2660-120-000-029.mp3

Producer [00:00:03] This is Sound Roll 29. It's the 20th of the third, 1992 Channel 13 WNET Travels Le Mal d'Afrique project number 401 Sound Roll 29. Turns at neg eight. And this is a take 2 of the last wild track on Sound Roll 28, which is the wide shot perspective of Lamu with the wind. And you can hear the Qur'an being said in the distance.

Unidentified [00:00:50] [background sounds]

Producer [00:02:21] Cut. Wild track atmos for 300. Take one mute. Important.

Unidentified [00:02:35] [speaking in the background] .

Producer [00:03:51] Camera to 3-0-1 take one mute and wild track to cover. This is wild track atmos for 3-0-2. Take one mute front board.

[00:04:00] [background sounds]

Producer [00:05:12] Cut. And this is some wild track atmos for 2-9-9. Take one mute front board. And a slightly wider perspective.

Producer [00:09:11] And this is the third wildtrak. This is no engine. This is the boat just wallowing in the water. Cut. Track atmos for 3-0-3 take one mute end board.

John Heminway [00:12:05] George, very simply this. Tell me how you came to Lamu.

George Fagen [00:12:09] Well, my story about coming to glamor was rather long, but I will try and shorten it as much as possible and still make it sensible. I was selling a picture one day in Sotheby's and the head that the old masters said to me "if the picture doesn't fetch the price, where can we get in touch with you?" I said "You won't. I'm on my way to Kenya." He disappeared to have a private conversation, and his secretary said to me, 'Oh, I heard you say you are going to Kenya. Would you be kind enough to deliver a bottle of gin to a dear old friend of mine?" I said, "sure, my dear, certainly, just label it properly." She handed me the bottle of gin labeled properly, and I departed for Kenya. I got out of the airport. I went to a taxi and I said to the taxi driver, on your way to the north folk could you drop me off? Let me drop this bottle of gin off at Shela Lamu. And the taxi driver invited me to take another taxi because he thought I was bonkers. And then I discovered that Sheila Lamu was someplace a hundred miles from nowhere, and I didn't have any idea how to get there. However, two weeks later, I was sitting on the balcony of the Castle Hotel, and I heard one young man saying to another, "I would love to go to Lamu, but I haven't the money." And I listened and when his friend departed. I approached him and said, How much does it cost to go to Lamu? He said, 60 shillings. I said, I could defer your expenses to Lamu, if you could help me and carry my bag and we can both go to Lamu. So the next morning at 6:00, we got on a bus, stayed on the bus all day, got onto a boat, and I set foot on Lamu at 6:00 that evening. And I tell my friends, I swear that that very moment a weight dropped off my shoulders and I felt totally relaxed and that I have at last found the place I wanted to spend the rest of my life. Because by this time I spent three years going round the world looking for some place that would be totally at where I would be. Absolutely. And mentally relaxed with a beautiful sunshine and a nice beach, nice people and no harassment. And I subsequently discovered that seven different people, ethnically different Indians, Africans, Swahili Bajunis, Europeans, all these people were living together and

had been living here for over 200 years. And as Moy would say peace, love and harmony, and it was therefore a unique, a very remarkable place. And it turned out to be that for me.

John Heminway [00:15:10] You you must tell me A) just a little bit about yourself. You've been a doctor for a long time. And and and why and what were you looking for? And that you had gone around the world, as it were, looking for the perfect place to retire in that case.

