



Next Month:
An Era Passes
By Terence E.S. Underwood



This tiger was trying to pull a beater out of a tree when the author arrived on the scene. The wounded cat charged the author on three legs and was stopped by a charge of buckshot in the face.

AN ERA PASSES

BY TERENCE
E. S. UNDERWOOD

Photos by author

I returned to India in December, 1946, with my wife, Val, sailing from Suez in a lovely old troopship.

When I got to Karachi and the headquarters of my regiment, the 10th Baluch, there was little, if any, trace of the pomp and splendor that had marked another day. Colonel James Lord, D.S.O., M.C. and Bar, my old Commanding Officer who'd taken me, an absolute yokel by regimental standards, under his protective wing, had retired and gone back to England, and a new C.O. from one of the returning battalions whom I'd never met, had taken over.

"Much good at wielding a pen?" he wryly inquired after we'd met.

"I'm about due for release anyway, Sir."

"Have you any place to go?"

He was offering a haven if I wanted it, even for a few months.

"I'm not sure, sir. My father will most likely leave India, but I've a wife waiting for me in Bombay."

The colonel's bushy eyebrows shot skyward.

"We were married overseas, sir, about a year ago."

"In that case," said the colonel, not unkindly, "you may leave here if you wish."

"Thank you, sir!" I saluted and left the colonel's office for the last time.

I left Karachi not knowing what I was going to do. I was still entitled to army pay and privileges, but time was running out. Finally, Val and I decided to go to England where I had relatives who wanted us to stay with them, and where I could join the British Army in my war-substantive rank of captain. I was then a temporary major, aged 23.

On the morning I made my plans known to the army, a busy but extremely helpful captain in charge of Movement Control, G.H.Q. Western Command, India, quickly had a W.A.C. (I) in his office issue travel

vouchers to Val and myself for the S.S. "Empire Windrush", a troopship bound for Southampton. We were staying at the Taj and due to sail at 2 p.m. that very day.

At the last minute, I grew pale at the prospect of going to England. I was worried that it would prove to be too civilized for me and, when I really thought about it, could not visualize myself in what I naively believed would be a peacetime assignment in the army. So I put through a call to a former hunting companion, Henry, never for one moment doubting that he would help me, and the very next week I began work for Imperial Chemical Industries as an assistant plant manager. We moved from the Taj to a furnished apartment on Marine Drive, which provided a glorious view of the bay.

For a few brief months all went well. The transition from soldier to civilian was going smoothly. But then the changing climate of na-

tional politics made it obvious that others perhaps more qualified than I would take my job.

In the midst of this turmoil, with the present being rapidly swamped by the future, catching many of us unprepared or unwilling to recognize the changes that were coming, I turned for comfort to the one place where I'd always found happiness and peace of mind.

A couple of years earlier my brother George had written asking my permission to use the Model 70 .30-06 that Dad had bought me. I had agreed, and in no time flat, he'd shot two fine leopard with it. Now I didn't have the heart to take it away from him. So once again I repaired myself to the gunshops with happy thoughts of being able to buy just about any rifle that caught my eye.

There was not a rifle in sight—anywhere! I appealed to Ghulam Hoosain, our old dealer, to help me. Sadly, he shook his head and said, "Try Yeshwant, a gunsmith who works out of an upstairs room a few doors down."

I ran back along the alley up which I'd sauntered moments before as if the world had belonged to me, and groped my way up the rickety stairs to the gunsmith's hideaway. When my eyes grew fully accustomed to the gloom following the bright sunlight of the open street, I beheld a stout wooden door reinforced with two-inch thick strips of wrought iron and securely bolted from within. Through a small metal grill in the door, about chin high, I very politely asked for Yeshwant.

"Who are you and what do you want!"

"I'm Major Underwood, and Ghulam Hoosain sent me!" I bel-lowed back, laying rank on for all I was worth.

The bolt was quickly withdrawn and the door swung open, and there I stood in slack-jawed amazement as I beheld some of the very finest sporting arms I'd ever set eyes on.

Yeshwant, a quick, incisive little man, gave a nonchalant wave of his arm and said, "Go on, sahib. Take your pick!"

The prices were exceedingly high, so I contented myself with hefting a collector's dream of custom-made

double and bolt-action rifles from some of the greatest sporting gun houses in England and the Continent, in calibers .256 through .500. Finally, I put my money down on a best grade 9.3 mm X 62 Oberndorf Mauser in mint condition. I also bought 90 rounds—all Yeshwant could offer—of 285-grain softnose Eley-Kynoch ammunition.

