



MAKING OUR WAY - A McMahon/Cheyne Podcast

The Big Five (Season 1; Episode 19) - 3/20/24

Today's hosts:

Sandy Dobney
Russell Dobney
Jan McMahon
Rob McMahon
Deanna Cheyne
Jim Cheyne

[lion growl]

JIM (voice-over): These are the sounds of lions doing their best to perpetuate the species. For the sake of the enfeebled and the infirm, I probably should have pixelated that. Perhaps surprisingly, the low growl is the female, and the higher whine is the male. More on that later. Fair warning: put the kids to bed.

This is part one of Tanzania, the safari taken by Jan & Rob [music begins] and by our guests Sandy and Russ, who join us by video conference.

Today's topics include the planning & expectations for the trip, the wild life they saw, which gives us our title of "The Big Five," and the extraordinary efforts of Eki, their tour guide.

I should mention that joining the podcast from time to time, as you'll notice, are the dogs, our Three Amigos with Brigus, the Golden Retriever in the part of Lucky Day, Skye the Black Lab as Dusty Bottoms, and Pip the Teacup Yorkie as Ned Nederlander. Sorry, I just couldn't edit them out.

So, let's join our travelers now for some coffee.

[music ends]

JIM: We like to welcome our guests with a cup of coffee. It's our thanks to you. So do you guys know how to make coffee?

RUSS: Yes, we have coffee.

JIM: So okay.

RUSS: Costco brand.

JIM: Excellent. So consider that coffee as our thanks to you for for being a part of...

SANDY: We'd rather have money. [laughter]

JIM: Let's see if Costco will take a refund.

JAN: I think we're off to a great start.

[music]

JIM: Any idea what that is?

RUSS: Sandy thinks it might be Tarzan.

JIM: That's a that's very close. It's George Pierrot, Channel 7, Sunday nights, "World Adventure Series."

SANDY: Oh, no...

JIM: So I thought that would be the perf... well, you know, you're Detroit people. So I figured that'd be the perfect way to introduce the segment on Tanzania. So there it is. That's our theme music for this episode. George Pierrot.

SANDY: Perfect.

RUSS: That's awesome.

JIM: Who came up with the idea for the trip? Where did it first start?

SANDY: Well, for me, Marlene went to - our friend Marlene went to an African safari 10 years ago, 2014, just about the same time we were gone. And she came back and I went over I - she talked about it leading up to it. It was very exciting for me. If it had worked out somehow, I would have gone because she went alone. She went by herself. And I would have tried to go with her, but I was working and things didn't work out. And so when she got home, I went over there. I sat through all her pictures. We just talked for hours about it. And it was just like, "I want to do that someday. I mean, I want to do that." And...

RUSS: A few years before we retired, we were driving to Florida one time and we decided - we had just watched that stupid movie about the bucket list. And so we started to put together all of our thoughts of things that we would like to do. And of course, that was on our bucket list, both of our lists. But of course, we got into a big argument because the first thing on my bucket list was to see all seven continents. And then Sandy told me that was seven things. [laughter]

JIM: Do you still have that, Russ? You want to see all seven continents?

RUSS: Oh, yeah, that's up on my list.

JIM: How would you go about seeing Antarctica?

RUSS: Probably from a cruise ship. That would be the most - the least expensive.

ROB: That's how O.A.T. does it on a cruise.

RUSS: Yeah.

ROB: It's a cruise.

RUSS: Yeah.

JAN: I think anybody who's interested in wildlife and travel would be interested in going to Africa. I mean, it is one of those things that Rob and I used to talk about, but it seemed, I don't know, the older we've gotten the further away that got as a possibility. So...

ROB: It seemed out of reach.

JAN: Well, that's what - that's why there were some things about this trip that were really made possible because of Rob's and Sandy's mom. So that's, to me, an important part of this trip was the money that we received from Kathy, from Rob and Sandy and Rick's mom. Sandy and Rob decided we should take this trip together as kind of a tribute to her.

JIM: So you guys, the four of you have taken lots of trips together. Was planning for this one just like the others? Maybe more intense or was it something completely different?

ROB: We've never taken...

