

# Africa - UNBELIEVABLE!

## Part 2

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This trip to African Arrow Safaris started back in Sept of 2008 as we were finishing up our first hunt with Harry Nel and African Arrow Safaris. Monty Shropshire, my close friend and hunting partner on this hunt had already decided that we had to return to collect more specimens of the African plains game. My wife was along as a non hunter and agreed with our decision. The next hunt really took shape in March of 2009 at the RMEF Elk Camp in Ft Worth TX when I bought a hunt that Harry had donated to be auctioned. Along with buying this auctioned hunt, Harry had made a deal with another hunting buddy and friend David Nelson that whatever I paid for the hunt David and a friend could pay the same amount and make a party of 4. I bought the hunt and the work began to find another for a foursome. It did not take long as Terry Martin agreed to be the 4th person. Dates were set for the hunt from Sept 20th 2010 until Sept 29th 2010. A long wait, but I knew it would past faster than we expected.

Fast forward to Sept 17th 2010 and we are headed to Dallas, TX to begin our long series of flights to Johannesburg, South African. We were flying United from Dallas to Dulles International on the 18th to catch a flight on South African Airways to Johannesburg, South Africa. Upon arriving at Dulles, we learned that our flight had been delayed over 3 hours. It was going to be a long wait, a long flight and very late by the time we made to the lodge at African Arrow Safaris. WE finally got on the plane and met Harry and Deirdre at the airport to begin the 3 ½ hour ride to the Limpopo outside Ellisras. By the time we drove, unloaded and settled in, it was 3AM on the 20th. Sleep did not come easy as I was up with the sun, along with the 3 other guys to make sure our bows were still on. David's rest had somehow moved and his first 2 shots did not even hit the 20 yard target but. Panic began to set in, but he knew that he had an ace in the hole. I had owned and operated a archery pro shop and indoor range for 9 years and after some slight adjustments to his rest, he was dead on at 20 yards and further and good to go. We all had a late breakfast and headed out to Shelanti Game Preserve, a new 40,000 acre concession Harry had just acquired. This new concession had all the things you think of when in Africa, Cape Buffalo, Rhinos, Hippos and Elephants. About the only thing missing were lions. By the time we got everyone settled in their hides for the evening hunt it was approaching 12 noon. Harry, my wife and I enjoyed the antics of a White Rhino female and her 3 to 3 ½ year old offspring close to the hide we were going to occupy for our evening hunt. I managed to get some good pictures and video of both up close and personal. The 2 African rookie hunters in our group, David and Terry started their hunts of with a bang as David took a mature, heavy horned Kudu

that measured a little over 51" and a very nice 21 ½" Impala all from the same hide. Terry managed to kill a mature Zebra Stallion on his first hunt with a well placed arrow. What a start for the rookies, a Zebra, Kudu and Impala. Neither Monty nor I took any shots, but I did get to watch the Rhino and her young, many Impala and a very beautiful but young Nyala drinking at about 8 yards from the blind. All in all it was a very successful start to our safari.

*Tuesday Sept 21, 2010*

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This morning started just like the first with watching a beautiful sunrise, shooting our bows to make sure everything was still on and breakfast. We then loaded the trucks and headed back to Shelanti. Shortly after arriving at Shelanti, Harry, my wife, Scott, the videographer and myself settled into an elevated hide situated 25 yards from the water. Our first animals in for a drink were a group of 5 Cape Buffalos. They never quite made it to the water as the wind shifted and off they went, crashing through the brush like "a herd of buffalo". We then watched numerous Warthogs, Waterbuck cows and 5 good Kudu bulls come to the water. 4 of the 5 Kudu bulls were over 50" and one was an outstanding bull. These bulls were in and out of shooting distance at the water from 11:30AM to 3:00PM and all offered excellent shots except for the big bull. He was always facing or quartering to us and would immediately spin and walk directly away and then stand broadside, but at longer distances than I cared to shoot. Some of the bulls continued to come into and out of the shooting lanes at the water, but the big boy never returned.