The time I impulsively chose for this hunt was the worst possible for hunting in India. It was the monsoon, when venomous snakes abound. Through Dad, whom we found in the sad process of winding up his affairs in India, we arranged to spend two weeks in Chandni shooting block, an overnight run by rail from Bombay. My wife and I settled into the rest house on a hill while our servants, a cook and bearer, set themselves up in quarters in the rear.

From the open verandah we could look far out over the jungle to the distant battlements of Asirgarh, an olden-day fort with gnarled and twisted tree roots growing out of its crumbling walls. The gap-toothed outline of the old fort, high on its own hill, looked invincible in the soft deceiving glow of evening, as indeed it had once proven. In days gone by, it was the home of Asir, a Rajput chief who ran off with the princess of Burhanpur after the Mogul king denied them permission to marry. When the king found out, he and his soldiers gave chase. Asir and his men confronted them at the gate, where a pitched battle ensued before the invaders were driven back.

Now the moldy ruins offered refuge to insect-eating bats and assorted reptiles. In the dust below the ancient walls, one sometimes found the pugmarks of a leopard, while large and very destructive sounders of wild pig, scattered herds of slope-shouldered blue bull and numerous chinkara gazelle inhabited the rolling scrubland beyond the gates that had once held a king at bay.

Heavy rainfall had cooled the atmosphere and softened the earth, so that man had to set about the task of tilling the land for his food. The beasts roamed far and wide, after the hot and deadly summer which had limited their movements

to a few sheltered spots where food and water could be found, thus enabling the crafty poacher to exact his toll. Val and I chatted about the jungle, took a few birds for the pot, and netted a number of brilliantly colored butterflies for my collection which had grown since my days as a schoolboy in the hills of Naini Tal. Then one morning a young Ghond tribesman named Daulat presented himself at the bungalow. I shouldered the Mauser and followed him out under leaden skies.

In the two or three miles we walked along a bullock cart track that was now too soft for cart travel, I was amazed at the number of fresh leopard pugmarks following the hoofprints of the game. We approached a clearing in the jungle through which the cart track led and, on the far side about 250 yards away, we saw a herd of blackbuck. A look through my old binoculars revealed to me that the herd buck was a black-and-white beauty with spiralling horns about 26 inches long. I easily closed the gap between the buck and myself to about 100 yards by moving just inside the trees.

I was settling down for the shot, behind an anthill, when I saw a large male leopard lying in the grass and looking at the herd, no more than 20 yards from me. I put a bullet in the leopard's neck, and then a second leopard which I hadn't seen jumped a bush and came bounding toward me. I snapped a shot to the point of the shoulder and down it went—a pair of leopard in as many seconds!

A few days later, Val, Daulat and myself took a long walk through the jungle. We saw several head of game, including a very fine Axis stag which succeeded in giving me the slip. Then, toward evening, while walking home along a cart track, Daulat who was in the lead stopped dead. Silently, with his big toe, he pointed to fresh tiger pugmarks. I knew we had tiger in the block but hadn't put out baits, because of the insects, especially when the sun went down. And to try and organize a beat at this time of year was asking for snakebite trouble.

But now the sight of fresh pugmarks filled us all with excitement. The rifle on my shoulder slid



When a tiger is killed, villagers come from miles around to view the magnificent cat and hear the tale of its killing.

quickly to my hands. I moved into the lead with Val behind me, and Daulat right behind Val. On we went, peering intently in all directions and hardly daring to breathe.

The chance of seeing the tiger was slight, but the unexpected encounter, often at close quarters, is very typical of Indian hunting. We approached a stream that flowed over the cart track. As we came to the water's edge, I looked over to my left and saw a tiger leap straight up a ten foot bank, where it stopped to turn and look head-on at us, about 45 feet away. He was a typical hunting tiger, long, lithe and sinewy. I put a 285-grain soft-nose bullet into his chest, directly under the chin, and he quickly subsided.

When tigers make a kill, they shove the remains against a rock, log, or overhanging bank, where they cover it with leaves. After killing and eating the hindquarters of a large wild boar, this tiger had pushed the remains into a pool of water, where we surprised him. I'd never before seen anything like it.

This was the last of five tiger shot by me, three of the previous four being troublesome cattledlifters. I had got special permission to hunt those, all within a 30 mile radius of where we lived, because officialdom winked an understanding eye at my age in a less complicated era. There had been persistent complaints from the villagers and some officials had failed to dispose of the culprits. None of those tiger posed any problem because I

was getting a lot of offhand shooting and always placed that first bullet with extreme care.

