small for machans. The villagers were able to provide a foot-square stool, tied into a tree on the riverbank, as a seat for Prem Belwal. Ujagar Singh helped the older man climb into position and handed up his double-barreled rifle, a .450/400 Edwinston, Green and Sons beauty, with which Belwal has killed most of his tigers.

Anand Belwal simply took a stand in the crotch of another tree out in the field, his feet only 10 feet above the ground. He would be easy prey for an angry tiger at that height, unless he could stop it with his Winchester .375 Magnum.

Poor soil had stunted the sugar cane in a clearing facing the elder Belwal, giving him a field of fire. But the sugar grew thick and high in front of Anand. The solution was to sacrifice some of the crop. So the headman had the villagers cut down the cane to make a yard-wide swath for 50 yards along Anand's line of sight—an alley that, hopefully, the tiger would have to cross.

The tiger must have been listening, and maybe watching, while all this was going on. He couldn't help noticing something, what with the arriving elephants, the chatter of the audience around the field, and the sound of cane-cutting. But through it all, he stayed put in the sugar.

It was 4 p.m. when all was in readiness. From his shaky seat over the river, Prem Belwal waved his hat as a signal for the beat to begin. The elephants,

MAN-EATERS OF NAINI TAL

spaced 15 or 20 yards apart, had been stationed across the narrow river, over to Prem Belwal's right. Their mahouts were instructed to walk them in line abreast, crossing from right to left and passing first in front of Prem Belwal and then, farther on, his son.

The elephants started in unison. "As they approached the river bank, I saw one of the elephants hesitate," Prem Belwal said later, "as if it smelled or saw the tiger."

"Some distance ahead, I saw the tops of the sugar cane moving, and I suspected this was the tiger, trying to get out of the way."

"The elephant lumbered across the river and approached the moving cane. And then, in the clear space just in front of me, there was the tiger."

It will have to be remarked here that the government of India, to conserve foreign exchange, practically prohibits import of luxuries, including hunting ammunition. This will explain why ordinary .375 Magnum cartridges bring \$1.68 a round in the Delhi black market, and why Prem Belwal, this day, was using ammunition that was 15 years old.

"I had a perfect shoulder shot," Belwal continued. "I pulled the trigger. And I had a hangfire."

"The percussion cap exploded. But it was the best part of a second before the cartridge fired. I had lost my aim, and the shot went high."

"The tiger was very much alarmed by the noise. He bounded in front of me into the high sugar to the left of the clearing. And he kept going."

"But when he came to the path which had been cut in front of my son, he scented danger. He stopped and stood there without crossing. I could follow his movements by watching the cane."

"The elephants were coming on behind him, and I guess the tiger was trying to find the way to safety. For he put his head out into the path through the cane, and he looked up and down, and then he saw

Anand in the tree. He was only 30 yards away, and my son saw him clearly, saw the tiger looking at him. The tiger was wary, and when he saw Anand lift his rifle to aim, the animal pulled his head back into the cane, out of sight."

"Anand couldn't see anything now, but he could tell by the stillness of the sugar cane that the tiger was still there at the edge of the path."

"So Anand calculated where the neck ought to be, and then he fired into the cane at that spot."

"All this took place within a minute or so from the time I first saw the tiger. We heard nothing after the shot, and we couldn't see any movement. We didn't know what had happened, so we just waited."

"Since all continued to be still, I called for one of the elephants, and got on her from my tree. We went over and picked up Anand, all the while with our rifles ready in case of a charge. There was a chance we had a wounded tiger on our hands. He might even spring across the stream into the crowd of villagers and do great damage among these people."

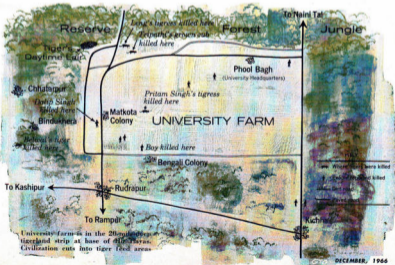
"But when we reached the place at which Anand had aimed, there was the tiger, dead. Anand had dropped him where he stood with a shot that broke his neck."

"The mahout called out the news to the villagers, and with that a riot broke loose."

"These people were living every day in fear of man-eaters. Now, with one of their enemy dead, they shouted and laughed, and they crowded around us and reviled the tiger. It took us a half hour to clear a space so we could load the tiger onto the elephant."

"They followed us, singing and yelling, all the way to the village. And when we unloaded the tiger, they mobbed us again in their happiness. They climbed all over us, and all over the tiger, and they broke in the top of our jeep before we could get away."

As with Earl Leng's tigress, the Belwal tiger's skin



is being cured, to be added to the trophies in the family drawing room at Ram Nagar. There it will be exhibited to the leading citizens who treat the home of their ex-mayor as a sort of political and social club.

You might also call it a natural-history museum. From the main window, a big mounted tiger gbares out over the busy, noisy Ram Nagar bazaar. Two tiger skins—both of animals measuring more than 10½ feet—adorn the walls. There are tiger-skin rugs on the floor, tiger-skin throws on the furniture, tiger and leopard heads in the bare spaces. And over in a corner, an erect, sloth bear, standing more than six feet high, grins nastily.

XIII

A fourth man-killer—another tigress—about this time became the objective of Amar Singh, the farm superintendent at Matkota Colony, and his friend Pritam Singh, a 35-year-old instructor at the university.

"We got on the trail of this tigress," Amar Singh said, "and found her to be making a circle about ten miles in diameter when she hunted, passing the same places every second or third day."

"We tied baits along the university side of her route, and night after night we sat up at the places we thought the tigress would come.

"Finally, one night when there was a moon, Pritam Singh was asleep in a machan we had built about a mile from my house here at Matkota, and the tigress came and killed the buffalo. She was trying to break the rope, in order to carry the dead calf away and eat it, when the noise woke Pritam.

