





The Dasingabadi Rogue

*No one would ever discover why the great
tusker assumed such murderous behavior.*

*By Pat James Byrne as told to Captain John H. Brandt
Paintings by John Serey-Lester*

It was early on a Sunday morning in April of 1953. The days were becoming oppressively hot, and Augustino, a lay Catholic preacher, decided to leave early to avoid the heat on his mile walk to the village of Dasingabadi. He was pleased with his accomplishments in that two families from the hamlet had already converted to Catholicism. As he walked, he went over in his mind what he would include in the sermon that Sunday morning.

The Pangali Ghat road that led from his house to Dasingabadi wound through some dense forest in a hilly section. The thick, overhanging boughs made a shaded arch and gave a pleasant coolness to the road. Although there were tigers and leopards about, there had been no problem for quite some time, and Augustino had no fears as he started into the forested area.

Reaching the summit of a small hill, he saw some distance ahead of him an elephant feeding on the roadside. Augustino was not alarmed because elephants were often encountered and moved away quickly after sensing that a man was approaching. As he watched he felt a cool breeze hit the nape of his neck, which in seconds carried his scent to the elephant.

Then the unanticipated and abnormal happened. The elephant jerked his head on catching the tart human scent and raising its trunk, started ambling upwind on the roadway directly toward Augustino. As Augustino turned to escape, the elephant let out an earsplitting trumpet and broke into a run after the fleeing man. Although an elephant may appear bulky and ungainly, on an open course he can easily outrun a man. It took only a moment for him to close the distance between himself and the desperate, dodging preacher.

The elephant raised his trunk and with one horrifying swipe, like a man crushing a fly with a fly-swatter, he knocked Augustino off his feet and sent him sprawling into the roadside ditch. Stunned and unable to move, the man saw the elephant loom above him and then kneel on him before all went mercifully black. The enraged elephant tore the crushed and flattened remains to pieces and then, following a

mysterious ritual incomprehensible to man, proceeded to cover the mangled remains with branches and leaves. The elephant then turned and disappeared into the dense undergrowth.

Ordinarily, this horrible scenario would have been pieced together later from physical evidence at the scene. However, in this case, there had been a horrified witness who had watched the entire episode from a nearby hillside.

Ananda was a woodcutter from the village of Pangali who had gone to the forest to retrieve a few sal logs that he had illegally cut a few days earlier. He felt, since it was a Sunday, that most likely the forest guard would be taking the day off, and he would be relatively safe from being caught. What he saw was not part of his plans, and regaining his wits, he hesitated for a moment, wondering

what he should do. If he reported the killing, he would compromise his reason for having been in the woods.

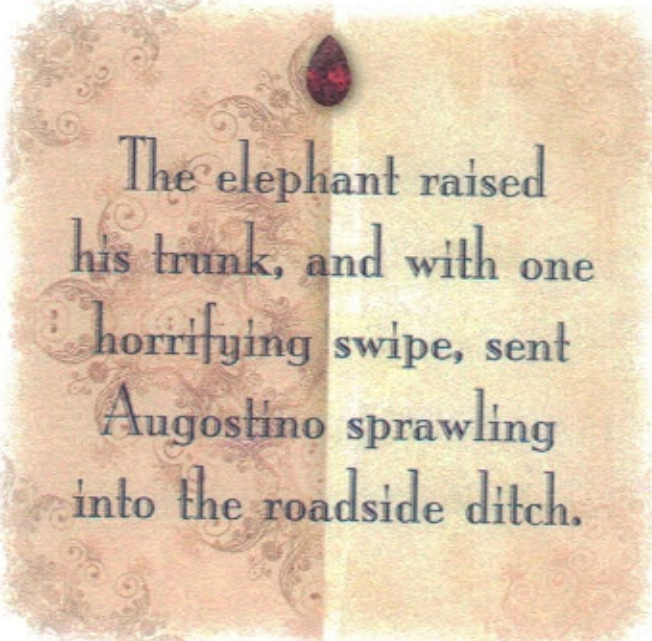
After assuring himself the elephant was gone, and he could see or hear no further movement in the area, he decided he had no choice but to make his grisly discovery known and let the authorities know what he had witnessed. As fast as he could run, he headed to Pangali to report the matter to his headman.