It was only when I took others out that I ran into difficulties. On one memorable occasion, a tiger was wounded in a beat. I stood behind the machan in case the tiger came through, but after taking a bullet in the leg it ran back among the beaters who'd closed to within 50 yards of us in very dense jungle. The beaters called for help, and fearing the worst, I rushed toward them after restraining the client from climbing down.

I found three badly frightened bearers clinging like monkeys to the topmost branches of a small tree barely able to support their combined weight. The tiger was reaching up while standing on its hind legs, trying to get the lowest man in its jaws. One massive paw was braced against the tree and, had the tiger been able to make use of its broken leg, that man would have been pulled down and killed long before I got there. On seeing me, the tiger dropped to the ground and charged, and I just barely had time to snap a shot to the head.

Little more than a week of our holiday in Chandi had passed when a forest guard showed up at the rest house in full regalia, accompanied by some men from another village. This mark of officialdom saluted smartly and handed me a brown manila envelope marked "URGENT!" Inside I found a chit from the District Forest Officer telling me of a leopard that had

killed a child and suggesting that I deal with it. Under the circumstances, it was difficult to refuse. I couldn't take Val with me, so she caught the next train back to Bombay.

My servant and I had to row across the Tapti river in a crude dugout. The river was in flood, and the craft none too stable. The murky waters harbored many cattle-killing crocodile of cunning nature and impressive girth, the Tapti being one of the big rivers of India with much of it flowing through prime jungle. I'd spent an afternoon some years before on the Tapti, shooting crocodile as they rose to the surface like slim torpedoes, showing just the tip of the snout, the eyes and line of the back, and drifted in on the current hoping to catch a drinking beast by the muzzle and pull it under. You may be sure I hopped quickly out and hauled the dugout ashore on the far bank this time.

We discovered the maneater had been stealing infants from two remote villages named Gowlia and Ampani. The infants were taken from the huts, sometimes from their sleeping mother's arms. Salam's chit had merely said "maneater." Later in my report to Nimar District H.Q., I added the name of the village and the cat became the Gowlia Maneater.

I spoke with a boy who'd escaped with a mauling some months before. While we talked he stood on one leg, leaning against a stick bound at the two ends with copper wire.

One evening, as he was bringing the cattle in, the leopard pounced on him. He twisted and called to the buffaloes for help. Long domesticated, but still retaining a trace of their wild ancestry, the buffaloes tore in and surrounded the boy and the leopard.

The leopard sprang to one side. The boy scooped up the copper-bound stick, hit the leopard a solid blow on the head and the leopard ran off. While describing the attack the boy turned to show me some jagged scars that ran the length of his back, where the leopard's claws had dug in. But he had no bite.

"Was it a big *tendua*?" I asked.

As may be expected, the boy said yes.

"Was anything wrong with it, some injury?"

"No, sahib. It was *bilkul choka* (perfectly normal.)"

I walked to the hut where the leopard had taken its latest victim. The mother lay in a corner while mourners kept up a dismal chant. The husband stood nearby, stoically taking in the scene. I waved him over and he followed me to my hut. I let him light up his pipe, then asked him to tell me what he knew.

It was hot and humid inside the hut, he said, so the family moved out to the patio to sleep, placing the baby between them. In the early hours, when sleep is soundest, the mother awoke. Sitting on the ground beside her was a leopard. It was looking down at the baby. As she screamed, the leopard grabbed the baby by the head and vanished and that was the last she saw of the tot.

I learned that the leopard had done most of its killing recently (May/June, '47), during a time of extreme heat and humidity. When the villager left, I was going to turn in, but recalled seeing a number of goats earlier on. I found out where the goats were kept for the night and, hoping for a quick confrontation with the leopard, I decided to place my bed in with the goats, with the door wide open and a loaded shotgun at hand.

The goats would not leave the shelter at night, and if the leopard came by they'd let me know. Had I been dealing with a maneating tiger, nothing short of an urge to commit suicide would have induced me to act alone, and certainly not in this fashion. The leopard is not nearly as formidable as the tiger.

The goats, of all sizes, soon grew friendly and very inquisitive, sniffing at my bed and jumping all over it, and nibbling at my ears, fingers and toes. When they settled down, I turned down the wick of the oil lamp and placed it by the door. There was nothing else to do but wait, and keep awake while doing it.