RUSS: This one was completely different for me because once we decided to go on a safari, all's we had to do was look in the OAT brochure and they had several

to choose from. And then so Sandy and Rob decided which one met the most of our criteria. And because it was a one-stop shop, they did everything for us. It was beautiful.

SANDY: It was very easy once we decided what we wanted to do.

ROB: And this was unique too because usually we've never taken a trip together where somebody else did all the planning. We usually plan it ourselves. You know, from Alaska to...

JAN: Just to reinforce what Rob was saying, this is the very first time we haven't planned this trip ourselves. Usually it's like...

SANDY: Right.

JAN: I would say primarily Sandy and Rob put together our travel, and Russ and I just benefit from their ideas. But this time somebody else professionally did it for us. So this is the first time we've done that.

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: You know, when you let loose the moorings and you're out sailing and suddenly you realize you're not home anymore, and you're untethered from home, I'm worried about health, safety, money. So what sort of preparations did you have to do for that? For instance, I know there's something called Travelers Insurance that you can take out to protect your investment in the trip. And then also, are we all Medicare people? That ends at our border, right?

ROB: Right.

JIM: Did OAT, O-A-T, the Overseas Adventure Travel, did they give you ways to handle insurance?

JAN: Go ahead, Sandy.

SANDY: Yeah, all that was required that you take out the insurance. A lot of... Like when we go on cruises and stuff, we're not required to take the insurance, what we normally do. But, O.A.T., you were required to do all that. So we... Quite a bit... It was quite expensive to get all the stuff they wanted you to protect your trip. Protect you and your trip.

JIM: So the trip insurance is, in case somebody goes wrong with your getting to the trip or something happens during it, you still are covered for the expense you've put into the trip...

SANDY: And for expenses incurred because - like, for instance, if someone were to fall and break their arm, you know, those expenses were covered, you know, or if we had had medical issues, it did cover medical.

JIM: Jan, do you want to tell our listeners what exactly happened, luckily towards the end of the trip, not at the beginning?

ROB: At the very end.

JAN: Yeah, it was at the end. We were just getting ready to go...

SANDY: 15 stinkin' minutes before we were supposed to leave.

JAN: I can still listen. I can still see the look on Russell's face, which was both - I mean, it made me sad to see the look on Russell's face because I looked up at him and he just looked like, "I can't believe this just happened." Yeah, I fell down on - I'll claim that I was on an unfamiliar surface and I stepped back and I didn't realize that I was at the edge. So I fell back and I broke my wrist, and I didn't get to leave with Russ and Sandy, but that was sad. Not that any of us cried or anything when that happened.

ROB: No. There were some tears.

JAN: But anyway, I got to ex... - Rob and I got to experience medical care in Tanzania. We went to the hospital in Arusha, which was an hour's ride, exciting through Arusha at rush hour with... it was a nightmare. But the kindest people ever helped me. They set my arm. And it was like going back in time to a medical facility from before we were born. But this is what was kind of interesting. I was x-rayed a couple times, sedated. The doctor pulled my arm into place and put it in a splint and wrapped it, set me on my way, and it was - how many shillings, Rob?

ROB: 201,000 Tanzanian shillings.

JAN: Which was \$79 US. So it was one of those moments when you realize you're in a very poor country. That would be a good portion of an annual salary for a Tanzanian. But for me it was like, obviously, nothing and I was very emotional about that too. So it adds to the story.

JIM: Well, let's give some more praise to O.A.T., Overseas Adventure Tour. It was your guide who took you to the hospital, right?

ROB: Yeah.

JAN: Our guide left the rest of the group. It was funny because I went to see my doctor right before my surgery, our primary care doctor, and she said to me, "How did you get to the hospital? Did you take a cab?" And I said, "No, our leader took us to the hospital, told the whole story, took care of making sure I got the care I needed, translated, explained, did everything for us, brought us back, made arrangements for us to stay an extra day, changed our flights, did an incident report, got us to the airport the next day." It was astounding. I can't say enough about our, about Eki.

SANDY: We all sent letters of complaint because our tour guide wouldn't go to the airport with us. [laughter] So we said, "Our tour guide sucks." That's what we said.

JAN: He went off with some more...

SANDY: Just so you know.

