

RHINOS ON THE RUN

By COLONEL MARCUSWELL MAXWELL

With photographs by the author

WELL up in the hot semi-desert country towards Kenya's northern border lies a pan which does not differ in any respect from the many others in the country. This pan is merely a broad expanse of level sun-cracked mud which, when heavy rain falls, turns into a liquid sea of the consistency of thick black soup. On most sides it is surrounded by level grass country, while it is so cut up by clumps of large yellow thorn trees and thick bush that, to the eye, small pan seems to follow small pan indefinitely. But what really distinguishes this pan from others are the animals that live there. Among the most interesting of them are the rhinos.

Rhinos are generally considered cantankerous and stupid. But after a long study of the rhinos who inhabit this pan, I have come to the conclusion that such a statement is far from true. Cantankerous they may be at times, especially when drought has forced natives from miles around to raid their feeding grounds and resting places, but stupid is an epithet they

do not deserve. They are really very shrewd.

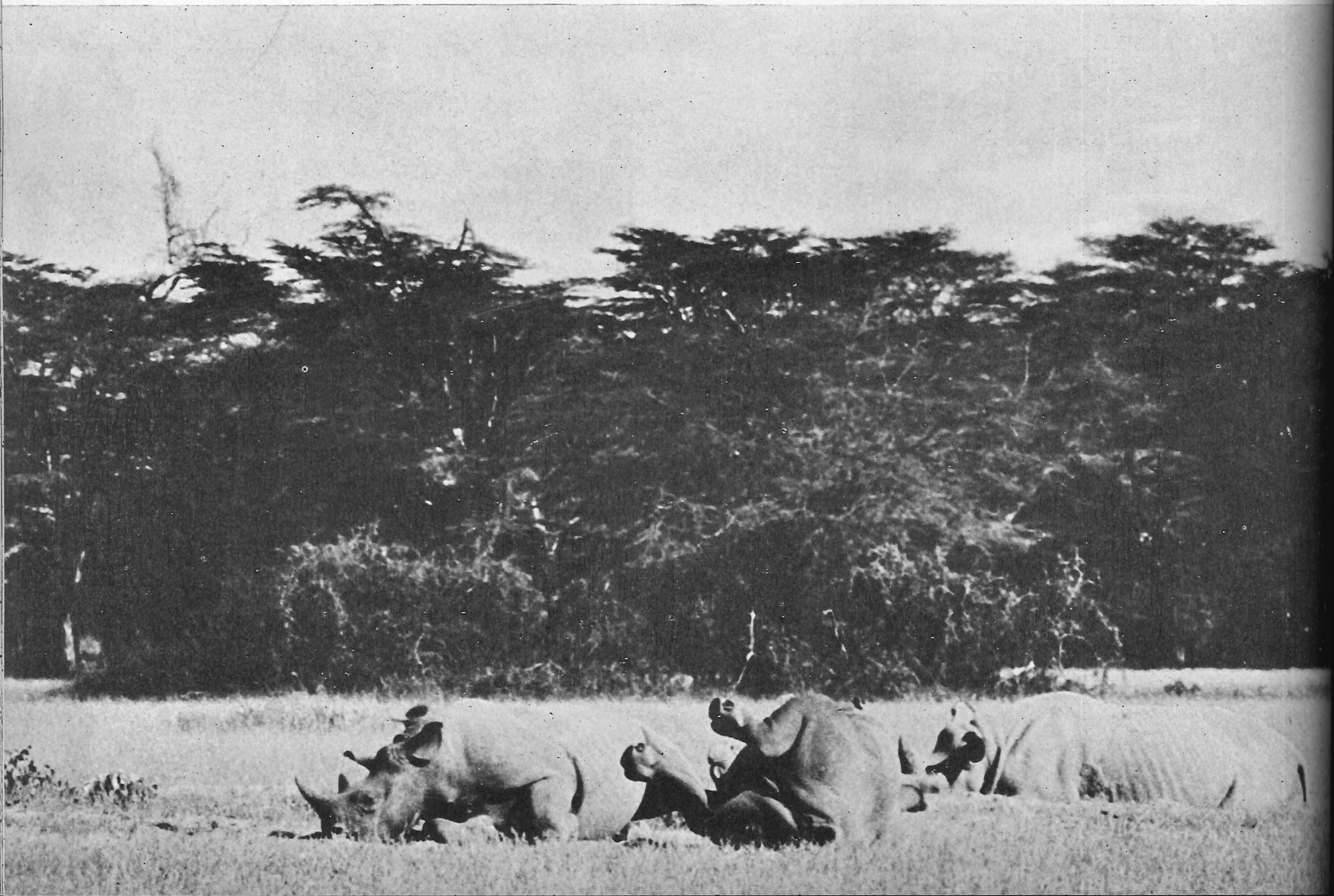
When out with my camera one morning I came across a family consisting of a female with an excellent horn, a large toto, and a big bull. I did my best to get within photographic range, but as the ground was very brittle the female heard me almost at once. Determined to find out what I was, she went around the bush in a large circle, hoping to wind me. However, I managed to avoid this, and she then took her family to the top of the nearby hill which was almost bare, the vegetation consisting of one large tree and two bushes. As soon as I realized she was going to lie under this tree I started to approach, using the two bushes as cover, only to find that as I got near she had wisely put the bull under the farthest bush and her calf under the other, a maneuver which completely defeated me.

