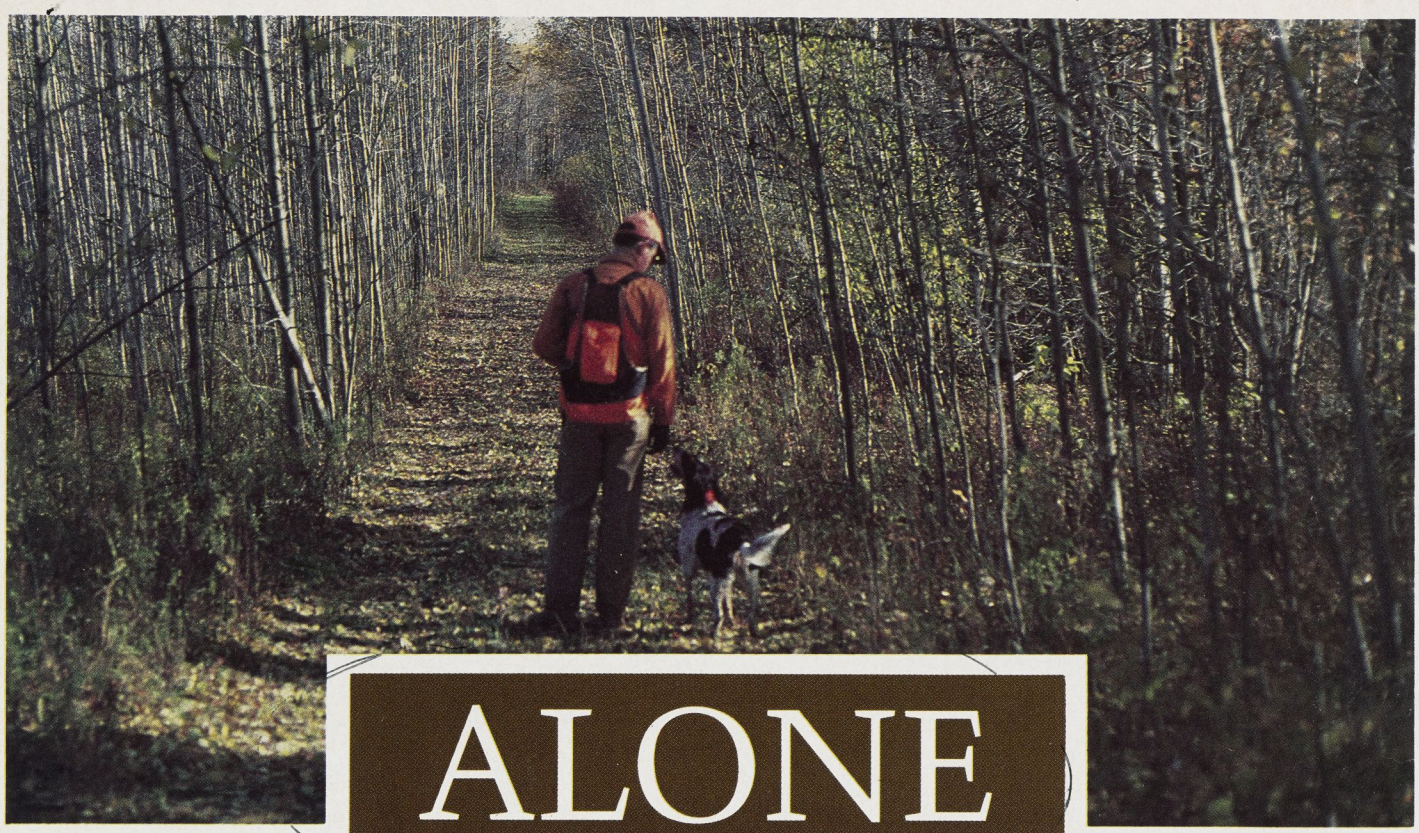
NORTH OF THE BORDER

by Bill McClure



ALONE

A shooting guest, a kindred soul and never a great need for talking.

I have a confession to make. I prefer to go shooting alone, always have, and as the years go by I appreciate solitude in the woods or marshes more than ever. In contrast to our largely urbanized continent so intent on togetherness, conviviality, cooperation and brotherhood I prefer my dog and gun for company. It's not that I dislike cities or people, quite the contrary, both have a place in my life, in small doses, well spaced, and buffered by ample aloneness. I like my outdoors devoid of discussion, analysis, or disappointment. Although I recognize many of the plants, flowers, trees, shrubs, insects, birds, toads and cloud formations, it is my choice not to speak of them often in October. I listen to a great deal of music for enjoyment and read extensively about musicians but I cannot bring myself to analyze or dissect a performance. I leave that to others.

My favourite camera is my eyes. I resist contests connected with collecting the most, the largest, the first or the last of some variety of fish or game. Although I have always loved shooting I have also been involved with everything else which is associated with the sport; the canoes, chickadees, brooks, lakes, guns, toadstools, wildflowers, boots, dogs, and muskrats have been as important parts of the whole as a basket of ducks. That has always been so. As a youthful trout fishing disciple of Ray Bergman back in the 40's, I, like my mentor, believed that the watercress, the sassafrass and the fly were as captivating as the fish. Mr. Bergman and I would have no difficulty with catch and release, nor would a two-duck limit upset us.

As you might have guessed there was a day when one cottontail rabbit in the pouch transformed my view of the world. It still does. Six would not make the fresh bright snow or the cry of the hound coming around the cedar woods, six times better, just busier. And when alone all my eye sees comes to sharper focus, my ears are acutely tuned and I can even smell a fox. Strangely most of us shoot better when we are alone even though we play our best golf when playing with someone better than ourselves. On the few occasions when I have been lucky enough to complete a right and left on grouse or woodcock I have not had a witness and the organizations that award silver lapel pins or bottles of apricot brandy to doubles shooters require the testimony of two witnesses. With two other guns I couldn't imagine hitting a thing so all I ever had to offer was a paw print from "Kip," "Prince," or "Corky" whose veracity was beyond reproach. They never crowded me either. But no silver pins or Bols brandy has come my solitary way and now my only spectators to these exhibitions have gone silent to their graves.

Waterfowl hunters are generally pretty gregarious and although I have been a guest in many blinds or goose pits I never recall rising on the command "take 'em" at a time propitious to me. The company was great but the fellow who issued the command invariably had a brace 30 yards out, wings locked, feet outstretched. In that split second it takes to react to the instruction the birds see him

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pop up and my pair were already flaring downwind. Alone there is no need to look up or call out while listening so intently to the sound of the wind in their wings and it is they who are astonished by the greeting from the formerly invisible. By myself I have even had a premonition that there were birds on the way and in a minute or so, I see at the first moment possible, that staggered line of dots flying the characteristic hesistant wing beat of those looking to rest.

Most shooters are social beings and enjoy the outing and the company as much, or indeed often more than the shooting which serves as a kind of club membership complete with costume and a newsletter. These convivial souls are quite willing to stop to visit on a sunny October Tuesday afternoon while we loners have acquisitive thoughts about grouse strutting stiff legged out onto the borders of grape-lined arbours. Once the gregarious have dressed and motored off somewhere they are satisfied and complete men. Their objectives are simple and usually they approach the sporting day very well equipped. Their dress is expensive as are their guns and 4×4's. Their dogs I am sad to say may be valuable but because they spend so much time in their crates are not very adept at their job.

I once spent a week quail shooting with the most sociable gentlemen in North Carolina and although we did see a few coveys we saw many more farmers, their wives, chickens, livestock, new tobacco barns and collie dogs. In desperation I even took pictures of many of these images. Our costumes remained immaculate and our social standing held up very well. There was no need to present the landowner with a brace of quail after our hunt—we didn't have any—another long visit served quite nicely. Others, driven to complete the circle, would never be content all dressed up with not much to do. If it is any comfort the latter minority seems to be well distributed from British Columbia to Newfoundland.

Surprisingly the companionless are also in my experience found distributed amongst all manner of shooters, in all age groups, and socio-economic populations. There is, to be sure, an over-representation among grouse shooters including to my surprise those who gun for the principal Newfoundland grouse, the ptarmigan. All Canadians believe that nowhere in our country are to be found a more congenial, sociable, friendly group of citizens than on our largest island province.