Quickly realizing the seriousness of the situation and the imminent possibility that someone else might be killed, the headman

ordered Ananda to run to Dasingabadi to alert the police officer stationed there.

Listening to his tale, the police officer in charge decided that, since it was now late afternoon, little could be accomplished before daylight, and requested that Ananda remain at the station overnight so he could lead a rescue party to the scene of the tragedy the next day.

Late the next morning, as plans were being completed for a group to proceed to the Pangali Ghat road, a trio of highly excited men ran up to the steps of the police station shouting that an elephant had just attacked the Revenue Bungalow at Dasingabadi and had killed the watchman. They had come as quickly as possible to report the incident,



The elephant raised
his trunk, and with one
horrifying swipe, sent
Augustino sprawling
into the roadside ditch.

eded
l into
n
ified
t
gall
; that
; it
ld be
rom
s, and
lering
f he
he
nis
en in
nself
ne,
hear
nt
led
it to
overy
at he
ast as
aded
the
nan.
; the
y
night
nan
e
could
nat
l lead
day.
gali
p
w at
had
t,



Seeray-Lester ©XIV

which had occurred at 10:00 that morning.

With the news from Ananda of the preacher's death the preceding day, it appeared most likely that the rogue had continued his murderous escapade and had continued on to wreak mayhem at the bungalow, which was not far from where the first killing had occurred.

The group, led by two police officers carrying old, obsolete rifles entirely inadequate to stop an elephant, moved cautiously and apprehensively toward the area where the woodcutter said he had seen the killing take place.

Entering the darkened forest, they saw some distance ahead of them a brush pile in the middle of the road. As they came closer it quickly became apparent from the smell of decaying flesh that this was the funerary shroud of branches and leaves, which Ananda had seen the elephant place on top of his victim.

Kicking the branches aside, they saw beneath them the fly-encrusted, bloated and blackened body parts of Augustino that the elephant had mangled and smashed virtually beyond recognition. The sight sickened the entire group, and it was only with considerable determination that the remains were gingerly placed into a sack to be transported back to Dasingabadi.

With great haste the rescue party trotted back to the bungalow where the second reported killing had occurred. Arriving at the bungalow, the two policemen reported in to the senior police inspector who was already at the scene. The policemen described what they had found; the inspector motioned them to the back of the building where they again saw a similar mound of branches. They did not have to be told that it would also contain the same crushed fragments of a human being, much as they had found on the roadway. The watchman's corpse, or what remained of it, was removed and turned over to relatives for cremation.

While the police were completing their investigation and talking with the villagers, a man bicycled up to the bungalow with a report that another killing had occurred the previous night at a place about ten miles from the bungalow. The police learned that a man from the village of Sakerbadi had not returned home the previous

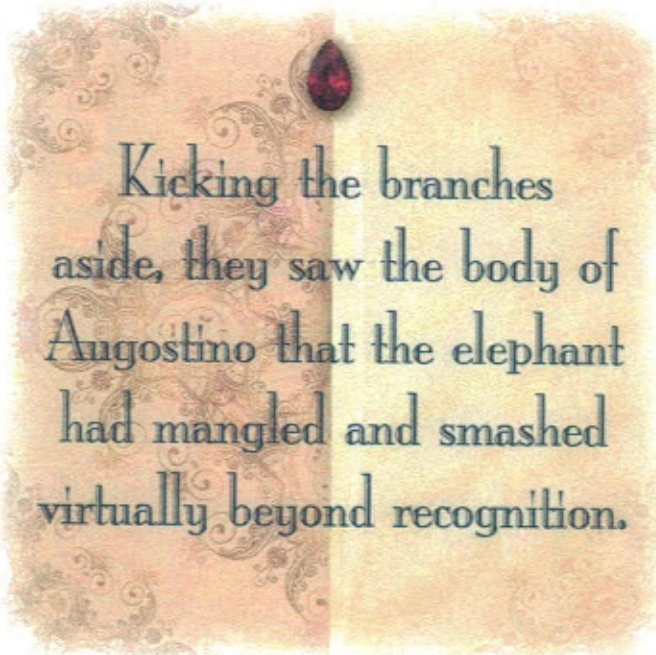
evening. Not knowing about any of the other killings, the villagers had waited until daylight, and then walked up the track that they felt the man would have used on his return home. They shouted his name loudly but received no reply.