About sunset, a group of Warthogs made their way to the water and bring up the rear was a boar Warthog that only dreams are made of. It was difficult to get a good shot as a group of female Waterbuck cows came in also and between all the Warthogs and Waterbuck I did not have clean shot at the big boar. About 15 minutes before shooting light faded away, he finally turned perfectly broadside at 25 yards and it was now or never. The 20 yard pin settled high on his shoulder and without realizing it the arrow was on its way. The boar must have known too as he whirled directly away from me at the release of the arrow, but the 560 grain Gold Tip XT tipped with a 100 grain Smoke Ramcat found his left ham and buried to the nock. It knocked the boar off balance and we could immediately see blood, even with a marginal hit. After a short wait, we climbed out of the elevated hide and began the tracking. It was a short and sweet tracking job and we found my world class, once in a lifetime Warthog that ended up having 15 ½" tusks! After high fives and plenty of picture taking we returned to the water and retrieved all our gear out of the hide and waited on the truck to come pick us up. Scott then told us to be quiet and about 15 seconds later Harry said to get back in the hide and quickly. We retreated to the safety of the elevated hide and then watched 11 Cape Buffalo

come to water. They were lead by a big mature bull that Harry said had lost all respect and fear of humans or vehicles. He had been known to ram or butt anything that came into his territory. This was my second sighting of Cape Buffalo and it was a thrill to see them interact around the water. The wind then shifted, they were off and the truck showed up to pick up my Warthog and us and we headed back to the lodge for a great meal. We also learned the Terry and Monty had both connected on Kudu bulls both over 50" in length. A very successful day all around.

*Wednesday Sept 22, 2010* \_\_\_\_\_

We started this morning a little earlier than the previous as the animals seemed to want to water earlier than the previous 2 days. We were hunting the Nel's 14,000 acre home place so our drive was very short compared to the previous 2 days. We settled into a hide and had a short wait when Waterbuck cows filtered into the water accompanied by a very nice Tsessebe bull. Harry whispered that this was an exceptionally large bull. I had not thought of shooting a Tsessebe on this trip, but when Harry said it is exceptional that means it is a trophy in anybody's eyes. He gave me the perfect shot broadside at 22 yards but I unfortunately shot a little high. After a long tracking job and a follow up shot, I had an excellent Tsessebe bull with 15 ½" horns. Without the superb skills that Harry possesses in tracking, this recovery would not have been possible. Upon closer inspection of the bull you can see the different colors on this animal. They range from red to gray to black in different hues and are very beautiful. He will look great on my wall. Since the tracking job took us well into the afternoon, we spent the remainder of the day at the lodge sending emails and reliving the hunt. David returned that evening having taken a very good Blesbuck with 16 ½" horns. We all toasted each other for our success thus far and had a wonderful meal and retired to bed a sleep and to await the next day's adventures.

*Thursday Sept 23, 2010* \_\_\_\_\_

This morning was repeat of the previous mornings, shooting our bows and breakfast and a short trip to the hide. Harry told my wife and me that we could expect to see some nice Kudu bulls and Waterbuck bulls at this water, 2 of the main animals on my list for this trip. Nothing showed until about 9AM when some Waterbuck cows moved into the water. They milled around all morning and were joined periodically by more cows, warthogs, a nice Gemsbok female and 2 good but young Eland bulls. I was enjoying seeing all the animals milling around the area when Harry told me to get my bow and get ready. A very large Waterbuck bull was making his way in and Harry said this was an exceptional shooter. It did not take long for the bull to offer me a broadside 15 yard shot and I made it count. A perfect shot right straight up the leg and 1/3rd up the body broke both shoulders and after

short tracking job by Harry I had my hands on my Waterbuck bull. This is an exceptionally beautiful animal with long slick and fine hair and a white circle surrounding his rump and very distinctive markings on his face. He will look awesome as a pedestal mount with thick 29" horns. High fives and picture taking was followed by the loading of the bull into the truck for the trip back to the skinning shed. If anyone is wondering about what happens to these animals once they reach the skinning shed as far as the meat and such, probably over 95% of the animal is utilized. The workers on the farm will eat the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys and use the stomach for soups and the intestines, once cleaned, for sausage casings. The meat is also consumed by the clients, family and workers so very little is not used. We had a quick lunch and headed back to a different hide for the evening hunt. The evening's hunt was uneventful as we had only 4 Kudu cows and 4 young Kudu bulls in, none of which reached Harry's 50" minimum on Kudu on his concessions. The sun set and we headed back to the lodge for drinks, another fine meal, storytelling and lies and then off to bed.