Recently I interviewed two experienced and very keen dog men in Newfoundland concerning their devotion to ptarmigan shooting over pointing dogs on the high barrens.

Dogs, chickadees, lakes, guns and wildflowers have been as important parts of the whole as a basket of ducks.

Friends had recommended that I see these two noted shooters who trained their own dogs, owned hunt camps miles from the nearest road, and shared many years of experience. Both are native Newfoundlanders who grew up with gun dogs and birds and in their young years were very much a part of mainland Canadian university collegiality. To my great surprise both of these men who live 250 miles apart and do not know one another, took particular pains to tell me why they preferred to hunt on the wild and lonely barrens alone. Doing so is patently dangerous as the region can be socked in in a matter of minutes by a dense fog making travel extremely risky. A lone gunner and his dog could be in a very precarious predicament and of course an injury would be a disaster. Their wives worry about them but their pleasure in lone hunting is very strong.

Often these men go to their camps with a group of friends but invariably they choose to hunt with dog, gun and compass. When I asked each man to explain what his reasons were for such a preference they both described their sense of freedom to move in whatever direction they chose and both emphasized they could handle their dogs better when alone. Their belief was that the quality of performance they got from their dog was infinitely better because of their ability to focus on what the dog was doing. Another key point that both men emphasized was their ability to cover more territory, see more game, and not worry about whether their companion was tired, hungry or having a good time. My informants readily admitted that they really enjoyed people and camp life but when "on the country" looking for birds their most exhilarating moments came in the hours of solitude, when they were free to work out farther away from camp late in the afternoon.

They expressed joy in being able to walk along a decades old caribou trail to check out a pond over the range to see if a flock of geese pitched in during the night. There was no one with whom they felt obliged to ask to see if they were still up to the walk and there was never any question that their dog was willing and able to go to eternity if asked to do so.

I have a grouse hunting friend in Québec who has been afoot in the coverts of the Eastern Townships since boyhood; he still has his first gun as well as a couple of custom made numbers but he rarely ever shoots in company. He takes his deer alone, fly fishes for trout by himself but in every other respect is a sociable, genial man with many business and personal friends. Another pal of mine who is about the most outgoing guy you could ever meet goes out of his way to avoid a shooting party. When he becomes involved he chooses not to shoot at many birds preferring that his guest have the fun. In fact many who are solitary hunters select this option when in company and one I know claims that if he is gunning with anyone except his wife he shouldn't even be allowed to carry a gun because he feels so uneasy. These are not in any respect withdrawn anti-social people, not by any stretch of the imagination. Quite the contrary, I know that each one

There are times when newcomers are welcomed and every effort made to show the guests a good day's sport. Photos by the author.

is involved in a host of socially pleasant daily encounters in their work and community endeavours. But not in the coverts and marshes.

Not being unique in my need for concentrating solitude does not mean this behaviour should be commended to all. There are times, many now, when I both crave and welcome the companionship of newcomers who I can introduce to game shooting. Such encounters are completely pleasurable. There is an altruistic atmosphere and every effort is made to show the guest a good day's sport with as the old Britts used to say, "a lovely show of birds."

But the times when the circle is complete for me is when I am solitary but I do have an exception to this pleasure on being alone. I have a friend, a kindred soul, who travels across Canada for a shooting visit every few years. He doesn't need to be shown a good time because our coming together for a week is a good time. Never do I have to worry about "a lovely show of birds" since he, like I, is well pleased with every day. We both see the wild asters, hear the hawk, and notice the coyote track. His profession once was to interpret the names and place of flora and fauna but he rarely ever offers a name up for edification. We laugh a lot. Sharing as we do similar feelings about life's pleasures of body and soul there isn't a great need for talking. Our minds surround the whole of a shooting day. Little escapes our notice so there is rarely any need for signals or warnings about a precipitous event. He knows exactly where to go in the instant a point occurs and is never surprised when a flock of ducks arrives over the corn. That is why we are there. Nor are we heartbroken when we miss, which is often and at times shocking, but we are always complimentary when the other shoots well. There is, I am pleased to say, an unspoken gentlemanly competitiveness in our shooting of the sort we once knew so well and honoured on the court long before commercial sports turned games into contests and sportsmen into pawns.

We always have such a good time. There is no lamenting our dogs' errors, poor marksmanship, the lack of the game or weather. Dogs, we have found, will be dogs, and like our aim or the rain must be accepted as one of the day's events. We grew up decades apart but read many of the same shooting and fishing writers and dreamt the same boys' dreams of becoming what we are now, doing what we now do. That is a lot in common. We share not only a mental picture of the committed straight line cargo aircraft flight of a sharptail grouse but also a devoted lack of interest in the drop at heel or comb thickness of our guns.

Both of us are knife happy, owning several lifetime supplies, losing them at a great rate and celebrating their reincarnation years later. We have confessed to one another the social sin of going to great pains at times to avoid joining a shooting party, electing instead to creep out alone ashamed but unrepentant. Both of us share the understanding that even granting our romantic ideation about the place of ruffed grouse in the minds and hearts of the men of October that they in turn hold no such notions about their predator. That we believe is what makes them so good to eat.

One November day we marked a few down in some tall goldenrod along a brook. Why grouse would ever choose to flush into such cover is decidedly their business but I suppose having escaped the initial barrage they were full of immortality. A new point was joined and we two marched like the Queen's Guard toward the opposition. One by one they rose above the weeds careening in the wide open towards the hardwoods ahead. There was even time to reload. When it was all over I exclaimed Our Lord's name, but being a parson's son, my companion just stared incredulously at the last departing bird. We burst out laughing.

My eldest daughter who knows her father very well indeed said after my friend's last shooting visit that she had never seen me happier. That is company. □

THE LAST BUFFALO HUNT

BY REV. THOMAS L. RIGGS

An eyewitness account of the final hunt of the Sioux Indians, in what is now South Dakota.

"Hunt at Crow Heart," an oil painting by John Clymer.

In September of 1841, two missionaries—Stephen R. Riggs and Alexander Huggins—left their home state of Minnesota and traveled West to visit Indian bands along the Missouri River. They found a group of Indians encamped opposite the present site of the city of Pierre, South Dakota, and Stephen Riggs preached to them in the Sioux language the first sermon ever delivered in the state of South Dakota. Thirty-one years later his son, Thomas Lawrence Riggs, founded a mission at Oahe, about 18 miles north of Pierre; and in 1880 helped establish the first Congregational Church there.

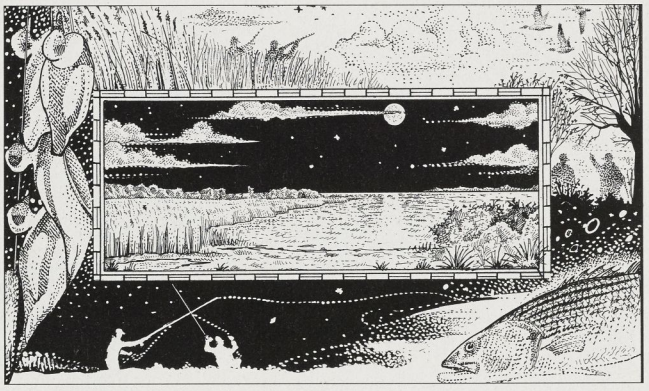
Thomas Riggs's missionary work with the Dakota Indians became legendary, and for good reason. Riggs spoke the Sioux language fluently, knew their customs well, and spent many of his days living among them. He earned their respect—they called him "Eyanpapa-Wakan," or Sacred Herald—and was the only white person invited on the Sioux Indians' last buffalo hunt. The words that follow were taken from a family genealogy that was started 100 years ago, by Riggs's nephew, and which has been passed down to family members ever since.

YOUR PLACE OR MINE?

BY ED GRAY

The place was hard to get to, especially at night, and the man who showed it to us was well into his seventies. It was a spot on the shoreline of a saltwater bay where striped bass fed, and until the man died we fished that place with him or with people he'd shown it to. No one else. It was (because he'd showed it to us) *his* place.

One October, though, I did take two others to the place. It was duck season, and we set up decoys out on the flats where the previous June it had been thick with bass. My duck hunting friends had no idea that this was a secret fishing spot, and I kept it that way.



GLENN WOLFF

As dawn came and went, we saw only a few ducks and were picking up to leave when we saw a small boat humming along the shoreline. In it was a lone man, and he came right to us.

