



Christian Outdoor Fellowship of America

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Wilbur McCormick

Thoughts from a New Editor

This is not so much to introduce myself as the new editor of the COFA E-mag as it is to give you some guidelines to follow if you wish to send an article for future issues of the E-mag. But, just in case there are those who don't know me, here is a very short bio.

I am Wilbur (Grizz) McCormick from Jackson, Ohio. I have been with COFA for four years and sincerely believe in what we are trying to accomplish by reaching folks in the outdoors. I have several hats that I try to wear for COFA, among which is East North Central Regional Director, “Cross Trails” editor, and keeper of the membership list. I am a retired teacher with a major in History and Social Studies and teaching certification in Computer Science. My last years to teach were done in the field of Publishing. In addition, I have served as Pastor of a local church and Music Director of two men’s choruses and a Church Choir.

Ok, enough about me and on with the tips for articles. These will help me tremendously in getting the E-mag out on a timely schedule.

1. Proof read what you send and be sure it is in the form you want published.
2. It is OK to send articles email, but please con-

“Big Horns of the Wind River Mountains”

**By Jim Ferguson
as told by
Kim Bright**

vert them to black print. OCR systems don't like blue or red print.

3. If you can, send articles as "DOC" files attached to your email.
4. Send pictures to go with your articles as separate attachments to email. I can open most picture formats.
5. It is the decision of the directors that articles with extensive advertising material will not be used unless profits will go directly to COFA. However, email addresses, a web site or phone number may be included on a "for more information" basis.
6. It is understood that ALL pictures I receive are released for COFA to include in their data base and use as needed. No exceptions. If you don't give us this permission, don't send the picture.
7. If you are sending me material or pictures you did not write or take, I must have the original publication, the original authors name, or the original photographers name. These are copyrighted items and credit must be given. Again, NO exceptions.
8. Mark all items for the E-mag "for E-mag" in the subject line of your email.

I am truly looking forward to working with the E-mag, however the editing of any publication is a time consuming task. The above suggestions will make the task much more easily accomplished.

In closing; If you have materials you would like included in the E-mag, please try to have it to me by the first of each month.

If you would like to send me something by "snail" mail, that is fine as well, however the above suggestions still apply.

Address for mail is:

W.L. McCormick
215 Lewis Street
Jackson, Oh 45640

Email address is:

Leejoy@roadrunner.com

Have a great month and God Bless!

Grizz

Bighorns of the Wind River Mountains



"Out here men live by the sheer grace of God. Each man, no matter how strong, needs the Almighty to see him through these hard winters,"- Jim Bridger



Jim Ferguson

By Jim Ferguson
as told by
Kim Bright

The Bridger National Forest is as close to my kind of heaven as you can get. The fantastic granite escarpments of the Wind River Ranges, where I am a year-round outfitter, seem to have given the entire Rocky Mountains their name. Not to mention the belly deep summer meadows and glacier fed lakes and streams that yield the best in high country hunting, fishing and pure eye-popping scenery. But several years ago, in the early part of my business, the mountain winter I called "heaven" nearly became "hell".

The trail back to Osbourne Mountain seemed longer, steeper and more treacherous than the last three times I had been on it. Winter comes with a vengeance at 10,000 feet in the Wind River Range and the one in 1984 was especially rough. It had snowed real hard in the night. My horses' belly dragged as it broke trail for my wrangler, Greg Petersen, and the other horses and mules in our pack

string. I knew my horse and I were both at the point of exhaustion-his from the strain of the rider and the cold, deep snow and mine from four days of hiking above timberline looking for signs of game, pushing myself to the limit. Even though I'm accustomed to the higher altitudes and prolonged exposure to the elements, lack of oxygen can take its toll on even the fittest outdoors man. Some people are deceived by what we call the Rocky Mountain high. It comes from the sheer beauty of observing the picturesque landscape. The other side of the high is very similar to an alcoholic drink. It comes from the lack of oxygen. First you feel euphoria, and it may make you giddy, but, like alcohol, the effect altitude has is ultimately depressive. That's why every hunter needs an experienced guide to recognize these symptoms when in the mountains.

