

2660-120-000-022.mp3

Producer [00:00:02] This is sound Roll 22. It's the 17th of the third 1992. Channel 13 WNET Travel La Mal D'Afrique. Project number 401. Sound roll 22. Turns at neg eight. We continue the interview with Sam Weller. Wild track.

John Heminway [00:00:33] You know, Latham had a, you know, he went to South Africa and then he went to Rhodesia and then he finally ended up in Britain. And what he wanted more than anything was to come back to Africa. What is it? Why did why did somebody like that have to come back to Africa to sort of fulfill his life?

Sam Weller [00:00:57] I don't really know. One knows about Pliny's Ex Africa. But there's another quotation.

John Heminway [00:01:07] Actually. Why don't you. Why don't you just say the quotation? Why don't you just start that one a fresh thought there? Just say, one always knows about and then translate it so for?

Sam Weller [00:01:17] I can't remember the Latin.

John Heminway [00:01:19] It's Ex Africa. Sempers Nova [sic].

Sam Weller [00:01:21] Semper Nova [sic]. But there is another quotation. But I can't remember where it's from, that those who drink the waters of the Nile will surely return. Where does that come from? But it's, there's a certain amount of the Nile water starts off in Kenya, but not the Nile proper.

John Heminway [00:01:49] Do it now. Let's. Let's relate it to Latham. Why did a person like Latham perhaps, carrying a great secret, as he did, and also being a little bit on the outskirts of the century and of society and everything else. Why did he come to Africa? What did it do to him.

Sam Weller [00:02:10] Going back a bit, of course, he served as a young man in France in the first war, and it was from there that he came to Tanganyika in government service. And so he'd spent almost his entire adult life in East Africa. And I can understand him not wishing to leave it. I don't know what he did in the second war, in the second war. He would have been 45. Six. He'd have been 45 when the war broke out, but he may have been in a reserved occupation. I don't remember.

John Heminway [00:02:58] It would have been 49.

Sam Weller [00:03:00] 49.

John Heminway [00:03:03] What is this attraction of Africa?

Sam Weller [00:03:11] I'm pray I'm not given to that sort of deep, profound thought. I just don't know.

John Heminway [00:03:21] You've had many opportunities to leave.

Sam Weller [00:03:26] Well, there are people who landowners, those with capital invested in the country who describe themselves as economic prisoners. But I haven't heard the

phrase used for many years. And I suppose if people want to go, they can do that. They're free to go.

John Heminway [00:03:49] How about yourself? Are you free to go? And why haven't you. Have you chosen not to go?

Sam Weller [00:03:56] Well, I stay here because more of my friends live in Kenya than they do in Britain, in Britain or elsewhere. And it's a very kind country. I'm regarding creature comforts. There's no need to have a central heating and there's no need really to buy more than a short sleeved shirt to live in a country like this.

John Heminway [00:04:28] But Latham was happier in Nanyuki, living in penury [sic], as you describe. Then he would have been living in Britain under similar circumstances. Why? Why did he want to be here and not there?

Sam Weller [00:04:49] I think that he identified himself with East Africa in the way of Tanzania, Tanganyika, and just couldn't see himself living in Britain. Did he, in fact, try to live in Britain?

John Heminway [00:05:07] No, he didn't. Okay. I'm sorry. There is something about, about Africa that responded to his personality, though. Can you think of that?

Sam Weller [00:05:23] No, I'm afraid I just can't. My mind's a blank. Hmm. Okay. Because I've never really considered this matter. What draws people back to Kenya. Having, having had three children to identify themselves with Kenya and came back to live here after being educated in Europe. And one, my younger daughter lives in England. I'd like to come back here as often as you can. They were all born in Kenya.

John Heminway [00:06:01] And how do they describe it?

Sam Weller [00:06:04] I have never asked them. It's a [break in tape] mixture of living incomes and, incomes and salaries in in Europe and America have simply rocketed recently.

John Heminway [00:06:18] Yeah.