"Private property here," he said. "You'll have to get off."

"You the owner?" I asked.

"Assistant warden," he answered. "Owner's away, and I'm looking after it for him. You'll have to pack up and go."

The guy had on a gunning parka and his boat was painted camouflage; there was an old pump gun lying down on the floorboards. He was no state conservation officer. "What's an 'assistant warden'?" I asked him.

He got huffy. "This here is a private wildlife preserve. Only the owner and his guests are allowed to hunt here. I'm hired to keep it that way."

Aha. The old "private wildlife preserve" gambit.

One beautiful, wild spot might have a lot of people who think it's theirs alone.

WAS IT LEGAL?

Sure. There are lots of private preserves, and almost all of them are excellent and valuable conservation tools, even if the owner's purpose is purely selfish. Land protected from development is...land protected from development. We need more of it. But did that mean that this "assistant warden" could toss us out of there? Absolutely not.

We had walked in at low tide, and in that state all land below the mean high-water mark is open to anyone who wants to go there for "fishing and fowling." That very specific right is written into the state constitution. We were totally legal, and I knew it.

The "warden" knew it too, and backed off completely when I brought it up, calling his bluff. "Well I guess you guys are okay if you stay here. But don't go up in that part of the marsh," he said, pointing. He motored away as we finished picking up our decoys, hurrying to get off ahead of the slowly rising tide.

WAS IT RIGHT?

A lot was going on here. I had shown a secret place to two newcomers, even though they didn't know what the place really was. A guy had pretended to be a warden and had tried to throw us out of a place we had every right to occupy. Some distant stranger had bought a semi-public place and wanted to keep it all to himself. And the man who originally showed it to me hadn't bothered to mention that if you stepped up onto the high ground you were trespassing.

One at a time, then:

Should I have brought my two friends there? No, definitely not. These two guys were striper fishermen as well as duck hunters, and they could read water. If they were alert, they'd have spotted the potential there, and I had just shown them how to get to the place. Furthermore, I hadn't told them it was a fishing place, so if they figured that for themselves, then they would—rightly—feel that the place was now their own. And they could then introduce it to others.

Should the "warden" have tried to evict us that morning? Absolutely. His loyalty was to the owner, and his bluff was harmless enough. If it had worked, he'd have helped to keep the place a bit more secret.

Should the absentee owner have tried to lock the place up for himself, even below the high water mark? No, but I wouldn't hold that much against him, either. After all, he had paid real money to buy the whole place, and he'd put conservation easements on it. If his stewardship of the land was a bit too zealous, it was still stewardship in the old sense. There's far too little of that around these days as it is.

And finally, what about the man who had showed me the place in the dark, never mentioning all those "posted" signs we were slipping by in the midnight ebb? In his mind, he was slipping in and out of there just like the bass he was following. "Anyone you know ever own the tide?" he'd have answered if I'd known to ask the question. I wish I had, just to be able to hear him say it.

In the one sense that really counts, we were all right, even where we did the wrong thing. Because we each did it for the place. All of us wanted to keep, and protect, and be in, that wild little place. It's still there. It's still wild. And there's nothing wrong with that. **SA**

This is a story of a winter hunt for big game as the Dakotas of the Sioux nation have followed it for generations. It was their last winter hunt. They prepared for this, entered upon, and carried it out with religious feeling and fervor. Much that is good of their ancient religion shows in every detail. "Spies" are sent afield and their reports received under oath and according to a ritual of thought and form that is fixed and handed down from generation to generation. The ordering of the chase itself and the sharing of the spoils is clear-cut and invariable. The hunting camp is a unit and the crier stands as representing the camp—its recognized spokesman and its high priest.

Early in September 1880 reports of returning game were brought to the river agencies, and several hunting parties went out. I accompanied those going from the Cheyenne River Agency. Our route was up the Moreau River and to the west of Slim Butte. There were 60 hunters and 40 women in the party, with innumerable dogs and 300 horses, and we brought home about 2000 robes. Indians from the Custer battlefield of four years before made a considerable portion of the party. Being the only white man along, I was able to study their habits and language; this indeed was my chief object in accompanying them. This is a partial account of this hunt, and gives an inside view of the customs and laws that control all hunting parties of the Dakotas when out for big game.

Roan Bear and I had turned out our horses with the bunch in the breaks, where they would paw away the snow and feed during the night, when he proposed that we go to the "soldier lodge," or council tent, and learn what was to be done. There had been talk of sending men to the hills, for we were not far from where big game might be found.

The soldier lodge was like other tents, though larger than most, and stood in a sheltered spot not far from the middle of the camp, which was pitched on the south side of a fringe of trees and brush. In one respect, however, this tent is quite different from others—there are none of the usual trappings of travel around the door nor any ordinary signs of cooking and home life outside. No woman lives there. Food is brought from other tents. This lodge is the heart of the camp and levies on all for voluntary contribution. Here all general matters are discussed and plans made.

When Roan Bear and I went in we found Little Bear and one or two others only. They were seated at the left as we entered. A carefully tended fire in the center made the tent warm and light. By the fire there was a kettle or two of boiled meat and a large pail of coffee. Little Bear had his pipe, and this was passing from one to another.

As others came in they seated themselves in a circle about the fire. We had but one topic; yesterday a young man had seen what appeared to be the drifted over trail of a single buffalo, indicated by the broken bits of snow, and today others had seen similar signs, and just before we made camp these were found plentiful and sure.

No shooting had been allowed for two days, and even loud talking and the barking of dogs had been repressed. It was three weeks since we started, and the camp was well in hand and under strict control.

It was thought best not to move camp the next day, but to send out scouts in the morning. Two young men of experience were selected for this service. They were to leave camp before daylight and were carefully instructed as to their route. Keeping together, they were to go to certain well-known landmarks; if nothing could be seen from there or on the way they were to go to other specified points of outlook and, returning, bring reports. These instructions

were given by the leading man, he who stood as chief of the council tent; he was assisted by others and all was said in the hearing of those present.

The selected two were sworn to the service; each, with one or both hands placed palm down flat on the earth, received the instructions and made silent pledges. There is no fixed form for this oath, nor is it given aloud. The solemnity of the occasion and its serious purpose is felt and responded to by each. Many others also joined in this vow and prayer. I sat next to Touch-the-Cloud. He rubbed away the grass and leaves at his side and sat with one hand flat on the earth. Seeing that I was noticing, he said: "I am offering prayer with one hand and I now do so with both." I did the same. The earth is the mother of all and prayer is offered in this way, as the oath is administered, lest the all-mother give alarm to the buffalo and carry to their ears knowledge of the presence and purpose of men.

Life in camp the next day was anxiously dull for most. Our scouts went out as ordered. The very horses taken were known. Each rode second best—not his buffalo runner. As the day passed interest grew and guesses were made regarding when to expect their return.

I learned several interesting things: Going out to scout for buffalo is spoken of as "going to the hills"; if returning with glad messages the scouts would be "the runners," from the way in which they would make known what their report would be on the first convenient hill at a distance from, but in sight of, the camp. "What do you call them when they have no message, if they come back and say there are no buffalo?" I asked. "We shall not see them at all if they have nothing to tell. They will not come back till after dark and then even the dogs of their own tents will not know when they return." I thought this rather hard on the poor fellows. It occurred several times, however, on this very hunt. No one knew when the men sent to the hills returned, and even the next day they had but little to say save in answer to questioning.

It was just before sunset that our "runners" came in view. Someone announced the fact and the entire camp went wild—women calling and men running and everything about the tents forgotten as we looked to see the message they were bringing. "They run! They run!" everyone shouted in suppressed voice as the returning scouts appeared on a ridge about a mile from the camp and there, separately and from opposite directions, ran their horses several times up and down across our line of vision. "That is good," was the comment made by Charger. From there our runners came full tilt to a second rise nearer by and repeated the maneuver. "We shall have plenty of fresh meat by this time tomorrow," said Yellow Owl, a brother of Little Bear.

