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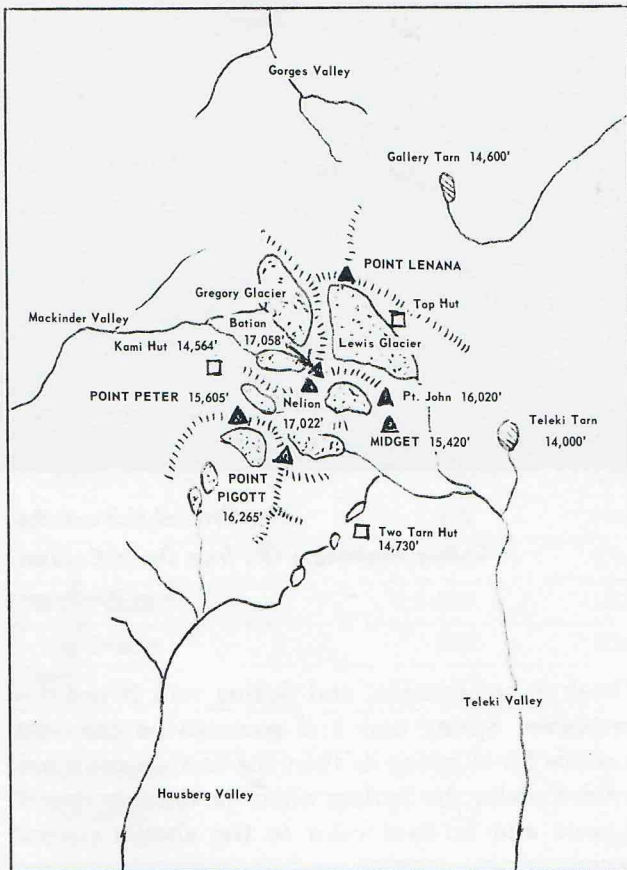
Two

Dear J.,

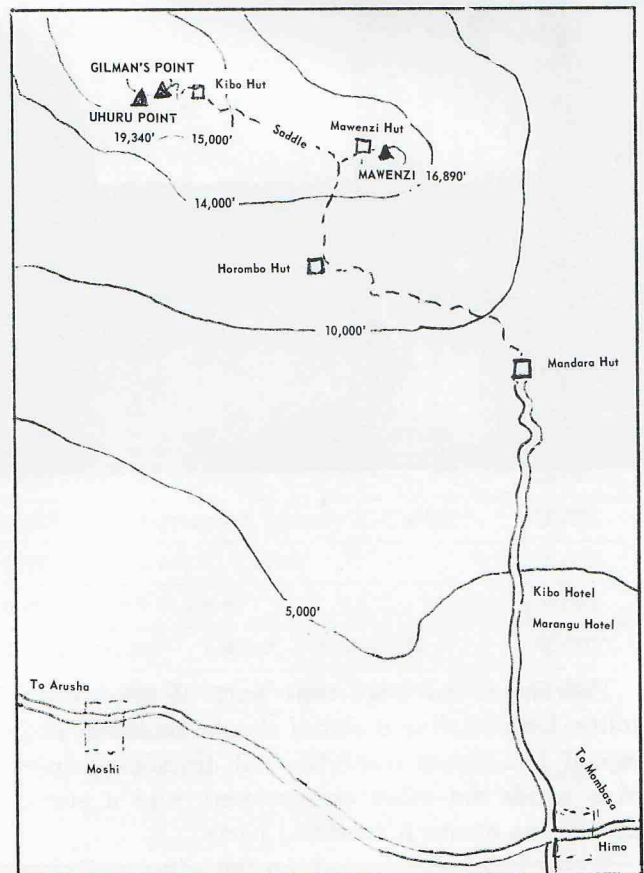
Mt. Kenya (17,058') in Kenya and Mt. Kilimanjaro (19,340') in Tanzania are the two highest peaks in Africa. Joel and I climbed Nelion, Batian, and Lenana, the three highest summits of Mt. Kenya, and Kilimanjaro last March. Although these mountains are both volcanoes, their general character and the type of climbing one

finds on them are quite different. Kenya is a volcanic plug whose solid rock and steep glaciers provide many challenging routes. The easiest route to Nelion and Batian, its twin rock summits, is moderate fifth class. Kilimanjaro, on the other hand, is a huge volcano whose summit can be reached by long walks over scree and snow from several directions.

