

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The purpose of the following is to prove, that the undersigned is a responsible person, who knows how to handle a 12-bore shotgun and uses it sensibly as an ethical hunter of game birds such as Guinea fowl, Swainson francolin and Egyptian geese – whenever he gets a chance.

Growing up on the farm “*Enhlanhleni*” near Dundee in KwaZulu/Natal, I became appreciative of nature’s blessings of solitude, peace and quiet which characterize this nearly bushveld at an early age. Although there was no large game in that area left during my lifetime, small game like duiker, various reedbuck and game birds proliferated in that area – making it a small hunters paradise.

At the age of just more than ten years, my father presented me with an airgun, with which I could practice marksmanship on targets such as mouse birds and sparrows, which pestered my mother in her vegetable garden. Soon I was able to shoot doves, pigeons and partridges with good placed shots and thus helped with feeding the family – idealistically at least. Obviously I learned not only to shoot, but also to clean the birds taken and to cook, fry or bake them. In this time I learned from my father the absolute necessity of taking care of my airgun in a professional way and to make safe-handling a number one priority. With eight younger siblings this was of vital importance – and in time became a second way of life. To prove the point all siblings are still safe and sound – and in the mean time the same holds for their spouses and their growing number of kids.

As I grew up, my father gradually allowed me to use his rifle .303 to shoot duiker, which were regular guests in my mother’s rose-beds and vegetable patch. Shooting the small antelope was only one small part of the overall way of life on the farm. We took care only to shoot old rams or if one of the fawns or ewes was ill or had been hurt in a snare or by stray dogs or Zulu hunting parties, who often could only hurt and not kill the animals, we would end their misery quickly. Prowling around the farm was the most exciting thing to do – and I got to know it and all its inhabitants only too well. I sincerely believe in the duty of hunters to conserve nature and especially wild game in its natural environment, as this ecological harmony constitutes, what Africa is really all about. As we human beings have intruded long ago, I also acknowledge the necessity of staying involved in a responsible manner – providing enough cover/brush and feeding for the animals concerned. However this also necessitates the responsible hunting and culling of vermin, pests and certain animals – especially exotics -, who take over and in the process displace endemic creatures. These ideas were nurtured by becoming a member of the South African Wildlife Society. Their magazine was a monthly thrill, which later on was supplemented by a gift subscription to *Magnum* by a good friend. Reading popular writers on hunting like Robert Ruark “Safari”; Jan Roderigues “The game rangers”; Capsticks volumes on the big five; Ian Players “Wilderness. Shadow and soul” and the old classic “Jock of the Buschveld” by Sir Percy Fitzpatrick added pieces to the growing world of a small and part-time hunter. Today my library contains some serious hunting literature like: “Wild Ways” by Peter Apps; “The game animals of SA” by Astley Maberly; “Signs of the wild” by Clive Walker and even some german classics e.g. “*Die Jägerprüfung*” by Richard Blase and “*Das grosse Buch der Jagd*” by Robert Elman.

Soon I took a special liking to shooting guinea fowl and partridges. As we were good friends with our neighbours – Fritz Müller from Montrose and Frikkie van Zyl from Sutherland – we had quite a huge stretch of land on which to pursue this task. In the hunting season we regularly went out to try our luck. It was better than any birthday party or graduation ceremony! If at the end of the day, we had been lucky enough to have bagged some birds, we would be ecstatic. Walking through the autumn veld called by the cry of the Swainson francolin at dawn and sent on our way again by them at dusk, listening to the noise of the busy guinea fowl pecking away, the adrenalin rush as the spooked birds flew in a great hurry to reach safer ground ahead, the thundering of the shotguns, the thud of the falling bird, the beauty of the prey – all of that is unforgettable.

Later as a student and even professional pastor, time became more precious and the hunting opportunities declined. To keep up the marksmanship, I turned to clay pigeon shooting – especially with my cousins at my uncles place Helmut Niebuhr near Moolman. That really was good fun. I practised as often as the opportunity arose. As luck would have it, my congregation in Wittenberg asked me to take its twelve bore-shotgun “Aya” into my charge. That is how I came into the possession of “my own” shotgun. It was properly registered in my name and I had the privilege to practice and hunt with it on numerous occasions. The congregation even opened up a clay-pigeon shooting range practically in our backyard, so that we could regularly practice our shots. During this time I really enjoyed the variety of sports action made possible with a shotgun: pigeon shooting at Mr.Johannes on the harvested Soya-bean or sunflower fields (Panbult), the duck and partridge shooting with Mr.Böhmer and Mr.Weber in the dry mielie lands (Anhalt) and the guinea fowl shooting on the farms of Mr.Beneke and Gevers near Lüneburg.

During this time, I also started to regular hunt larger game in the Pongola and Magud areas, which was at the most two hours drive from my home in Wittenberg. I hunted on the farms of the following game farmers: Colenbrandner, Niebuhr, Coetzee, Meyer, Prigge and Weber. On some occasions I was invited to Micah/Hoedspruit to hunt with Niebuhrs and others on the large hunting concessions: “Balule”. Warthog, Impala, Kudu, Wildebeest and Zebra were among my trophies. (See photos) The inspector of my safe can view my trophies, which line my entrance hall in Rubida 196 whenever he comes to control the data of the safe etc.

During my office in Wittenberg I bought a hunting rifle from Musgrave – a model of the popular german caliber 7x57 with the original Mauser action - with BKB in Paulpietersburg and it thoroughly proved its worth. In the vicinity of Wittenberg I shot mountain reedbuck, fallow deer, steenbok and many duiker on the farms of Kohrs, Reinstorf, Weber, Paul and others.

In addition to this hunting rifle my father in law presented me with the small calibre rifle .22, which I used to not only practice target shooting cheaply, but also to shoot vermin i.e. rats and stray dogs, which disturbed our poultry farming with geese – especially harming the nesting hens and small chicks.

In the year 2000 I received a call to the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Pretoria, (LTS in Tshwane) which I accepted and thus moved with my family to Murrayfield: Rubida 196. That is why I had to give back the shotgun to the Wittenberg congregation. (See the proof of the cancellation of ownership attached.)

That is why I was very glad, when my father lately offered me his shotgun, which he had inherited from his father – my grandfather. Not only does it have a lot of sentimental and personal value, no, it also gives me the opportunity to carry on the much-valued tradition of hunting game birds. It is my sincere wish, that this shotgun will soon be registered in my name, so that it is legally mine and I can again practise this honourable sport fairly and in an authorised and orderly fashion.

Murrayfield
18.July 2003