A third time the runners gave the signal when but a short distance from camp, and then rode with all the speed their tired horses had left directly to a little knoll to one side, where the camp crier and others had gone to receive their report. We gathered facing the West, for the runners were coming from that direction. Each man brushed aside the snow before him and kneeled on one knee. The old crier had gathered a few buffalo chips and piled them before him. Straight to him the runners came; jumping from their horses, the leader kicked the little pile aside, and both knelt opposite the crier and facing us. The crier lit a pipe, took a whiff, and after reverently touching the earth with the bowl and lifting the stem to heaven above, he presented it to the leader and said: "You who are no longer children—grown up amidst these hills and valleys—tell me, I pray, if you have seen anything of prowling dog (wolf) or flying bird (buzzard) and feeding animal (buffalo) beyond the hills whence you come; tell me truly and make me glad." The runner, having received the pipe and in turn offering it to earth and sky, takes a mouthful or two of smoke, and passing the pipe to his comrade answers, "Yes." The expectant crowd from camp gives voice to a shrill cry of exultation: *Hai...i! Hai...i!* The crier repeats his question, calling now for particulars. An answer is given, this time presenting what they first saw. Again is the charge given and more of the particulars "from beyond that" asked for. And even a third time is the call made for what is "beyond that." After this the runners are told to tell at will all they learned. The official report has been made and now all rise and the runners give with more personal detail the news they bring, while some scurry down into camp to tell the women and to prepare for the run to be made the next day.

"In the Face of the Blizzard," by E.W. Lenders. Courtesy of the Wildlife Museum of the American West.

We turned to the left, and hardly 80 rods away the already startled buffalo closed up and began to move, breaking into a gallop.

The hunters were out early—56 men of us—and, leading the horses they were to ride, with a number of extra packhorses along, soon after daybreak approached the place where buffalo were seen the day before. As we could see each other more clearly I noticed the blackened faces of those who had been appointed "soldiers" for this run. This was the sign of their authority, and it was their duty to keep the party together and to stop any ambitious hunter from starting away and alarming the game before all could take part on even terms.

The morning was gray and chilly—the day before Christmas—and Co-kan-tan-ka expressed my own feelings as he rode up to where we were stopping with a shivery, "I'm cold!" He added, after a look to the East: "We shall all be warm soon and without the sun." The snow was deeper than the older men liked and many falls were predicted,

though several remarked that there would be fewer bones broken because of this. The buffalo were not far away and some were soon seen, but the herd was very small and there was considerable talk before it was finally decided to run them. We were tired of venison and porcupine, skunk and badger meat, and every man longed for the food of former days—buffalo meat, "the meat that satisfies and has a tang to it."

We changed mounts, taking our running horses—the pampered ones that had run loose all the way out and at every opportunity were fed the strength-giving shavings of the inner bark and the twigs of the young cottonwood trees—these were the horses on which we now depended and about which we had bragged mightily night after night. A few of these were experienced buffalo runners, of known speed and staying powers, but there were many untried horses. My own was an old hand and knew all that horses could know about running buffalo, besides being very fast. Every man in camp knew him, for he was the horse that Can-pta-ye had on the Little Big Horn against Custer in '76. Some men rode bareback, but most of them used a convenient, lightly stuffed running pad. I had added stirrups to the Indian-made article I used.

While changing to our running horses a consultation was held. During this, one of the quieter men of the party led his horse to one side and with covered head, seated himself on a slight rise of ground. Joining us again, he said: "I have been praying that we may have a successful run and that no one will be hurt. My heart tells me that we shall soon eat fresh meat."

Starting again, two or three were to keep along on the edge of the little plateau beyond which the game was feeding, and by signal keep the main body posted as we made a detour and followed up a long, crooked depression to get close in before showing ourselves. There had been excitement before, but now it was intense, affecting horses as well as men. Some worked along quietly, making no show of their eagerness. Many of the men rode like demons, recklessly using heel and quirt to key their horses up to the rush they would soon have to make, and a few of the horses were equally wild.

For weapons we had magazine and single-shot rifles, though Little Bear, who rode a famous Pinto horse, an old-time hunter, carried his bow and arrows. To prevent losing one's horse in case of a fall each man had a small line about 20 feet long tightly tucked under his belt, one end of which is fastened to the bridle bit and the other tied to the belt itself. When this has not been done horses have been known to get away and never be recovered.

My own hands, on this first run, were very full. I, of course, was as excited as any, and it was all I could do to control my horse, who would first carom against the man on one side and then against the one on the other, much to my discomfort and anguish, for in the midst of it my line slipped from my belt and flew away behind, a most tempting loop on one end, I on the other—for some horse to step into and I be jerked off and covered with snow! To pull in, recoil and tuck away my line was nerve-splitting work at the moment,

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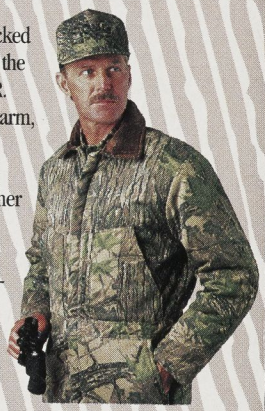

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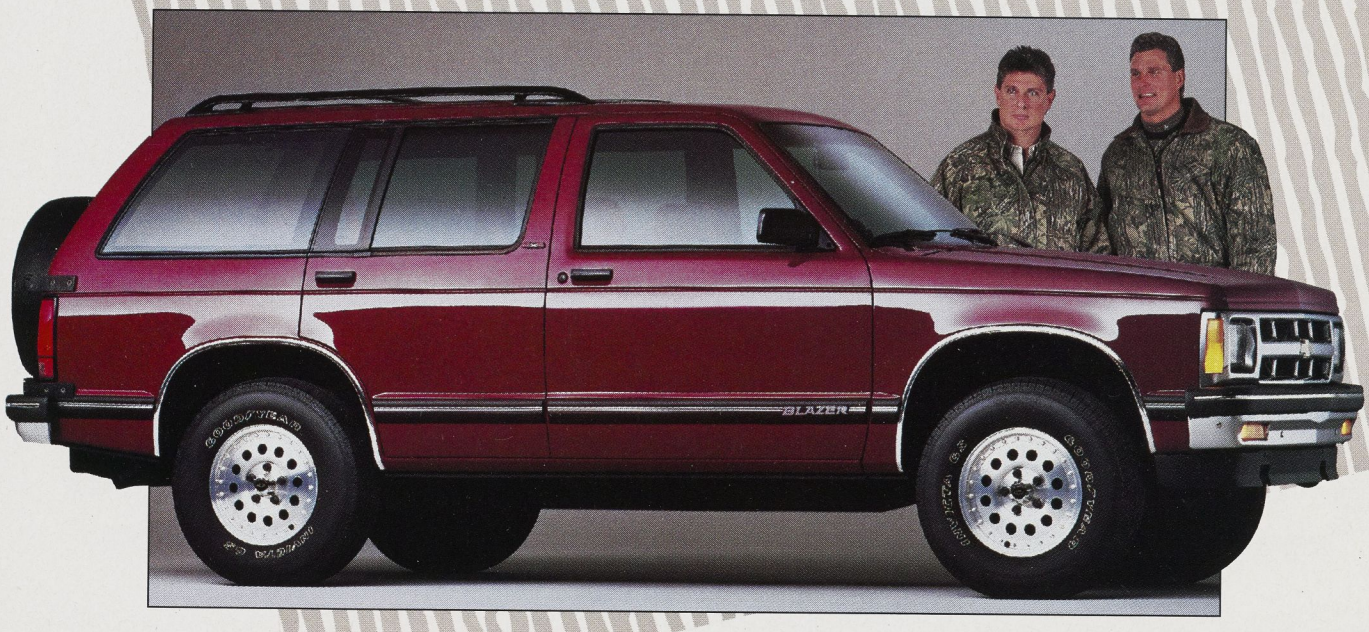


and my heavy Remington was extra trouble. I could easily have used another pair of hands.

A laughable occurrence eased the strain somewhat. One of our "soldiers," one who had been left with the main party, was very suspicious of those who were doing scout duty above us. He declared that they were deceiving us and were not to be trusted, and as we could see nothing whatever, he finally started off in a hurry to see for himself, running his horse over a little rise and down into an open draw leading out of the valley. Suddenly there was a cloud of snow, and both man and horse disappeared. The man rose uninjured and, after much effort, helped his horse from the snow-covered washout into which he had ridden. As he turned back, shaking the snow from inside his clothing and clearing it from his gun, Roan Bear whispered loudly enough for all near to hear, "He is cooled off now," and we trotted up to the valley with better hold on ourselves.