Soon they found a pile of branches on the trail permeated by the same sickeningly sweet odor of decomposing flesh. The buzzing flies around the brush pile left no doubt that they had found the body of the missing man.

Just then, on the hillside above them, they heard the loud trumpeting call of an elephant, and in one movement the entire group fled the scene, leaving the body where they had found it. The headman had ordered one man with a bicycle to go to Dasingabadi by a long circuitous route to advise authorities of the killing.

The police were now extremely concerned. Three

deaths in a 24-hour period, presumably all the murderous work of one elephant, prompted them to contact the District Officer (Collector) to request his authorization to declare the animal a rogue, which as a public nuisance and danger, should be destroyed immediately. The D.O. wasted no time in issuing the required proclamation and invited interested hunters to come and undertake the task of killing the animal.



Kicking the branches
aside, they saw the body of
Augustino that the elephant
had mangled and smashed
virtually beyond recognition.

Almost a month had passed since the killings had occurred before I

heard of the incidents. A telegram had been sent to my home in Calcutta by the headman of Nuagam, requesting my assistance if I could get away. He said others had attempted to kill the rogue, but all had been unsuccessful.

I made plans to go look at the situation, although at that time even getting to Dasingabadi was a major undertaking. The village lay almost 40 miles from Nuagam, which is where any road worthy of a name ended. Beyond Nuagam the only means of transport was by walking or, if available, by bicycle.

On my way I contacted the district officer, who issued me a permit to shoot the rogue and also kindly gave me a letter of introduction to all police units in the area asking for their assistance and cooperation, which

proved to be most helpful to me.

With the aid of the headman I hired six men at Nuagam to help me transport my camp gear and equipment. I bicycled, but often thought that perhaps walking would have been much wiser. It took several days to reach Dasingabadi, where we arrived on the morning of May 26.

The villagers were elated at my arrival and quickly told me that the rogue was still in the area, and that only three weeks earlier he had attacked a caravan of bullock carts hauling logs. He had smashed two carts, killing the bullocks. Although the cart drivers had escaped injury, an innocent villager, who had just happened to be in the right place at the wrong time, had not been so fortunate. The enraged elephant had caught him in his trunk and smashed his body into pulp against the base of a tree.

The police at Dasingabadi confirmed the event, and they and the villagers helped me bring my gear to the Revenue bungalow where I would stay. It was a bit disconcerting knowing the rogue I was after had attacked the very building where I was to sleep and had killed the watchman there only a few weeks earlier on the first day of his rampage.

One of the men who was assisting with my gear broke away from the group and came over to me. He was small and wiry and had a huge grin on his face as he saluted me. Speaking very quietly, as a jungle man should, he introduced himself as Bana. He added that he was the village shikari and would be my guide and assistant in hunting the elephant. Glancing over his shoulder at the police officers, he added that he was also the village poacher and knew the jungle well. With great confidence he said that he had no fear of elephants and, if we were to team up, we could slay the rogue. I liked his demeanor and sincerely hoped he was right.

Since the attack on the log carts almost a month earlier, there had been no reports of the elephant. And no other known killings had occurred. As the days went by without any reports, it was difficult not to entertain thoughts that perhaps the elephant had moved away, died or changed its habits. All were unlikely, but the frustrating inactivity of waiting made me wonder if

I had made a mistake in setting up my headquarters in Dasingabadi. Hunting rogues is always an exercise in patience, and I did my best to familiarize myself with the area and to keep occupied while awaiting news of another attack by the monster.