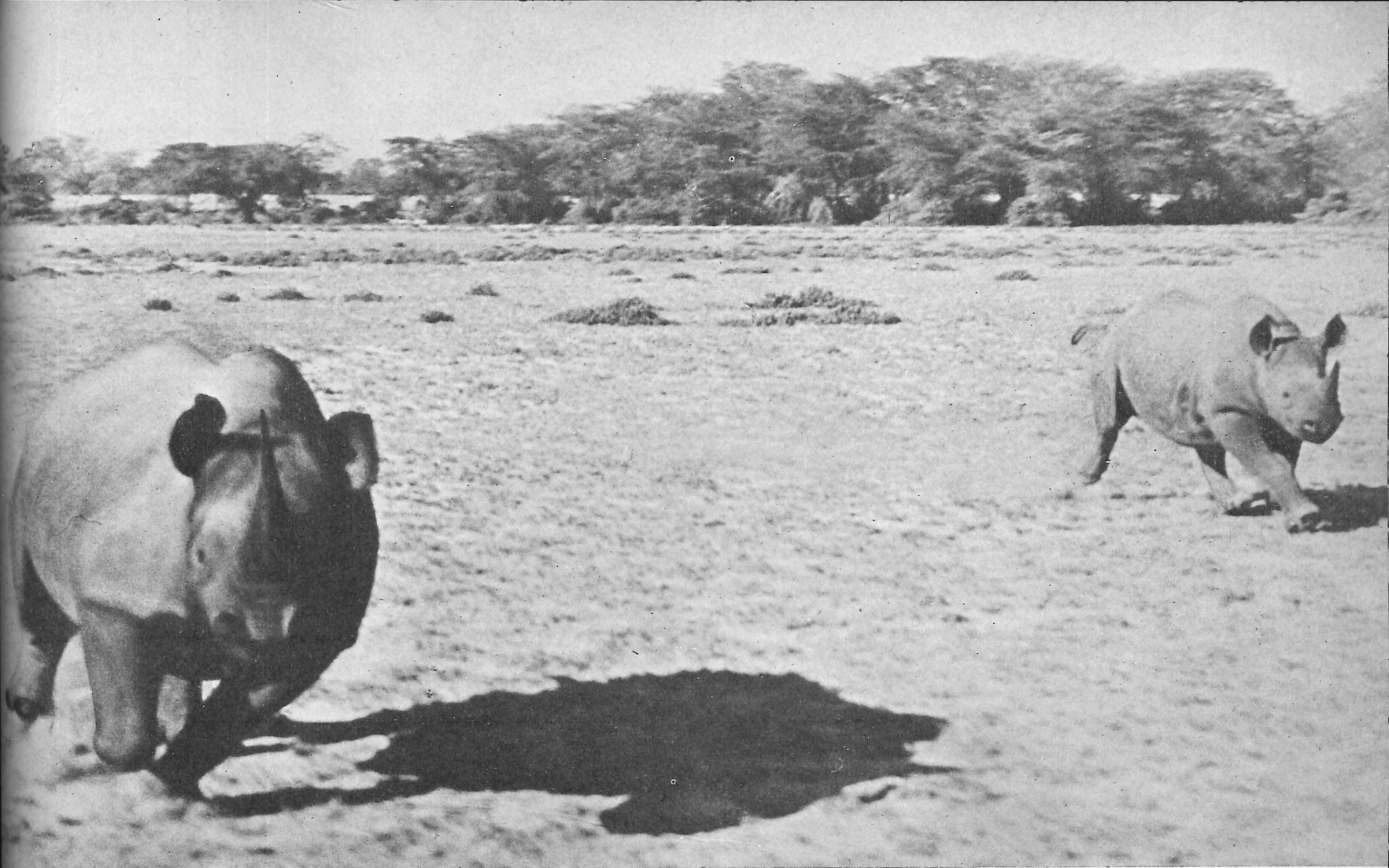
This lady also taught me not to put much faith in what I think is a fallacy—namely, that a rhino's sight is hopelessly bad, for as I moved away rather carelessly she saw me

and came out, although I must have been at least seventy yards away from her when she first spotted me. True, a rhino's sight is poor, and you can get very close by walking slowly in a dead straight line, using a tree or a bush to cover your approach, but any quick movement, especially a sideways movement, is readily perceived. Once a rhino has spotted you he does not readily lose sight of you again.

