

PHILANTHROPY ISSUE TOWN & COUNTRY

WEDDINGS &
BEAUTY SPECIAL

MAY 2015

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WAYS TO
HELP
CHANGE THE
WORLD

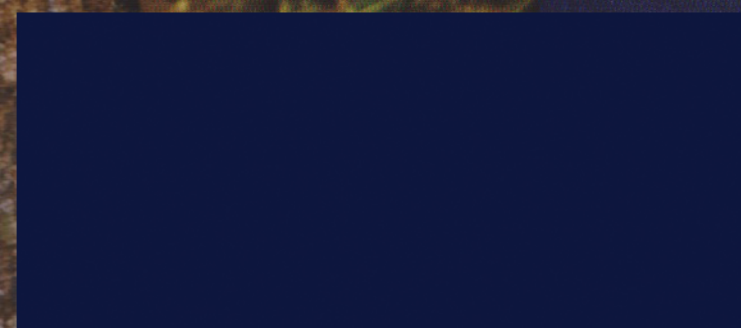
BILL CLINTON:
THE WHEELS,
THE DEALS,
THE MAKES
A BIG
DIFFERENCE

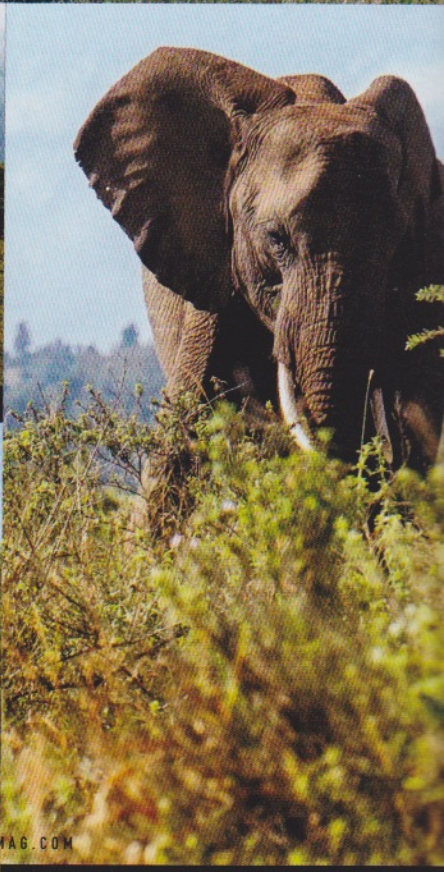
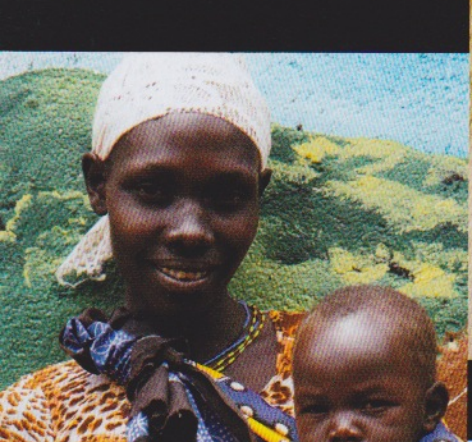
ALMA HAYEK
GOLDEN HEART,
GRASS KNUCKLES

ONE
WOMAN'S
WAR
WITH
AFRICA'S
ELEPHANT
KILLERS

WHEN
BAD BOYS
GIVE BACK,
WHO
REALLY
BENEFITS?

Plus:
MARIANE PEARL
CHRISTOPH WALTZ
JENNIFER GARNER
SEAN PENN





CALL OF THE WILD

By Allyn Stewart Photographs by Oberto Gili

AN ITALIAN ARISTOCRAT *TURNED HER BACK ON A LIFE OF PRIVILEGE FOR ADVENTURE AND ENDED UP BECOMING ONE OF KENYA'S GREAT PROTECTORS. A CLOSE FRIEND VISITS TO SHOW HER TEENAGE SON WHAT REAL SACRIFICE MEANS.*

MATERNAL INSTINCTS
Sveva and Kuki Gallmann (*top right*), on the grounds of their 100,000-acre conservancy in northern Kenya. They have dedicated themselves to protecting the land and its animals from the ravages of deforestation and poaching.

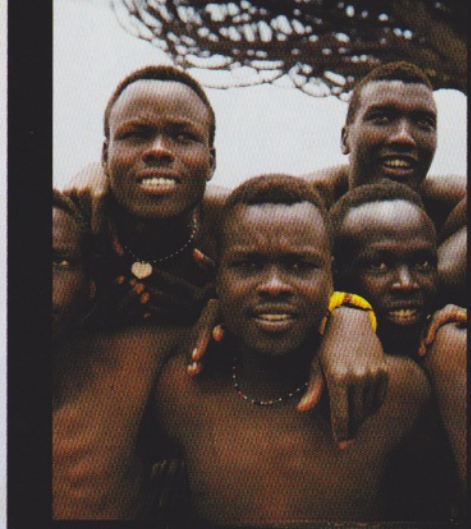


COMMUNITY EFFORTS

A large part of the Gallmanns' efforts is focused on improving relationships among the tribes that live near the property.

