

# NOTHING Goes to Waste in Africa

– LARRY’S SHORT STORIES #167 –

It was a big surprise when the Ford tractor came rolling down the dirt road and drove right up to the dead elephant. The tractor was pulling a large flat-bed farm wagon, completely loaded with people from the local village; they had come to process the elephant. We were soon to learn that nothing goes to waste in Africa; and that the villagers take the entire process very seriously.

Skinning a deer or elk back home is pretty straightforward, we remove the guts in the field then do the skinning at the skinning shed. Moose, however — because they’re much bigger — must be handled differently; first, we skin the “up” side, just as the animal has fallen, remove the two quarters, then roll him over and repeat

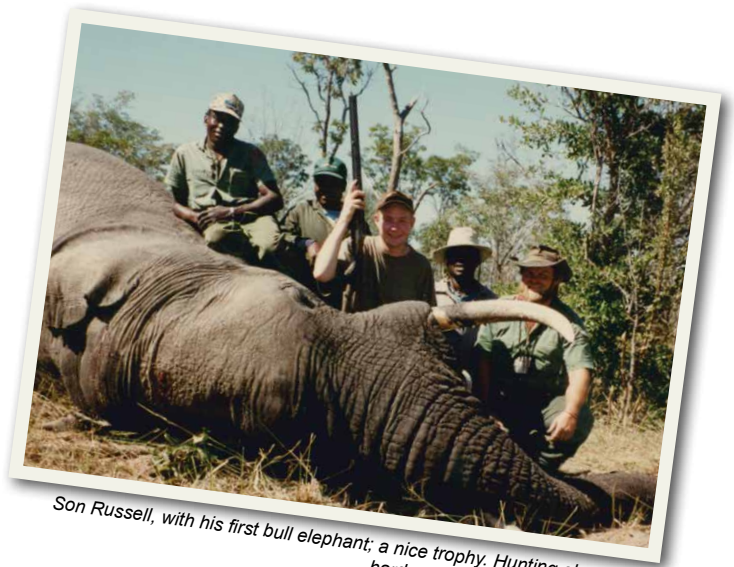
the process.

Skinning an elephant is a whole new deal.

The ivory tusks are the real trophies, of course; but the hide, once tanned, can be used to make boots and shoes,

gun cases, briefcases and many other things; all of which are trophies too, and can provide a lifetime of memories of the elephant and the hunt.

After the villagers had “oohed and aahed” for a few minutes, one man walked up to the elephant with a piece of chalk and began marking lines on the skin — laying out the panels that would be cut off and sent to the leather tannery. The largest panels were 4-5 feet square — an elephant is really big. It was a very small crew that did the skinning, while everyone else looked on.



*Son Russell, with his first bull elephant; a nice trophy. Hunting elephant is hard work, and so is skinning one.*

With the skin removed from one side, the rest of the villagers began harvesting the meat and piling it on the wagon. Back at the village it would be cut into small strips and hung in the sun to dry. After one side was clean of hide and meat, they rolled the carcass over — with the help of the tractor —

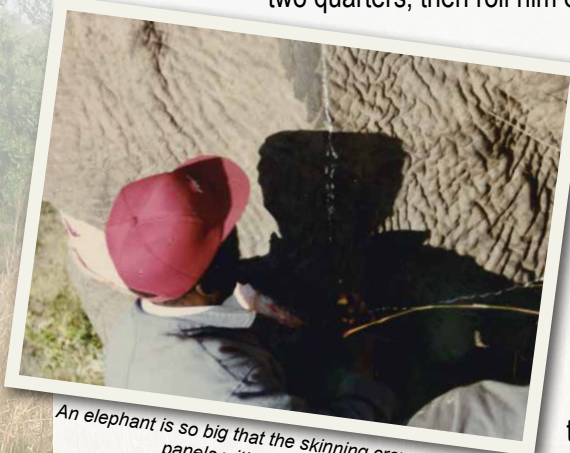
and started on the other side. Lastly, the heart, liver, lungs and intestines were removed — yes, in Africa, they eat it all.

**“...one man walked up to the elephant with a piece of chalk...”**

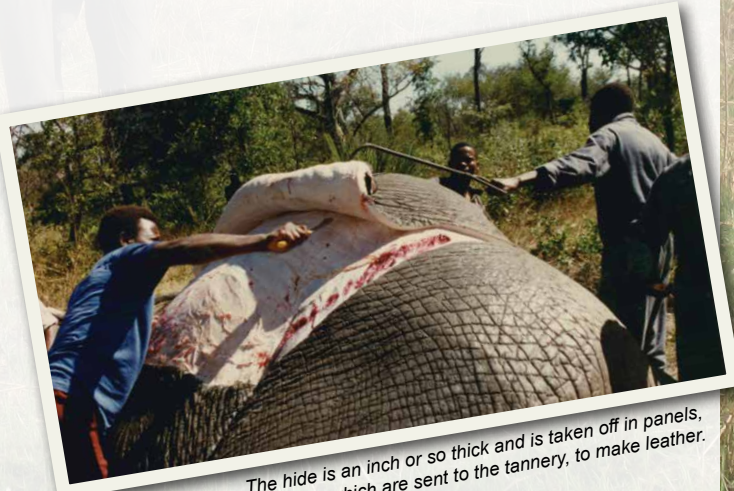
My family and I have a deep level of respect and gratefulness for the life of any animal we hunt and harvest. It’s encouraging to know the elephant meat goes to feed a hungry village and the trophy fees help protect the rest of the elephants from poachers. Nothing goes to waste in Africa.



Larry Potterfield  
Ngamo National Forest  
Outside Hwange National Park  
Zimbabwe  
16 June 1996



*An elephant is so big that the skinning crew marked off the panels with chalk, before they started cutting.*



*The hide is an inch or so thick and is taken off in panels, which are sent to the tannery, to make leather.*