Bana and I examined numerous old spoor, presumably of the rogue, in jungles surrounding Dasingabadi. None were fresh, but from the easily visible tracks in the soft dirt near where the bungalow guard had been killed, we estimated the size of the bull at about ten feet tall. The rogue was a huge animal and one of obviously enormous strength.

Unfortunately, diligent searching day after day produced no fresh tracks or signs of elephants in the vicinity. Another week went by and my time was running out. I had almost decided that, unless some report came in within another day or two, I would start the return trip

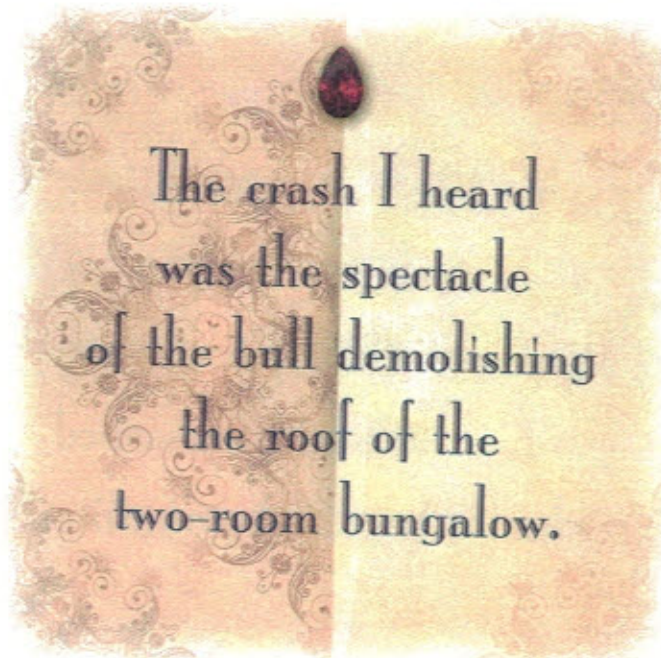
to Nuagam. Then the next day, what I had been awaiting happened!

A messenger brought a letter to the bungalow from the police officer stationed at a village called Bamnigam, which was located almost 24 miles from Dasingabadi. The letter contained a detailed description of a killing by an elephant in the area a few days earlier. The fact that the killer had placed a mound of boughs over his victim confirmed that it must be the same rogue, who had obviously covered great distances in his travels.

I debated on what the best course of action might be, since it would take me a day or two, at best, to reach Bamnigam. Bana and Boliar Singh, the headman, discussed the situation with me, and said from their past experience the rogue rotated at fairly frequent intervals throughout his range. Since he had been away from Dasingabadi for several weeks, it might be possible that we would be on his circuit, and he would likely soon return.

I knew they were also concerned about my leaving, which meant they would be left to face the rogue alone without weapons. I agreed to stay another few days to see what happened, since the news of the killing from Bamnigam was now already several days old. It proved to be a wise decision. It was now June 3.

Continued on page 202



The crash I heard
was the spectacle
of the bull demolishing
the roof of the
two-room bungalow.



**Browse Over
50,000
Guns for Sale!!!**

The #1 Gun Classifieds for Antique,
Collectable, High Grade, Competition,
& Sporting Arms

www.GunsInternational.com

CELEBRATING OVER 50 YEARS IN BUSINESS • HANDCRAFTED ONE AT A TIME

HART



RIFLE BARRELS, INC.