The Mount Kenya Area



The Kilimanjaro Area



African Volcanoes

By Arlene Blum

Kibo, the snow summit of Kilimanjaro was sighted by the missionary Rebmann in 1848; Mt. Kenya was seen by his colleague Dr. Krapf in 1849. The peaks were first climbed about 50 years later: Kibo by Professor Hans Meyer, a Leipzig geographer in 1889; and Mt. Kenya by Geography Professor H. J. Mackinder in 1899. Since those days the traffic to these mountains has increased to the point that 800 people a month visit Mt. Kenya during the dry season and even more attempt to hike up Kilimanjaro. At least 14 routes have been established on the rock summits of Mt. Kenya and 10 on Kibo. In fact, in 1964 two climbers went from the top of Kibo to the top of Mt. Kenya in under 22 hours.

Almost anything needed for the climb of these mountains can be purchased in Nairobi except for Wyler's drink mixes. Generally, local food is of high quality and less expensive than in the States. Expensive imported foods should be avoided as they tend to be ancient. We found local cashews, cheese, and lemon curd to be especially delicious and inexpensive. Excellent English freeze-dried dinners, such as prawn curry and rice, are reasonably priced and generally available.

Public taxis cover the one hundred miles between Nairobi and Naro Moru River Lodge from which the mountain may be climbed. Our taxi lost its windshield quite dramatically to a stone a few miles north of Nairobi. Picking off the glass fragments, the driver continued windshieldless in a driving rainstorm. Shaken, we arrived at Naro Moru Lodge at 4 p.m. and by 4:30 had arranged for a car to take us to the roadhead the next

morning and for three porters to help carry our 150 pounds of baggage to Top Hut.

We spent the night at the bunkhouse of the Naro Moru Lodge from which we saw a red and gold sunrise warm the summit rocks of Mt. Kenya over 10,000 feet above us. The ride to the trailhead (10,000') cost about \$16 for 16 miles and is definitely overpriced. Renting a cheap VW in Nairobi and driving up oneself to the trailhead would cost no more. Park entrance fees were another \$16 but at least are used to maintain the park.

We set off with our porters and Sue Darling, an English girl we met, for the pleasant four-hour stroll to Teleki Hut (13,500'). The porters, who carry 35-pound loads, were all well-equipped with proper boots and clothing. Many even had wrist watches and cameras along. We'd heard there was a "vertical bog" here like in the Ruwenzori, but we found just one steep, slightly wet section of trail where only the most talented hikers could get muddy to their knees. The Ruwenzori was never like this!

Teleki Hut was too crowded as was most of the Naro Moru River track. It seemed like a circus with hordes of tents and people all around. Feeling scrunched, after a very crowded night at Teleki, we reached Top Hut (15,700') in a four-hour climb up a steep grade of consolidated scree. The weather was excellent when we arose and deteriorated by mid-morning, to clear again only at sunset. This was, unfortunately, the pattern during our entire stay on Mt. Kenya.

Going up to 15,700 feet in two days seems not an especially good idea. In the last year there

have been five deaths due to pulmonary edema on Mt. Kenya, probably caused by this very rapid gain in elevation.

We left for the climb of Nelion and Batian at 5:30 a.m. Joel was not feeling well, probably due to the prodigious dinner he'd easily consumed, but not so easily digested, the previous evening. After crossing the Lewis glacier in 15 minutes we scrambled to the base of the rock and sat in the dark for an hour deciding whether we wanted to climb or just sit and digest dinner.

We were catalyzed into action by 18 dots approaching on the glacier. Most alarming! Rather surprising, as we'd been told that only about one party a week attempted to climb Batian and Nelion. The dots turned out to be a Mountain Rescue practice group. African porters were being trained to carry out technical rescues on the mountain. Excellent idea! In 1970, an Austrian climber was injured near the summit of Batian, and a team had to be flown in from Europe to rescue him.

We finally began to climb at 7 a.m., hurrying a bit to stay ahead of the rescue team. Fortunately, they found their victim near the bottom of the route and did not proceed further.

The climbing was really fun: third and fourth class on sound rock with occasional fifth class moves which in some unaccountable manner all seemed to occur during my leads. Too soon, the clouds swirled in and the snow fell. We got slightly off route near Mackinder's gendarme, and put in a couple pitons, the only two we placed during the climb.

In heavy snow we reached the summit of Nelion (17,022') at about noon to find the fantastic Lo Bonar bivouac hut on the top. Ian Howell had brought up the hut in fourteen solo climbs of Nelion as training for the climb of Annapurna South Face. The hut had thick foam on the floor, blankets, sleeping bag, stove, fuel and food. As we'd carried up extra supplies in case of a bivi, we left all the latter for future climbers. Motivation for climbing Batian in a snowstorm was now completely lacking, so we curled up in the hut to wait for the clear weather of the next morning. The sunset from 17,000 feet was spectacular. What a painless way to bivi!

After watching an even better sunrise, we traversed in the clear, cold morning air across to Batian (17,058'), the highest point in Kenya. Although Nelion and Batian are only 150 yards apart, one must descend about 140 feet into the "Gate of the Mists" between them. The descent rocks were steep and iced so we left 80 feet of quarter-inch line in place to facilitate the re-ascent out of the mists. The scramble to Batian was really pleasant in the warm sun.

