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June 28, 1958

Dr. Wesley R. Fishel
 Vietnam Project
 Office of Coordinator
 Michigan State University
 East Lansing, Michigan

Dear Wes:

I was very pleased to receive your memo regarding Mr. Lewis Zimmerman. I'll try to answer the questions in the proper sequence.

Relative to hunting from mid-March to mid-April. Even tho' the Vietnamese military and police forces do not obey the laws, there is a closed season on hunting, from 15 March to 15 September. A Mr. Fitz, a big game hunter and author for Outdoor Life came to Vietnam in May and was given a license to hunt big game. So it can be done by clearing with the proper people. Fitz' stay was unplanned and too short so that he was unable to get anything in the five days he was out. In that short time he was unable to get a guide so went to one of the French plantations.

I honestly believe that the four months, November, December, January and February, are the best. The rains stop in October, and by November the leeches are on the decrease. By March the forests are dry and any stalking that is done becomes a chore because of the dryness of branches, twigs and leaves. You will remember that I planned my hunting trip during January. There were no leeches infesting the forests and plains by then and even though there had been no rain for two and a half months, the forest was green and stalking a pleasure. Let me put it this way--March and April are months that game "spooks" easily but it can be shot despite this tendency. If that's the time Mr. Zimmerman comes to hunt, that's the time that we'll do everything possible to give him a successful hunt.

Regarding game, there are at least seven different species of deer here ranging in size from the very tiny barking deer to deer weighing 450 and 500 lbs. Elephants are numerous but the really large elephant are in the out-of-way areas and considerable walking must be done over rugged terrain and thru thick jungle growth. It may be necessary to walk 15 miles in a day for a day or two in order to get an elephant to be proud of. I mean an Asian elephant with tusks that will weigh 80-100 lbs. That's big, here. I am now planning on an elephant hunt for October. However, I'm used to the leeches, by now.

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There are three species of tiger, and all three are plentiful. The Plain's tiger in the area around BanMeThuot, the Swamp Tiger and the Mountain Tiger. All three probably, at one time, had the same parents but environment has changed them sufficiently to make them clear and distinct. The Swamp and Plains Tigers are smaller than the Mountain Tiger and are not, as a rule, man-eaters. The Mountain Tiger is the largest and will stalk and kill man. Reports from last year (1957) reveal that more than 600 Vietnamese people were killed by tiger. The Mountain Tiger is identical to the Bengal tiger and there are still several in Vietnam that will measure 12 feet from nose to end of tail. (Mine was 9' 8", Babineau's 8' 5")

Bantang or wild cattle are plentiful and a large male set of horns would make a wonderful trophy. Gaur are plentiful, but to be sure of a good head require stalking by day and this involves walking. I'm enclosing several photos of my son Stephen's hunting success, a very large male gaur, about 12-13 years old and weighing close to 3000 lbs. If Mr. Zimmerman should compare this size to a very large American Bison, the Bison will suffer by the comparison. The photo showing the two Montagnard on the beast gives a good indication of size. This gaur when standing was quite close to seven feet at the shoulder. One odd item about gaur, there has never been one in captivity. They are very wild, and, very dangerous when wounded.

Leopard and panther are plentiful but harder to get than tiger. A more suspicious lot, apparently. There are black panther here.

Wild buffalo are plentiful and a carefully selected male head would really be a trophy. I intend to get a good one before I leave Vietnam.

Several months ago heard of a Frenchman who had shot a rhino. Asian rhino are very scarce and, here, very valuable because of the value the Chinese place on the horns for medicine. If a person is interested and willing to walk, a rhino is not beyond the realm of possibility.

Bear are plentiful. I shot a large "horse" bear (specie unknown), weight close to 500 lbs. Small "honey" bear are extremely plentiful as are wild dog, civet, and smaller game.

All kinds of fowl--wild chicken, pheasant, peacock, pigeon, etc.

There is a specie of antelope here. The Latin name is Cervulus Muntjac.

Does this resume interest Mr. Zimmerman?

