

UCSD Graduate Student Organizes African Safari

October 11, 1967

Have you ever dreamed of joining a safari to an unexplored swampland in Africa where the last remaining bushmen might still live and where the tsetse fly is the official greeter?

If you're geared for the adventure of spending three or four months in the Okavango Swamps in the tiny country of Lesotho in Southern Africa on not much more than 2 to 3 dollars per day, then there is a graduate student at the University of California, San Diego that you should get in touch with.

He is Ian Malcolm Hirschsohn, a 25-year-old South African born in Johannesburg who is going back to his homeland in two years to try to conquer the Okavango Swamps by Jeep. Hirschsohn can't do it alone and he wants to take as many as 10 people and five Jeeps with him.

"We could cross the swamps with two Jeeps, three would be better, five would be ideal," Hirschsohn said. He added that one or two persons in just one vehicle would be suicide. The chances for survival seem to be directly related to the number of vehicles on the trip.

To interest people and answer questions concerning the safari, Hirschsohn has scheduled a public meeting and slide show of his past trips for 8:00 p.m. Tuesday, October 17, in room 2622, Undergraduate Sciences Building at UCSD.

The safari is scheduled for the summer of 1969. It will be winter in Africa and that area's most favorable season.

Hirschsohn feels it will take the next two years to gather equipment and to train and condition the safari members.

"You have to be completely sure of yourself and your vehicles on a trip such as this," he said. By way of conditioning, Hirschsohn hopes to organize trips into Baja California this Christmas and to Alaska next summer.

According to Hirschsohn, money for this type of trip isn't important. He said the entire safari can be made for about \$1,500 per person compared to the normal safari cost - complete with great white hunter - of \$200 per day. What is important, he said, is finding someone who will help locate vehicles and parts at reasonable cost.

Those who are going should find their vehicles within the next two months and begin to fix them up. They can be in any shape when purchased, Hirschsohn said, but they must be in top shape when they are shipped to Africa.

Hirschsohn's safari will be a research trip. It might include biological studies of the various plants and animals in the area, or a survey of the geological structure. Hirschsohn is already sure of one companion, a geophysics student from Purdue University, who wants to do refraction studies in the swamp area.

Hirschsohn has had wanderlust for most of his adult life but he has settled down long enough to further his technical education along the way. He graduated in 1963 from the Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg with

a B.S. degree in mechanical engineering. While in the University he worked at times in the gold mines to save money for a trip to Europe. He also hitchhiked around Southern Africa taking in Capetown and Durban, Rhodesia, the Kariba Dam, Zambia and as far north as the Congo border.

On another trip he hitchhiked west through the Kalahari Desert to diamond-rich Southwest Africa through 126-degree wilderness, where towns consist of five houses, a bar and a gas station and are 150 miles apart. In December, 1962, he flew to England during a vacation to work in an aircraft factory outside London for two months. Before returning home he hitched through Belgium, Holland, Germany and France. He returned to Europe a year later and toured Belgium, France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland and Germany by motor scooter.

In September, 1964, he entered Purdue University and in his first year traveled to Milwaukee, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, New York, Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Smoky Mountains. He also went west and hiked in Bryce Canyon, Zion Canyon, and walked down the Grand Canyon from rim to rim and back.

In the summer of 1965 he attended summer school at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and did some hiking in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. At the end of the summer he again went west to hike in the Rocky Mountain National Park. During Christmas, 1965, he hitched to Miami and flew to the Bahamas where he spent eight days sleeping on the beaches of Nassau.

Hirschsohn received an M.S. degree in engineering science from Purdue in 1966 and is currently writing his thesis for an M.S.E. degree from Princeton University. He came to UCSD this fall and entered the Department of Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering Sciences to take advantage of "a really impressive and superior faculty." He is working toward a Ph.D. degree in the area of turbulent reacting fluids.

Hirschsohn is sure he will get his safari together and on the way on schedule in spite of the extensive preparations and the tsetse fly. These flies are a half-inch long housefly equipped with a stinger that will penetrate the hide of an African buffalo. Not only do you feel them, but you get the added advantage of sleeping sickness.

There is no known cure for sleeping sickness, but don't worry. Hirschsohn said only one tsetse fly in a million carries sleeping sickness. You just have to hope that that one doesn't bite you.