We descended to Top Hut in three hours in another snowstorm. The mountain was cluttered with rappel slings and we'd heard tales of the numerous rappels necessary for the descent. Instead, we found the descent to be mostly third and fourth class with two 75-foot rappels, each done from about *thirty* slings left at the rappel point.

All in all, Mt. Kenya is a fun climb, though this route presents few technical difficulties. There are several infrequently climbed routes, notably on the north and west sides of the mountain, that involve challenging fifth class and aid climbing. The west ridge looked like a particularly fine ascent.

After climbing Mt. Kenya, we decided to spend a couple days hiking around it. Next morning we hiked up the snow in half an hour, more or less (more for me, less for Joel), to Pt. Lenana (16,355'), the objective of most of the people who climb Mt. Kenya. Then we crossed Simba Col to Kami Hut (14,564'). We saw numerous emerald green tarns that would have been most inviting for swimming if it had not been snowing.

At the hut I started feeding one of the apparently tame rock hyraxes that live around the huts begging for food. The cute, furry hyraxes fill the ecological niche of marmots in the Tetons: blatant thievery. The hyrax lunged for a particularly choice morsel. "Do rock hyraxes carry rabies?" I wondered, as I washed my deeply bitten thumb in a nearby tarn. Joel tried to raise my spirits by making oatmeal cookies from some leftover breakfast cereal, raisins, sugar and butter. Yumm!

Next day we hiked to Tarn Hut (14,730'), crossing three 15,000-foot passes on slidy scree. Too much work with fifty-pound packs! The inevitable mist came in, obscuring views of the

north and west sides of Mt. Kenya we'd been enjoying all morning.

Then down, past Mackinder's and Clarwell's camps in the pouring rain. What a change! In the past few days we'd visited nearly all the huts on the mountain and seen absolutely no one else. Coming in, there were hundreds of people on the track, and now we were apparently the only people on the mountain. Why? Was there a revolution in Kenya? Had Nixon's visit led to ultimate war between China and the U.S.? Or had the rainy season begun? We pondered the possibilities as we watched the rain turn to snow and gobbled hot oatmeal cookies.

In the morning, we hiked on frozen ground down the Teleki Valley. The region of lobelias and groundsel gave way to bamboo and then thick forest near the trailhead. On the way in there had been dozens of cars parked at the trailhead. Now, none at all.

We walked along the road through the forest with some trepidation as big game are one of the climbing hazards on Mt. Kenya. Several climbers, walking out through the forest at night, have been trampled to death by elephants. All we saw were several buffalo who grudgingly vacated the road for us at Joel's gentle persuasion, "Git out a heah, yah dumb critter!" I undid the waist loop on my pack as we walked by them in case they came back for further conversation.

Finally we reached the park entrance and learned that the rainy season had begun and we had indeed been the only people on Mt. Kenya. Reading the log books in the shelters on the mountain, we'd seen several entries of parties heading for the pleasures of the Kenya coast. As the rain fell in solid sheets we resolved to follow their example and retreated to Lamu, a veritable tropical paradise. Cold and wet no longer!

After acquiring most impressive sunburns, we reconsidered the pleasures of the mountains, and decided to visit Mt. Kilimanjaro in Northern Tanzania. We approached the mountain by driving almost completely around it through the Amboseli game reserve. This was the Africa I'd imagined: lions, rhinos, huge herds of giraffe, wildebeest, zebra, and gazelle on a high, dry plateau with Kilimanjaro benignly in the background.

At the Marangu Hotel in Marangu (P.O. Box 40, Moshi, Tanzania), we arranged for our safari. For \$16 we hired two porters who would each carry fifty pounds on their heads for our five-day climb. Unfortunately, we did not sign up for the complete tour. For about \$40 each, the hotel would supply several porters, guide and cook. The party is served tea in bed, and three delicious multi-course meals on a checkered tablecloth with flowers. A most civilized approach to mountaineering. Each morning, slurping down our oatmeal, we would enviously watch the "bwanas" eating fresh pineapple and papaya, bacon and eggs.

After much confusion with loads, porters, tourists and an illustrated lecture of the hardships of the ascent of "Kili," we set off with our porters. In an attempt to save us from the grave dangers of climbing the mountain without a guide, the manager of the Marangu had warned us of the possibility of our getting lost going through the forest. This seemed somewhat peculiar as we followed a jeep track nearly all the way from the Marangu at 4,500 feet to the Manderu Hut at 9,000 feet.

