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The managers at Kalala, the desert camp, were of Belgian descent. How near or how far removed from the motherland you never know in Africa, as colonization goes back to the 18th century. Also, political upheavals have been so dramatic for the rulers and the ruled, such questions may be inappropriate.

Making a guess, I placed them as bored Frenchmen. However, so few English speaking people outside of the Southern United States understand my dialect, the language barrier might have been the reason contact was so cold. (A German boy at Tanda Tula said he understood Zulu better than my English. Who knows, I may have inspired the lad to study Zulu and later on marry into the tribe.)

The rest of the staff was friendly Nama people. Descendants of the bushmen, these delightful folks click their tongues against the tops of their mouths speaking certain words. They work hard and may do a few quick dance steps on the way back to the bar or kitchen. On the last night in camp, the waitresses and maids sang songs in their language and did a finale in English of the old hymn "Marching to Zion." Their childlike delight in entertaining us smoothed over the amateurish effort.

Five charter planes picked us up on the camp's airstrip early the next morning. We flew over the very dunes we had climbed the day before to hit the Skeleton Coast on the Atlantic Ocean. Along the miles and miles of desolate beach, rusty shipwrecks, the origin of the coast's eerie name, stuck from the sand. Old mining equipment, likely the dreams of a promoter in London or Berlin, lay abandoned and wasting away with caved-in roofs and machines strewn over the ground.

Flamingos in abundant flocks cast roseate reflections in tide pools; colonies of seals flopped on the beaches like black seaweed washed ashore. The ocean framed one side of the picture in raging white-capped waves rising from a royal blue sea. A vision lingered of the many diamond prospectors and shipwrecked sailors who struggled up this desolate coastline hoping to reach the two small seaports, Swakopmund and Walvis Bay.

We landed for lunch at Swakopmund, so deeply Germanic that Hitler's birthday is still celebrated in private. Hops from the small brewery come from Germany. Streets and sidewalks glisten with the clinical cleanliness of the Teutonic race. Lunch was asparagus soup and big orders of Wiener Schnitzel and thick yeast bread. Right on the sea, the resort bore none of the markings of the casual housekeeping of many such towns. The history of German West Africa, or present day Namibia, links the colonists to a horrid past. However, I will go no further along those lines, as such subjects are for political historians.

The afternoon flight landed in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia, for the night at a hotel. I chose to skip going downtown to clean my camera lens and empty the sand from my body and gear. By using tables gained from reading a Sea Scout's manual long ago, I was able to fill the bathtub to the exact level of body displacement without running over the tub. But the sands washing from under my finger and toenails threw my calculations off a full three inches.

Packed under a baggage limitation of 25 pounds, all of my costumes were the same, khaki pants and J.C. Penny chambray shirts. However, to add a bit of dash to my attire, I tied a blue bandana around my neck in a classy square knot. (Cf. Boy Scout Troop 116, Mertzson, 1941) So close to the diamond fields, it is safer not to give the impression of the nouveau rich. The hotel had a casino downstairs. After sweating a hand or two of blackjack, I suspect a lot of guys checked out next morning more conscious of their hip pockets than the crease of their blazers.

The group assembled in front of the hotel at bare daylight, an astounding collection of 19 travelers and four leaders. "Astounding," because not only were these folks going through time and season changes, they were loading and unloading off airplanes and open air safari vehicles on schedule, like descendants of P.T. Barnum's family. Hours later, passing through customs into Botswana, I watched in absolute disbelief as four of the women returned from an airport shop on time without having to be handcuffed to a guide to be lead on the plane.

At the next stop in the Okivango Delta in Botswana, nine of us were assigned to one camp and 10 to the other. On the short flight, herds of cape buffalo and scores of elephants and giraffe were seen from the plane. High grasses bordered the airstrip. Excitement mounted as just minutes on the ground, baboons and impalas grazed by, sharing their eternal vigil for lions and hyenas.

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