I made myself comfortable with the loaded shotgun on the floor beside me. The night soon became very quiet. The rest of the village had gone to sleep behind closed doors, leaving the goat hut the only open hut in the village. As nightfall deepened, the feeling grew on me

that we would have a visitor. Then the rain began falling, softly at first, but soon increasing to a sleep-inducing rhythm that had me battling to stay awake.

One moment I was fast asleep; the next I was up and reaching for the gun. Had the gun been on the bed where I'd thought of putting it, I could have killed the leopard, but I didn't like the idea of having a loaded weapon alongside my feet. When I reached, the leopard, halfway through the door, spun round and disappeared. Except for a nanny goat pounding the floor with its foot, there hadn't been a sound.

Earlier that night I'd attached a torch to the twin barrels of the shotgun. I rushed from the hut in my bare feet and flashed the torch all around, but there wasn't any sign of the leopard. Loud bleats now started coming from the hut, and villagers awoke and wanted to know what was happening.

I told them to stay where they were, but a door in one of the huts swung open and a tall man stepped out with an offer of help. His name was Bhik Raj, and he had a wicked looking axe over his shoulder. I went back to slip on my shoes, after which we walked along the cart track that passed through the village, then took a swing around the perimeter. The leopard had gone.

At daybreak, my bearer made tea, flapjacks and eggs, and after this tasty meal I set out to look for pugmarks. I cut the tracks by circling the village again, carrying my fine Mauser rifle loaded with a full magazine of softnose ammunition.

It was a cool, clear morning, fresh and invigorating, with the smell of rain still in the air. The soft, melodious cooing of doves greeted me on every side, and also the calls of that speckled red-legged dandy, the black partridge. The trail of the leopard led across the fields which had been freshly plowed to a small grass shelter built on four slim poles buried in the ground. The villagers guard their fields at night from these shelters, about 10 feet above the ground. From there the pugmarks led to a second shelter which could be seen beyond a thorn fence.

The leopard circled the second shelter a number of times before

dropping into a gully. I searched the area for about an hour without reward. It was so dense that I frequently had to part the grass with the end of the barrel to see where my next step would fall. On returning to Gowlia, I slept for several hours. At 4 p.m. I climbed into the second of the two shelters, directly over the gully, with a young goat tied to a bush below me. The sound of the bleating goat could soon be heard floating over the jungle, and if the man-eater was anywhere within a mile-wide radius, it was as good as dead.

I'd rubbed myself with citronella oil because without it I could not have sat still for a moment. After about 40 minutes of loud and pitiful bleating, the goat fell silent and dropped its nose to the ground—a sure sign the leopard had arrived. As I watched from under the brim of my bush hat, a large leopard came into view. It sat before the goat on its haunches, and before it could make its rush I put a bullet through both shoulders.

Everyone back at the village claimed I had shot the man-eater. I wanted to believe them, but later that night, while eating supper and contemplating whether or not to tell the bearer to pack, I heard monkeys calling on the hill behind the village. The guttural sounds, potent with hate, were soon picked up by a *muntjac* (barking deer), and a roosting peacock, perhaps the keenest-eyed inhabitant of the jungle. My fork stopped halfway to my mouth when I heard the hacksaw grunts of an angry leopard.

I was overcome with doubt, the hope of an early reunion with my wife fast disappearing. I picked up the shotgun with its torch and double load of buckshot and took another slow walk around the village, stopping every now and then to play the light over places where a dangerous animal might lurk. Again I drew a blank.

Had I known more about man-eaters I might not have walked round at night, but I was used to doing this and hunted this leopard as I would any other. Tiger and leopard are largely nocturnal by nature, and if we in our hunting camps had reason to believe they were around, we went after them.

The chances of seeing them were slim—although on more than one occasion we did—but walking in the stillness of the night produced the closest harmony with the jungle. The sounds we heard, the sensations we felt were unique. I was far more frightened of snakebite—terrified, in fact, if I allowed myself to dwell on it—than I was of any leopard. Snakebite had never been a factor in the winter months when we usually did our hunting.

Late the following morning, while I was still trying to decide whether to stay or leave, a small delegation of villagers led by Bhik Raj arrived at the door. They had come from Ampani, about 4 miles away, to report that a *tendua* had taken a child. I was not surprised as the villagers were indifferent to danger, a wounded tiger being about the only animal—and yes, old *bhaloo* (bear), too—that they really and truly feared. The *tendua* or leopard, a sneak thief, a stealer of chickens and pye-dogs and goats and piglets, often from inside the huts, was an object of scorn, a very under-estimated danger except for the rare occasions on which he became a maneater. Bhik Raj, a born leader, cheerful and optimistic, offered to accompany me to Ampani.