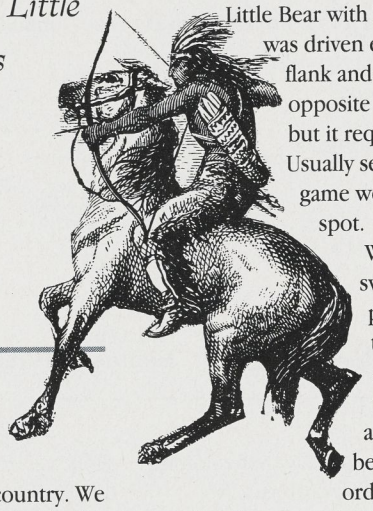
For weapons we had magazine and single-shot rifles, though Little Bear, who rode his famous horse, an old-time hunter, carried his bow and arrows.

The head of the valley brought us out on a bit of level country. We turned to the left, and hardly 80 rods away the already startled buffalo closed up and began to move, giving their stumpy twists of tails an upward flirt as they broke into a lumbering gallop. I hardly saw them except to note that they suddenly vanished as if swallowed up in the earth.

The first wild burst of the chase left me off to the right, and for a moment I thought a trick had been played on me. In a flash my horse is running like the wind in the rear of the silent, hard-whipping riders. These disappear as unexpectedly as had the game a second before, and now I reach the edge of a steep-sided, flat-bottomed watercourse to see the buffalo climbing out the opposite side and scampering away, while in the valley before me my comrades are strung out in most disorganized style. Under the snow there is a wide sheet of ice, and probably 20 horses are down and their riders in all positions of falling and recovery. A few are across the ice and some are slowly making their way over, while others are picking themselves out of the snow, helping their horses up and taking stock of damage done. It is an impossible sort of dropoff, and I would give all I have to be able to pull up on the brink. My horse will not have it so, and with my heart well up in my throat we go over and are across with the fortunate ones before I have time to think of the next thing to be scared at; indeed, I have now drunk deep of the wine of the mad chase and would not stop at anything! The run is well on and the leading hunters begin to shoot; those on slower horses far in the rear also begin to shoot, much to the disgust of those in front, where man, horse or buffalo stands an even chance of being hit.

A good horse, a magazine gun and an open prairie is all that an ordinary man needs with buffalo afield. Formerly a cut-off smoothbore flintlock was the weapon; the hunter carried his bullets in his mouth and, dropping a ball in on the powder, poured by guess from the horn as his horse raced warily along the right and slightly in the rear of the game. He rapped the butt sharply on his thigh to settle the charge and prime the piece, and was then ready for his shot.

Our first run allowed but one lone buffalo to escape. We packed back to camp the meat from 50 carcasses. One of these was killed by Little Bear with his bow in the way of his fathers. The arrow was driven entirely through the body, entering the right flank and its steel point sticking out low down on the opposite side. In former days this was often done, but it requires great strength of both bow and arm. Usually several arrows are necessary, and often the game would run for miles after being hit in a vital spot.



When the buffalo falls, the hunter, if on a swift horse, does not stop, but passes on in pursuit. Those on slower horses, especially the relatives of the swift one, follow, and soon skin and cut up the animal, selecting the dainty morsels of liver or the belly fat for a quick lunch as they work. To each of these belongs a definite portion, depending on the order of his coming up. To the man who ran and shot the game, the hide and one side of the meat belongs. His first assistant has the other side, and the second assistant comes in for the brisket and other parts. These three make the ordinary complement, and they are spoken of as "first," "second" and "third killer" respectively. Should a fourth man render assistance his share is as shall be given by the others. Often disputes occur over who killed the animal, and sometimes quarrels and bad blood result, but there is never a question regarding the law of division.

On most hunts there is more or less stealing of game. The relatives of a prominent man, coming upon a slain animal, claim it as the spoil of his gun and horse and swear the rightful owner out of court unless it can be shown that his bullet reached the vital part. The size of the bullets or some special marking of his ball often give conclusive evidence. This practice, universally deplored by the Indians themselves, is fully recognized in the saying often heard in a buffalo camp: "The slow horses get all the buffalo!"

When the work of the field is over the extra horses are packed with the hides and meat, and some astonishingly heavy loads are carried, though but little of the bone of the animal is taken, and the hunters make their way back to camp. It is not always that the day ends as you leave the field.

You are tired and hungry, for it is usually 10 or 15 hours since you left camp, and there are yet

weary miles of return. One night our party struggled with the drifting snow and the long distance we had come till near daybreak. Not being equal to raw liver I was terribly hungry from the 22-hour fast, and the strenuous life of the day.

Many were the stories of trouble and difficulty told the next day. Touch-the-Cloud said he of all the party had been the most unfortunate! Someone else claimed this distinction for himself, and a show of experience was called for. The meat on one of Touch-the-Cloud's packhorses would not stay put, and kept falling off into the snow every few steps, and he had been busy all night finding lost meat and fixing his pack. His competitor killed an enormous animal and threw the green hide over his horse, sitting thereon. The hide froze as stiff as marble, and in passing through the deep drifts he was lifted clear off his horse, "the stiff-necked one," which passed out from under and left him straddling the frozen hide on top of nothing. Number two was awarded the claimed distinction, the absurd helplessness of his condition appealing to all listeners, and to this day—I write this a quarter of a century after the hunt—his story is told over and over by hundreds of Indians.

One of the most reckless acts I ever knew of on a hunt was a run in the dark and the shooting of game by Co-kan-tan-ka on a night when even the stars themselves had gone to sleep. We were working toward camp with extra-heavy packs when out of the darkness there came what appeared to be an abrupt bank or wall, but was an immense herd of buffalo moving diagonally across our line of travel.

With but one word, "I make a night run," Co-kan-tan-ka left us and in a moment we saw the flash and heard the report of his shot. Then another and another followed, and for fully an hour we heard nothing more from him, when he hailed us and the men went to his help.

He failed with his first shot, and as the sense of his awkward position in the midst of the madly running buffalo came to him he lost himself, and in his hurry he jammed the lever of his gun hard up and fired the piece in the air. This was repeated and now his magazine was empty. With the running buffalo bumping into his horse and rubbing his own legs on both sides, he reached back for a cartridge from his belt. By the time this was in place he had control of his nerves, "picked out a fat cow," and fired. The first three shots were all heard. Even after the successful shot he was carried by the herd a long distance before he could draw to one side and be free to return to his game.

Back to the camp we come with an abundance; the fires crackle and the pots are boiling; all are smiling and happy; no one injured, and the finest of robes have been secured. There are disappointments, to be sure. Some horses of which much was expected turned out poorly. Charger rode a big blaze-faced brown that ran splendidly until he saw the strange-looking woolly beasts with their wagging chin whiskers, and then he bolted and ran away in the opposite direction with his unwilling rider, nor was he stopped until two miles away. Roan Bear had a little black horse from which he expected great things, but which failed to make good.

Back to the camp we come with an abundance; the fires crackle and the pots are boiling; all are smiling and happy; no one injured, and the finest robes have been secured.

And so the talk of the camp came and went. The dogs that came from home lean and scrawny grew sleek and fat. A few of our horses succumbed to the hard work and the deep snow. Coffee and sugar became a thing of the past and flour was a memory. The older Indians cared not for these, but with the loss of the tobacco there was woe and sorrow. Little Bear cut up, shaved thin, and powdered in the palm of his hand, his old nicotine-soaked pipe stem that he might smoke it in a borrowed pipe. "I can stand hunger," he said, "and thirst, but without tobacco I am dead!" SA

The Living Legend of St. Hubert

by
Stuart M. Williams

A consistent, "sharp," trigger-pull is important to good shooting. If it doesn't have these qualities your finger (actually your brain—I know!) never knows *exactly* when the gun will fire—at what pressure on the trigger, or after what movement. Your trigger pulling can then never attain the confident, consistency that it should, and your shooting will suffer. If your gun has a bad pull *you* may not be conscious of this, but your brain will be, and in the microseconds before the final pressure that releases the hammer there will be pussyfooting around, instead of a smooth contraction of the finger muscles.