Two days earlier Greg Petersen, an experienced wrangler and friend had accompanied me to Stone-wall Canyon where we were glassing the slopes of the western rim for sheep. No Signs. It was my third trip into this area for the elusive Rocky Mountain sheep and seeing one, let alone getting one, was a long shot. So was Wyoming's lottery selection for big game. I can remember putting my application in the mail. I was more than reluctant to send it off because I knew it would place my new outfitting business under more financial strain. The last season bookings were good, but the hunting and fishing shows I attended did not result in enough bookings for the summer. The permit fee hurt the lodges' cash reserve. I rationalized to my wife that it would be good for business if I was successful, but our lack of agreement on this point caused a wider gap in our already-strained relationship. The bottom line was this, that elusive ram trophy represented my dreams and hopes for my lodge. It was a long shot, but it seemed the only shot I had to make a serious statement about my business.

Wyoming's change to all drawings or lotteries for its big game permits a few years back forced a lot of outfitters out of business. Those who survived changed their operation to more summer family bookings rather than the elusive fully guided fall hunts.

Our lodge was in this transition when I applied for the big horn sheep permit and GOT IT! Late August before the summer season ended was probably the busiest month of our life. I had just gotten back from the trip and was getting ready to go on a five day pack trip when everything come to a head. My wife and I exchanged bitter, demeaning words. I wanted a life long dream: to own my own ranch and outfitting service. This was a dream I had since the first time I laid eyes on the Rocky Mountains. My wife knew this and seemed to accept it as we put money down and signed the final papers on the sale. I discovered the truth later.

One of my wranglers delivered a note in a coffee can, on a rock we call "mailbox rock". It read "This is not what I want- you, the ranch, or any part of your dream". Now in the blowing snow of winter I was pursuing that dream like a mad man. Either that dream was right or I had paid too great a price for believing it. I tied up the horses at Clear Lake. It was too difficult for them to go on. I was going on with or without them. I would go ahead on foot to the summit of Osbourne Mountain where I had seen signs of sheep earlier in the summer.

As I left the horses and set out, I realized I was tempting death. I told Greg he didn't have to go on. But he was a friend: he followed. The route I chose took us across a series of high open meadows. It would be the only way to reach Osbourne by night-fall where we would set up a spike camp. I chose the open meadows to hike through because the wind would not allow the snow to accumulate more than 18-20 inches at the most, but that same biting wind burned our eyes and took our breath away.

Shortly we reached the outlet of Lake Jessica, wind was whipping snow at nearly 40 mph. We looked at the topo map to see how to go around the lake. Looking out we couldn't tell which way was the best so we had to rely on the map to guide us. Greg wanted to go on the north side reasoning that the steep cliffs would block the wind. I on the other hand argued for the south side which was more treacherous but shorter. When you combine the terrain, the snow, a 70 pound pack and rifle it wasn't just dangerous it was a fools decision. But I was too

preoccupied with my own problems to consider the danger realistically. Greg followed me out of friendship and I will always owe him for that.

About halfway we encountered a ledge scarcely wide enough to accommodate half a boot. To make my way along the ledge I had to brush the snow off with my boot just to make sure there was even a foothold. Many times I would kick the snow and find nothing there. We also had a problem finding rocks secure enough to hold onto. There was very little vegetation to steady ourselves. At one point I decided to turn around and keep my back against the wall. I reasoned the pack against the wall would help counter-balance any sudden shifts in weight and keep me upright.

As we inched along, small rocks tumbled down onto the lake, a drop I estimated at 100 feet. (Later after careful scrutiny of our topo map that distance exceeded 170 feet) Finally we reached the point of no return. It was now further back than it was to go ahead and the slow going was eating up our daylight and it was getting dark.

I looked back at Greg. WE were both exhausted. His eyes were piercing mine as if he had just seen the most terrifying sight in his life. What he clearly saw was the soul of a man driven, not by the thrill of the hunt, rather he saw a man driven by months of invested hard work attempting to bring back a failing business, a man whose wife had left him alone with an elusive dream, a man pushed beyond his physical and mental capabilities to the brink of self destruction.