JAN: Exactly. Thank you very much.

SANDY: It's all your perspective.

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: Yeah, so Eki is his name, and that's not just the insurance thing. That's Eki.

JAN: No, that's Eki.

JIM: Right? Working for his company. And then when we were at the hospital the other day and you're having the surgery, they said they did an excellent job in Tanzania, but there were some damage that the x-rays didn't reveal. And when they're in surgery, they're able to fix all that up. We're sitting there, and Rob gets a text from Eki wanting to know how you're doing.

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: This is when that troop should have been long gone. His job is done. He doesn't have to do that. So that is the - that's Eki was his name. That's short for what?

ROB: Exaud.

JIM: And so he's with Overseas Adventure Travel. Is that the group that Marlene took?

SANDY: Yes.

JIM: So there are a couple of praises for that group. So you had insurance to cover that, although that's out of pocket for Tanzanian funds.

JAN: Yes.

JIM: And so that also, the changes of flights are also something that would be covered by your travel insurance.

JAN: Yeah.

ROB: When we travel together, we worry most about Jan.

[laughter]

JIM: Russ, is there something that smile should tell us?

RUSS: I think, uh, I have no comment.

JIM: That's good.

JAN: I love you, Russ.

DEE: The irony is you're around these vicious animals, and you went up in a hot air balloon, and, you know...

JIM: All the other dangers.

DEE: ...and you had a lion run under your tent.

ROB: Yes, that's a story.

DEE: And, you know.

JAN: It's just walking. My downfall will always be walking. Ask any of these four people, you know.

JIM: One foot in front of the other.

JAN: Yeah, well.

JIM: So in your preparations for the trip, it was easy because O.A.T. was taking care of things, then you had to do the expenses of being away from home and making sure that everything would be okay when you're over there...

RUSS: The only thing that was a little different for us, I would think, would be that normally we don't bring \$1,000 on vacation with us. But this time, we were warned that some of the places we were going to were remote, and our credit card may not work. There may not be power to make the credit card work. So, they also advised us to bring new money. And if you never looked at your cash before, you don't realize that there's dates on there. And so I would go to the bank, and I have a limit of like \$300. Well, to go to get \$300, and then it was all in \$20s, and then I had to find smaller bills, and then I had to find bills that were new. And so by the time we got ready, about a month ahead of time, I was starting to collect new small bills...

ROB: Yeah.

RUSS: ...that - so that was a little different for us because normally we just take the plastic, and we have a couple of bucks with us. But because we knew that we were going to be in places that may not work, I did feel a little uncomfortable taking that much cash with us. But, uh...

JAN: That's funny. That was my biggest discomfort, I would say, with the trip, was carrying that kind of cash.

ROB: But they said the ATMs weren't reliable in a lot of places, and - actually, when I tried to check out the extra night that we spent at the hotel because of Jan's injury, when I went to pay, the power blinked, and so they had to reboot everything, so I had to come back about a half hour later to finally pay it.

JIM: So with all that, let's take the incident away from the trip. Did you have any misconceptions about Tanzania that were quickly corrected there?

RUSS: I don't have any problems because I was in Ghana a few years ago, and to me the countries are remarkably the same. Lots of poor people, lots of people's jobs based on agricultural, a lot of little homesteads, some good roads, but mostly poor roads. A lot of poor people, but a lot of happy people.

JIM: And all the photos are people smiling, not in a Disney way, but this is just who they are. What were you in Ghana for, Russ?

RUSS: We went over, it was a band of us - 20 - and then we would work in the morning on the chapel. And then in the afternoon we would rest or maybe take a - I don't want to say a tour, but they would take us around. And then in the evening we would go to a Corps and we would have a Salvation service.

JIM: So that was more of a missions trip than a vacation trip?

RUSS: Yes.

JIM: Was Ghana on your bucket list?

RUSS: No. [laughter] But Africa was, so - check.

[laughter]

JAN: He counted it, yeah.

JIM: So for the whole time there, what was the most difficult day you had in Tanzania? Like this was just like, "Oh, that was a day."

ROB: That was the last day.