- STAINLESS STEEL RIFLE BARRELS
- REBARRELING / CUSTOM WORK
- HUNTING
- HIGH POWER
- SMALL-BORE
- BENCHREST
- MILITARY
- OLYMPIC
- SNIPER / POLICE DEPARTMENTS
- AR-15
- PROUDLY MADE IN THE USA



Jim Hart, Owner/Gunsmith



Paul Sutton, Owner

P.O. Box 182, 1690 APULIA ROAD, LAFAYETTE, NY 13084
(315)677-9841 • FAX (315)677-9610
 EMAIL: HARTRIFLEBARRELS@SBCGLOBAL.NET
WWW.HARTBARRELS.COM

Continued from page 102
The Dasingabadi Rogue

The day was one I will long remember, as it was for all the local villagers, because an enormous storm crossed the area that night, causing extreme damage to homes and trees. For a time I wondered if the bungalow would survive the lashing rain and cyclone-force winds. About midnight the storm abated somewhat, and when morning arrived I could see trees uprooted all around the compound. A large mango tree had blown over the roadway, and a number of village women were already there with baskets retrieving the mangos, which were now suddenly so conveniently within reach.

There was much talking and laughing outside from all the people, when suddenly a loud shriek of fear from the women quickly brought me to the verandah to see what had happened. Wanting to be prepared for any emergency, I automatically grabbed the .470 Express rifle propped next to my bed. Stepping onto the verandah, I was thankful for this intuitive action because on the roadway was the very creature I had spent so many weeks waiting for. It was as if destiny had arranged this introduction with the rogue on my doorstep! I motioned for Bana to remain indoors as I stepped into the yard.

The bull, a huge tusker, was still some 300 yards away, and, since the wind was blowing toward me, he had not yet scented or seen me. He was also still somewhat distracted by all the scurrying villagers who had run at the first indication of his presence. He had made no attempt to catch anyone, and, after moving a few yards toward the bungalow, he veered to the left and disappeared into the brush. There was now total silence. Every villager had disappeared, presumably to the questionable safety of their frail huts.

I was now alone and proceeded one step at a time toward the area where I had last seen the elephant. I tested the wind, constantly hoping it would not change direction and alert the rogue to my presence before I had seen him. It took me several moments to proceed 100 yards, but I could make out no sound or sight of the bull.

Suddenly there was a loud crash to my rear, and I swirled, fully convinced that I had passed the bull and that he was making an attack from ambush behind me. What I saw was hardly what I expected! The bull had silently walked through the underbrush and, apparently unaware of me, had entered the compound. The crash I heard was the spectacle of the bull demolishing the roof of the two-room bungalow. He had grabbed a roof timber and with a shaking tug had torn loose the entire end of the roof.

Although he could have now easily seen me, he was so engrossed

with his demolition project that he totally ignored my approach. I had closed the distance to about 25 yards when the bull suddenly stopped and became deathly silent. He raised his trunk and picking up my scent, swirled in a lightning-like turn and thundered across the small compound toward me. His charge came as no surprise. I had expected it and was prepared.

Before the bull had taken three steps, the heavy bullet from the left barrel slammed into his forehead, stopping him in mid-stride. He sank to his knees with a jolt as I fired the second barrel. With a shudder, he then rolled quietly onto his side and lay still.

I carefully approached the great tusker, but there was no question he was dead. I sat on his head catching my breath over the excitement of the past few minutes, waiting for my pulse rate to return to normal.

My cook and Bana soon appeared from the partially wrecked bungalow

and joined me. Within moments, calls of curious inquiry came from the jungle in several directions, asking, "Sahib, is he dead? Is it safe to come out?"

Assuring them that the rogue was dead, we were soon surrounded by a deliriously happy group of villagers. Some men brought a chair in which they insisted I be seated so they could put me on their shoulders to dance in triumph through the village. I made it on my precarious perch through the festivity, which lasted late into the night.

Although neither I nor the villagers would ever determine what had prompted the great tusker to take on such murderous and abnormal pathological behavior, no one really cared. The Dasingabadi rogue was dead! 🐘

Note: "The Dasingabadi Rogue" is reprinted from *Hunters of Man* (1989) by Captain John H. Brandt by permission of Safari Press, Huntington Beach, California.

BOG-POD
TRIPODS • BIPODS • MONOPODS • ACCESSORIES



VERSATILITY DEFINED!

switcheroo
SHOOTING SYSTEM

877-509-9160 www.BogGear.com

S P O R T I N G C L A S S I C S