I wanted to reassure him what he saw was not true, but our eyes are the mirror of our soul I only muttered "it won't be long and we'll be on the other side of this mess". A cold terror slipped icy fingers around my heart. With a sudden rush I felt out of control. My eyes turned away from his and in a split second that terror turned into reality. The rock ledge gave way under my feet. My arms wedged my body between tow rocks but my feet were dangling 170 feet above a free fall. Greg couldn't help me. We had no safety ropes and he was too far away to pull me back.. I was alone- just me and the

insanity that had driven me there. I closed my eyes trying to block out the reality of the situation. I thought of my outfit, my friends, my wife and family....all in the time it takes to take a shallow breath.

I believe it was the noise that brought me back from wherever my mind was. A noise that was louder than a thousand jet engines-it was the sound of a man screaming for his life. It was my voice.

With a last, desperate surge of strength I prepared to push off with my arms. I knew there was a slim chance for me to land on a small ledge somewhere below. Even if it did happen, I know the weight of the pack and gun would cause me to lose my balance again and I would plunge to the boulders protruding from the glacial lake shore.

Something that felt like the wind caught my pack as I pushed off the rock face. It spun me around and incredibly my feet landed solidly on a 5 inch ledge. Like a drowning man I grabbed anything that would keep me there. A small aspen shoot scarcely 1/4 inch in diameter seemed like a 30 foot sapling as it held me on the ledge. Seeing all this Greg took another route and we made our way to where we were going to make camp for the night. We spoke very little that evening.

When we awoke, snow was falling again. Greg stayed in camp saying the sheep wouldn't move until the weather cleared. I told him I at least had to try as I unzipped the tent. Snow blew in. I looked back at Greg and saw the same look I saw on his face when I was on the ledge. So be it I thought, Greg had no part in what was driving me.

Twenty inches of snow had fallen since last night and all I could think was "This is not what I want, you, the ranch or any part of your dream". The words mocked me as I fought my way to the top of the pass. My fingers were nearly frozen and sweat had soaked my gloves in the minus 30 degree wind chill.

Tired, weak and broken from the months of work, the pain of my wife leaving and the possibility of losing my business came down hard on me like the storms that invade the high country. Sitting at the

top of the world I began to cry. Softly at first, then loud into the howling wind. I wanted relief for my mind and body. I needed reassurance that everything would be alright. But where at 10,000 feet would I find it especially in a snow storm and miles from anyone.

I prayed. The first time in years. I have to admit it was difficult. The harder I tried to pray the worse it sounded to me, but I continued to try. I also tried to pry from the dark recesses of my mind the things I could remember about God. Nothing was tangible.

Now on the top of the Wind River Mountain Range I had to know if He was real. As I sat there in the snow I screamed at the top of my lungs across the expanse of the Continental Divide- there are few places on this earth nearer to the heavens, "Oh God if You are there show me a sign-give me a sign. As my voice cracked its final plea I looked up. Standing broadside at 70 yards was a 7/8 curl ram. There is no natural reason for that ram to be there. Perhaps my voice, screaming at God, had startled him. For the first time in my life I felt God cared for me.

Suddenly my hunting instincts took over. My safety clicked off, I aimed and fired. The ram fell where he stood. I crawled to the place where he lay. I could see the beauty of my magnificent trophy. I rolled him on his back and made a small incision just below the rib cage. Steam poured from the opening as his body heat rose into the air. Quickly I took off my gloves and slipped my hands between the skin and the body. The ram provided a critical source of warmth to my fingers but the warmth in my heart came from another source.

I didn't realize the significance of what happened until months later. Greg and I made it off the mountain with my trophy without incident. I found out later that another sacrificial lamb was provided for a guy named Abraham that was caught in a bush and saved his son.

I've gone back many times to the mountains in the Wind River Range where God first became real to me. And for the longest time I thought that's the only place I could find him. I talk more with him

now than I ever had in the past and one day I asked him, "Why didn't I die on that small ledge on the south side of Lake Jessica?" He said, " Do you remember when you landed on that 5 inch ledge and grabbed for anything that would keep you there?" I said "Yes".