SANDY: I think it was, the most difficult thing for me was the amount of sitting in the jeeps on bumpy roads. It was, they were built well, they were comfortable, but by the end of the two weeks of doing so much sitting and bouncing, I'm sorry, but my rear end was killing me by the end of it. I just wanted to, I just couldn't stand it. As soon as the jeep would stop, I would stand up.

JIM: Well, Jan had mentioned, and I was saying, "Do you have to be in shape?" And she was saying, "Well, they're warning us about the jeep travel, that it's going to just be bouncing on all these kind of paths or roads or whatever you had."

SANDY: Yeah.

JIM: So that was the most difficult experience was the travel.

SANDY: For me, I mean, I just was so tired of sitting by the end of it. I mean, I wouldn't have missed any of it, but it was just like - and I did stand up during part of the drive, but I had a bad experience there when the driver took off and I wasn't ready and I went flying. I collapsed on this poor woman in front of me and I'm trying to pull myself back up. [laughter] I'm like, "Yeah, I don't think I should stand when the vehicle's moving. I think I need to sit."

JIM: What's the longest trip or the typical trip you would be in a jeep? Is it a matter of an hour or is it several hours?

ROB: Oh, several hours.

SANDY: Several hours.

RUSS: Yeah. The longest day was when we started at the Ngorongoro place, and then we drove along the edge of the Ngorongoro caldera. And then we went through the conservation area on bumpy roads, and then we drove all the way across the Serengeti...

ROB: The Serengeti, yup.

RUSS: ...because we entered the park at the very eastern edge and our accommodations were at the very western edge.

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: Very good.

RUSS: And so that day was the longest day. That was the longest drive that we had...

ROB: Yeah.

RUSS: ...and by the time we got there, they offered us a little washcloth that was wet. [laughter] And you wiped your face because of all of the dust.

DEE: Oh, my gosh.

RUSS: Mine was like mud.

ROB: It was. It was. You wiped your hands and your face and the white cloth was just...

JAN: Covered in dust.

ROB: ...covered in dirt.

JAN: You know, you have to, you can know that roads aren't paved, but this was like, I took several pictures of just the road because it was kind of unbelievable some of the places we got ourselves and how rough the ride was. And you do kind of get used to going with it, but it's a constant.

ROB: Yeah.

JAN: It's a constant. And you're out for at least, I'd say half a day at a time.

SANDY: At least, yeah.

JAN: So it's a long haul. And even though you're stopping and starting, it's never smooth. So that physically was the hardest part of the trip - was just what Sandy said. She needed drugs by the end. People were offering her painkillers at the end. So...

ROB: For her butt.

JAN: ...that's what it really was like. It was a hard ride.

JIM: How about pillows rather than pills?

JAN: Well, there was -

SANDY: Yeah. [laughs]

JIM: So, OK, let's do the flip side. What was the most satisfying single day? Like I know there are all these you've got the Serengeti that can take days. You've got the Ngorongoro crater. You've got Mount Kilimanjaro. But if you were to say, "That day is forever going to be my greatest memory of Tanzania."

RUSS: Probably the return trip because we got to do the exact ride backwards the next day, except - a few days later. But then that time we got to go inside the Ngorongoro crater and we finally got to see a rhinoceros up close.

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: So the rhinoceros is one of The Big Five, right?

ROB: Yup.

JIM: The big five. What are they, Rob?

ROB: The big five are Lion, Leopard, Elephant, Rhinoceros and Cape Buffalo.

JIM: Cape Buffalo. Not the hippopotamus?

ROB: Not the hippopotamus or the giraffe.

JIM: The way I understood it was that the big five were so-called because, for big game hunters, they were...

RUSS: Right.

JIM: ...the hardest to stalk on foot. So when you saw the rhinoceros, was that your fifth one?

JAN: Yeah.

SANDY: Yes.

RUSS: Yes.

ROB: Yes.

JIM: So, you had seen the others...

RUSS: I had seen one earlier.

[laughter]

ROB: No. No.

JAN: Russell...

ROB: Absolutely.

JAN: No, listen. Russell reported to seeing one, but no one else saw.

ROB: He reported that someone else had seen one.

JAN: In fact, he claimed it was a rhinoceros with two babies that he saw. I'm going to say it didn't exist.