However, to return to my rhinos of the pan. Among them were two specially noteworthy animals—a fine bull and his amazing consort. My first meeting with this pair was most interesting. I happened to be looking across the grass which fringes this pan when I saw what I took to be a thin pole which projected three or four feet above the grass and moved about. Slowly it came closer, until a large female rhino stepped out of the reeds onto the pan. She had the most remarkable horn I have seen on any animal. It was almost four feet long, straight as a sword blade and almost

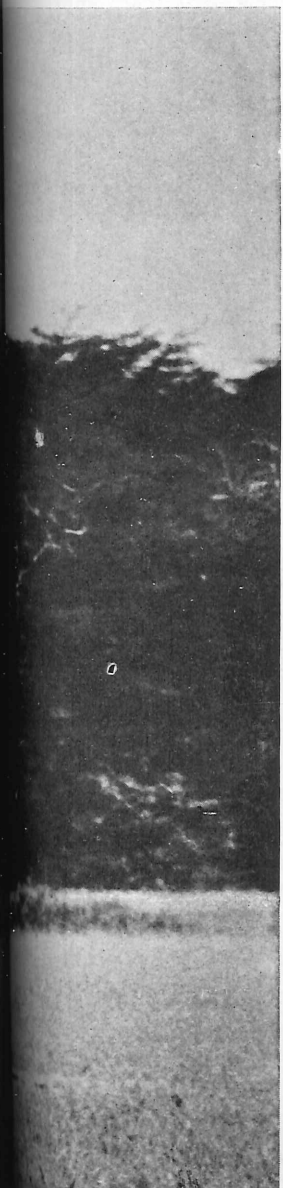
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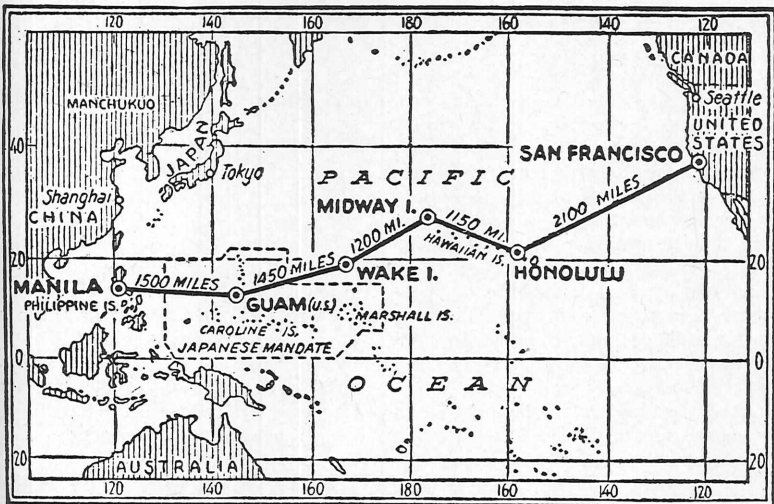
PACING RHINOS BY MOTOR

They are going about twenty-five miles an hour, these clumsy pachyderms. Colonel Maxwell drove too close to them in his motor car. After stirring their anger, he turned his car to let them follow, doing their infuriated best to catch up with the intruder. It's a fine spectacle from the safe vantage point of an automobile. Photographs can be taken, and the rhinos' speed can be estimated on the speedometer. In the upper and lower picture the female is on the left. Below, she is just beginning to get under way. Later on she proved herself a far nimbler sprinter than her lazy consort, actually reaching a speed of thirty-five miles an hour. On the opposite page is a group of rhinos in an indolent mood in their pasture not far from the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro.



WAKE ISLAND—AMERICA'S MID-PACIFIC AIRPORT

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loss of her music in the shipwreck, she gallantly gave two concerts to packed houses. She then proceeded to complete her world tour

Tonight Wake Island lies out there in the midst of the Pacific Ocean with the darkness of gigantic waters around her, and the three red eyes of her beacon and her windmills staring across her flat coral fields to the sea. A strange combination of something which belongs to the dim silent centuries, and something which is ushering in the new age of air—such is this unique island.

When a Flying Clipper finally lifts you from that island into the sunrise, there is a moment of intense regret as you look down upon the familiar horseshoe outline. You see the lonely windward stretch of shore where birds still hover in the winds of the sea above the old anchor chains of the *Libelle*. And already, as the island fades into the morning behind the Clipper's whirring gleam of motors, you know that even if you never see its shores again, nothing can ever erase its memory from your mind.

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as slim. This horn did not slope back as usual, but canted well forward so that as she bent her head down to feed, it was almost horizontal with the ground. Although I was able to obtain a small amount of ciné-film of this animal, neither then nor since have I ever been able to get close enough to obtain a still photograph.

