



Laura Lee Huttenbach with her book cover, 2015.
Photo: Mary Beth Koeth.

From Mau Mau to Raven

By Lee Skye

Picture the 2001 State of Georgia Women’s Intersport Female Athlete of the Year. She’s a 5’9” four-sport athlete with brilliant blue eyes, long straight blond hair, and a disposition like a bright sunny day. Now imagine that Laura Lee Huttenbach, a recent graduate of the University of Virginia, is trekking alone through Kenya in 2006. In the remote Meru district, Laura Lee chances to meet Japhlet Thambu, an 85-year-old tea farmer also known as “The General,” because he was a leader of the Mau Mau Revolution.

They bond like grandfather and granddaughter, and Laura Lee decides to document Thambu’s life, sitting at the feet of The General, recording his oral history in a dusty tradition that started to disappear with the arrival of British colonialists and “modern” education.

The result of her conversations with *The General* is *The Boy Is Gone: Conversations with a Mau Mau General*, published by Ohio University Press in 2015, just after Thambu died.

In a December, 2015 televised interview presented below, Laura Lee talks with Jeff Koinange of station KTN in Kenya and describes her improbable journey.

I first met Laura Lee at the Miami Book Fair in 2015, and readily understood how she could captivate a Mau Mau general. I was standing on the waterfront deck of the Standard Hotel, at a Book Fair party to celebrate National Book Award recipients, and Laura Lee simply walked up and introduced herself. Within minutes we were yakking like old friends and by the end of the evening she was imploring me and my husband to adopt her.



Laura Lee Huttenbach, Raven, and Mary Beth Koeth on Miami Beach, 2015. Photo: Mary Beth Koeth.

Most recently, Laura Lee has finished her latest biographical manuscript, *Running with Raven*, the story of Robert Kraft, known as “Raven,” who has been running eight miles per day in Miami Beach, every day, since 1975. To gather information about Raven’s remarkable streak and the folk legend behind the accomplishment, Laura Lee joined Raven’s running pack and acquired the nickname “White Lightning.” It didn’t hurt that one of Laura Lee’s “Athlete-of-the-Year” sports was cross-country running.

The links below are to Huttenbach’s Kenyan television debut on a popular evening talk show called *Jeff Koinange Live*. The episode aired on Dec. 23, 2015. Click or tap on any video. You must be connected to the Internet to view the videos.

PART A: 16 min.



Laura Lee Huttenbach on Jeff Koinange Live, 12/23/15

PART B: 16 min.



Laura Lee Huttenbach on Jeff Koinange Live, 12/23/15

PART C: 21 min.



Laura Lee Huttenbach on Jeff Koinange Live, 12/23/15