*Friday Sept 24, 2010* \_\_\_\_\_

After a quick breakfast and flinging a few arrows, Coen, Harry's Dad and I headed to a hide for the morning's hunt. Coen was my PH this morning as Harry was helping WJ and David track David's big bull Eland he had shot the previous evening. Harry got David close enough for a second shot and he had a fine 36" massive Eland bull. Our morning was slow as all we saw was 13 Red Hartebeest that just gave us a parting glance as they went by the hide. We decide to head for the lodge around 1PM for another fine lunch. After a few stories, big lies and many laughs, we all headed to our evening spots. We headed back to the hide where I had shot my Waterbuck hoping the 2 big Kudu bulls that claimed this area would show at the water. The waterbuck cows came to the water followed by more of the cows, some Kudu cows and a fine Blue Wildebeest bull. I passed on this bull as I already had one from a prior hunt with Harry in 2008. Harry then spotted the big Kudu bulls coming towards the water through the brush, but unfortunately one of the many Eurasian doves, Guinea fowl or Franklins did not like something and sounded the alarm and everything left in great haste and the big Kudu bulls faded back into the brush never to be seen again that evening. They "Gray Ghosts" of Africa had eluded me again. We returned to the lodge, had another wonderful meal with drinks and then retired to our rooms for more dreams of tomorrows hunt.

*Saturday Sept 25, 2010* \_\_\_\_\_

Harry decided the next morning that we were going to do a "spot and stalk" hunt along the river to see if we could get close enough for a shot on a Bush Pig, Bushbuck or Nyala. We dropped Terry and his PH Gary in a hide on the way to the

river. Once we reached the river, we got the wind in our face and began a slow, methodical stalk through the lush reeds, forbs and grasses that grew along the banks of the river. This was in very stark contrast to the dry, sanded rolling hills of the rest of the concession. All the animals avoided us that morning, but it was a thrill just knowing that at any moment a shot could have presented itself on a trophy "river dweller". After our stalk, we returned to a hide close to the river to close out the morning's hunt and to await lunch. I began a "power nap" in the hide and left the "viewing to Harry. Harry woke me after a short nap and we both observed Waterbuck cows and 6 fine young soon to be trophy Waterbuck bulls and 1 young Kudu bull interact around the water. Each was chasing the other around the water trying to show their dominance when a very fine Impala ram began his slow trip towards the water. The Waterbuck chased him off, but he returned about 5 minutes later and walked directly in front of the hide at about 5 yards and stopped to our left at about 12 yards, slightly quartering away. My arrow struck him in the crease of his leg and after about a 75 yards tracking job I put my hands on a very mature, heavy horned Impala ram that measured out at 24 ½", quite a bit bigger than the one I killed in 2008. Pictures followed along with a trip back to the skinning shed and the lodge for lunch. It was a very nice morning in the bush. We headed to the Impala stand for the evening's hunt. This was the name that Monty and I gave this hide in 2008 as we both killed Impala rams out of this hide. I ask Harry what to expect to see out of this hide and his reply was Zebra and/or Kudu. This put my senses on high alert as these were 2 animals on my list that I had failed to take. Around sunset, 4 shooter Blesbok and 1 nice Impala ram came in to drink, but left almost as fast as they came in. As the Impala left, I looked towards the far end of the opening and there they stood, 4 Zebra. It was a stallion with a very short tail, 2 mares and 1 extremely big mare. Our targets, if they ever came to the water were the stallion or the big mare, whichever gave us the first and best shot. Being a very wary animal, the 4 Zebra took their sweet time making it into the water. After what seemed like an eternity and quickly fading shooting light, the big mare presented me with a broadside 25 yard shot. My shot felt very good, but after looking at the video, we decide that the shot was a little forward of the intended sweet spot so we left the hide to let the area rest until the next morning. We returned to the lodge for a very sleepless night for me.

