

# And so it began...

There were two things in my favour. Firstly, I had a father who loved the great outdoors and, secondly, I grew up in the old Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) at a time when the land was wild and free. It would seem that hunting is also in my genes, although, out of five brothers, I am the only one to have inherited them. My great grandfathers were both big game hunters at the turn of the 19th century. Grandma often told me stories of how they loaded their wagons, oxen and provisions at Delagoa Bay (site of present day Maputo), en-route to Kenia where they spent their winters hunting for ivory and hippo fat; the latter for making candles. We lived on the Eastern border between Zimbabwe and the old Portuguese East Africa, now Mozambique, in a rural community with very little interference from the authorities. One fine day my father decided to slip over the border with his trusty Mannlicher-Schonauer over his shoulder to see what was on the other side. I was about 12 years old at the time, it was school holidays and there was no way whatsoever that I was going to be left behind - so we packed the donkeys and set out on this amazing adventure, accompanied by an old Shona tracker and a young Shangaan boy named Manwere.

It was late afternoon and we hadn't yet reached the border into Northern Mozambique when we walked slap-bang into a herd of Eland. My father wounded a large bull and he and the old tracker set out to follow it. Manwere and I were told to carry on towards the Chimanimani Mountains<sup>1)</sup> (below) and to make camp beside the Rusiti River that ran along its foothills. The sun was about to set and we had to make a sufficiently large fire so that they could locate us in the dark. We had barely gathered enough wood and started the fire when the night closed in around us - two frightened young boys, one white and one black. In our imaginations we saw the glittering eyes and heard the snuffling of the most fearsome creatures imaginable and so we huddled together. I had read somewhere that wild animals respond positively to music so it was with relief that I remembered I had brought along my harmonica<sup>2)</sup>.

In later years my father often, laughingly told the story that they hadn't needed the fire to guide them to camp, all they had to do was follow the sound of the harmonica. That was my first African adventure. And so it began ...



1)

 [more about the Chimanimani\\_mountains here...](#)

2)

 [harmonica](#)

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