SANDY: Well, it was unconfirmed.

RUSS: You just can't argue with anybody's testimony, can you?

[laughter]

JIM: Okay. So let's talk about that. Your first sighting - let's just go down a list - your first sighting of elephant. How long were you there before you first saw elephants? Because, I know...

ROB: That was on our pre-trip. Our pre-trip we saw elephants. It was the second...

SANDY: Day.

ROB: ...wildlife tour - drive that we took. And it was later in the day, we had been all over the - it was in a - the pre-trip took place in an area of Tanzania where we could go off-road. Which didn't make a whole lot of difference because the roads were as rough as anything else. But we could go...

JIM: But it wasn't a national park.

ROB: No, it was a preserve.

SANDY: A conservation area.

ROB: Conservation area, yeah.

SANDY: We have the name of it, but I can't remember what it is.

JIM: So this is out of Arusha and you're in the Mount Kilimanjaro area...

ROB: Area.

JIM: ...and so that's that part of the trip.

ROB: Right. And our driver, Yona - were you guys in the same vehicle with us that day? I don't remember.

RUSS: No.

ROB: But Yona was determined to find us some elephants. And all of a sudden, he was looking and he just took off, off the road. Straight line, bee-line, at high

speed, pretty high speed. And as we got closer and closer, they loomed into sight. These - it was about five or six...

SANDY: Five.

ROB: ...elephants - male elephants. They were all males, I think.

JIM: So that was all four of you?

SANDY: Mm-Hmm.

JIM: You're all together for the whole trip, right?

SANDY: Yeah, we were in different vehicles sometimes, but basically, yes, we were all together.

JIM: And this was the pre-trip. So the O.A.T. offers a safari, but then they offer you some things ahead of time. This is one of those.

ROB: Right.

JIM: Okay. So that's elephants. Let's take, uh, Rob, you saw some lions.

ROB: Yes. We saw some honeymooning lions. They separate from the rest of the pride for about seven days, Eki said, didn't he?

SANDY: Yeah.

ROB: Seven days. And...

JIM: You mean a couple?

ROB: A couple. And they copulate hundreds of times during that period. Every time she got up, he was after her and mounted her, and then they'd go lie down someplace else. And then ten, fifteen minutes later, they'd get up and do it again. And they were totally unconcerned by - there were fifteen vehicles...

SANDY: At least.

ROB: in that area watching these two. And they didn't seem bothered at all.

JAN: No, they didn't care. Well, they walked right by our vehicle at one point.

ROB: Oh, yeah, at one point. I could have reached out and touched him as he walked by. It was right against the vehicle. I didn't do that. I did take my camera and hold it out over as he walked by.

JIM: Just as an interest thing, what was their demeanor during this? Is she a willing partner? Is he super aggressive? How does that work?

JAN: I thought she was bored.

[laughter]

SANDY: That's what it looked like.

JAN: It did. Ask - Sandy and I agreed, she was bored.

JIM: She wasn't...

SANDY: I heard a driver told us that they have to do the deed, so to speak, about three thousand times in the seven days. And so I was telling them this last night at the Corps, and they were doing on their calculators how many times that was in one day. And what happens is, when she gets up, she is giving him permission to come after her and do his thing. But if he cannot keep up with her,

she ditches him and she finds a male lion who can keep up. And they don't eat a lot during that time, and they don't sleep a lot. So I think it's an exhausting time for both of them. But it's the way it works. And it's a, excuse my vernacular, but it's a "slam-bam, thank you ma'am" thing, it's like boom-boom and it's over. And then she goes and lays down and he lays down, but the minute she stands up, he knows that it's okay for him to approach her again.

JIM: Well it almost sounds like it's a necessity, because if he doesn't perform, she's off to somebody else...

SANDY: Exactly.

JIM: ...and so there's this genetic drive to get this done.

DEE: Well what I was going to point out, in the animal kingdom, the male has to wait for permission.

SANDY: I like that.

DEE: Yeah, yeah, so humans can learn a lot.

SANDY: You're not kidding.

JIM: So that's what you saw with lions. There was another though...

RUSS: I never actually saw it because every time they got close, I turned my eyes.