*Sunday Sept 26, 2010*

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We were up early the next morning with Terry and his PH, Gary, and Steve one of Harry's trackers who were going to help on the tracking of my Zebra. After finding where the 4 Zebra had crossed the road. After about an hour and a half of tedious tracking, Harry spotted the Zebra and we were able to get a killing shot into her. I could now relax and enjoy the sight and feel of my long awaited Zebra. Another of God's great creations. Many thanks to Harry, Gary and Steve for their tracking

abilities and to Terry for giving up his morning hunt to help. After the congratulations and picture taking we watched as 9 of the ranch workers loaded the Zebra on a tarp and with great strength and endurance carried her out to the truck. This was a very thick pasture and travel except on foot was impossible and even on foot was trying at times. I could try to walk in this pasture and come out looking like a lion had a tussle with me. I really needed full body armor for this pasture! We got the Zebra loaded into the truck and dropped her off at the skinning shed and headed to the lodge for lunch. After lunch we headed out with David and his PH WJ to help with the tracking of the Zebra David had also shot the night before. We were not really tracking; we just hung out at the back and watched the experts, Harry and WJ, and marveled at the skill they possessed. After about 25 minutes we found David's Zebra and the congratulations and picture taking commenced. We were able to drive a truck to the location of the stallion and got him loaded and back to the skinning shed.

There was still of good bit of the afternoon left so my wife, Harry and I loaded in his truck and headed to his brother's place for a shot at a big Kudu bull. This farm had not been hunted before and I felt very privileged to be the first to do so. Harry, his brother Bronte, my wife and I crawled into the elevated hide and settled in for the wait hoping to see the Gray Ghosts. We were not disappointed as we got to watch 5 big Kudu bulls water and feed in the alfalfa hay right at dark. They ranged in size from 51" to close to 55". Unfortunately, none ever presented a shot that evening so we waited in the hide until Bronte's wife, Renee and his son Marco came to pick us up. Although I had not gotten a shot, it was still a thrilling evening getting to watch 5 magnificent Kudu bulls.

*Monday Sept 27, 2010*

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Not much happened at the water during the morning hunt. We saw a few Kudu cows and calves and several Waterbuck cows and calves come to water and it was fun watching them interact around the water. We did have one Kudu bull come to water, but Harry said he need 2 more years of growing. He was a very unique bull as his right horn was perfectly normal while his left horn went up then curved to the back and around to the front to make a circle. The formation at the end of his curved horn looked like a spear from mid evil times. A very unique animal and one I would not mind having on my wall if he is still around when we return in 2012. Later in the morning we had about 20 Gemsbok come into water. In this herd was one exceptional bull pushing 37" to 38" on his horns and 3 females that Harry said would go well over 40", maybe even 42" or 43". Hard to pass them up, but I have a good bull as a pedestal mount now, so I elected, as hard as it was, to pass on a shot. After lunch we headed again over to Bronte's place for another try at the Kudu. Harry, Scott, the videographer settled into the elevated hide for the long wait on

the Kudu. Harry thought they would come to water around 5PM, but unfortunately they did not show until after 6PM and it was getting dark fairly rapidly. Two of the bulls came to the water and alfalfa hay and Harry whispered in my ear to slowly and quietly get up. I had not seen the bulls yet as there was only 2 windows in the hide, one for the video camera and one shooting window. This was probably good as I could not get a bad case of "Kudu fever" as I had not seen what I was hoping to get a shot at. I nocked my arrow and quietly moved to where I could shoot through the opening. Harry whispered that it was the bull in the back we were after. I had previously ranged the water and hay so when I looked out the shooting window for the first time, I knew the bull was at 24 yards and standing perfectly broadside. I drew and anchored, but could not see thru my peep or see my pins well enough to shoot. I let the bow down and turned to Harry and whispered that I could not see and I was not going to risk a shot. He said he understood and I just stood there feeling a little dejected. That is until Harry tapped me on the shoulder and whispered in my ear to draw and move as close to the shooting window as I could.