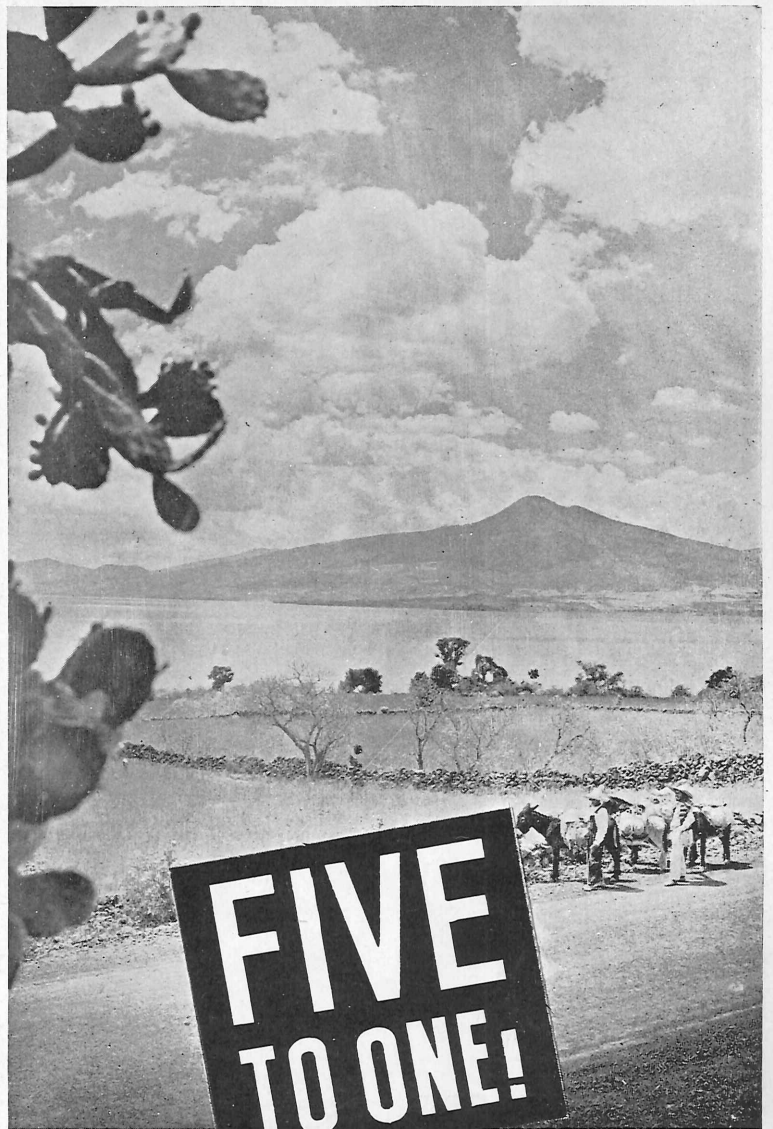
Behind the female followed her consort—a beautiful bull, large, unusually sleek, and with a good horn. I have met him many times since, and got to know him well. He proved to be a thorough sportsman, if one can so describe a rhino, but he would not permit any other rhino to come near him and apparently considered himself the overlord of this pan. However, there was nothing mean about him, and apparently he scorned to charge anything much smaller than himself. Luckily for him, he appeared to have come to an understanding with the elephants which live amongst these thorn-tree clumps. On several occasions I have been able to get quite close to him on foot, as he lay up in the midday heat among thick bush or under some dense tree, although on each occasion I suspect that he knew I was there, for he always showed great skill in choosing his resting-place.

I often tried to get up to camera range by car. Though I drove as carefully and quietly as possible on his blind side, and with all due regard to wind, he always spotted me

when I was still a long way off. Then, without hesitation, he charged. His charge did not stop until the car was in full flight and disappearing from his horizon in dust. Many a good run has he given me over the pan when I have met him either returning in the early morning from a good night's browsing, or when the setting sun has lured him from his daytime haunts. On each of these occasions this old bull has shown what has appeared to be such an amazing turn of speed that I finally decided to measure his pace. One fine morning, when I met him out on a small level plain, he charged. I kept the car just in front of him, and noted the speedometer. This showed that for about a quarter of a mile or more he kept me going at twenty-eight miles an hour, a speed which, though fair, was rather disappointing to me. (Some time previously I had tried out a female rhino, and she kept me going at thirty-five miles per hour over some considerable distance, although it was down a slight incline.)

It was perhaps just as well that the bull was not traveling faster that morning because my engine stopped when he was in full pursuit. Followed by a couple of tons of rhino coming at full gallop about twenty feet behind, I had an uneasy moment or two. Luckily the engine picked up again almost at once.

On other occasions, while a companion drove, I have been able to photograph my galloping rhino friend many times.



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