George Fagen [00:15:28] Well, I had about three years before I found Lamu, had unfortunately developed coronary artery disease. I had been, I was professor of surgery. I was senior surgeon to Sir Patrick Dutton's hospital and the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin. And I had a very big farm and an antique collection and several directorships. I think I was on 47 committees as well as on commissions, etc. I was really doing an 18 hour day and when I was told by one doctor and then I, I wasn't too sure about accepting one doctor's opinion another. And the third that I had it that I was, got this progressive coronary narrowing. I was just told to go and find some place to retire to that if I continued as I was, I would be dead in a couple of years. So I then had to get away from Agro and get into a long time because my angina was triggered off by cold. And I set out to find some place in the world where I could have a nice warm climate and get some exercise and get away from the aggravation of university councils, and government interference, and heavy workload as a doctor, and of course at the university, I had to organize the teaching for 100 students and the surgery and the examination, and I had to attend all these international meetings. So. I really had one hell of a life and I had to cut it all and find some place where I would be totally relaxed. So I started off and I looked systematically around the world. I had a 17 point plan in which I gave marks to each country, depending on its disease factor, its currency factor, its political factor, its esthetic factor, and so on. And it was a tie between Rarotonga [sic] and Lamu in the end, and they came out as neck and neck. But really, Lamu captivated me because of this ambiance. Or this wonderful feeling of friendship among the people or understanding is a better word tolerance. Understanding. This exists between all these people of totally different backgrounds, different religions, different political outlooks. They have a total tolerance of the other man's point of view. And this tolerance seems to give the island a special, uh, feeling that it's got.

John Heminway [00:18:20] You have to go back and just finish the story now. You got off the, you step set foot in Lamu and then you haven't told us that name of this old man.

George Fagen [00:18:30] Well, yes, I apologize. I sent food in Lamu I did have the bottle of gin, which I had replaced having from the first bottle, thinking the silly girl has given me an impossible task. Then my conscience made me buy a second bottle and I had retained the label of the first bottle and the bottle was labeled bawana bada kufa [sic]. Now, I had no idea what that meant, but it means not yet dead, because when Leslie Latham Moore, the man in question to whom I was to deliver the bottle of gin. When Leslie Latimer arrived on this island, the young people looked at him and thought he should be dead. So they christened the Mr. not yet dead. Because he'd be dead very soon, according to them. So he was called bawana bada kufa [sic], which means in Swahili, not yet dead. And I came to the Shela little seaside section of the island to Peponi Hotel. I went to Charles the bar man and then said, Charles, have you any idea where this guy lives? And Charles said, Yes, sure. And he wandered up to this house or flat, apartment. And Leslie Latham Moore, uh, was housed in and there and then I deliver the bottle of gin with great ceremony, I keep my eyes on it now for 15 minutes discussion. When he didn't seem to be going to open it, I suggested, I could manage, I can open for him. And then I had a bottle of gin.

And from then on, of course, I got to know him. He was a tremendous character. Everybody knew him and eventually I became friendly with him because he had a varicose ulcer, which was the condition in which I had been doing research for most of my life and which was the cause of my downfall because I became too well known. I had many, too many patients and the overwork from that made me eventually have to bail out and find a place like Lamu.

John Heminway [00:20:43] What were your impressions of of Latham? It was actually Latham Leslie Moore.

George Fagen [00:20:47] Latham Leslie Moore well I thought that Leslie Latham Moore fitted in better. So I rechristened him myself. My impression of him was that he was an enormous character. He had very little reception receptors. He was an extrovert of the highest order, and he almost thought that everybody, mentally he was a king in his own mind. He thought that everybody should hop to it. And in fact, people didn't disillusion him here, and they did hop to it and attended on him with great tolerance. At times he to me, he was overbearing, but the people were so nice and so kind here that they never allowed, never censured him for his arrogance. But but this came from the fact that he was an enormous, outsized character.

John Heminway [00:21:43] Do you do you think that he was an anac... an anachronism?

George Fagen [00:21:48] Well, he must've been, because he certainly, any man who has established his own island, his own kingdom, his own parliament and his own I think he even had wives on the island. And I don't know I don't know the facts about that. But certainly, there are very few places in the world that he could have felt at home. I did visit him and helped him up to his next home in I think it was Nanyuki [sic]. And there he had again the entire hotel management and the owner hopping about attending on him as if he were a king again. And at this hotel he was paying, he was being taken in at a very small sum, uh, to, to because they knew his circumstances were not good. But still he demanded, as if he was a royal visitor. So.