I now undertook to hunt the leopard in country I'd never seen. There were no goats in Ampani and a search for the infant had proved futile. I would have to send to Gowlia for a goat, but to have used one could more than likely have led to the slaying of another innocent leopard. A buffalo calf works well as bait only when tied at a good *moka* (trail) that is used with a fair amount of regularity by big game. A buffalo calf, unlike a goat or dog which hysterically attract attention to themselves, tries to be quiet and thus avoid trouble.

That same evening I tied a buffalo calf under a tree before the entrance to the village and climbed into my machan. Now if a leopard other than the maneater found the calf, it would be pure bad luck, both for the leopard and the calf. I wanted none but the guilty one, but as it turned out, not a thing came past that tree.

I lay shivering in bed most of the following day, a sure sign of ma-

laria. As the fever mounted and sweat oozed from every pore of my body, I soon became wringing wet and was overcome by the most serious doubts about my future. Apart from the painful realization that earning a living had to take precedence over my great love of hunting, especially now that I was married, India so far as I could tell was in an unholy mess. Rival political and religious factions were bent on carving up a once fairly united country regardless of the danger, both within and from without. There was almost daily blood-letting between Hindu and Moslem, the two main divisions of the country, men who had fought with a great deal of honor and effectiveness in far-off lands—and side-by-side at that, regardless of religious dictates, as in my own battalion. In the midst of this chaos, my wife, who didn't understand the country or its people, was alone in a strange and often violent city now seething with unrest and uncertainty of the worst possible kind. Several hundred miles away, I belatedly struggled with my conscience and pondered the forces that had placed me in this predicament. I'd done all I could, I told myself. Salam could unearth someone else to take on the errant leopard. To hell with it!

In this frame of mind I told Bhik Raj to make ready to leave. Word of this spread with most uncommon speed. In no time at all the people of the village had gathered, offering no resistance apart from the too-expressive looks in their eyes. Bhik Raj, devil that he was, seized on the opportunity to chide me loud and openly. I absolutely loathed him for exploiting me, but the upshot was that I agreed to sit up one more night.

I climbed up the tree again, with the calf placidly chewing the cud below me. I tried to sleep when darkness came since I felt quite weak, but the stifling humidity and constantly attacking mosquitos, which bit in spite of liberal applications of sticky citronella oil, made rest impossible. A dense canopy of cloud blanketed the stars. It was so black that I couldn't see the hand in front of my face, a test I somewhat bemusedly administered in mute testimony to the dark.

Sometime after midnight, the buffalo calf began to move. I slowly rose to an upright position, fingering the button on the torch clamped to the rifle. The calf then settled down and the night once again grew still. In the middle of this eerie, very early morning quiet, I heard the wail of a woman at the far end of the village.

"*Tendua! Tendua!*" she shouted.

This was followed by a good deal of noise and commotion as villagers yelled to one another from inside the huts. I remained in my tree, overcome by fear and indecision. For the most part I hunted big game with a rifle because of the precision with which one can place a bullet. For dangerous game of the cat family, at close quarters in dense jungle where one needs to shoot very fast to survive, buckshot was the ticket. I'd left the shotgun in Gowlia, and this was one reason why I hesitated to get down off the tree. Also, the woman's anguished cry, reaching me in my fevered state, badly unnerved me.

At daybreak my worst fears were confirmed. Some of these villagers in what was known as the Bhainsa valley built huts with low overhanging grass roofs that effectively shielded the entrance from sun and rain. They had no door, and because of the heat mother and child had moved to the opening to sleep. My presence at the other end of the village had given rise to a feeling of false security, a sacred trust bestowed on one by innocent people that had proven fatal.

I spent two more days combing through those jungles that had by now lost much of their charm, especially since I'd seen where the leopard walked right past the buffalo calf I'd tied under my tree as bait. It was a large calf, but not so large and powerful that a healthy leopard like the one described by the boy could not have killed. Were there a pair of maneaters? That thought certainly crossed my mind.