[laughter]

JIM: You averted your gaze.

JAN: A liar, liar, liar.

ROB: I can go deaf now.

JAN: Russell - never mind.

RUSS: But I certainly didn't take any pictures.

ROB: I have it, I have it on video.

DEE: I heard you were going to bring treats for the kitties.

[laughter]

RUSS: Yeah. Yeah, that really got Jan fired up when I told you I was packing some kitty food.

JIM: The other close encounter you had with a lion, Jan, was what?

JAN: Well we were in, where were we?

ROB: We were in...

JAN: It's all like a blur.

SANDY: Yeah, we weren't in the Serengeti, well the Tangeri, how do you say it?

ROB: The Taran..., Taran... - the Tarangire.

JAN: Tarangire.

ROB: Near that, yeah, that.

JAN: So almost every place we stayed, we were in what we would call tent cabins, up on platforms.

JIM: Are these the ones that you said actually had plumbing?

JAN: Yeah, they do.

JIM: So they had toilets, so you could stay inside, which turned out to be a very good idea.

JAN: Yeah. So this was up on stilts and what was kind of cool is, Russell and Sandy were three doors down from us, three huts down from us. And Russell had seen this lion run by before he got to us. So it was like running by along the water I think, chasing, right?

RUSS: Chasing some warthog.

JAN: A warthog. What I saw was, as the lion turned toward our tent and came running chasing this warthog. And then, it was a young warthog, and then there was an adult warthog behind the lion. And the three of them are all running toward me, up on this platform. And they all ran underneath our tent cabin. We were at the far end, so we were the most remote tent cabin, which made it a little unnerving to walk outside afterwards. But every place we went where we were staying someplace like that, we had staff come and make sure we were safe wherever we had to walk. So that was another - I never felt unsafe in any of these environments.

ROB: That was a really nice camp too. It was called the Burunge Tented Camp near Tarangire National Park. And that was, it was beautiful. They were all beautiful. I mean, all of the tented camps we stayed in were just beautiful.

JIM: So we've got elephant stories. We have lion stories. What's next on our list? Leopards?

ROB: That was Yona again, our driver. He, we were, it was, again, it was in the afternoon, and we were out on a wildlife drive, and he stopped - Eki was in our vehicle at the same time. And he got out his field glasses, and he's looking at this tree. The acacia trees, those are the trees that you think of in Africa. They have the flat tops, you know, they spread out and are flat. And the limbs are just perfect for the big cats to perch in, you know, and to get out of the sun and to rest in. So he was looking out there, and he said, "That's a leopard." And Eki was looking at Eki and he said, "There's no leopard over there." So they were arguing about it. And so he drove around a little ways, and then I had my video camera out. It's got a really good zoom on it. And I zoomed in, I said, "That is a leopard." And so, it was pretty cool, because that was probably going to be the heart, well, next to the rhino. Those two are the hardest of the big five to actually see while you're there. Because the leopards are very secretive. And we were always looking up in the trees. I know, I saw Russ always checking the limbs in the trees as we were going by. So that was cool. That was a leopard.

JIM: So we've got our elephants, we've got lions, leopards.

ROB: Oh, remember also we saw the kill up in the tree at the Ngorongoro crater on the way...

SANDY: Yup.

ROB: ...in. Yeah, there was a part of some kind of gazelle.

SANDY: It was an impala or gazelle.

ROB: Impala or gazelle. Yeah.

JIM: And the leopards take it up into the tree to protect it from other scavengers and that. The rhinoceros we've seen in the crater.

ROB: Ngorongoro.

SANDY: Yeah.

JIM: Ngorongoro.

ROB: The caldera.

JIM: They're called what?

ROB: Caldera.

JIM: Caldera. Okay.

ROB: They call it the crater.

JIM: Okay.

ROB: It's like Crater Lake.

JIM: Okay. And then we've got the Cape Buffalo.

JAN: Yeah, they're kind of everywhere.

JIM: Are they? They're...

JAN: Well, you see a lot.

