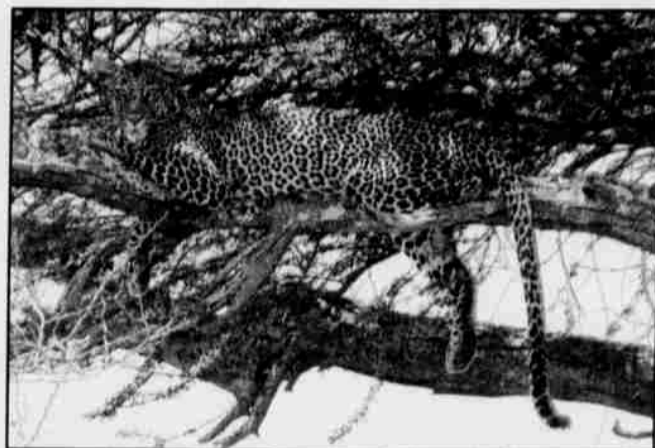


"I've Never Seen A Land So Alive."



Photos by David Harrelson

Up Close — Tribal member David Harrelson took these photos of the Pembe Abwe sunrise, a coastal fishing village in Tanzania (l) and this leopard in the Tarangire National Park in Africa. Harrelson was participating in Lewis & Clark College's East Africa Overseas Program.

■ Tribal member David Harrelson talks about his adventures during four months of study in Africa.

By Ron Karten

From August to December last year, Tribal member David Harrelson filled his requirements for four courses at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon in part by living with the Hadzabe and the Massai peoples in Tanzania in East Africa.

Some of those he met, like the Massai, live hand-to-mouth existences. "We consider them barely eking out a living," said Harrelson. "They would consider themselves living bountiful, meaningful and fulfilling lives."

"The village that I was in, a rites of passage was going on for a young warrior," said Harrelson. "This is the tribe you always see on the Discovery channel, where if they flinch (during the ceremony), they are outcast as cowards."

Living with the Massai, he said, was "amazingly comfortable. I slept better there than anywhere else in Africa."

While there, he saw the sacrifices of a sacred cow and a sacred goat. "I watched the slaughter of the cow and ate that cow two hours later. I ate a raw goat kidney; it was still warm. It didn't taste so great but I couldn't flinch because all the warriors were looking at me. I had to just politely swallow it.

I drank honey beer, their own home brew made out of honey and various plants around. It tasted like a mix between bad champagne and Welch's white grape juice fermenting. I actually liked it quite a bit."

He was able to make this four-month trip, through the college's East Africa Overseas Program, that he then extended through various cities in Europe, thanks in part to college grants and help from the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde.

He traveled in a group of six men and 18 women who participated in a range of educational opportunities, not all the same as Harrelson's.

"David is eager," said Lewis & Clark College History Professor Stephen Dow Beckham. "I often encounter him at 8 a.m. By the time he gets to class, David has already been to a work-out at the gym or put in a couple of hours (often in the dark and rain) on the Willamette River. He is an avid member of Lewis & Clark crew team (see *Smoke Signals*, 5/1/04 issue).

"David is curious. His curiosity

led him to participate in the college's East Africa program. He returned from Kenya and Tanzania with a broadened perspective on tribalism, natural resources, poverty, and human conditions. He also returned with a set of classmates who were

Tarangire National Park, the Ngorongoro Crater and the Serengeti National Park, all in Tanzania.

He worked on a mammal atlas and counted wildebeest; he studied grasslands ecology. And saw, he said, "every single African animal



Wild — Tribal member David Harrelson took this photo of two lions returning after a failed hunt while on Safari in Kenya, Africa. Harrelson traveled throughout Africa during four months of study.

bonded in friendship cemented by David's warm personality and positive outlook on life.

Harrelson toured Mombasa, Kenya for a weekend, "and got a feel for coastal Muslim culture," he said.

He spent a week in Arusha, Tanzania studying birds. "We captured birds for banding and recording and we took part in nationwide survey called the Tanzanian Bird Atlas."

