

Jungle Safari

by Bill Cavanaugh

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Information Provider for the Glider Guider

Would the rain never stop? The intrepid contingent again started out on their sacred journey. First, they had to traverse the grassy plain, soaked from twelve days of rain. Since there were no strong young porters available, they were all engaged in employment elsewhere the determined group, all senior citizens, carried all the equipment necessary for their mission themselves. The grass seemed higher than before and slogging through it was more difficult every day.

Finally, they came to the edge of the rainforest. Though they wore protective garb and boots, the dense forest was not hospitable, with dripping undergrowth and vines blocking every step of the way. Undaunted, they pressed on; their mission must be accomplished. They reached the little clearing that they had made on their previous trip, and there it was, the object of their in the top of a tree. It had been sixty feet from the ground and their 55 foot telescoping pole was about five* feet short. But wait, the wind had blown it down to a lower branch. Maybe it was now reachable. Extending the wet pole was a chore. What was simple in good dry weather became a near-impossible task with wet hands and a slippery pole. After numerous tries, this rescue method was abandoned.

After much discussion, the weaponry was brought out. A heavy duty slingshot shooting a weight attached to a monofilament line was made ready. This method had been tried previously without success because of interfering branches and inadequate power of the slingshot to reach sixty feet of altitude. This time the goal was a little lower and it was decided to use a lighter weight. Each shot was a challenge: Shoot up the weight, work it down on the other side, wade into the jungle undergrowth to grab the weight, remove it and attach a heavy duty woven cord, pull the cord up and over with the monofilament line, get both ends of the cord and work it through the tree leaves and hope you are over the right branch, shake the branch and pray.

The three safari voyagers were members of the Bald Eagles, the BASS retire group, Joe Allulis, Joe Radoci and Bill Cavanaugh. The object of the mission was to rescue Joe Allulis' beautiful original design sailplane, as yet unnamed, that had been hit by radio interference on the second Bald Eagles Wednesday outing five days before. The next day, Thursday, was the first safari which included Phil McShane as well as the above three. Phil had slingshot experience shooting up lines to pull up antennae for his ham activities. Sixty feet proved daunting. Joe Allulis had tried by himself a couple of days using half inch polyvinyl piping, which was light but behaved like a "wet noodle " at sixty feet. The final safari took place on the following Monday. Joe Radoci manned the slingshot.

Several shots proved unsuccessful with weights being stuck or lost, although a branch in the way was overshot and broken off by the cord that was pulled up by the monofilament.

During a break while the group huddled in the rain, Bill Cavanaugh made the observation that this safari was a part of this great hobby, and since we are all retired and could theoretically be doing whatever we wanted to do, and we chose to be here, we must be having fun!

A bird decided that the dangling and jiggling weight was something nourishing, and scurried around it for about ten minutes. The group watched in fascination, hoping that maybe this creature would bring it down. But it finally realized that a lead weight was not edible, and flew away.

Bill pointed out that people pay big bucks to go on safari in the jungles of Africa to go into the rainforests and gaze at the animals. Here we are experiencing the same joys for free, the only difference being that we have smaller animals. We know that deer inhabit these woods since we have seen them many times. Also, the holes in the ground are evidence that smaller animals are nearby. And birds are everywhere! Isn't this a wonderful experience?

At last, an aim, a swoosh, the weight went up, up and over the object of our sacred mission. The weight was worked down with much difficulty, the cord was attached and pulled up and over. On the first pull of the two ends the branch imprisoning the treasure broke and all came tumbling down! Ah, sweet success! The crew, like explorers in the wild, retraced its steps through and out of the jungle carrying all equipment and, in addition, the valued treasure, retrieved.

Joe's sailplane, while damaged, was definitely not beyond repair We expect it will be again flying soon, and in the meantime has earned its name: The "Survivor