Sam Weller [00:06:18] And anybody who was quite comfortable in Kenya would find it difficult to get back on the ladder in England. Yeah. Are You from England or the States.

Speaker 4 [00:06:29] We're from the states. So.

John Heminway [00:06:30] Sam, was it amusing to go up and chat with, with Latham?

Sam Weller [00:06:35] Oh, very, yes. He was very interesting, man. And of course, there were always that sort of rogue's gallery of photographs. George the Sixth, Lawrence of Arabia from all manner of the Prince of Wales, all manner of people.

John Heminway [00:07:04] So in other words, when you walk into his room, which was tiny, right?

Sam Weller [00:07:07] Tiny.

John Heminway [00:07:08] Just walk around the room. And how would you describe it if you could today?

Sam Weller [00:07:13] Well, I'm afraid it was a sort of a bed sitter. And he sort of, he had a little of his own furniture. And really, he lived on and off his bed. You must remember.

John Heminway [00:07:29] But then these photographs around the room in silver frames.

Sam Weller [00:07:36] Well, of course, by my fate, my failing memory. I don't remember very many of them, but then. But they were mostly almost entirely from the early part of the century. They were all really about the 1920s, from about 1915 to about 1920. He obviously had a great many friends in England.

John Heminway [00:08:03] All right. Good, good. Lovely.

Sam Weller [00:08:09] Because some of them I might remark about the Sportsman's Arms. We'll give great offense to Mrs. Chamsenden [sic] who one sees every day in settlers door [sic]. She's got some link with the place, and she's always on the on the buyer side of the counter. And my remark about the squalid, Sportsman's Arms which I almost withdrew when I'd said it. but totally, totally true.

John Heminway [00:08:36] That was his first home here. And once again, why why did he why did he leave?

Sam Weller [00:08:42] Well, it was because he, he, Latham was an arch impressionist. And, as you remember, and he he treated everybody as if there was lesser breeds without the law. And he was he provoked all Chamsenden [sic], I think every day of his life and Champsenden actually treated him very well. He gave him this room of his at an exceptionally reasonable rate. I mean, incredibly reasonable. I think offhand he paid him something like £20, £25 a month, full board.

John Heminway [00:09:30] Incredible. Yes. And so what led to the. He called you up there that one day?

Sam Weller [00:09:37] No, he, I'd heard that there was an appalling row brewing. And the Latham was, had been ordered to leave the Sportsman's Arms. And I came up and asked him about it. And it was then that he he told me that he'd been struck with a rolled up newspaper, but by Chamsenden [sic]. And when he finally drew breath, I asked him what he'd done to deserve this, what he'd done to provoke Chamsenden [sic] because I realized he said something. And he said nothing at all. I did nothing to provoke him. I merely called him a coolly.

John Heminway [00:10:19] Do you think he was? You just said he was an arch imperialist. He treated races all as inferiors to him, all other races as an inferior to him. And yet, was there a certain amount of bluff in that. Actually. Could we just hang on one second? The clock is going in. Yeah, I. I think he'd like to do it because he got a rise out of people sometimes.

Sam Weller [00:10:46] Oh, yes. There's no doubt that he had his tongue in his cheek in many of his things. And there was a certain element of of acting about his in his character and his attitude. Particularly in regards chivalry and. And his attitude to life.

John Heminway [00:11:12] He would often dismiss races just with the wave of his hand, and yet individually had these extraordinary friends among those races. Did you notice that?

Sam Weller [00:11:24] Oh, yes, he did. He had many. He had many friends, both African and and European. But he always did rather adopted his attitude of being the, being the superior race.

John Heminway [00:11:48] Is that, how do you, how do you think he could get a get away with that in a newly independent country in which he was effectively a minority? I mean, he must have known. I mean, you can do certain things on the surface and other things you have to do behind the scenes. What is your read on that one?