ROB: They were at our - They came up in the evenings in our Serengeti camp. They would come right in between the tents. I didn't hear them, but the guides were saying, "Yeah, they were up there all night." You could hear the lions at night. You could hear the hy... - what I heard most was hyenas. The hyenas

calling to each other. So, but yeah, the Cape Buffalo, that's the first place I think we saw them, was when we drove up to the camp in Serengeti.

RUSS: Yes, that's true.

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: Okay, so that, plus hippopotamus.

ROB: Yeah.

SANDY: Oh, yeah.

JAN: They're disgusting, by the way.

JIM: When you saw them, they're...

[laughter]

RUSS: You can smell them. When you see the water that they're in, you can smell them.

ROB: Oh, yes, yes.

JAN: You smell before you see.

JIM: Really? Okay.

SANDY: I couldn't.

JAN: She's... Yeah. Sandy can't smell.

JIM: So they're all in water, the ones you saw were all in water.

ROB: Yeah.

JAN: I want to talk about giraffes just because the very first animal we saw out of the norm, besides cattle and goats, was a giraffe.

SANDY: Yeah.

JAN: And again, it's that surreal thing of, you're looking off into a field, and you realize, no, you're looking at a giraffe.

ROB: It's a giraffe out there all by itself.

JAN: It feels so odd, but it became common. We would see giraffes. We saw them in different circumstances. Up close. We saw young ones. We saw them run. We saw them come through our campsite in the Serengeti. Um, it was - they were just great to watch. And we thought about our niece Karie. That's her favorite animal. So every time I see a giraffe, I think of Karie, and how she should get to Africa someday. That's my goal for her. Anyway, yes, the giraffes were everywhere.

ROB: Yeah.

RUSS: We also saw them, remember, when we landed in the balloon.

ROB: That's right.

JAN: Yes.

RUSS: They were in the field that we landed in.

SANDY: Yeah, that was so cool.

RUSS: We saw a giraffe from the top.

[laughter]

JAN: Well, you talk about the hot air balloon was sort of an extravagant thing, especially if you ask Russell, that was an extravagant thing we did.

RUSS: I struggled with that.

JAN: He was thinking of how many people we could feed instead of being in a hot air balloon, which was a legitimate thing to say. It was, um...

JIM: Like Jesus and Judas.

JAN: Well, yeah.

JIM: "Do you know how many people could be fed with that ointment?"

JAN: It's oh, that's a turn I didn't expect. But anyway, we got up. That was a hard day for me. That was a hard day. We had to get up at three something and ride a long way for that experience. And then you had to be very uncomfortable climbing into the balloon and climbing out of the balloon. But it was everything you could have imagined. And when we were coming, well, I'm going to give the one exception, which is I had the same thought that Russell did. That scares me to say, but it's true. When so when we're up, it's amazing how far you can see. Quiet. Beautiful sunrise. But we didn't - what I expected to see is what Russell expected to see, which was more wildlife from the balloon. And we really didn't see that much. It's just a, you know, matter of luck, I suppose. But we spotted certain things. But it wasn't like when we drove into the Serengeti and you saw masses of zebras and wildebeests. It wasn't like that. But when we were coming down there were these five giraffes that were kind of running ahead of us as we were landing. And so that was our pretty much our main wildlife viewing for the hot air balloon.

ROB: Talk about the hot air balloon a little bit. The basket held 16 people, plus the captain. And it was on its side. It's not upright to start. It's on its side. We had to crawl in and we're lying on our backs, basically, with our rear ends against the seat, our feet in there. And we're holding on to these handles on the top. And we loaded - they loaded us specifically by weight, I think, and things like that. But Sandy and Russ and Jan and I were in the same compartment. But getting in was not easy. And then there's two, there's a upper row. And then there was a lower one. We were on the lower one, which was good. It was a lot easier than getting in the upper one. So they're doing it on both sides. And then when the balloon starts to go, as they fill it and it goes up, it pulls the basket upright. And then you can take off. But I'd never experienced that before. And that was interesting, I thought.

JIM: I would have thought it was just tethered and you'd have a ladder to climb into it.

ROB: Yeah.

SANDY: Yeah.

JAN: No, it was, like - we've got video of us trying to get in. I think it was frightening.

ROB: And to get out wasn't easy either.

JAN: And pictures of us getting out. Russell, again, came to the rescue for us, so...

