



West of the Moon: Early Zululand and a Game Ranger at War in Rhodesia

Ron Selley

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From colonial northern Zululand to guerrilla warfare in the Gona re Zhou of Rhodesia—a sweeping canvas of southern Africa. *West of the Moon: A Game Ranger at War* is a sweeping canvas that evokes a bygone era of the 1940s’ colonial Natal through to the cruel intensity of the ‘Bush War’ that ravaged Rhodesia in the 1970s. The book is in two distinct parts?Part 1 chronicles the author’s earlier years?an idyllic childhood spent roaming and hunting among the empty, rolling hills of northern Zululand; of the inaccessible St Lucia waterway; the nostalgia of yellow fever trees; of building railway bridges into the wild interior; of colonial scallywags and native witchcraft; of sugar estates and of poaching; of shipwrecks; and the sweaty cantinas and backstreets of Lourenço Marques?of a time that slipped away ... Part 2 recounts the author’s move across the Limpopo where his love of adventure, hunting and the bushveld lead him to Rhodesia where he becomes a game ranger, dealing with ‘problem animals’ in the farming areas and the escalating terrorist war in the Gona re Zhou National Park in the beleaguered southeastern Lowveld of the country. Trying to care for an environment and the animals that depend upon it, while the people around commit barbaric acts in the name of political ideology, brutally awakens the author to the reality of the disintegration of an organized colonial subcontinent.

Ron Selley was born on Bastille Day, 1947. He grew up in northern Zululand, South Africa; his early schooling was in Kwambonambi and latterly in Pietermaritzburg and Meyerton. In the wilds of northern Natal, he started hunting at the age of eight and operated a boat on Lake St Lucia, his ‘home turf’, at the age of ten. He became fluent in Zulu, Afrikaans and French. After school he did his national service with the South African Kommandos, before working on various farms and sugar estates in Zululand and Swaziland. In 1975, with his thirst for adventure and an overriding love of the bush, he moved to Rhodesia, where he joined the Rhodesian Department of National Parks and Wildlife as a game ranger, operating in the Lomagundi, the Zambezi Valley and the Gona re Zhou during the height of the Rhodesian Bush War. He returned to South Africa in 1979, hunted professionally for a period and joined KwaZulu Nature Conservation, in charge of the Kosi Lake system and Northern beach areas. In 1982 he transferred to the Transvaal Department of Co-operation and Development (Nature Conservation), in charge of anti-poaching on all trust land bought out by the apartheid government for incorporation into the so-called ‘homelands’. However, as a result of prosecuting one too many senior members of the South African Police force for poaching, he was framed and charged as an ANC terrorist. Eventually exonerated, but sadly disillusioned, he left nature conservation in 1989 and became a successful entrepreneur in the plant-hire and security businesses. He moved to Lambert’s Bay on the West Coast in 1994, where he still lives, running a wide variety of businesses, such as boat-charter, ship painting and cleaning services. He enjoys black-powder hunting, is an avid collector of World War II trucks and tanks, owns two Rolls Royces, which are in daily use, and is the Station Commander of National Sea Rescue Station 24A.

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