"He fired his .375 Magnum and sent the tigress sprawling. Then she got up and sprang away into the sugar cane, and everything was still.

"This was about twelve in the night. Pritam didn't want to risk facing a wounded animal at night, so he stayed in the machan until daylight. When I came to get him, we found the tigress dead in the field about fifty yards away. Pritam had hit her just behind the right shoulder.

"This tigress was eight feet nine inches between paws. She was very thin. And her right forepaw was slightly crippled from an old wound inflicted by a shotgun."

XIV

Thus, at this writing, there are four man-killing tigers left at and around U.P. Agricultural University—three of them hunting in the Matkota Colony area, and the fourth at the other, eastern, end of the farm.

These tigers are the targets of many guns: Earl Leng's, Prem Belwal's, Anand Belwal's, R. L. Tripathi's, and the weapons of any number of Singhas. But even when the four animals are destroyed, as they will be, the tiger menace will by no means be ended in the university countryside. Prem Ballabh Belwal tells why.

"By nature," Belwal wrote in his report to the district magistrate, "the tiger likes to live in extensive dense patches of wild undergrowth or tall grass in a forest area, as it must take rest and a fairly long sleep during the day at a secluded spot where it will be undisturbed by any living creature, especially human beings. Any interference during the hours of its respite is irritating and annoying in the extreme.

"Of late, wholesale felling of trees and clearing of undergrowth have been undertaken by the authorities. Tractors create threatening sounds, and plantation laborers and others are spread out over the entire length and breadth of the forests at all times.

"Thus," continued Belwal's report, "intolerable conditions have been created for any tiger to live in peace in his natural habitat. As the tigers have been deprived of their lairs, or, rather, ousted from their hideouts, they have been forced to move out of the forest areas to find shelter in more favourable conditions.

"The university farm and adjoining lands, where sugar cane stands over several thousand acres at a stretch, interspersed with ravines and high grass, provide excellent homeland conditions. Tigers are



Holim Habab pedaled this rickshaw on attack night. Policeman has ill-fated Dalip Singh's seat; Prem Ballabh Belwal, Max Singh's seat

Anand and Prem Ballabh Belwal pose by their man-eater



Belwals flank author as they sit on iron cot on veranda of the famous Jim Corbett

MAN-EATERS OF NAINI TAL

therefore attracted there, especially as no alternative is left to them.

"But at the farm they have to put up with the serious drawback of insufficient game or stray cattle to feed upon. All the tigers which choose this locality have to face an acute problem in procuring natural food at regular intervals. That enough food is unavailable is proved by the empty stomachs of all the tigers shot in the area.

"By instinct, the tigers dread and avoid human beings, and the sounds produced by man. But with farms and villages all around, they cannot avoid humans, and in course of time they grow accustomed to people and their voices.

"The man-fear thus gradually gets reduced to a great extent, and man is no more a terror to the tiger.

"So a tiger who gets hungry, having overcome his fear of man, may dare to attack a human being. And then, finding the taste of human blood agreeable, he may get encouraged to repeat the performance on more occasions.

"A healthy tiger—even if it may have killed a human being—will always look first for wildlife to feed upon. It is the absence or paucity of wildlife in a particular locality that compels a tiger to kill its first man, and there is no doubt that while natural food continues scarce, the tiger will go on killing humans, and may turn into an habitual man-killer.

"I am therefore of the opinion," Belwal concluded, "that the tigers in the university farm area have not turned man-killer necessarily from any incapacity, old age, or bodily injury. I am afraid that the menace will not be completely eliminated in future even when the existing man-killers are wiped out."

Or, as Earl Leng, the tiger-hating American professor, puts it:

"Four man-killers are still at large, there are probably thirty more tigers in the area, and every one of them is a potential man-eater. I am absolutely sure there will be many more people killed before this is over."

Earl points out that a man provides more meat

than a hog deer, most common of the wild animals on which the tigers feed.

"These tigers have to eat," Earl says. "A tiger needs to average at least twenty five pounds of meat a day to survive.

"The hog deer and the other game are being driven away as the land is cleared. We have twenty or thirty thousand people in this area now. So the tigers circle on their beasts, and look for deer, or sambhar, or wild boar, or domestic animals.

"And when they grow hungry and can't find natural food, they attack and eat a man."

The most dangerous time of year, Earl says, will continue to be the period of 1965's most concentrated killing—that is, from July through October, when the sugar cane is high and heat and insects have driven what is left of the game into the hills.

But there is no safety at U.P. Agricultural University at any time of year. At this writing, Earl Leng is on a campaign to kill a tiger he calls the Beni man-eater, the big old male that hunts in the eastern end of the university farm. In January, the Beni man-eater found a villager stealing mustard-grass fodder from a university field and attacked and killed him to record the first tiger death of 1966.

"This tiger runs a beat down the Beni Nullah," Earl said. "He comes down the ravine at irregular intervals. Only the other day he attacked a man in a jeep near my house.

"The district magistrate has written me to collect my 500 rupees reward for the tigress, and I am going to give the money to the men who helped me, Tripathi and Sher Mohammed. But the magistrate considers the Beni man-eater so dangerous that he has raised the reward for killing him to 1,000 rupees.

"I'm laying for this animal. I don't think there's any safety here until these tigers are wiped out."

To which Earl's wife, the humanitarian who disapproves of hunting, adds a fervent amen.

"We can have either a university here or we can have a jungle," Jacqueline Leng says. "These tigers have to be killed."

THE END



Above: Earl E. Leng and Harold W. Walker pose with man-eater. At right, Leng, in author's New Delhi home, talks tigers



Man Singh (no beard) tells how tiger clawed him and killed friend

