

Store Owner Also Master Of Jungles

By BIRCHEL BARRETT

If you are interested in discovering "what's new in downtown Inglewood," you might check with C. J. McElroy, owner of Floorcraft, 111 North Locust Street. McElroy, a big game hunter, has opened a new store in Inglewood which features a huge trophy display room

filled with skins, heads and complete stuffed animals he has shot all over the world the past 15 years. A tour of this impressive collection will give the guest a vicarious trip on a big game safari he will never forget.

McElroy, 118 West Hillcrest Boulevard, is president of the Southern California Safari Club, an organization of the top hunters in and around Los Angeles, and hunting is a major part of his life. In fact, it is a family affair. His wife, Alvina, goes along on most of his trips.

The sportsman stressed that while the beautiful display room is not readily available to the general public, he will accept appointments for youth groups, classes at school or other groups or customers on request.

And what will you see when you enter this miniature jungle? This will give you an idea:

McElroy has shot a dikdik, one of the smallest of the antelope family in Africa, standing 12 to 14 inches at the shoulders. Next to it over the 11 by 22-foot floor-to-ceiling fireplace are elephant tusks and feet of a beast which was 11½ to 12 feet tall at the shoulders.

Also on display are rhinoceros, Grant gazelle, roan antelope, reed buck, Thompson gazelle, Kodiak brown bear, Canadian moose, mountain goat, caribou, all four species of North American sheep (stone, Dall, desert and Rocky Mountain), elk, antelope, impala, cape buffalo, oribi, wart hog, steinbock, topi, oryx, water buck, gnu, bush buck, wildebeest, sititunga, hartebeest, Indian chital, deer, eland, sable, greater kudu, jaguar, polar bear, wolverine, tiger, Arctic wolf, zebra, lion, leopard, sloth bear, iguana and monitor lizard.

Some of the trophies are heads mounted on the wall of the two-story knotty pecan paneled display room. Others are rugs, with and without heads, and some are complete specimens mounted on cast-ored standards. The room features a conference table and seating area in front of the huge fireplace, as well as a bar which can be concealed by the wall.

Naturally McElroy has his favorite trophies. They are his world record jaguar (based on skull measurement) shot in Cienega, Sinaloa, Mexico, in 1965; a bighorn ram shot in Alberta, Canada, in 1965; a polar bear shot in Kotzebue, Alaska, in 1965; an Alaskan brown bear shot on the Alaskan peninsula in 1965; a 10-foot, 1-inch tiger from India, and a 50-inch cape buffalo and 118-pound tusked elephant.

McElroy was honored at the last competition conducted by Boone and Crockett, record keepers for North America, in Philadelphia. He received first place for his jaguar, third for the bighorn ram and fourth for the polar bear.

"My wife goes on many of my safaris with me," McElroy said, "and she's very good, too."

Mrs. McElroy's trophies include antelope, gazelle, a record book wart hog and American game.

She uses a .306 Winchester and a .270 custom made rifle. Her husband shoots a .300 Weatherby and a .458 Browning for elephants, rhinos and buffalo.

They have gone on several safaris together, including trips to Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda, India, South America, Mexico, Alaska and Canada.

McElroy was born in Denton County, Tex., on a farm

and says he has hunted since the age of 10 when he ran traps before going to school, catching opossum, skunk, raccoon and mink.

"I've been hunting big game as often as I can in this country," the hunter said. He came to California in 1935 and has been in the floor covering business for 18 years, locating in Inglewood three months ago.

"My trophy room covers hunting over the past 15 years," he continued. "Before that I didn't keep trophies." He also has trophies at home.

McElroy returned June 14 from his fifth trip to Kenya where he failed in his attempt to bag a bongo, a rare breed of antelope found only in the most rugged parts of the Abedee Mountains and on Mount Kenya among the bamboo forests.

"I passed up two females," said McElroy. "We hunted for 15 days in that nettle-covered country and we wanted a bull. Maybe next time."

He said that after 15 days they decided it was too dry and they came out of the mountains to hunt cape buffalo—and he got one.

"Rowland Ward, who keeps records for Africa and is an official in Nairobi, told me it was the best buffalo killed in East Africa in the past four years," he beamed.

The beast measured 50½ inches (width of horns) and 16½ inches for the boss (thickness of horn across the front). Each horn was 47 inches long.

Also on the last trip, McElroy went to elephant country near Tsavo National Park and killed an elephant with tusks weighing 118 and 108 pounds, respectively.

"This is the dream of an elephant hunter," McElroy smiled, noting he made the "100-pound club" in tusks and the "50-inch club" for the buffalo during the five-week trip.

The sportsman said he went alone and hired Mike Horsley of Nanyuki, Kenya, an Englishman who served as PWH (professional white hunter). Horsley provided a 10-man crew of Africans.

An exciting moment came during "control" work when Bill Winters, Nanyuki game warden, invited him to help kill elephants raiding farms and eating maize.

"We went to the mountains where the farm was and got in the middle of 50 or 60 elephants," McElroy said. "He shot one and I got two."

McElroy explained that the elephants walk through the tangled bamboo and thick thicket and are almost invisible.

"You can't see them, but you can hear them trumpeting," he recalled. "All of a sudden we realized we were surrounded."

He said that if you kill two or three they don't come back to that area. After a few are killed, the others are frightened away with fire bombs.

The hunter had other interesting comments about the last safari.

He noted that after a buffalo is killed the ticks leave it and take to the hunter while the animal is being skinned. "It really makes you itch," he laughed.

He recalled an eight-foot bovard which was feeding on bait (an impala) in a tree. Instead of climbing the tree, the leopard would stand on its hind legs and gnaw the meat.

"He always came when we were out of the blind," McElroy chuckled. "He was very smart."

And what about clubs or organizations? Wouldn't you guess, hunter McElroy is a member of the Elks!

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