This hesitancy shows up clearly if the pull-off is not only "creepy" or "draggy," but also a bit lighter than you would like, or are used to. The *lighter* the pull-off, the *greater* any variations in it from shot to shot *seem* to the user to be (an example of something called Weber's law). Eventually, if the trigger pull is sufficiently light and sufficiently variable, the shooter will start to hesitate visibly before pulling the trigger, and then fail to shoot at all at a percentage of targets. Questioning will dig out the fact that the shooter doesn't feel he is fully in charge of the gun, that he isn't sure where it will be pointing when it fires. A lot of trapshooters, by the way, have gone the route of the lighter and lighter trigger pull to try to get off well-timed shots, and finally arrived at a stage where they couldn't get a shot off at all except with the release trigger mentioned above.

Note that a top quality trigger pull is most important to the shooter who uses a Swing Forward or Swing Through lead (see my article in the December/January number). In these the gun muzzle is visibly accelerating relative to the bird, and so the *exact* time the trigger is pulled is very important. It is impossible to get that timing consistent if the trigger pull weight varies, and the trigger "creeps" a varying distance before the gun fires. You are being handicapped by working through a "random" mechanism outside your control! Things are better when using the sustained lead. Since the muzzle is maintaining a fixed visual distance ahead of the bird, it matters less *exactly* when the gun fires. I have had my say on the unsuitability of the Sustained lead for game and sporting clays shooting in the article just referred to.

A lot of *new* guns (let alone those that have seen some use) would be better for the attentions of a gunsmith with skill in adjusting trigger pulls. You may find one locally. It is legitimate to ask to test specimens of his work by dry-firing on snap caps. If he also works on *target rifles and pistols*, that is a good sign. The users of these have to have the best-possible trigger pulls that can be gotten out of their guns.

The success of one Italian gunmaker, particularly in the last twenty years, is based in no small part on the locks in the guns of this make, and the superb trigger-pulls they can produce, and are *made* to produce before they leave the factory. Mainly these are trapguns, though shotguns for every purpose are produced. This reminds me of something else I wanted to say about top ribs before I close. This concerns their utility to the trapshooter (and to those American rules skeet shooters who also raise the gun to face and shoulder before calling for targets, which is 99% plus these days). "Gun up" shooters of this kind often feel that they can, in effect, substitute the top rib for any attempt at correct stock-fitting. The feeling is that if they get the head scrunched down on the stock comb, so that the eye looks squarely down the top rib, then they will be able to keep it there while moving the gun on the target, and so all will be well. And it may be—for a while, the shooter using the rib (and its usual twin beads) as a check on head position each time he mounts the gun, before he calls for the target(s).

However, sooner or later, the shooter misses, perhaps more than once. "Lifted my head," he says. Asked why, most will say "To get a better look at the target, I guess." But the old shooting instructor, standing behind the shooter, has seen the increasing tension in the latter's long-suffering neck muscles, and how, eventually, they lifted the shooter's head—just to get a little relief!

St. Hubert—the patron saint of hunters—was born in Belgium about 658. He became a passionate, unrestrained hunter early in life. He went hunting one day for red stag in the forest of the Ardennes Mountains. There he had an experience much like that of Saul on the road to Damascus. He lost his way in the mountains, when suddenly he saw in front of him a magnificent stag bearing a radiant crucifix between its antlers. The stag turned to him and spoke ominously, "Why do you hunt me, Hubert?" Then Hubert heard another voice, warning him to abandon uncontrolled and conscienceless hunting, and to give up his life to Christ and follow Him.

Hubert left the court and abandoned worldly pleasures to become a monk at Maastricht, Belgium. He later made a pilgrimage to Rome, became Bishop of Liége (later to become one of the world's great gunmaking centers), preached widely throughout Belgium and northern France, burned idols, and aggressively converted the heathen. He died in 727. He was soon thereafter accepted as a saint, and became known as the Apostle of the Ardennes. He was canonized just a hundred years later, and his remains were taken to the Benedictine monastery in the Ardennes. The St. Hubert Basilica was erected on the foundation of the old monastery church, and it soon became a popular place of pilgrimage.

It was here that the famous hunting dogs of the monastery were consecrated and branded with the mark of the golden St. Hubert key. Up until the French Revolution—almost 1000 years later—the abbot of the St. Hubert monastery had to supply the French king with six trained hunting dogs annually from the monastery pack.

It was only in the tenth century that St. Hubert became the patron saint of hunters, and it was not until the fifteenth century that the legend of the miraculous stag gained currency. About that time several Orders of St. Hubert were founded. In 1444 on St. Hubert's day—November 3—Duke Georg V of Julich founded the Order of the Knights of St. Hubert as an act of thanksgiving for a battle he won on that day. To begin with, the Order was not connected with hunting, and only 300 years later did hunting entertainments become accepted in place of other celebrations. St. Hubert increasingly became the ideal of the sophisticated, conscientious hunter.

Sometimes these celebrations took several days, and they were generally of a high moral order, as they took a strong stand against unrestricted hunting and for the protection of game. They served to improve the image of hunting, and at the same time demonstrated the hunters' love of animals.

It must be pointed out that although hunting was exclusively the sport of royalty and nobility throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance it was, as practiced by some of them, little more than butchery. For example, the Lord High Master of the Chase for the Holy Roman Empire, the Most Serene Elector of Saxony, Burgrave of Magdeburg, Duke Johann Georg I, caught or shot or otherwise killed during his 45-year reign 116,906 game animals. His son, the Elector Johann Georg II of Saxony, killed during his 25-year reign 111,141 animals—an average of thirteen a day. To kill thirteen animals a day over twenty-five years has nothing to do with noble sport. Even if we admit that there was some exaggeration in these reports, and that frequently the kill of the whole hunting entourage would be ascribed to the king or the highest-ranking nobleman, it is clear that often hunting had much more to do with killing than with sport.

In his delightful story, *The Legend of St. Julian Hospitator*, Gustave Flaubert gives a graphic picture of medieval hunting as slaughter:

> Before him lay a valley shaped like an amphitheater and filled with stags...he dismounted, rolled up his sleeves, and started shooting...The lip of the valley was too high to climb, and they bounded about in the enclosure, looking for a means of escape. Julian went taking aim and shooting, and his arrows fell like shafts of rain in a heavy storm. The maddened stags fought, reared up in the air, and climbed on each others' backs, their bodies and tangled antlers making a broad mound which kept shifting and crumbling.

At last they died, stretched out on the sand, their nostrils foaming, their entrails gushing out, and the heaving of their bellies gradually subsiding. Then all was still.

Against this background the legend of St. Hubert became ever more popular and significant.

Every November 3 large numbers of hunters from throughout Europe convene in Liége, Belgium to celebrate St. Hubert's Day. Generally the day begins with a solemn mass of St. Hubert in the cathedral. (The most famous mass of St. Hubert is that one composed by Jean-Francois d'Andrieu for hunting horns and organ. It is available on record from the Musical Heritage Society, MHS No. 1535, and glorious sound it is.) After the mass there may be a concert of various groups of hunting horns, blowing their "Drum and Dran" and "Höohes Wecken" (Reveille), their "Jagd Vorbei" (The Hunt is Over) and Halali (Taps). There may be a field trial of outstanding dogs, and/or an exhibition of hunting art, a trophy display, a display of fine guns, a lecture on some aspect of conservation, a hunting film or films. All hunters attending are impeccably clad in beautifully tailored hunting costume—green loden caps and capes and coats and knickers, with thick knee-high green wool stockings. In eastern Europe the day may well be celebrated with a hunt on horseback or a shooting party, ending with a festive dinner. It is a wonderful occasion, and it makes one proud to be a member of the international fraternity of hunters. Every hunter who seriously loves his sport owes it to himself to attend at least once.

St. Hubert is not merely feted one day of the year and forgotten the rest. Indeed, the legend has such a hold on the imaginations of hunters in certain parts of Europe that it influences their conduct afield, the decor of their homes, the ornamentation of their guns, their tastes in art and music, and even the smallest details of their lifestyle. In the predominantly Catholic countries of northern Europe—Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, and large parts of France and Germany, and to a lesser extent in East Germany, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia—hunters might well have a stained glass window in their home depicting the legend of St. Hubert. They may eat off of porcelain that has been hand-painted with the legend of St. Hubert. They may drink beer out of zinc mugs or steins that bear the St. Hubert scene in deep relief, and they may drink wine out of crystal glasses that are etched with the St. Hubert scene. Their tablecloths and wallpaper might be printed with the St. Hubert scene, and their oaken cabinets may be deep-relief carved with the St. Hubert scene. Some of their cufflinks and neckties will certainly bear the head of a magnificent stag with a radiant crucifix between the antlers. If they have any fine guns, certainly some of them will be engraved with the St. Hubert motif. (This is the most frequently requested motif of the engravers at the great gunmaking centers of Ferlach, Austria and Liége, Belgium.) On the walls of their homes may hang one or more prints of some of the countless paintings depicting the legend of St. Hubert. They will certainly have some records or tapes of some of the solemn masses of St. Hubert. They will probably shoot shotshells with the brand name of Hubertus.

