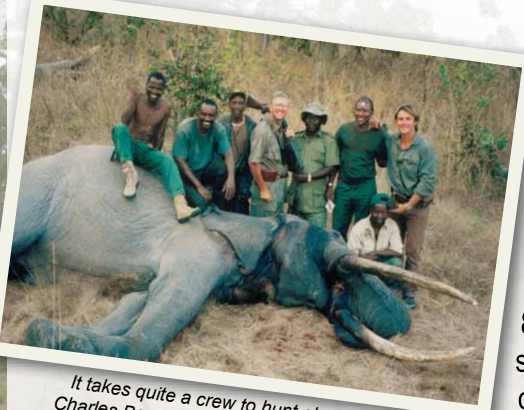


# The ELEPHANT I ALMOST Didn't Shoot

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #20 —

Judging the length and weight of elephant tusks is challenging, even for experienced professional hunters; and poor judgment could cost a PH his license.

Our routine was to leave camp each morning just after 6:00 am, when there was enough light to see fresh elephant tracks crossing the dirt roads. It was now the eighth day; we had tracked up a few bulls, but nothing interesting. After lunch, we eased the safari car quietly into a large clearing that held some water. Our PH had seen a crocodile there on an earlier safari and he wanted to take another look.



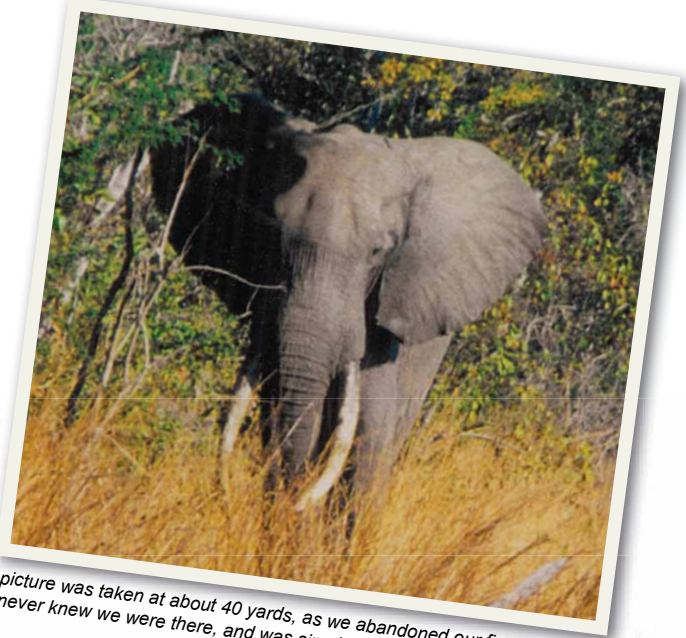
*It takes quite a crew to hunt elephant. My rifle is a Charles Boswell Double, in 500 3-1/4 Nitro Express.*

As we came into the clearing, there were two elephant bulls walking away at the far end, perhaps 800 yards. We stopped the car and looked briefly with our binoculars and

then began a quick advance on foot. The rear bull had the biggest ivory I had seen, but what did I know?

We left the rest of the team in the shade about 150 yards out and the PH and I proceeded alone, to a small bush about 40 yards away. We looked him over carefully and it was obvious that my young PH was in a quandary. Was this a shooter or not? He finally decided no. I took a few pictures and we backed out.

The PH, speaking in Swahili, related the story to the others. There was quite a bit of discussion and the game scout was quite animated. Then, in English, the PH said that the game scout was insistent this bull



*This picture was taken at about 40 yards, as we abandoned our first approach. The bull never knew we were there, and was simply flapping his ears to keep cool.*

was big enough to shoot and that he would take full responsibility, if the bull was under the legal minimum. "So, what did I want to do?"

Easy choice, I had thought he was a shooter at first sight. So, the PH and I made the short trip back to the bull, nearly in the position we left him.

**“Was this a shooter or not?”**

He was facing us and we walked straight in. At about 20 steps he noticed us, raised his head and started toward us. My first shot for the brain was a little high; as he turned to run, I put one between his eye and ear and he was down for the count. The elephant I almost didn't shoot had the longest tusks of anything I have shot since.

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Luwele Camp  
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Tanzania, Africa  
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*The tusks weigh 44 and 46 pounds and are just under six feet in length, along the outside curve.*