I did as instructed and when my sight reached the opening, the fiber optic pins light up and I could finally see through my peep. I anchored my 30 yard pin right on the belly line of the big Kudu and squeezed the release. I heard the arrow hit, but could not see where. The bull whirled and was out of sight within moments. Harry said to stay quiet as he moved to the shooting window and listened. Scott said he thought he saw the bull stumble as he left and Harry said it had gotten quiet really quick rather than hearing the bulls still running thru the thick bush. We sat there for a while, me shaking and thinking about the shot until Harry said to get down to find the track and hopefully my Kudu. We all went to the area where the bull was standing but found no blood only tracks. We walked about 20 yards when Harry bent down and picked up my bloody arrow and said "he is dead my friend". My arrow was covered in bright red blood and the blood on the ground shined in the light. We went about 50 yards through a small draw and came out on the road that we had driven in on when Harry turned to me and extended his hand in congratulations as he had seen my Kudu laying dead in the road about 30 yards in front of us. Talk about a rush of adrenaline, I finally had a Kudu of my own.

I unfortunately lost one in 2008. While finding this Kudu did not make up for the loss of the one in 2008, it went a long way to helping ease the pain. This Kudu definitely had no ground shrinkage as he was a lot bigger in the body and horns than I realized. I was stunned to see such a large animal with tall sweeping and curling horns. Words could not describe the feeling I had at that moment. I felt sadness for taking the life of such a great animal, but elated that it was I who had done so. A lot of pictures were taken that night and one of the best parts was the Bronte only had to back his truck up to the bull to load as he had fallen directly in the center of the road. I had looked at my watch within seconds of shooting the

Kudu and my watch read 6:23PM. Talk about fortunate. When we returned to the skinning shed we measured his horns at 54 ½". Another fine meal followed by more storytelling and a very peaceful sleep followed.

*Tuesday Sept 28, 2010*

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This morning it was cold, windy and overcast, the 3 things you do not want to see on safari this time of year as the animals hide out in the thick bush and do not move. We all loaded into one of the farms trucks and drove the roads to check out the water holes and to see if we could locate any fresh sign or possibly something we could spot and stalk. Very little fresh sign was seen and what animals we did see had already spotted us and was moving away from us or bedded in extremely thick brush. We finished our scouting and headed back to the lodge for lunch and to wait to see if the wind would lay and the clouds would clear. About 3Pm, the wind did lay a little and it became partly cloudy so we all headed to our respective hides. Harry warned us once we got to the hide that we would still probably not see anything as it took a while for the animals to start moving again. He was right in telling us not to expect any movement so at 5PM we headed for the river. What happens next is what dreams are made of. About ¾ through our stalk along the river we popped out into a small opening in the brush and reeds when Harry motioned for me to stop and for my wife, Jan, to kneel down. I saw Harry begin to slowly raise his binoculars and look across the top of the reeds to the opposite side of the little slew we were on. I peaked over Harry's shoulder and looked at the opposite side of the slew when I realized He was looking at a monster Nyala bull.

This bull was unaware of our presence and was feeding behind some small trees. Harry motioned for me to move slowly right behind him and we ever so slowly began to close the distance from about 50 yards to hopefully 30 or closer. The big Nyala eased and fed his way towards the right side of the trees and should show himself at what Harry ranged at 30 yards when he popped out. Like most animals do, he decides to turn and feed back to our right still behind the trees. There must have been a small opening in the trees as when he reached the middle, he eased into the opening between us and the trees, but standing in a hard quartering to us position. Harry ranged the bull at 25 yards, but we still had no shot. The bull eased a little closer to us, but was going down a slight impression and was almost disappearing from our sight. We both eased to our right about 5 steps and the bull came into view, well sort of. All we could see was about the top half of his body and that was it. We had everything in our favor at this point as the wind was in our face and blowing hard enough to make the reeds noisy and the big Nyala had not seen us yet and was standing at 20 yards. Harry said to aim a little high on his shoulder and not to worry about shooting through the wispy tops of the reeds. I drew my bow as Harry step to my left. I settled my 20 yard pin a little high on his shoulder and squeezed the release. I heard the arrow hit with a solid thud and the

