

Charara North, Kalulu Safaris, and Fred Everett's Ashes

By Hans Jacob Dehlie

I suppose most of you have met a total stranger and after five minutes felt you've known the guy all your life.

That's how it was with PH Joe da Silva, who I first met in 2008 at the Joburg airport, both of us on our way to Zimbabwe, specifically to Charara South. Soon after, Joe joined forces with the knowledgeable Mashona PH, Marieth "Mash" Mashonynika, to form Kalulu Safaris; Kalulu means "rabbit" in Shona.

In late November 2012, I booked and accompanied a two-week hunt with Kalulu Safaris for two hunting clients, Lars and Verner, for plains game, Cape buffalo, hippo, and "tuskless" elephants. My wife Rita was also accompanying the hunt – her seventh safari, but first to Zimbabwe.

After a long night flight from Norway, we met Joe at Joburg airport, then all flew together to Harare. Clearing people and hunting rifles in Zimbabwe takes time, but it works. We stumbled out of the airport with all our gear and were met by the entire crew of Kalulu Safaris: Mash our PH, Fundice the tracker, Max the camp manager and second tracker, Catherine the chef, and Simba our waiter – all of us immediately talking loudly and laughing.

While driving the 365 km from Harare to Cerutti Lodge on the shores of Lake Kariba, which borders the hunting concession Charara North, Joe turned to me and asked: "Do you know about Fred Everett?"

"Yes," I answered. "I have both his brilliant books – signed, first editions. I know he died three years ago."

Joe said he'd brought the wooden box containing Fred's ashes to spread in the Zambezi area. "Do you want to come along?"

"Yes, of course, it would be a great honor for me." I was astounded. "But how come this is possible?"

"I'll get back to that later," Joe said.

At 11:00 in the evening we drove into camp, right on target.

"And here we were, sitting with Fred's ashes. He died in 2009, and his widow Sue had kept his ashes on the mantelpiece these three years, not being able to spread it in a place Everett would have wanted."

Lake Kariba, one of the world's biggest artificial lakes, was dammed to provide power to Zimbabwe and Zambia. Before it was filled, between 1958 and 1963, the existing vegetation was burned, which created a thick layer of fertile soil for the lakebed. As a result, the ecology of the lake is vibrant. In addition to indigenous tiger fish, a number of other fish species were introduced, notably the kapenta, or Lake Tanganyika sardine, which now supports a thriving commercial fishing industry. Fish eagles patrol the shorelines that harbor Nile crocodile, hippopotamus, and herds of elephant.

At 5:00 a.m. on the first day, I was woken by the characteristic cry of the fish eagle. Just as if they'd been asked a question, a hippo family sunbathing on the shore immediately responded. "Great," I thought, "everything is in order," including the busy kitchen staff, so I was able to sit down with a first cup of coffee.

This was my 25th safari in 25 years and I was celebrating. I loved being here, just like every time I'd been to Africa. I was hopelessly lost to this kind of life – the smells, the sounds – all of it. It reminded me of what Everett wrote in his books, especially since I was in the same area where he'd spend some of his ivory hunting years in the 1930s, returning occasionally later.

It was already 30°C – this was going to be hot! And I enjoyed that thought. We'd just left Norway where it was 15° below zero.

As always, we tested the equipment before going into the dense bush after the big guys. Lars and Verner each put holes in a matchbox at 50 metres. So with that settled, we were ready for action. Both hunters were going to use Verner's Winchester Model 70 Safari Express in .375 H&H Mag., topped with a Swarovski Z6 1-6x24, with Verner's homeloads: 270-grain Barnes X-Bullets and 270-grain Barnes RN Solids.

However, that would not have been my choice, and I felt very comfortable with my Heym Model 88B in .500 NE for back-up. I'd brought along 20 Kynoch 570-grain solids. Mash carried his double-barrelled Chapuis in .470 NE.

Charara North is known for its dense population of elephant, buffalo and hippo. I don't think I've seen more elephant anywhere in a two-week safari than I did here. One day we saw a 60-pounder and a 50-plus-pounder! Almost every day we saw Cape buffalo bulls in the 40-inch class; in fact, 40-inch buffalos were abundant.

After some thrilling stalks, Verner took a nice, old 40-inch Dagga Boy, who'd long since retired from the strenuous life of the herd. Lars shot an old hippo bull that ran off back into the lake. We found him the next day, lying floating close to the shore. Luckily the crocs hadn't start feeding on him.

Both lion and leopard can be hunted here, but there are probably better places in Zimbabwe for this. And although plains game was not abundant, Verner collected a nice bushbuck.

Both hunters took their "tuskless" elephants with very little drama involved: one lung shot and one brain shot, respectively. Both elephants carried perhaps 20 pounds of ivory, but were allowed to be culled by hunters as part of the Game Department's elephant control program – and Charara showed clear evidence of elephant overpopulation; but the ivory could not be exported. Shooting an exportable tusker would have cost an additional US\$10,000 – elephant hunting is an expensive, but exciting experience. It can drain your strength as well as scare the sh-t out of you. So why do people do it? As Peter Capstick so elegantly put it: It's one of the last great adventures you can buy for money. And *that's* a good reason.