Finally, quite late on the third day, I decided to get back to Gowlia, and this time no one objected. We saw a sambhar stag on the way. There were many sambhar in these densely wooded hills, most of them in velvet. This one stag still had his antlers, which were about 38 inches



The author's wife Val with the Gowlia Maneater.

long—a nice heavy head with polished tips. He was grazing at the edge of the jungle, about 120 yards away. Bhik Raj and I were well inside the trees on our side of the clearing, and I stepped off the path we were using to get in for a clear shot. I raised my foot to avoid stepping on a stick. As I did so, the stick rose up and struck at my leg with lightning speed. My legs were bare as I'd discarded my army clothing and now wore shorts and tennis shoes for greater freedom of movement. I took to the air like a rocket to avoid being bitten. I was very badly shaken, but raised my wobbly rifle to try and shoot the cobra in the head as it sat there swaying on the grass. The rifle just wouldn't settle down. While struggling to regain my composure, I decided to kill the snake with a stone.

The only stone I was able to lay quick hands on was one about the size of a 16 lb. putting ball. Passing the rifle to Bhik Raj, who was likewise terribly shaken, I picked up this unwieldy missile and tried to lob it on the cobra's back. I should really have walked away and let well enough alone, but I allowed anger to get the better of me. Had

I lobbed the putting ball correctly it would have anchored the cobra, making it a lot easier to deal with. But the huge stone just grazed the skin, and the snake, which was gyrating around in a highly agitated mood, came straight for me.

I turned on my heel to run, but slipped and fell heavily on a flat moss-covered rock on which my tailbone took an awful bang! Every ounce of breath left my lungs as I landed on the rock. I found myself lying full-length, totally paralyzed and unable to breathe. Conscious, yet completely helpless, I saw the cobra run toward me with its hood raised fully two feet above the ground. It halted mere inches from my face, looking for the smallest move. After a terrifying second or two, during which I didn't move so much as an eyelid, the snake turned on its tail and slithered away.

Bhik Raj ran forward and helped me to my feet, praising God as he did so. He hadn't dared to make a move for fear the snake would strike. The stag was now forgotten and so was the maneater. All I wanted was to get back safely to Gowlia. With darkness closing in, that last walk through the jungle became a nightmare. With every step I now visualized putting my foot down on a cobra.

When we finally came to the open fields before Gowlia, I had to sit down to rest. Soon after, I heard a chinkara gazelle sneeze, but my thoughts were far away, mostly with my wife, whom I'd taken from the safekeeping of her family, and for whom I hadn't provided well in the event of my death—something that I had previously thought very little about.

The gazelle sneezed again—quite close! But I failed to attach any significance to the sound, and neither did Bhik Raj, who seemed lost in thoughts of his own. In a very detached sort of way I began to recall that "chink" was a word in Hindi meaning sneeze. That's how the Indian gazelle got its name—the chinkara gazelle; the sneezing gazelle. . . .

My companion's elbow in the ribs ended my wayward thoughts, but by then I'd seen the shadowy form of a leopard moving slowly toward

us. It stopped to look over its left shoulder, about 30 feet away. The leopard didn't know we were there, but it was headed in the same direction we were, toward the village. I raised the Mauser, held low on the point of the shoulder and fired. The muzzle gave off a blinding flash, but I saw the leopard flip over. I worked the bolt and, as the leopard struggled to regain its feet, growling and tearing away at the ground, I fired a second time and killed it.

I'd shot two leopard more than I wanted. The female that ran toward me in Chandi, triggering my reflexes faster than I wanted her, and the fine big male, the second of that hunt, that I'd shot over the goat at Gowlia.

After I killed this last leopard, little more than a stone's toss away from Gowlia, I left the area to return to my wife, confident that the maneater was dead. Maneaters are not inherently old and decrepit, but this one was. It was a pitiful bag of bones. I've examined upward of fifty leopard, but never saw one so old. It had lost much of its essential equipment. Three claws were missing from the front paws and its fangs were chipped and broken down to the gum. Sheer desperation, brought on by the ravages of hunger, had forced it to steal the weakest and slowest of prey—small village children. It could have not killed the buffalo calf in Ampani without a good set of fangs; it couldn't hold the plucky herdsboy who had twisted free without a toothmark on his hide.

Before coming to America, I sold my beautiful Mauser rifle and most of my trophies. Some I gave to friends, but my wife hid one. This old skin is something that I can see, touch and feel, an admittedly primitive link with my distant past, a past that stretches far beyond that fateful evening in Gowlia.

After many years, I am still a hunter. I enjoy good hunting as I enjoy few things. That is important to a healthy mind and body. I have the greatest reverence for the game I hunt, as for this scarred-up old leopard who drew the blood of man that he might live. I killed him but he lives, there on my living room wall and in my heart forever. ■