In fact, an observant hunter can hardly go anywhere in central Europe without seeing the St. Hubert motif depicted one way or another. He may well stay at a rustic inn called Hubertus Haus or Hubertushof or Gasthaus Hubertus. He will see the St. Hubert legend depicted in scores of paintings, triptychs, bas-reliefs, and stained glass windows.

On a recent hunting trip to Czechoslovakia I was walking across the wonderful Charles Bridge in Prague, which is adorned from end to end with baroque statues on both sides, when I spied a statue of a splendid stag bearing a golden crucifix between its antlers. A couple of years ago I hunted out of the world-renowned hunting lodge, Karlhaus, high in the Austrian Alps. On the facade that greets arriving guests a short poem, done in most elaborate calligraphy, proclaimed:

Karlhaus
Wird ich gennant.
Ich bin Hubertus schützender Hand
Und hoffe zu sehen auf ewige Zeit

Waidgerechte fröhliche Jagersleut!

(My name is Karlhaus and I stand
Under the protection of St. Hubert's hand.
Unto eternal time I hope to see
Hunters who are sporting, merry, and free.)

The cult of St. Hubert is strongest in the German-speaking countries, i.e., West Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. It is an inextricable part of the whole Germanic hunting ethos. Implicit in that ethos is the understanding that Europe is a very densely populated continent, that most wildlife habitat there has long ago been destroyed and that the destruction continues apace today faster than ever, and that therefore quality hunting is a scarce and expensive commodity. This hunting ethos further assumes that since the demand for quality hunting will always exceed the supply, there must be some fair means of reducing that demand. In Austria, West Germany, and Switzerland there is a written and practical examination so rigorous that only the most zealous ten per cent or so of the candidates pass after years of arduous preparation. There is no pretense that hunting is a sport that may be enjoyed by anyone just for the paying of a small license fee, no egalitarian illusion that hunting is a right and not a privilege, or that it is a sport that may be enjoyed by the common man. The prevailing assumption is that quality hunting is a rare and exquisite privilege.

As such, it must be earned. It carries with it very serious responsibilities—to the game, to the landowner, to the sport of hunting, and to the whole fraternity of hunters present and future. It is not a purely consumptive sport that may be enjoyed merely for the buying of a license. It must be earned through serious study of the game; through helping the landowner with winter feeding of the game, repair of fences and roads, and other tasks; payment for damage done by game animals; working on behalf of conservation organizations; generous donations to the work of conservation, game management, and habitat preservation; and scrupulous obedience to hunting regulations. There is an understanding that each hunter must be a public examplar of the best qualities of hunting, and a public relations agent on behalf of hunting.

As such, there is virtually no anti-hunting sentiment in the German-speaking countries. Hunters are few in number and exemplary in behavior. For the most part, they are doctors, attorneys, bankers, owners of their own businesses, diplomats, and upper-level executives of major corporations, and similar prominent members of society. They must be people of considerable financial means as well as a serious devotion to hunting, because quality hunting in the German-speaking countries is a *very* expensive sport.

The exemplary hunter in the Germanic countries embodies the highest ideals of the tradition of St. Hubert: love of and knowledge of the game; restraint in the harvest of game; devotion to maintaining harvestable surpluses of game; self-discipline; and service.

What the legend of St. Hubert does is to give a supernatural sanction, a religious sanction, and specifically, a Christian sanction to hunting. This sanction is based on very specific passages from the Bible:

> And God blessed them, and God said unto them Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:28)

> And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air...into your hand are they delivered. (Genesis 9:2)

> Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. (Psalm 8:6-8)

Some commentators have misinterpreted these

passages as permission to kill without restraint. That is a complete misunderstanding of God's intent. Clearly He has provided "the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea" for our nourishment, and we are to kill only so much as needed at any one time.

The legend and the hunting ethos of St. Hubert are known in this country only by the most sophisticated hunters. They will certainly become better known, as hunting conditions here tend more and more to approximate hunting conditions in Europe: widespread and continuing loss of game habitat; destruction of game birds through use of pesticides and herbicides and clean farming; vast diminution of waterfowl numbers through drought, water pollution, and lead poisoning; and an ever greater imbalance between the demand for quality hunting and the supply thereof. Like it or not, we are facing a rapid "Europeanization" of hunting.

The International Order of St. Hubert—which is dedicated totally to the ideals I have described above—has been for some years quietly performing its good works in this country, just as it has been doing in Europe for centuries. Founded as a knightly order in 1692 by Count Franz Anton Sporck in Austria, it was temporarily disbanded during World War II. It was reconstituted in 1950 in Austria, and now has chapters in Belgium, Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, West Germany, Switzerland, USA, Canada, and Mexico. Since it is a knightly order, all members have knightly rank, e.g., squire, knight officer, knight commander, knight grand officer, grand prior, and grand master, in ascending order. Like all knightly orders—the Knights Templar, the Knights of Malta, the Teutonic Knights, among others—its primary goal is service. Its motto is: *"Deum diligite animalia diligentes"*—Revere God in His Creatures, or, Love God by Loving His Creatures. Every St. Hubert's Day the members gather to celebrate and to repeat their sacred obligation: "To see that no free living animal or living plant will ever become extinct."

Although the background of the International Order of St. Hubert is that of Catholic and Germanic aristocracy, it is strictly non-sectarian. Its purposes are threefold:

1. To foster a spirit of brotherhood and fellowship among true sportsmen and to maintain the highest standards of sportsmanship among members.

2. To foster and encourage measures for the preservation of the habitats of wildlife and the conservation of such wildlife.

3. To encourage, sponsor, and support all reasonable measures for the attainment of those objectives and purposes to the end that succeeding generations may continue to enjoy the heritage of true sportsmen.

A hunter does not choose to join the International Order of St. Hubert—the order chooses him. It is quite selective. The roster of current and deceased members of the U.S. chapter includes names like Gen. Mark Clark; former Senator S.I. Hayakawa; actor Robert Taylor; the great operatic tenor Lauritz Melchior; comedian Edgar Bergen; John Olin; Roy Weatherby; Shooting Sportsman publisher David D. Thomas; Walter O'Malley; and Weatherby Award winner Basil Bradbury. Certainly the International Order of St. Hubert is the most prestigious and selective group of hunters in the world. Nevertheless, it is always looking for new members who embody its ideals.

The spirit of St. Hubert seeks not so much what it can get from the sport of hunting as what it can give to the sport of hunting. It views hunting not merely as a sport, but as an integral part of a nobler, freer, more spacious lifestyle. In a country where many hunters do not embody the ideals of St. Hubert and where there is considerable hostility towards hunting and hunters, the rest of us must strive all the more zealously to embody those ideals.

The spirit of an obscure saint who died over a thousand years ago is more alive than ever. We have been killing game for thousands of years, but have only started seriously to conserve it in the last fifty years. The hour is late, but it is not too late.

THE FIRST HUNTERS

BY DOUGLAS MAZONOWICZ

Prehistoric artists left us vivid records both of the animals they hunted and of the hunt itself. At top, an archer pursues an ibex. Above center is a frieze depicting bulls; and directly above a band of bowmen springs an ambush on a surrounded herd

Standing quite still, deep within a cave, you find heavy, intense silence. The only sound comes from the guide's quiet breathing and the hiss and occasional splutter of his carbide lamp. Suddenly, somewhere, a drop of water falls, and the sound waves, like miniature explosions, vibrate and echo along the narrow passages and through the great high-ceilinged halls of rock and calcite. It is a strange, unknown world of darkness and silence in which you find yourself.

Passages often stretch for miles into the mountains; twisting and turning, rising and falling, only to double back again around sharp corners. The floor is wet and slippery, the walls feel damp and slimy to the touch, sharp stalactites scrape the scalp, and stumpy stalagmites trip the unwary person who adventures here.