The trip to Manderu was a pleasant four-hour stroll for which we were handsomely rewarded. Delicious chupatis and beer were for sale at the hut. As we sat in the cultivated rose garden sipping beer and listening to the strains of Bob Dylan on the harmonica, we realized that U.S. climbing has a long way to go. When is someone going to open a hot dog stand on top of Mt. Rainier?

We set off again through a thick forest of trees dripping moss. By now there were quite a group of us from the U.S. Bob Dodson, who'd climbed all over the world, including Sikkim and the Antarctic; Steve Pinterich, the harmonica player who'd just hiked through the Rolwaling Valley of Nepal where we hope to go this fall; Bruce Markle; Susan Sachs and Linda Leuchter, who we later visited in Jerusalem. Singing and chatting happily, we walked through the open moorlands to Horombo Hut (12,300').

Filling our bottles with the LAST WATER the next morning, we set off for the pass between Kibo and Mawenzi (16,890'). Mawenzi may be climbed by several moderate to difficult routes on somewhat unsound rock. We did not seriously

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consider climbing it in our present slothful state.

The pass was several miles of high desert, flat and sandy. Soon we reached Kibo Hut (15,500') and tried to spend the afternoon sleeping. We'd heard rumors that customs up here were not nearly so civilized as down at Mandara Hut. Sure enough, at 1 a.m. we were rudely awakened by the guides of the other parties.

We staggered out into the lightly falling snow, and I immediately went back to sleep in spite of the cold. When I awoke, the sun was rising; I was at Gilman's Point (18,600') on the rim of Kibo's crater, and blessedly enough, there were 3,000 feet of snow-covered scree between me and the hut. I'm sure I'd never have been able to make it if I'd been awake.

"Uhuru" (19,340'), the highest point in Africa, was 700 feet above us and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles around the crater rim. The others were advised by their guides of the folly of attempting its ascent. Joel and I, lacking a guide, had no real choice but to go over and take a look at it.

And, I must say, we were very glad that we did. The walk around the crater from Gilman's Point to Uhuru is by far the nicest part of the climb. There is fantastic high mountain scenery: huge cornices, vertical blue crevasse walls, and delicate ice feathers above the hot African plains 15,000 feet below. Far out! Kili's reputation as a boring slog is doubtless based on accounts of people who are awake between Kibo Hut and Gilman's Point and then go no further around the crater.

At 9 we were on top of Uhuru in the warm morning sun. My sunburn was feeling better, so I lay in the sun for a while in my bikini to stay in practice for the beach. Surprisingly, we found a Sierra Club register with a note addressed to us from some Seattle climbers we'd met previously on Mt. Kenya. Eating smoked oysters and cashews with relish, we felt quite at home. We considered a visit to the inner crater of Kibo, which has very interesting thermal features, but decided we'd rather go down and eat oatmeal cookies.

So down we went, 7000 feet to the Horombo Hut. At some point a cold rain began, and I went

back to sleep, just awakening in time for cookies at the hut.

The next day's walk down was idyllic. The porters, eager to see their families again, tried to rouse us at 5. Fat chance! We staunchly stayed in our bags until 8. Then singing, we strolled through fields of flowers to Mandara Hut, where we enjoyed chupatis and beer. The porters made beautiful garlands of wildflowers for all those who'd succeeded in conquering Mt. Kilimanjaro. Refreshed, we finished the 20-mile, 8000-foot walk down to the Marangu in early afternoon.

It was time to go back to the beach again!

Sincerely,
Arlene

As the above suggests, climbing in East Africa is a most civilized and enjoyable activity. The seven-day trip around Mt. Kenya cost us each \$45 and the five days on Kili about \$25. Since porters' salaries are going up considerably, the trips are now somewhat more expensive. The best times for climbing are from December through mid-March and from July to September. Help and information can be obtained from the Mountain Club of Kenya, P.O. Box 45741, Nairobi, Kenya. They have meetings every Tuesday night which are usually quite interesting. Also they've published an excellent "Guide Book to Mt. Kenya and Kilimanjaro" which costs about \$3 and contains a thorough coverage of information about climbing and hiking in these mountains. There is a 1:25,000 map of the peak area of Mt. Kenya (\$1) and a 1:5000 map of the central peaks by Schiebl and Schneider. (\$4). The 1:50,000 and 1:100,000 maps of Kilimanjaro are of limited usefulness. All four of the above maps may be purchased from the Mountain Club of Kenya or from Alpina Technical Productions, 1 Medow Close, Goring, Reading, Berks RG8 OAP England.

Huts should be booked in advance. For hut bookings on Kenya, write the Naro Moru River Lodge, P.O. Box 18, Naro Moru, Kenya, and for Kili, write 'Hut Bookings,' Tanzania National Tourist Board, P.O. Box 381, Moshi, Tanzania. The charge for the use of huts is about 75c a night per person.