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Hunting big game here is different than hunting in Africa or India. There's no such thing here as a regular safari with many porters to bring in necessary supplies, with hot water baths, etc., nor is tiger hunting here done with the use of a hundred beaters as it is in India. Tiger hunting here is done by the use of bait and the building of a mirador (a platform in a clump of trees). The tiger comes to the bait, usually during the night. He can be shot at that time by using a headlamp or, the hunter can wait until the tiger returns again in the early morning when he can be shot in daylight. As I mentioned before, elephant, gaur, bantang, and wild buffalo are stalked during the day, since, if hunted at night, one is unable to carefully select the proper trophy heads. Therefore, regarding special equipment, bring well-worn hunting clothes and rubber-soled light boots. Days are very hot, nights can be very, very cold, so a couple of woolen shirts and a heavy jacket are needed for the nights. A Winchester 5 cell headlamp and fresh batteries are a must.

Regarding weapons, nothing smaller than a 30-06 rifle should be brought, and it is preferable that the rifle be a 375. I use a 30-06 and intend to shoot elephant and gaur with it. My son Stephen shot his gaur with my 30-06. I have shot bantang and wild buffalo and have been successful in bringing them down. However, I am a good shot, know what the gun can and will do, and never shoot unless I have the proper target. Wounded game can be dangerous game--I therefore recommend the use of the .375.

Since Les Smith stopped guiding hunters, there has been only one good guide in Vietnam. He is the chap I use whenever I go hunting. Stephen was with him for two weeks, alone. I trust the guide implicitly. He is extremely capable, young, and knows the country like the palm of his hand. Speaks a little English, speaks French fluently, Vietnamese, and four different Montagnard dialects so that he can go anywhere in the mountains and receive Montagnard cooperation. His name is Pierre H.J. Chanjou, P.O. Box No. 61, Dalat, South Vietnam. I would suggest that Mr. Zimmerman get a letter off to him explaining just what game he is interested in and mentioning the dates he will be here for the hunt. Pierre can give all information that Mr. Zimmerman will need regarding costs, gun permits, hunting permits, etc. I had a letter from Pierre day before yesterday asking that Chuck join him on a hunt for a month the latter part of September when Pierre guides a stateside client for a month. Pierre is on Weatherby's (the Cal. gun man) guide list for stateside clientele and business is beginning to pick up. The sooner Mr. Zimmerman makes the contact and makes the necessary arrangements, the better. If Mr. Zimmerman wishes, he could enclose a letter to Pierre to me at my FPO address. I'll forward it to Pierre, and any answers can be processed through me. Because international mail is still unreliable, this might be the surest method.

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One month is sufficient time to do all of the hunting one desires and to shoot some really fine trophies. But, please let the guide know what specific game is desired. Some areas are excellent for elephant but poor for gaur; others good for gaur but poor for wild buffalo, etc., so if the guide knows what is wanted he surveys areas for the specific game wanted and has all preparations made to fill the needs of the client.

Last but not least, David Zimmerman, age 11.

Stephen Sloane, age 16-1/2, is an excellent shot with rifle, shotgun and revolver. He is 5' 11" and weighs 170 lbs. He is a star scout and has a number of merit badges on camping, etc., earned here in Vietnam. Living conditions in the Montagnard villages, far away from any contact with civilization, can be and is very rugged. However, even tho' he would not be able to walk for elephant, etc., he might conceivably be able to shoot a tiger from a mirador, if he can remain motionless for 10 to 12 hours. The decision should rest with the guide, whether he could provide hunting for the boy.

I've tried to give a general resume of the hunting situation. If Mr. Zimmerman contacts Pierre, he will supply more information of value to him. Inasmuch as Charlotte and I consider Pierre and Mrs. Chanjou as personal friends, it wouldn't do any harm for Mr. Zimmerman to mention my name when and if he writes to Pierre. I know he will get royal treatment.

If there is anything else Mr. Zimmerman wishes to know, have him drop me a line.

Hope this finds you, Jane and the children well and not suffering from cultural shock.

Sincerely,

Charles

Charles Sloane

CS/her
Enclosures