



Keeping Up with the Joneses

*Your finest hunt. What did you hunt?
Where did the hunt take place?*

This is a very broad question and hard to select my finest hunt! I presume you mean as a PH guiding and not myself hunting personally?

Over 30 years of guiding in 12 countries across Africa I've been blessed with many clients and successful safaris but trying to recall which was my finest safari is difficult! The one safari that I often recollect - was my 1st season in C.A.R in 1993/94. I had one of two Australian clients (2 brothers named John & Peter) on safari for 28 days for a mixed bag safari with his priority being a Lord Derby Eland. We had bagged various species but no eland yet, we had come close on numerous days for an L.D.E but luck alluded us for some or other reason. Day 28 we tracked a big herd all day, we had caught up leapfrogging and playing the wind 8 times without spotting a suitable bull. We were miles from where we had left our vehicle, it was 4pm and we were hot, tired, thirsty and despondent. I was discussing with my client and trackers that it was time to "call it a day (safari)" and start heading back to our vehicle as we were at least 3 hours walk to our vehicle and another 2-3 drive back to camp!

This would be the sensible and responsible thing to do but my gut feel was to persevere as we didn't have much too loose at this stage of the game! With some persuasion I managed to convince everyone (maybe not all) to keep going. Like most eland they tend to drop their guard around dusk, we had got ahead of the herd which were now browsing in our direction. After literally bumping into the herd, we backed into a bush, sat in awe

and watched the whole herd walk by one by one within 5-10 paces from us until finally a magnificent bull appeared...!

The rest is history but the lesson learnt will always remain with me – NEVER GIVE UP HOPE!!

I may add that I've been incredibly fortunate in my professional hunting career to have had the opportunity to hunt some of the most iconic species in the world (besides the many African species) namely - Polar bear & Muskox in the Arctic, Alaskan brown bear on the Alaskan Peninsula, Marco polo sheep in Kyrgystan and a Bukuran Markor in Tajikistan.

What advise was given to you as a young PH that you would like to pass onto a junior PH?

Professional hunting is one of the professions where it is - all or nothing! You got to eat, sleep, read and drink hunting! If you want to be successful you've got to start with a dream, be completely committed, live the passion and find a role-model to be your mentor.

Do an apprentice and be prepared to start at the bottom. Wash cars, skin trophies, pack lunch boxes etc. Spend as much time in the bush alone and with staff building roads, camps, blinds or fixing fences, vehicles etc before you start guiding.

Don't be too proud to ask your senior Professional hunters as many questions as you can, there is no substitute for experience especially when it comes to hunting dangerous game. Google hasn't got the answers to most situations you gonna find yourself in!

Don't try and be a hero, your client's safety is your primary objective!
Understand ASAP that it's all about your client's satisfaction and enjoyment and not your own!!

PATIENCE is the best characteristic you can have as a PH.

Enrol in as many short courses as you can from vehicle mechanics to learning other languages, history of the area or country, gun and bullet info etc etc. Get as many feathers in your cap as possible.

Treat all Clients equally and with respect but be firm when the time comes!

It is YOUR responsibility to educate clients when it comes to integrity of what is acceptable or not when hunting.

Remember everything you do and say is a reflection of who you are, your safari company and your country.

Always be a Gentleman and have fun!

What was your first rifle that you bought for yourself?

My first rifle I owned was a Remington (model 21) Fieldmaster .22 pump action rifle given to me by my father when I was 11 years old. I then got given a Musgrave .308 by an uncle for whom I hunted and which I later traded and paid in for a Winchester (model 70) 7mm rem mag which I still own today.



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