



**PRESIDENTS AND 400**

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**Story by Warren Parker (Safari Club International Magazine)**



It was February 18, 2006 as I stood behind a scrub tree in the northern Cameroon's Savanna. I settled the cross hairs on my 300 Winchester Mag on a Sing Sing Waterbuck laying down facing away from me. If I make this 375 yard shot I will have fulfilled a life time goal of taking 400 different species of big game animals, which few hunters if any in the work have ever accomplished.

This trip had really started at the SCI convention in 2005 while at the Mayo Oldiri booth. My old friend Antonio Reguera the owner of the company asked me if there was anything left in Cameroon that I had not taken.

I told Antonio there were two animals that I had not taken that occur in Cameroon, the Korrigum (Giant Tope) and the Sing Sing Waterbuck, which occur in the very Northern part of their country in the savanna. Antonio told me only very few permits per year given for the Korrigum in the entire country. Antonio then invited me to hunt with him in the Mayo Nduel camp in zone 20 where there were lots of Korrigum and Waterbuck and I could have his permit. My long time friend Al Cheramie, 12th SCI Past president would join me on this hunt. Al wanted to take a Western Savanna Buffalo, along with several other animals. We would be hunting for six days, along with another friend Mike Hagen who would join us for a 14 day full big hunt, including the Giant Eland. On February 16, 2006 we arrived in Douala, Cameroon on an Air France flight. We were met by Mayo's people who efficiently whisked us through customs then took us to the Meridiem Hotel to recover from our jet lag. The next morning we were picked up and taken back to the airport to catch a domestic flight to the northern city of Garoua. There we were met by Sadi Cheikh and an old friend from the forest hunt, Luis. We loaded duffel bags and weapons, and then were taken to a house to eat lunch and discuss the upcoming hunt and catch up on old times. We each were send to three different camps.

Sadi and I were off to Mayo Nduel, while Al went to Mayo Oldiri, Mike and Luis went to Mayo Vaimba camp. Our trip took 3 ½ hours over terrible roads, we drove through villages filled with round huts made of grass and straw. Everywhere we saw people looking as we drove through the villages. Two weeks before the trip started I slipped a disk in my back, it was still very painful. My doctor took an x-ray and had found that two vertebrae had been broken at some time in my life. The only time that this could have occurred was in 1963 during one of the three helicopter crashes that I survived in Cambodia during the Vietnam War. I had been a sniper serving in Cambodia, Laos and

North Vietnam for MACVSOG making hits on Chinese and Russian advisers, then destroying their training camps.

I had picked up a plastic bottle of frozen water, and then placed it on my back as we drove to help ease the pain from the constant jarring, the 115 F temperature did not help the situation.

Once in the Nduel I found a small but very comfortable camp with round huts made of brick and stucco. My hut had its own bath and large bed. Guav Johnson, my guide was there to meet me as I stepped out of the truck, a Zimbabwean who guided for Mayo in the Savanna as well as the forest hunts in the first part of the season. He then goes to Mozambique or back to Zimbabwe to guide.

That evening after a delicious dinner of Waterbuck fillet with sauce and fresh vegetables from their garden Guav and I discussed our hunt and what type of animals I wanted to harvest. I had brought along pages photo copied from the SCI Record Book for the Korrigum and the Waterbuck. I told Guav I would like to take both animals in the top ten; after all we did have 6 days to do it in. The next morning we were up at 4:30 am, ate breakfast and loaded up the land cruiser. My trackers would be Taiwee, Martin and Zacario, who as I would find out were very capable and professional with excellent eye sight and great knowledge of the area we were hunting. Once we left camp we immediately saw a large numbers of animals, it was like being in Tanzania, Roan, Waterbuck, Western Kop, Duikers, Western Hartebeest, Giant Eland and Western Buffalo in large numbers with many being trophy quality.

We drove about one and a half hours to the very edge of the area before we started seeing Korrigum; we encountered small herds of five to fifteen. We decided to park the truck and start walking to see what we could find on foot looking over some wonderful animals.

Several years ago there had been a die off for some unknown reason. They are just starting to come back so they are able to give few permits a year. After walking for one hour we spotted what we both agreed was an outstanding head, so we made the long crawling stock for about 300 yards, always keeping trees and shrubs in between us and our quarry. At 350 yards out we glassed, Guav was planning the final stock, he said he wanted to get closer by 150 yards before the shot would be made. I think I told him, I was going to make the shot from here; he asked, "Can you make the shot?" I told him to watch. My 300 mag. built on a pre 64 Winchester action, which had its organ as my sniper rifle. Enemy fire had hit the barrel with an incinerator round as well as the scope and stock, while the rifle was on my back without a doubt the rifle, saved my life.

