



Photos & Story by Danny Liska



DANNY and **Arlene Liska** of Niobrara, Neb., recently completed a perilous journey across Africa from the Mediterranean Sea to the Cape of Good Hope. This is another in their series of adventure stories written exclusively for the Magazine of the Midlands.

THE Dinka like to prove their manhood by spearing elephants, stealing cattle and hunting lions. For entertainment they play with their cattle or raid neighboring tribes. When it comes to food, their greatest delicacy is fresh cows' blood mixed with milk.

A Dinka hates work and detests clothes. Nor does he care for the Moslem religion, Arabic language or Arab people.

Recently some of these southern Sudanese black tribesmen killed a Sudanese Arab officer and emasculated him. When his body was discovered, the Army garrison at Juba went berserk, set fire to the native homes and butchered the occupants as they fled. News sources placed the death toll at 14 hundred. The actual figure may have been several times as much.

BEFORE I went to Africa I knew little of the Sudan, but after traveling 25 hundred miles in it, I looked up some figures to find out just how large it is. The Sudan has nine times more people than Nebraska, is 12½ times larger than Nebraska and is one hell of a primitive country.

Never had I felt as uncomfortable as the 10 days my wife and I spent traveling up the Sudanese Nile on a paddle-wheeled steamer. By uncomfortable, I don't refer to the swarms of hungry mosquitoes or the hot, sticky deck plates on which we slept at night, or the dirty river water we drank and the slop that we ate for food.

After several months in Africa you get used to things like that, but what kept us on pins and needles during the entire boat trip was the hostile atmosphere that hung like a pall over our fellow passengers.

On this same boat were some six hundred naked or semi-naked black tribesmen armed with spears. They outnumbered by five to one the Arab soldiers who patrolled the overcrowded decks, shoving their way through the blacks with the muzzles of their sub-machine guns.

AT KOSTI, I bought passage at the fourth class window, so during the entire trip we had to sleep and eat among the tribesmen . . . fourth class.

They were an interesting lot. Some had fantastic hairdos done up with cow's dung. All had their faces mutilated with tribal scars.

Once we learned the distinguishing marks it was easy to identify the tribes. There were the seven-foot-tall Nuer, Dinka and Shilluk, who for hours stood stork-like on one foot with the other leg cocked and toes braced above the knee of the supporting limb.

There were Latuka who had pulled out their top teeth so that they would resemble the cattle they adored. And there were a variety of other tribes — among them the shorter Bari with teeth filed to a point and the Azande who are said even today to occasionally practice cannibalism.

The Africans asked us to eat

with them. We squatted around a pot of darra (a grain somewhat like milo), scooped it up with our fingers and squeezed it into balls before placing in the mouth. Surprise delicacies were small pieces of half-rotted meat thrown into the stew.

Although each African spoke his own tribal dialect, almost all of them knew some English. This is the legacy of 57 years of British rule and as many years of Christian mission work among these people. I was constantly amused by the heavy British accent of one naked seven-footer who spoke English impeccably.

I asked him what caused the hatred between the northern Arabs and the southern Blacks. "Blimey!" he exclaimed, "the Government wants us to speak in Arabic and take up this rot of bowing toward the east, becoming Moslems and all that sort of thing. Quite impossible!"

WHEN Sudan got its independence in 1956, the five million blacks living in the southern provinces couldn't have cared less. The British Colonial Government had never bothered them much, seldom interfered with tribal matters and had not insisted upon formal education.

It may have been a bit annoying when a district commissioner tried to limit the number of elephants that they could legally spear, but the fact that the British didn't permit Arabs in the southern provinces made up for that.

Although an Arab runs against the grain of an African Sudanese, "One Nation—One Language—One Religion" became the motto of the new Government. They sent forth teachers into the jungles and papyrus swamps of the southern provinces to teach the five million blacks the Arabic language and the Moslem religion.

They also sent along some soldiers. The southern blacks didn't go along with the idea and to emphasize their views killed a few soldiers.

Undiscouraged, the Government built a new railroad into the south, built schools, hospitals and airstrips. This only confirmed the blacks' suspicions that the Arabs were coming to exploit them so they killed some more soldiers. The dream of the "Greater Sudan" just wasn't materializing, and it was in this atmosphere of rebellion that Arlene and I headed south.

SUDANESE visas are hard to get and I had only gotten ours by lying to the Sudanese consul in Cairo that we wanted to visit an Arab friend in Khartoum. The visa was invalid south of the capital but we started southward anyway.

Two hundred miles later, at Kosti, the road was closed to all except military vehicles. Rather than turn back, we threw our motorcycle aboard a huge paddle-wheel river boat which was destined for Juba, 10 days farther south, up the Nile.

Hundreds of black tribesmen were climbing aboard and I sensed



that they were going back to their people to be there when the trouble began.

The boat was overloaded several times its capacity. Permanent passengers were some 75 uniformed Arab soldiers, who carried their sub-machine guns in readiness. There were another hundred Arabs on the first and second class barge, where we were not allowed, and about 25 plain-clothed Arabs who mingled among the blacks. (I later saw them dressed in military uniforms.)

When I attempted to take one black's picture, an Arab officer put his hand over the camera lens. "It is forbidden to take pictures of our southern savages," he said. "We feel it is unfair of foreigners to show their people the primitive side of our nation. We wish to be regarded as a young country with pride and dignity."

I LATER had many visits with the officer and once he even invited Ariens and me to have dinner with him—first class. During our many hours of conversation he told of the profound problems undermining the unity of this young country.

Should the southern blacks secede and form their own independent nation, how could they succeed as a country with no agricultural or mineral wealth, destitute of cities and economy, in a jungle land with five million illiterate and primitive tribesmen?

They could, of course, if they continued to live the simple life

they have always known—these noble-featured ebony giants who have never wanted or asked for anything other than to be left alone. But today who allows a savage to remain a savage?

During the entire river journey I expected the blacks would at any moment take up their spears against the soldiers. But the hatred, to my amazement, was held in check. The bloodletting never took place aboard. They waited until they got ashore before they began to kill each other.

A few days after our boat docked at Juba, 30 thousand Sudanese blacks fled into Uganda. The refugees were almost entirely women and children; the men had either been killed or had remained to avenge the slaughter.

THE trail that led from Juba to the Uganda border took us through several burned-out villages. Not a soul did we see. Once we passed by a flower garden, its blossoms a splash of color among the cinders that had been a Christian mission.

When I read later of the Arab officer whose mutilation led to the burning and slaughter of Juba, I hoped that it had not been the officer who told me, "We wish to be regarded as a young country with pride and dignity."

Although he undoubtedly learned that I had disregarded his warning and had taken some pictures, he shook our hands as we parted at Juba and said, "Alaikum as salaam;" ("On you be peace").



Upper left—Shilluk tribesman wears nipple-like tribal scars.
Upper right—Sudanese guard stands on barge up the River Nile.
Lower right—Dinka tribesmen watch the loading with interest.