He visited Pembe Abwe in Tan-

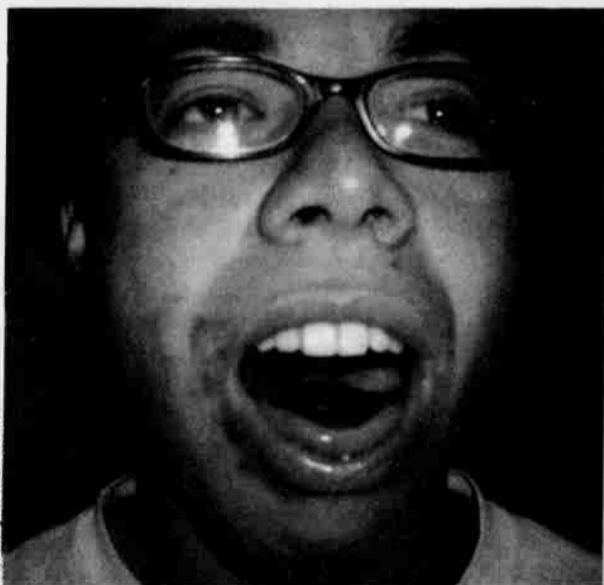
you can imagine.

Harrelson lived with the Hadzabe, a hunter-gatherer people, one of the few left in Africa, for a week. He found it to be an "egalitarian society where the people had no possessions except bows and arrows. They don't have houses; they sleep out in the elements. We went hunting with them; chasing all wild game, from giraffes, warthogs (gamey pig) to impalas.

These are "some of the most ancient people in Africa," said Harrelson. Some he met spoke with clicks. The clicks, he said, come from the back of the throat, and are part of words, like letters, not whole words themselves.

In Nairobi, Kenya, he worked for the Institution for Education and Democracy, a Kenyan non-profit. The group was holding an election for a new constitution. "It was very conflicted," he said. "Police stations burned. There were constant clashes. Harrelson wrote a paper about the constitutional process within Kenya.

As a History major and an Indian, the experience "had some really exceptional meanings," he said. "The people there are constantly struggling with resource management. Their biggest problem is land. So many people and not enough land."



Rare — Tribal member David Harrelson samples a raw goat kidney. "It was still warm, but I couldn't flinch because all the warriors were looking at me."

zania, a coastal fishing village at the shore near two coral reefs. Snorkeling underwater, Harrelson collected data for a government project.

He was on safari for a month in the

In Nairobi, "we lived two kilometers from the second largest slum in the world with 800,000 people. We lived in a walled compound. There was a constant fear of being robbed, for women of being raped. A lot of women worked in slum schools, whereas I worked with a non-profit. One of my classmates got robbed twice in one day.

"Whites are called wazungu. We'd walk places and people would point and say wazungu wazungu. Among the Massai, a small child that saw me started crying and was terrified. She never saw a white person in her life."

"Water is a limiting resource for these people, he said. "It's a reminder of the massive infrastructure that

exists in the U.S. It just doesn't happen there. There are no taxes. No money to tax. You have to walk three miles for water with plastic jugs on their heads. A bath is a sponge bath. They have to compete with wildlife for water resources.

"And there is just so much wildlife. You see thousands of animals. I've never seen a land so alive. It makes our land look barren."

"I ate giraffe, ostrich — meat and egg — alligator, warthog."

And now that he's home, Harrelson is looking forward to getting back on the fire lines with the Tribe this summer. He's aiming to be a hot-shot fire fighter, and he's open to new adventures, new opportunities.

He was a very sociable child, even as a baby, recalled his mother, Kim Campbell. She is a Tribal member and Medical Receptionist at the Health Clinic.

"When he was four months old, we drug him everywhere with us," she said. "He was exposed to a lot of adults, not so many kids."

"I always knew he would have high expectations for himself," she said. "His dad's family are all high achievers."

But he has never ignored his interest in adventure. When he graduated from high school, his present was a trip to Peru where he climbed Machupicchu. In 2001, he went into the woods with a group for 21 days. For three of those, he went off on his own (see *Smoke Signals*, 12/1/01 issue).

And what has he learned? Maybe that adventure is his road to the future. ■