ALPHABETS Aa-Zz

Cc	Dd	Ee	Ff
Hh	Ii	Jj	Kk
Mm	Nn	Oo	Pp
Rr	Ss	Tt	Uu
Ww	Xx	Yy	Zz



On the shortwave radio they call her Mama I. My friend Kuki Gallmann has earned the handle. She has the grace of an Italian aristocrat and the unstoppable will of a herd of elephants—two herds. She fights for animals as if they were her children, negotiates between warring tribes as if they were her family, and nurtures the land as if she were Mother Earth herself. She and her 34-year-old daughter Sveva have made Africa's preservation their life's mission.

I met Kuki almost two decades ago. I remember the moment my producing partner, Stanley Jaffe (of *Kramer vs. Kramer* and *Fatal Attraction* fame), his wife Melinda, and I circled above a grass strip on Kuki's 100,000-acre Laikipia Conservancy, in northern Kenya, trying to buzz a few elephants away so we could land. Stanley, a dyed-in-the-wool New Yorker, was apoplectic, as it took several tries before they would budge and we could come down. He had purchased the film rights to Kuki's memoir *I Dreamed of Africa*, the first in a poetic three-part series about her life on the camp and the continent. We were here to develop a screenplay that would eventually become a movie starring Kim Basinger (as Kuki), Vincent Perez, and the then little-known Daniel Craig. It quickly became apparent that we had descended into an African Eden with a decided Italian influence. If the Hotel Cipriani had taken command in Africa, it couldn't have done so in a more refined way than Kuki has.

She arrived in Kenya from Venice as a young woman in 1972, with her husband Paolo and her young son Emanuele, and settled on Ranch Ol'ari Nyiro, near the eastern ridge of the Rift Valley, above Lake Baringo. Her memoirs speak of her almost mystical lifelong connection to Africa and its peoples—she calls the land “a memory in her genes”—and Paolo was a great traveler, a handsomely rugged Italian who had often been to Africa before they met. Soon after their wedding he whisked his wife and her son away from a life of luxury and privilege to embrace one of exotic adventure. It's a wildly romantic narrative, but it came at an exorbitant cost. During the course of her life in Africa Kuki lost both Paolo and Emanuele in tragic accidents: Paolo was killed in a car crash, and the teenage Emanuele died just a few years later from a snakebite. Sveva was born shortly after Paolo's death. Kuki, despite her family's requests that she come home to Italy, refused to leave Africa. Paolo and

Emanuele are buried side by side in a garden next to her home. For decades Kuki, now 71, has spread the seeds of the giant acacia trees that adorn their graves all over the conservancy, keeping Paolo and Emanuele alive by rejuvenating the land.

While developing the screenplay, my partners and I followed in the footsteps of Kuki's past: swimming in crocodile-infested Lake Turkana, sitting around the fire at night while animals blinked at us and the lions roared, dancing with the Pokot people. On almost a daily basis we witnessed the fragility of life, as well as its extreme beauty.

Last summer I decided it was time my 14-year-old son Flynn met Kuki and Sveva. I wanted him to understand that if one faces challenges fearlessly, one can survive against difficult—sometimes impossible—odds. He was about to leave home, in Idaho, for boarding school in Massachusetts, and I, selfishly, wanted to have an experience with him that might help shift the way he saw the world. And so we found ourselves above the same small grass strip, waiting for the elephants to move so we could land.

Many people warned me about the dangers of going to Africa at that time. The Ebola outbreak was on a rampage, and terrorism had once again reared its head along the Kenyan coast, but my instincts told me I would be as safe there as I have always felt. Flynn didn't get to swim with the crocs, but we did sneak around in adrenaline-pumping proximity to Cape buffalo and bull elephants. We listened as rangers reported on skirmishes with poachers who had crept onto the ranch behind trespassing cattle herders. And each night Kuki and Flynn talked about her life.

It takes hours to drive from one end of the ranch to the other, and driving with Kuki is an experience unto itself. I received more than one sideways look from Flynn as Kuki careened along the rocky dirt roads, conversing in Swahili on her shortwave about a range of projects that are both exciting to hear about and overwhelming to witness. My six-foot-two son became a wonderful addition to her workforce, and she embraced him as if he were her own. And, in contrast to an earlier trip to China during which he remained stubbornly transfixed by a screen, at Kuki's Flynn put down his phone.