ROB: We got out as it was upright. We didn't have to go back.

JIM: It sounds like a fraternity prank. Okay, so the hot air balloon. Jan, you mentioned wildebeest. Did you see wildebeest?

JAN: We did see wildebeest, yeah.

JIM: So how do you know that you didn't see part of the Great Migration, because that's wildebeest? I mean, do the Great Migration to the wildebeest all wear, like, runners numbers?

JAN: They do.

JIM: They're the official migration. And then you saw some outliers.

JAN: Well, there are more of them and they're more hell-bent on a location. These are just sort of out with the zebras, you know, having... We learned that wildebeests are not the smartest animals. That zebras are smarter than wildebeests. And they sort of use them as their test balloon before they put themselves in a bad situation. I can't really explain that very well. Russell probably can. Anyway...

RUSS: The wildebeests have a better sense of smell. The zebras have a better sense of eyesight.

JIM: Uh-huh.

RUSS: And so they complement one another when they're out in the fields. But when the Great Migration happens and it's time to cross the river, the zebras let all the wildebeests go first.

[laughter]

JIM: I understand.

RUSS: Because then the crocodiles get their fill of wildebeest and then the zebras can follow along. At least that's the story that we were told.

JAN: It worked for me.

JIM: Well, I can understand it's a behavior that is successful for them. That's good. So...

RUSS: But the other funny thing about the Serengeti is the time of year that we were there, all of the zebras and wildebeests were on the east side of the park.

ROB: Mm-Hmm.

RUSS: And our lodging was on the west side of the park. So we were there for three days. So all of our drives were basically on the west side of the park where the great herds were not. We were in the area where there were more trees and very tall grass. And these animals - the zebras and the wildebeests - they like to short grasses so they can see the lions coming from far away.

JIM: Good.

RUSS: And so we did see the great herds on our way into the park, and our way out of the park.

ROB: Right.

RUSS: But during the whole time we were there, just because of the month of February, that's where the zebras were. We did see on a map where they do go in a clockwise circle all the way around the park. And so had we been in our camps in June and July, then there might have been a lot more zebras and wildebeests in the part of the park that we were in.

JIM: The zebras like to hang around the road because they like to see the jeeps go by and all the tourists bouncing up and down. That's kind of their

amusement. "There goes another one." Okay, so this is some of the wildlife that you've seen. Any exotic birds that you hadn't seen before?

ROB: Oh, lots. Russell got more of the birds written down than we did.

JAN: He had a list.

ROB: We both kept lists of things.

SANDY: We got lots of pictures.

JAN: Storks.

RUSS: Yup.

JAN: Eagles.

RUSS: Well...

SANDY: Flamingos.

RUSS: ...we also learned about the Ugly Five.

ROB: Yes.

JIM: Okay.

RUSS: And the Ugly Five are the wildebeests, the warthogs, the hyenas, and then two birds, a vultures and a marabou stork.

ROB: Right.

JIM: Excellent.

RUSS: So we saw all of the Ugly Five, and those marabou storks are really ugly. [laughter] Their heads look like they're some kind of sunburn victim or something.

[laughter]

ROB: They look very prehistoric.

SANDY: Yeah.

ROB: They got a big red - red thing under their chin that hangs down.

JAN: They are ugly.

ROB: Yeah, they're ugly.

JAN: They are very ugly.

SANDY: Yes, they're ugly.

JAN: You know, just a thought, one of the most interesting things for me wasn't the Big Five. I mean, obviously they were the pinnacle, but it's when we first rode into the Serengeti. And you can see these expanses of zebras and wildebeests for like ever. It was like you could imagine what Africa would be. And you're driving in thinking, "This is just amazing." It was sort of surreal. And it was the same when we were leaving: zebras as far as the eye could see. So I would say in some ways we didn't get to see the Great Migration, but we definitely saw, or could imagine, what that might be like, by how many [music begins] animals we saw that just went on forever. It was incredible.

JIM (voice-over): These wildlife adventures are just the beginning of their Tanzanian Tour. Next week, we'll learn about the people and the culture of this beautiful place as we continue Making Our Way. Until then.

[music ends]