Nyala disappeared. I looked to the left of where he was standing and saw what I thought was my Nyala heading up the hill towards the thick brush. Harry immediately ran around the reeds and screamed at the top of his lungs "YES!" I thought he had found my bloody arrow, but when I cleared the reeds, Harry was standing right beside my trophy Nyala. I had shot high like Harry had said and I was fortunate enough to put a perfect spine shot on the big bull as tracking in these reeds at night is almost impossible. Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought that this could happen to me. I immediately turned and looked at my wife Jan and raised my bow over my head in jubilation over my accomplishment. She came running over and we all stood and admired another beautiful African plains game animal with long sweeping ivory tipped horns. We were all astounded at our luck in taking such a beautiful and trophy animal. My wife and I had already determined that if I ever took a Nyala on one of these hunts that it would grace my house in a full body mount. Never did we realize it would be this quick. Jan and I continued to gaze at the Nyala and run our hands over the horns and cape while Harry went to retrieve the truck and cameras. I think this is the only shot we do not have on camera, but we never thought we would see such a trophy. After a lot of hugging and handshaking and a tone of picture taking, we got the Nyala loaded into Harry's truck and headed to the lodge. I definitely had some humbled bragging to do. I was extremely lucky to take this Nyala and only Harry's expertise in getting me within range and my fortunate and lucky shot allowed me to have my hands on my Nyala. Harry told me to watch his Dad Coen's eyes when he saw the Nyala in the truck. I watched as Coen made his way over to the truck and when I raised the Nyala's head to show everyone his horns, Coen's eyes opened as wide as they could possibly open. His handshake, congratulations and a big old hug was all that I needed to realize I had just taken maybe the trophy of a lifetime with a bow. We eventually measured his horns at 28  $\frac{3}{4}$ " and his mass at 7  $\frac{7}{8}$ ". I had just participated in an evening that I will remember forever.

*Wednesday Sept 29, 2010* \_\_\_\_\_

It was still a slow morning the next morning as the wind was still up and it was cool and partly cloudy again. I was still on a high from the previous evening's hunt, so it was not that bad sitting in the hide. We did have 2 Warthogs come into the water and I enjoyed watching their antics with each other. They are always fun to watch no matter what they are doing. At lunch I learned that Monty had taken the big Kudu bull that had eluded me at Shelanti and David had taken another fine Impala ram. After lunch we went to a hide looking for a big Blue Wildebeest cow. I wanted to take a cow just for the hide as my wife and I wanted to get some furniture made with the hide for our trophy room. Unfortunately all that came to the water were 5 young Wildebeest bulls and one pregnant cow. Oh well, it is not as if I had not shot anything yet. We returned to the lodge for drinks and to admire

Monty's trophy Kudu, measured at 57 ¼" and David's Impala ram measured at 23 ¼" and to watch the video of the hunt and to listen to their stories of the hunt. Once again we dined on some fine food and retired to our rooms for sleep and our last day at African Arrow Safaris.

*Thursday Sept 30, 2010* \_\_\_\_\_

Monty, Harry, David and WJ returned to Shelanti to track David's Waterbuck he had shot the previous night. There is no tracking done on Shelanti at night as there is too many Cape Buffalo, Elephants and Black Rhinos to risk someone getting hurt. Terry and our PH's stayed on the main concession to finish out our hunt. I was still looking for a Wildebeest cow and Terry was looking for an Eland of the big Gemsbok cow he had wounded earlier in the hunt. As luck would have it, the big Gemsbok female returned to the waterhole and Terry was able to get a second shot on her and after a short tracking job, has his second Gemsbok of the hunt. A fine female with 38 7/8" horns which will be a great compliment to his big Gemsbok bull he had taken earlier. I spent the afternoon in camp, packing, relaxing and helping Scott do a promotional video for African Arrow Safaris. An excellent way to finish off what I considered to be a hunt of a lifetime. I had taken the 4 main animals on my list and to take a Tsessebe, Warthog and Nyala like I took was extra special plus the other 21 trophies that David, Monty and Terry had taken. I want to take this time to extend a huge THANK YOU to Coen, Henriette, Bronte, Rene, Marco, Garry, Hennie, WJ and Scott for their hospitality and grace in allowing us to come on safari with them. My biggest THANKS go to Harry for his friendship and guidance and to Dierdre for her friendship and grace in putting up with us, especially me David, Monty and Terry. This whole crew means the world to us and I want to let everyone know that when you come to hunt with African Arrow Safaris you will arrive as strangers but leave as family.

*"Tot Ons Weer Sien" Until next time.*

*Doug Johnson aka Mudslinger*

*Lubbock, TX*