Rather than throw it all away, I saved the action and throw everything else away. The shot entered the right shoulder, taking out both lungs, he never moved out of his tracks. This made my count, 399 species of the world. We thought he was big but never expected him to be the largest ever taken in Cameroon, as well as the largest taken anywhere in the last 25 years. The drive back to camp was a joyous time with my trackers patting me on the back. When we arrived in camp at 9:30 am Sadi came to greet us with a surprised look on his face as if to say, " why are you back so soon." Guav simply said, "We have nothing", this is when I spoke up and said. "There is no game in this area at all." Sadi was taken back and his face fell as if I had hit him with a fist, with

that there was no way I could continue with the joke, we took him around to the back of the truck and showed him what we had taken. He was astonished at the size of the horns; he had never seen a Korrigum this large even in the days when there were lots of them. We all sat down and had a cold drink, talked about the morning hunt and waited out the heat of the day which hit 115F, the week before arriving the temperature had been reaching 125F.

At 4:00 pm we went back out looking for Waterbuck, we saw lots of game including Waterbuck, but not the right one. Just before last light we spotted the one we had been looking for; he was in thick timber but not enough light to make a good shot. If it had been 10 minutes earlier he would have been mine, but for this day it was not to be. We would have to wait until tomorrow at sunrise, we creped back to the truck and head back to camp.

First light found us on foot pursuing my quest for #400, following the tracks he left during the night. After about ½ hour we spotted 15 Waterbucks in all but not the one we had seen the night before. We continued to follow tracks until we broke out into a clearing; this is when we spotted him about 650 yards away. Down on our hands and knees we crawled to where we were around 400 yards. We stopped to rest and take another look, he was laying down facing away from us, he was a little lower then we were behind a scrub tree. Guav thought that we should wait for him to stand up and then make the shot. I then suggested another way; I had a good rest to take him through the center of the back taking out the back bone and exiting through the lungs. Guav stated I would have two inches from side to side to hit the back bone, kawam!!!! The shot was true and he lowered his head not knowing what had happened.

Number 400 was mine!!!! After the photos and hand shakes all around, we headed back to camp. In just one and a half days I had completed a dream that I had started since I was 5 years old hunting antelope with my father in Wyoming so many years ago. We hunted together every year until he died in 1980.

Our camp was all a buzz; they had caught a poacher with about 20 snares in a sack and a bushbuck. They were interrogating him, trying to find out who else was with him. He was then taken into town and turned into the local authorities for punishment. As we ate lunch I discussed with Sadi how to interrogate a prisoner not to leave marks, but to get the information they needed, after all I was well versed in this area from the war in Cambodia.

That afternoon Guav, Sadi and I left our camp to see what Al and his guide were up to and possibility we could have been some help. We arrived at the new camp just before dark soon after Al came in with a wonderful Western Buffalo. He was so happy to realize it would be in the top 20. I went out with Al the next several days to help spot, in 6 days he took a Western Hartebeest, Western Savanna Buffalo, Western Roam and a Western Kop. Jose Carrion was Al's guide, a very nice person and an expert guide. Al had a very interesting time hunting his Roan from my first camp where we spotted several good trophy animals. Using his 375 he shot through a small tree trunk and killed the Roan.

Mike Hagen hunted for another week taking a Giant Eland, Roan, Bushbuck, Western Kop and Warthog. The highest point of his hunt was taking his Eland out of a herd of

over 200 with an additional 50 Roan and 40 Hartebeest. Mike's Roan was over 31 inches long, which will put it in the top 10 of SCI's record book. In addition he took Reedbuck, Red Flank Duiker, Hartebeest, Waterbuck and Oribi. His guide's Luis and Joaquin were outstanding, they moved to three different areas to find the best game there was. Mike is still saying he cannot believe all the game he saw while he was there.

Mayo Oldiri is without a doubt one of the premier outfitters in all of Africa, especially for the hard to take species. They run 100% on all game that a hunter seeks. Every year several 50 inch Giant Eland are taken, as well as the Bongo of the south, most of them over 30 inches. The only regret that I have is there is no need for me to go back to Cameroon, but who knows maybe Antonio will open up in another country that has species I have not taken.