First we were off to her nursery, where we loaded more than a thousand saplings that we were to plant that day into the back ➔

*THE REAL
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BE SOMEWHAT
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THE ELEPHANT,
THE RHINO, THE
FORESTS, THE
NATURAL SPRINGS—
ONCE THEY GO,
THEY GO FOREVER.*



*YOU MEET SVEVA
AND GET THE
SENSE THAT SHE
COULD SURVIVE ANY
CIRCUMSTANCE. SHE
COULD SETTLE A
TRIBAL SKIRMISH OR
FACE A LION. SHE
DOES SO, REGULARLY.*



LAND RICH
Sveva Gallmann (here and opposite) was pulled back to Africa by the strength of her mother's mission to preserve it.



➔ of her Land Rover. She educated Flynn about the biggest challenge facing East Africa: the lack of water due to climate change and deforestation. Because of her efforts, barren and eroded hills on the ranch are now covered in groves of olive, acacia, and leshwa trees. Flynn enthusiastically wielded his hoe, planting tree after tree alongside local people who had come to help. He had joined Kuki's brigade and understood the future impact of his efforts. The forests on the conservancy have been rejuvenated to such a degree that they have created a microclimate that draws moisture to the area and preserves the underground springs, creating an abundant water supply for the conservancy while also acting as a water tower to the lakes down the Great Rift Valley, which are now filled to the brim. "Africa and its people have extraordinary qualities," Kuki says, "and still have much of what the rest of the world has lost. Africa needed creative and dedicated help. I wanted to emphasize the positive side of Africa, the healing, magical, culturally rich, and environmentally extraordinary, as opposed to the Africa in rags, torn by conflict and disease, that is endlessly portrayed."

Kuki's devotion to the continent is now a family effort; Sveva's dedication to their mission is equally amazing. After graduating from Oxford and settling into a life in London for a few years, she married and divorced, and chose to return to live and work on the conservancy alongside her mother. I think Sveva has a sense of manifest destiny, a feeling that she is meant to carry on her parents' protection of this land. She, like her mother, is a unique blend of highly polished educated woman and bush baby. When you spend time with her it becomes clear that she could survive any circumstance. She could settle a tribal skirmish, face a lion. Sveva does so regularly.

Meanwhile, I winced when Flynn saw photographs of animals poached on the property, and then admonished myself for my overprotective reaction. Those were the moments when Flynn could really see what Kuki and Sveva are fighting for, and understand what the consequences would be if they did not persist. They are on the frontline fighting the insatiable global appetite for ivory, the effects of which tragically live on their doorstep all too often. The estate is a refuge for more than 450 elephants and 4,000 buffalo, as well as zebras, cheetahs, leopards, lions, gazelles, and antelope. One current project involves creating corridors between their property and neighboring conservancies, so the animals can migrate safely. "We invaded their space," Kuki says, "interrupted their migratory routes, mutilated them for their tusks. And, yet, patient and enduring, they keep trodding, fewer and fewer, along ancient routes guided by an ancient instinct."

When Kuki and Sveva came to realize the degradation caused by cattle ranching,

they transformed the ranch into a nature conservancy and wildlife sanctuary. This included creating the first private anti-poaching squad in Kenya, as well as educating the nine tribes in the surrounding area about environmental sustainability and highlighting the importance of their own cultural heritage and their tribes' responsibility to protect their land and animals. Flynn and I visited the health clinic they established. He played soccer with the children from Kuki's school and walked in the Mukatan gorge, which has been a place of worship since prehistoric times.

Kuki and Sveva have also launched the Four Generations project, which monitors and records significant rituals, songs, and the oral tradition of the Pokot, Turkana, Tugen, Kikuyu, and Samburu tribes, which live in the neighboring areas. Children from different tribes are tasked with interviewing their elders, as if on a treasure hunt for their own history, which they record and turn into plays that are performed for other tribes as a way of building understanding. I kept thinking that if there were a Gallmann University I would send my son to it in a second. "The real monuments are no longer Venice and Florence, however extraordinary they are," Kuki says. "Whatever is man-made can be somewhat reproduced. The monuments to protect are the herds of elephant, the rhino, the forests, the natural springs, the life of the oceans. Once they go, they go forever. It is our collective responsibility to care for what is not ours to destroy."