He said " You didn't grab onto anything..... I grabbed onto you!"

Why I Started Hunting

By Julia Morris



I decided when my sons were young that if I wanted to have something in common with my husband, it had to be in the things that he enjoyed. So off I went to Hunters Safety Class. When I completed this, I then got a hunting license and proceeded to

spend time with my husband. I never thought that I would enjoy it

(Hunting) so much. My husband and I start planning the trips in Aug, and we both love the outdoors. We take our horses on most of the trips.

Our sons are grown now and have children of their own who are now coming with us. I don't regret one moment of it, even though we've been snowed in at camp a few times. I've one Elk, 2 Antelope, and numerous Deer to remember, God has truly blessed our family in more ways than one.

And on one more thought, After hunting for days and not seeing one animal, we come home and find herds of Elk and Deer in our own yard.



Wilbur (Grizzly) McCormick

NEW



Bob (Brooksy) Brooks

Temple Renovation Project

Do you not know that you are a Temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1 Corinthians 3:16

That's right friends, the Bible tells us that our bodies are Temples of God, and it also tells us that:

If any man destroys the Temple of God, God will destroy him, for the Temple of God is holy and that is what you are.

1 Corinthians 3:17

Brooksy (Bob Brooks) and Grizz (Wilbur McCormick) have noticed that they and many, many others in this country have had their Temples on an expansion program for far too long, and the expansion has gotten way out of hand. We have therefore pledged that we will support each other in getting this under control and take the needed steps to reverse the expansion program. We would love to have you join us in this renovation program.

To put all of this plainly, there are far too many people, including Brooksy and Grizz, who have a great need to get their weight under control and reduced to an acceptable level. We are jointly sponsoring a new COFA program of Bible Study

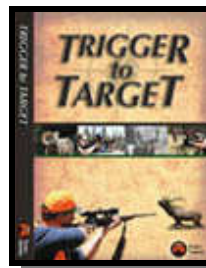
and Health Awareness.

We know that neither Bible Study, or a diet program are new ideas. Most of us have done both several times. So what makes this different? First, the Bible Study will take first place in this program. The weight reduction will come as a result of self education in nutrition and exercise, and the practice of moderation with the support of our friends.

This sounds like we are going to tell you that you need to lose weight, and then leave you on your own. Not so! We recognize that to practice moderation, we must first know what moderation is in our case. To determine this we are consulting doctors and nutritional workers to get their recommendations for foods, amounts and ways to determine when enough is enough. A sports medicine doctor is also being consulted to determine the best exercises for us to use. All of this information will be passed on to you to help you design the best program for renovation to use on your Temple.

To keep tabs on our progress (for our information, not the groups) we will have a weigh-in at each meeting, and a measuring at each meeting. Records will be kept of these weights and measures as a way for you to keep track of your renovation progress.

The Bible study for the first part of 2007 will be the book of John. If you would like to start a study group in your church, or just join us as a "Temple at Large" just let Brooksy or Grizz know and we will pass on all the information we receive to help keep us all on track.



Rocky Mountain Outdoor Adventures is pleased to present **Trigger to Target**, the first in the RMOA Video Library. This instructional DVD gives you nearly an hour's worth of insider tips to make you shoot better and with more confidence in the field. When you have that heart-stopping chance at that shot of a lifetime, you'll increase your odds of bringing it home.



The Last Century

Wylodine Bowman McCormick

The Winter Days

Well let me see, how do I start? Maybe it would be best to introduce myself. After all, this is the first time most of you have heard of me. Yes I am almost a century old, but not quite. Some eight and a half decades ago, I was born on a farm in southern Ohio and it has been suggested that our way of life on that farm might be of interest to you “younger” readers, so here goes.



Frank Bowman Farm - Hamilton Twp., Jackson Co, OH

Typical life on the farm in the 1920's was a lot different than it is today. Oh yes, there was snow and ice. Crisp sunny days and those days when it seemed like the sun just didn't bother to come up. There was chores to do and school to attend, but there was no school bus and no one ever heard of a “snow” day.

