

## South Africa Safari

What did you do this summer? That is a question a teacher might ask as students came back to school. One sixth grader who had quite a story was Brandon Striefsky, Flat Rock Road, Forest City, who spent 10 days in the Republic of South Africa. Brandon went with his grandfather, John Kameen, on a game viewing and hunting safari in East Cape Province, RSA.

After spending months practicing on the Browndale Sportsman's Club rifle range, his steady hand and sharp eye allowed him to get nine African animals including Zebra, gemsbuck, black wildebeest, two impala, blesbuck, two springbok, and a mountain reedbuck. He used a Remington Model 600 in .243 caliber for two animals, and a 7MM-08 Weatherby Youth rifle for the other seven game animals.

His mother and father, Brian and Patricia Striefsky, had some concerns about their son, who just got his Pennsylvania Hunter's Safety Card, going 8,000 miles away to hunt his first big game animals. The fact that grandfather and grandson would have a satellite phone to keep in contact with home, somewhat relieved their concerns. The phone allows you to call from anywhere in the world as long as you are outside and can see the sky.

They flew from JFK Airport, New York City, on South African Airlines for a 17 hour flight which stopped in Dakar, Senegal. The SAA planes have individual entertainment centers in each seat to play a variety of movies, TV programs, documentary films and games. This surely shortened the flight for Brandon.

After landing in Johannesburg, South Africa, they flew about two more hours to Port Elizabeth, SA, which is located on the Indian Ocean. Brandon remarked that he had never seen such a color as was the Indian Ocean. Picked up at the airport by ranch owner Grant Abrahamson, they had another 120 mile drive to his 16,000 acre ranch near Somerset East, SA, in the game-rich East Cape Province. Grant, a Professional Hunter (PH), and his brother-in-law, last year purchased a neighboring 20,000 acre ranch. In addition they have hunting rights on another contiguous 12,000 acre ranch. The area covered would stretch from Forest City to Scranton.

It is the end of winter in South Africa now, with temperatures in the 40's in the morning rising to the 60's during the day. Traveling to a different area each morning, Brandon and his grandfather, along with the PH and a tracker and skinner, sought out various game animals indigenous to that area by scanning with binoculars. When an animal which fulfilled the PH's trophy requirements was spotted, a stalk was setup. Not all stalks work out, in fact, almost an entire day, involving eight different stalks, was required to bag Brandon's blesbuck.

Brandon's most sought after trophy, the one he determined months ago was to be his principal goal, was a Burchell's zebra, a huge and wary African game animal. It was not until the fourth day that a trophy was spotted and a stalk ensued. The animal has great eyesight and acute smell and hearing. Wind direction and silence were absolutely required. He was able to get

within 160 yards to make the shot which was successful. The zebra weighed over 800 pounds.

All meat from game animals is returned to the ranch and cut up in a meat processing facility as large as is found in any area meat market. The meat feeds the ranch owner and his family along with his 26 employees. Brandon got to eat kudu, impala, eland, blesbuck and springbok, as well as Karoo lamb, the most delicious tasting lamb found anywhere in the world. Several large sheep herds and beef cattle are also pastured on a section of the ranch.

All meals were eaten with the Abrahamson Family which includes a son, Anthony, the same age as Brandon, and a daughter, Abigail, age 10. After every day's hunt, Brandon and the two children got together with the family's many pets including dogs, cats, pigs, chickens, even two pet springboks and a pet kudu. Brandon also got to learn about school as it is in South Africa.

The only tense part of the trip occurred on return to JFK Airport in New York when a drug dog hit on Brandon's backpack. The object of the dog's interest was a peanut butter and jelly sandwich which the Abrahamson Family had packed for him on the plane. The two were also surprised when they emerged from Customs inspection to find their family waiting for them with signs greeting their arrival.

Brandon and his grandfather will have lasting memories of that summer vacation which took them 8,167 miles (by GPS) from their homes in Forest City. Brandon got to learn that children in South Africa have the same joys and interests as those here in the states, plus they have all those animals surrounding them every day.