Every morning, sitting with my coffee, I thought about Fred Everett and his hunting ivory in this area, more or less legally in the late 1930s. I'm surprised how little attention his hunting and writing have received from the hunting fraternity over the years. In fact, he's barely mentioned at all. I wonder, why? Certainly at times he was poaching or over-shooting his quotas; but we must remember these were other times, other conditions.

In my opinion, his books are better than most in the same category. Another gentleman hunter of the same era, Brian Marsh, writes in his foreword to Everett's first book, *Heat, Thirst and Ivory*: "It is the engrossing tale of an extraordinary man and a vanished time. It is destined to become one of the classics of African hunting literature." In Peter Flack's forward to Everett's second book, *Tuskers in The Dust*,



On 3 December, the hunters and crew drove up to Makuti, on the road that was originally a migratory trail made by elephants, then continued on to Marongora Pool where Everett's ashes would be dispersed.



In the name of Everett's widow, Sue, who lives in Pretoria, PH Joe da Silva spoke, wishing that Fred "would always find good water," then threw his ashes into Marongora Pool where it was hoped they would find their way to the Zambezi River.



After several thrilling stalks, Verner (L) took a 40-inch Dagga Boy with his Winchester Model 70 Safari Express in .375 H&H Mag., a moment celebrated in the company of Lars, and Hans and Rita Dehlie.



Although both Lars and Verner (L) took "tuskless" elephants that carried under 20 lbs. of ivory, with PH Marieth "Mash" Mashonyika (front right), because they were culled as part of the Game Department's elephant control program, the ivory could not be exported.

he says: "He writes in a way that allows you to see, to smell, and to be there with him... It is the best hunting book I have read in ten years," and compares it with classics by Bell, Taylor and Selous. Not bad!

And here we were, sitting with Fred's ashes. He died in 2009, and his widow Sue had kept his ashes on the mantelpiece these three years, not being able to spread it in a place Everett would have wanted. Sue, now living in Pretoria, knows Fiona Capstick, and Fiona Capstick, knowing Joe, made all this happen.

Frederick William Everett, known to everyone as Fred, was born and grew up in Bechuanaland, now Botswana, an area reputed at that time for its varied and abundant wildlife. His backyard was Chobe and the Okavango Delta, where he could live out his dreams of hunting. And so he did, with the best guidance available, from Agatauwa, his friend and mentor, who guided him from boyhood to manhood.

For almost 35 years, Fred hunted ivory in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, (now Zambia and Zimbabwe), Botswana, Mozambique, Angola and Sudan. He also hunted crocodile commercially in Nyasaland (Malawi) and Tanganyika (Tanzania) during the same period.

But as Africa's colonies were granted independence, hunting for a living became almost impossible. That is, if you were not a PH taking safari clients out into the bush, which not appeal to Fred Everett. In 1968, Fred gave up his isolated life in the bush and joined the Tsetse Fly Control Department in recently independent Rhodesia, and kept on with it until 1984 when he was age 64.

And now, in December 2012, we were saluting Fred Everett on the shores of Lake Kariba, his long-time hunting grounds.

On 3 December we drove up to Makuti, the road made in the same decade as the Kariba Dam. The road was an old migratory trail made by elephants – the elephants had already found the easiest way through the bush – then continued on our way to Marongora. The whole hunting crew was present.

We walked down to the shore of the Marongora Pool and had a small, solemn ceremony there. Saying that Fred was one of Africa's grand old characters, Joe opened the wooden box. We saluted Fred again, and wished him always to find good water, as he had put it himself in his first book.

Joe threw the ashes onto the water where it made a gray shade on the surface, and then threw a flower into the shadow. It was

a beautiful service, and I felt a great honor and privilege that this opportunity had been given to me by Joe.

We left Fred there, on the waters of the Marongora Pool. Hopefully, when the rains came, he would be taken on to the Zambezi River.

This all made me think of Fred Duckworth's words in his book *Quest for Africa's Tomorrow*, in which he refers to a letter written by his old hunting colleague in the Central African Republic, French PH Daniel Henriot: "He is gone off on an extended safari into unknown territory, from where there are no return tickets available."

Everett's own last book leaves the reader quite frustrated, with Fred catching a train to Cape Town, then hoping to get passage to England to see what the future held for him...

Norwegian hunter and safari booking agent, 64-year-old Hans Jacob Dehlie is an engineer who has hunted since age 12. A member of SCI and Dallas Safari Club, he's been on 25 safaris in six different African countries over the last 25 years, and has hunted the Big Five. 🦏



The hunters raised their glasses in honor of departed ivory hunter and author of two books, Fred Everett, who also wrote "Heat, Thirst and Ivory."