Sam Weller [00:12:10] Well, there's a certain element of a time warp in Africa and that the the African, who's a very agreeable fellow, often puts up with, an attitude and an old person that he certainly wouldn't tolerate in somebody his own age.

John Heminway [00:12:33] So he was he chose a very, very forgiving land, and a forgiving people.

Sam Weller [00:12:38] Yes, absolutely.

John Heminway [00:12:40] Could you just say what I just said?

Sam Weller [00:12:44] Yes. Well it's clear that Latham liked to live in Kenya, because he, he, he chose to live in a very forgiving land with a very forgiving people.

John Heminway [00:12:59] Just one last thing. I mean, he had lots of African friends.

Sam Weller [00:13:03] Oh, yes, lots of African friends. As far as that went, he treated everybody alike.

John Heminway [00:13:13] Mind you, he treated me as an inferior. I was an American. And I think anybody who was in one of his regiments was probably an inferior. And I mean, most anybody in the Labor Party in Britain was an inferior. I mean, you know, it went on there were very few equals, I should think, in life.

Sam Weller [00:13:33] Very few indeed.

John Heminway [00:13:37] Just go on. I'm so curious to hear what you have to say about this.

Sam Weller [00:13:42] Now, I can't I can't really add to that.

John Heminway [00:13:46] Could you just say what I said, that he that by the time he had discovered everybody, he had very few equals something to that effect.

Sam Weller [00:13:54] I think he had this sort of presence and a character to regard him almost himself, almost to have been heaven born, and that he he always regarded almost everybody as being not as equal. Perfectly true.

John Heminway [00:14:13] How about yourself? It's. When were you his equal?

Sam Weller [00:14:20] I never asked him.

John Heminway [00:14:21] But did he treat you like an equal?

Sam Weller [00:14:23] I think he did, yes, but I never asked him.

John Heminway [00:14:36] Did you have thoughts about that.

Sam Weller [00:14:37] I can't add to it.

John Heminway [00:14:39] But. But. But did he have a great. Were women attracted to him and. And was he attracted to the women and.

Sam Weller [00:14:47] Oh, yes. He had that, that attractive factor that indefinable, and that women were drawn to him as he was as he was drawn to the women.

John Heminway [00:15:10] Was a, and, it seemed to go on forever. I mean, age, even when he was bedridden. I mean, I think I saw him just before he died in the hospital, I, I was traveling with a photographer who was a woman, and he immediately became very, it changed personality immediately when he saw her come in and smile crept across his face, toothless as it were.

Sam Weller [00:15:31] When the things off, I can tell you more about this.

John Heminway [00:15:33] Please just give us a hint. Just give us.

Sam Weller [00:15:35] There's nothing right out. I can, I can, I can, put.

John Heminway [00:15:37] Okay, fine, fine. We'll turn it off.

Producer [00:15:39] Wild track buz atmos. [background sound].

Producer [00:16:26] And the next board is 2-1-7, and it'll be a front bleep. [background sound]

Crew Member [00:16:35] Okay. And settling down here and ready. Okay. Okay. [background sound]

Producer [00:17:49] 2-1-8 coming up. [background sound]

Crew Member [00:17:51] One second. That link, settling, ready? [background sound]

Producer [00:19:04] 2-1-9 coming up. [background sound]

Crew Member [00:19:08] One second, test okay. Okay. And ready? [background sound]

Producer [00:20:13] The next slate is 2-2-0. [background sound]

Crew Member [00:20:17] We've done a little. Action. Cutting.

Producer [00:20:56] 2-2-1 next. [background sound]

Crew Member [00:21:01] Action. [background sound]

Crew Member [00:21:30] Cutting.

Producer [00:21:31] 2-2-2 next. [background sound]

Crew Member [00:21:32] And I. Roling. Think action. [background sound] Cutting. You know what?

Producer [00:21:59] Let's call it false start.

Crew Member [00:22:01] Roling. Action. [background sound] . End bleep. Pretty good. Okay.

Producer [00:22:26] 2-2-2 on the end.