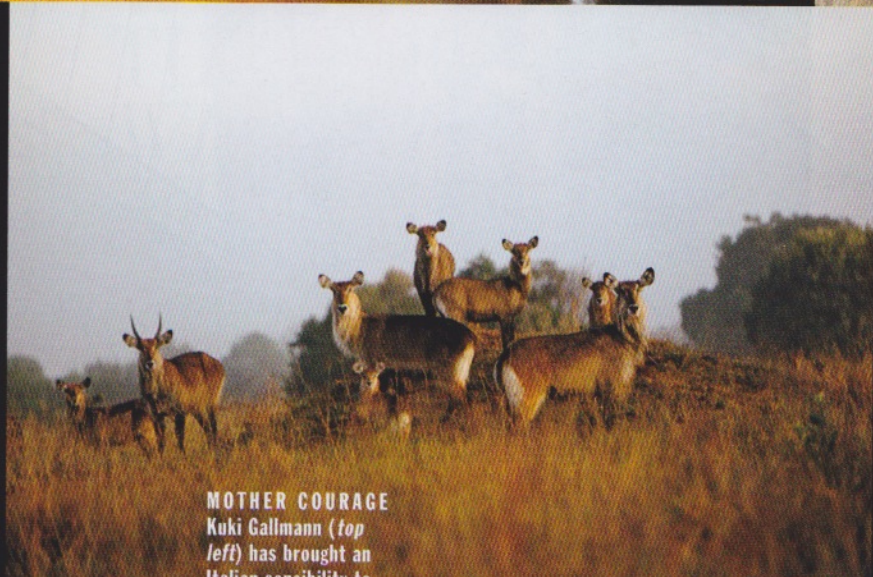
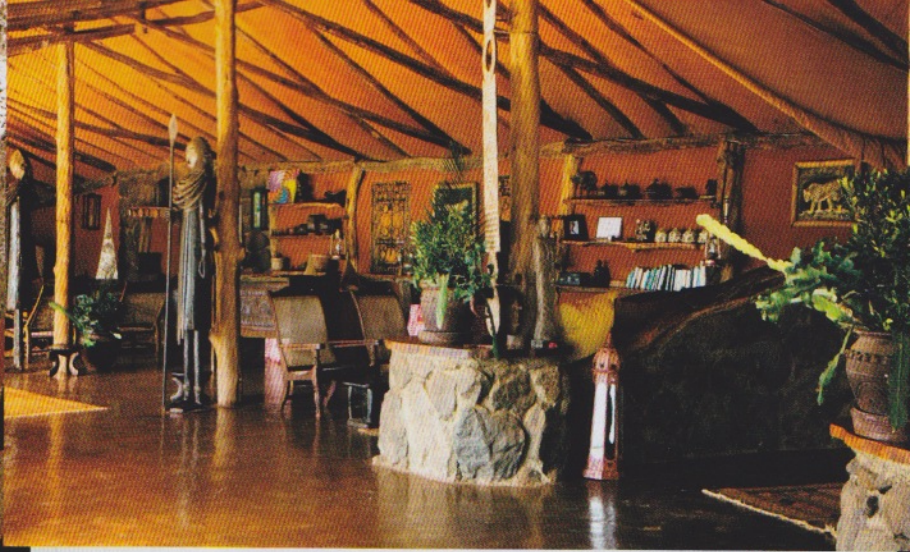
It was exhilarating to see my son experience the raw energy of Africa. And I was pleased that the pleasure he derived from our adventure was a result of the extraordinary people he encountered, not just excitement about seeing big game. I watched him listen in awe to Kuki and Sveva as they spoke of their plans and accomplishments.

Some say Africa is losing its romance, that it's too dangerous. But I watched my son grow before my eyes as he experienced the cradle of humanity while being embraced by the family of Kuki and Sveva, in the shadow of Paolo and Emanuele. "What happens to beast happens to man. All is connected," Kuki wrote to me after Flynn and I returned to Idaho. "As the birds wake up with song to celebrate yet another morning, and I brace myself for the new challenges that this day will bring; as the first bats fly low

to announce the rising moon, and my dogs bark at buffalo whose eyes glitter green in my torchlight, a very close trumpeting tells me that once again the elephants have come to my garden: I think of the world far away where you and Flynn now are." Flynn will return to Africa this spring to work on Kuki and Sveva's new community project for Kenyan children and youth. ◀

There are two lodges for visitors at the Gallmanns' Ol ari Nyiro ranch. For more details, and information on how to donate to Kuki and Sveva's efforts, visit gallmannkenya.org.

*I WINCED WHEN
FLYNN SAW
PHOTOGRAPHS
OF POACHED
ANIMALS NEAR
THE PROPERTY,
AND THEN
ADMONISHED
MYSELF FOR MY
OVERPROTECTIVE
REACTION.*



MOTHER COURAGE
Kuki Gallmann (top left) has brought an Italian sensibility to the decor of the camp and a humanitarian's zeal to preserving the land and culture that surround it.