In such an atmosphere, the heart beats a little faster. Imagine the excitement when the soft light of the hand-lamp falls upon a charging bison or leaping stag. The cave paintings, animated by flickering flames, would have had a profound effect upon the prehistoric hunters who stood in the dark cavern and gazed at them in wonder many thousands of years ago.

Deep inside the caves of northern Spain and southern France, prehistoric men would gather prior to departing for the hunt. It is believed that in these places they would perform their acts of magic—rituals that would ensure the hunt's success. Here in the dark cave they would become accustomed to facing—in the imagination—what they would soon have to confront in reality. The hunting and killing of bison and

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be lulled by the quiet that precedes the storm, but don't try any old-fashioned first aid, either, because you'll only compound the trouble. If you make incisions to free venom from the wound, you only are allowing the poison on the skin to enter the bloodstream. It is a good idea to wash the bite, then get to a hospital, and don't let anyone send you home for at least 24 hours.

While still on the subject of snakes, a recent letter contained some good tips for those fishermen who have found that fly casting in Southern waters can mean a confrontation with a water moccasin. Charles Cameron, of Norfolk, Virginia, wrote saying that he has occasionally snagged one of these belligerent snakes while casting, and quickly learned that the best thing to do is to cut the fishing line and get out of the water. Water is the moccasin's home court, and any fight there gives him a strong advantage. Since these snakes do swim with their heads out of the water, Mr. Cameron says he carries a pistol in a shoulder holster in case land is too far away.

Few columns could field questions on both moccasins and peaches, but this is one of them. Brighton, Colorado, resident Gerald Kelver wrote to say that some women in his area are trying to make preserves from peach seeds. He asked if this is dangerous, and the answer is yes. Peach, apricot, apple, and cherry seeds all contain quite a bit of cyanide. Eating a couple of seeds is harmless, but more than that . . . well, just keep in mind that cyanide is what is used in gas chambers. Leave the leaves and bark alone for the same reason, and tell the ladies to try making plain old peach preserves. They'll love 'em, and they'll live longer.

A question from reader Mary Keck of Louisville, Kentucky, points out the dangers fairy-tale princesses faced when kissing toads in search of handsome princes. Ms. Keck wrote to find out more about some poisonous toads she saw on a television news show. All toads secrete a poisonous compound that keeps their skin moist and protects them from predators. A Colorado River basin subspecies and some in Florida have a fairly strong venom, which can kill a puppy or kitten in a quarter-hour. The secretion doesn't pose a threat to humans, but it is a good idea to wash your hands after handling any toad, if you have to touch one at all.

Send questions to POISON!, c/o Field & Stream, 383 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10017.

other large beasts was an absolute necessity, a task fraught with danger and accomplished only through bravery and confidence. Familiarity with the adversary in the dark cavern would help to breed contempt for him on the day of the kill, and the hunter's fears would accordingly diminish.

This is one theory. Another possible reason for the cave paintings is that the hunter, always fearing the possibility of the animal becoming scarce, wished to create a realistic likeness of his source of food, and so in some mysterious way ensure the continuance of his food supply. He chose for his backgrounds strange rock formations that would add a third dimension, giving his completed painting a high degree of realism. The hunters of 20,000 years ago were accomplished artists, and a close study of their paintings reveals the evolution of weapons, techniques, and the many species of animals that were tracked, hunted, and killed.

Excavations at cave entrances support the paintings, and tell us a great deal about early man's diet and his reliance on meat for survival. The deeper one digs, the more ancient are the bones of animals and the stone weapons of hunters. Although the paintings describe the animals that were of greatest importance—mammoth, bison, bulls, horses, deer, and wild boar—there were also lean times when rabbits and squirrels often made a meal.

MAN'S early hunting techniques were crude and wasteful. By means of fire and noise, herds of bison and wild horses would be stampeded toward a cliff edge. Pressed from behind with the leaders unable to stop, the animals would fall to their death upon the rocks below. (In the Loire Valley at Solutré, the remains of over a hundred thousand horses have been recorded.) Using a similar technique, mammoths were chased into swampy ground and, while the heavy beasts floundered, they were attacked with stone axes and lances.

These hunting methods continued with little change for thousands of years, causing the near extinction of several animal species. Then, with the herds depleted, new weapons and improved hunting techniques became vital. Something more efficient than the hand-ax and spear was necessary. That something was the spear-thrower, a weapon that added extra length and leverage to the hunter's arm. It caused the spear to travel faster and farther, and was used over a very long period of time. Men also began to work more harmoniously with nature, studying the seasons and deciding when the best hunting time would be for each species. The autumn rutting season of the huge fallow deer was an excellent time to take it by surprise while it busily pursued the hinds. Positioned in the branches of trees, hunters would spear the deer at arm's length as they passed beneath.

THE SALMON, running upstream, was another valuable source of food, just as it is today for some of the world's primitive peoples. Harpoons with jagged teeth were delicately carved from antler bone and often decorated with etched designs before being thonged to long shafts.

All men lived dangerously at this time in prehistory. Courage and daring were not virtues but essential qualities if life was to be maintained.

Thousands of years passed, and by 10,000 B.C. men had ceased to paint and engrave deep within caves. Instead, they made their homes in natural rock cavities high on canyon walls, retreats chosen for their inaccessibility, safe from enemies and wild animals. The last ice age had passed, glaciers were retreating, and the climate was warmer.

On the walls of these rock shelters in the hills of eastern Spain men painted scenes of everyday life. Hunting themes predominated, and a careful study of these pictures, now faded with time, exposure, and vandalism, shows a further development of both weapons and techniques. Following a lengthy reign, the spear thrower was supplanted by the bow and arrow. It was a longbow, almost the height of a man. Arrows and bowshaft were held in one hand; the other was used for drawing the bowstring.

These paintings, which are located along the east coast of Spain, contain their share of mysteries as well as revelations. For example, although I have studied them all, I have never seen a drawing of a bison. This animal, along with horses and bulls, had vanished from this region. Probably they were overhunted, or perhaps their disappearance was due to climatic changes.

The only animals featured in this rock art are deer, wild boar, and mountain goats. Fleet-footed, and with a remarkable instinct for self-preservation, these animals have survived to this day.

Illustrated on page 130 are a few examples chosen from the many accurate copies on display in my New York gallery. One painting shows a herd of ten deer being driven toward four waiting bowmen. The females are leading the herd, and the males take up the rear. These bowmen have been waiting in ambush while their colleagues stampeded the herd, frightening the deer with fire or noise.

Another scene, not shown here, is of three bowmen and a charging long-horned goat, or ibex. The large bowman wears a headdress of tall feathers and a loincloth with a tasseled tail. The animal has been drawn larger than the hunters to emphasize the danger involved in facing a wounded long-horned goat in difficult terrain. The steep hillsides that the ibex frequent are strewn with loose boulders and prickly scrub, and to move but a short distance requires the use of one or both hands. It would appear that the animal was driven by a third archer toward the two bowmen waiting in ambush. This is a method of hunting that appears time and again in many of the shelter paintings.

THE LARGEST copy I have ever made is of a painting in a cavity called Remigia. This work measures 4 by 8 feet and is full of interest. The scene on the left shows seven bowmen converging on a herd of wild boar, some of which are wounded and are trying to escape the hunters; others, shown upside down, are dead. The bowmen are running at great speed, their legs stretched wide in a flying motion, and to protect their legs, they wear fringed gaiters just below the knee. The large figure wears a horned headdress and, like the others, carries his bow in a horizontal position, clear of the ground, while he runs toward the escaping boar.

The group on the right shows a large dead deer. Near it is a man bent forward examining the deer which has left its spoor, enabling the hunter to find it. With little or no likelihood of being able to kill a deer at first impact, the tracking and following of spoor marks are a common feature in rock art.

These early paintings, so recently brought to light, are of great importance, but their full significance has yet to be appreciated by modern man.

In all likelihood, we will never know what the men who created them intended. They lived at a time when life was hard almost beyond our imagining. Yet somehow, some gifted ancestors of ours found time in their struggle for existence to record what their lives were like. These men, turned to dust thousands of years before Moses, with a language we cannot even guess at, speak to us down through the ages. And every one who has heard the hunter's horn in his own spirit is their brother.

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