Our January day started about six o'clock. First person out of bed was my Dad. I can still hear him shaking the ashes from the old stove and the smell of wood smoke as the first flames caught the oak and hickory carefully placed on the bed of coals left over from the night before. Mother, or ma, was the next up, and we could all hear her starting breakfast. Fresh biscuits were always part of a country breakfast along with farm cured ham, gravy, fried potatoes and plenty of eggs. As the biscuits baked

and the ham sizzled in the skillet, the rest of us faced the cold, and rushed to get dressed.

I was the youngest of nine children, six of which were still at home as I grew up. The boys had a room in which all slept, and the girls had the same arrangement. Remember, the “bathroom” was a “short journey” from the house, and on a cold winters day....well let's just say that there were no long, warm showers to enjoy. It was “get in and out with no time wasted.

We all sat down to eat together, and the younger “kids” often made a game of eating. I remember that all our ham had the skin on, or a rind as we called it, as all our pork was butchered and cured on the farm. We would hide this under our gravy and try to eat all around it without revealing any part. If you could catch a glimpse of another's rind, you got it, and that was considered a major victory.

The school we attended was only one room with grades one through eight in the same building. A single teacher taught all grades and all of the basic subjects. Everyone took their lunch in a tin lunch pail and all drank from a bucket with a shared dipper. We walked the two miles to school even in the snow. If the snow was really deep, Dad would hitch the team to the sled and take us to school, but this was unusual.

While the younger children were in school, the older ones, still at home, plus Dad and Mother did the necessary farm work. Animals were fed and the cows milked. Stalls had to be cleaned and new bedding given to each animal. The cows only stayed in the barn during the coldest or snowiest weather, but the horses spent all the time they were not working in the comfort of their stalls. Dad always took care of his horses, leaving the other livestock to the older boys. Mother and the older girls had a regular weekly schedule in the house. One day to wash, one day to iron, one to bake and so on all week. Regardless of what other task was scheduled, cooking was a major part of the women's work. For Dad, Mother, and the older children, the

noon meal was major, with leftovers being served in the evening. By the way, we called the noon meal dinner and the evening meal was always supper.

When school we dismissed, we again made the walk home. The first order of business was to find a biscuit, sometimes with bacon grease and jelly, for a snack, and change to our work clothes. Next came time for our regular chorus. My job was to gather the eggs, feed the chickens and see that they had ice free water. It was also my task to see that they were all safe in the hen house before dark each evening. When that job was finished, I could stay out and play till supper. I used to love to walk along the frozen creek and draw pictures in the snow on the bank to illustrate stories I would make up. . Remember, there was no TV or video games in those days. We did have a battery operated radio, but Dad used it to hear the news and weather.

After supper it was time to do homework, if we had any, or play games. I remember that we loved to play board games, most of which had been copied onto cardboard by some of the older children. Dad and Mother joined in as the whole family played together. The winter darkness was illuminated by coal oil lamps and it cost almost a dime per gallon so we didn't stay up too late, about 8:00 o'clock at the latest.

Winter bed time meant first heating the bases of the flat iron on the stove, and wrapping them in paper. These were taken up stairs to our straw tick beds and tucked under the blankets to warm our feet. How we kept from setting the bed on fire is more that I know. Anyway, we were quick to undress and get into our long flannel night gowns. The boys just went to bed in their "long johns". In the winter, the lucky ones were the ones who shared a bed with another, as more body heat warmed the bed even faster. This is not to say we didn't sleep in comfort. Several quilted blankets above, flannel sheets, and a thick straw tick gave good insulation from the cold and made a cozy place for a long winters night.

Dad and Mother had it a little better, as they slept in the room with the stove, and they had a somewhat cozier tick stuffed with feathers. I guess that was the advantage of being the Dad and Mother. The disadvantage, however, we young folks knew, was that they would have to be first to face a cold morning when daylight again reached our little Ohio Valley farm.

That's enough for now, more later. God Bless!

Pastor's Corner

By Dan DeWitt



Pastor Dan and nice cow elk -2006

The weather report said that a snow storm was moving in, so everyone at the COFA Elk Camp was anxious to break camp, load up, and try to get off the mountain before the storm hit. When I went to the "kitchen tent," that morning, some of the guys knew I still had some vacation time left and wanted to be hunting, so they told me I should just head out and go hunting rather than stay in camp and help them. It didn't take much convincing. I was there to hunt, I wanted to fill my cow elk tag, so off I went!

I decided to try something a little different. Rather than head up the mountain where I had been hunting unsuccessfully, I went down towards private property and set up my Double Bull hunting blind just a few yards away from the fence line which separated forest land from private property. Although I had seen several elk that week, I hadn't had a good shot at anything, so I was pretty anxious.

Imagine my thrill when I looked out the blind win-

dow at about 7:45 a.m. and saw a few elk standing on the private property side of the fence line. There were three cows and one bull – but they were on the wrong side of that little line! As much as I would like to have shot one of them where they stood – they were on the wrong side of a forbidden boundary.

Even if you aren't a hunter, you have probably struggled with the issue of boundaries, and the temptation to cross a forbidden one. Maybe the "boundary" has nothing to do with the legal description of real estate – maybe that boundary deals with a forbidden food or drink, or a forbidden purchase, or a forbidden attitude, or a forbidden relationship.

Why should we let these forbidden boundaries prevent us from achieving our desired goals in life? Why shouldn't we cross them? What would it hurt to shoot that cow elk which was standing a few inches on the other side of a man-made boundary?

God has a good answer to these questions. God has placed certain boundaries in our lives for our own good (Deuteronomy 10:13). When we live our lives within His boundaries, according to His Will, we are on the road that leads to life (Proverbs 6:23). In fact, Jesus told us that He has come that we can have an abundant life (John 10:10) – an abundant life which is only found when we surrender to Him and live our lives His way, being obedient to His boundaries!

Oh, sure, you can always cross a boundary into forbidden territory. Maybe nobody will notice – maybe you will be able to achieve that goal – but it comes at a price. When you allow yourself to cross the forbidden lines of life, you lose a little bit of your soul in the process. No amount of "success" or "pleasure" in the world is worth the cost of a damaged / lost soul.

Jesus said it like this: *"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Mat 16:26 NIV)

King David crossed a boundary when he had an affair with Bathsheba, and he suffered tremendously for years to come as a result. Joseph refused to cross the boundary with Potiphar's wife and suffered for a while as a result of her lack of integrity, but he, his family and the whole nation of Israel were ultimately blessed by God as a result of his integrity. The lessons from the Bible are clear: it is always best to be a person of integrity and honor the boundaries God places in your life. Always!

So, what did I do about the elk? My soul is worth a lot more than any elk steak, so I put my rifle down and waited. It could have turned out much differently, but after a few minutes of waiting two of the cows jumped over the fence onto the National Forest side of the line. One of the cows offered me a clear shot at about 200 yards, so I was able to fill my cow tag. And I didn't have to cross the boundary. It's nice to have the elk in my freezer – but it is even nicer to know that I can eat the elk with a clean conscience!

As you struggle with the temptations of crossing "forbidden boundaries" in your life, make a commitment to maintain the high road of integrity. Keep your life on God's side of the boundaries. It is definitely worth it!



The Miracle Buck

By Michael Brooks



Dr. Michael Brooks

How many of us hunters have prayed this prayer from our hunting stand at one point of time, "oh, Lord please let me get a nice buck today...and God maybe an 8 or 10 pointer, that would be great, oh...and if his weight could be over 200 pounds, I sure would appreciate it God, thanks!" Sounds corny, but I have to be honest with you, I have prayed that prayer, several times. I even added that

I would go to Wednesday night prayer meeting if God could make that happen. I believe that prayer was never answered because God knew my heart and the motives were wrong, but I sure tried.

This story begins the Friday before deer season in central Wisconsin in 1989; I picked up my best friend from Colorado who flew into Billy Mitchell Field in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. We drove up to the Braman's farm from the airport two and half hours north near Tomah. George and I were eager to head up; we talked lots about hunting during that trip up north, this was George's first whitetail deer hunt. He hunted elk, muledeer and antelope in Colorado, and this whitetail hunting was a new experience for him

The drive from the airport to Tomah was catching up on old times, teachers, old girl friends, family and friends. As we headed north on I-94, we exited off of the highway to Mill Bluff state park. I noticed that the clouds were thickening, and getting extremely dark to the north, and it was only 2:30 in the afternoon. I knew something was brewing in the air.

We finally reached the Braman's farm, and pulled up into the gravel driveway, parked and got out of the car. I remember turning to George and saying, "man..the air is heavy and look how dark it's getting". We both knew that the weather was going to change and soon. We walked across the county road to a large grove of oak trees. As we walked into the grove, it was as if we had gone from day to night. We were looking for a good spot to place George into a tree stand. I could hear noise on the leaves about me, and then saw the specks of snow falling to the forest floor. "Hey, buddy lets find your place to hunt and get outta here, the sky is about to fall", so we hurried and found him a place to stand, and marked the spot. As we walked out of the oak grove to the road, there was already accumulation of snow on open areas in the woods and on the side of the county road.

I love a good snowstorm for hunting, it provides good tracking and shows which game trails the deer

are using. It lifts my spirits as well, can't explain it, but I get excited as a kid on Christmas morn when it snows during hunting. As we drove to Tomah, I knew we were in for a big storm, I could feel it in my bones. As we drove the 8 miles to town the roads were getting wet and icy. We were coming up to a McDonalds and decided to get a quick meal. I kept looking out the windows as we talked and watched the large flakes fall. Then our discussion turned to how blessed we have been through the years, with our children, and family. I have trusted in the Lord to watch over me, keep me on course in life. I turned and looked out the window as I sat in the booth, and watched the flakes dance in the parking lot lights as they fell gently to the ground. I was deep in thought, just enjoying life at the moment, even though my personal life was falling around my ears, going through a divorce, losing my parents to cancer. Even as I pen these words to you, a tranquility comes over me, knowing that God has me in His hands, no matter what I am going through, and you know what, He has you in His hands as well, no matter what you're going through. Stop reading for a moment and just thank God for his love for you, talk to Him, and tell Him what's on your heart!

As I sat and watched out the window, a thought came to me, and that is the word trust, the word struck me in a very unusual way, I am reminded of Proverbs 3:5,6. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not into your own understanding, in every thing you do acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. So, what these verses are saying, is give your problems to the Lord, and He will look out after you and keep you out of trouble, hmmm, I like that thought! Do we trust in the Lord when difficult times come our way? Or do we just try to fix it, and give things to the Lord when they are impossible for us to fix or figure out! I have tried to fix things on my own, and I make things much worse, haven't we all done that at one time or another? I heard George say, "Mike look at the snow, it really is coming down." We headed out to the car, I was so excited.

We headed to Paul's house in Tomah to get settled

in, his dad owned the farm where we were hunting, and Paul was excited to see us, another deer hunter who loved being in the woods. He loved snow just as much as I did. We turned on the television and heard all about the winter storm warnings, for our area. The weatherman, said this was going to be a big snow maker. I wondered how would get to the farm in my car, it was a small Cutlass Seria classic. Paul said that they plow the roads often, and not to worry about it. I was fine with that. I went to the kitchen window and looked outside. The snow was accumulating quickly.

I didn't sleep that well that night, I could hear the snowplows off in the distance plowing the highway, and streets. I kept looking at the clock across the room, checking my wristwatch. Most hunters hardly sleep the night before opening day. The hunter is keyed up, and is afraid he or she will over sleep. It's an exciting time as well, you think about your equipment, how to dress, and the walk to your stand. You wonder if you will you forget anything, you can see yourself holding your rifle in your lap. All these thoughts race through your mind..

The alarm went off, I quickly got dressed and looked out the window, wow! The snow was still falling, and I wondered if the county highway was plowed. It didn't matter, I was still going to try driving to the farm. George and I loaded up all our gear into the back seat of the car. I scraped off the windows, and had the heat turned on high as the car warmed up. Paul did the same in his car. After about 10 minutes, we headed out to the highway, it was slow going but my car managed to do ok, as the roads were pretty clear. It was about 4:45 when we headed out. The snow was pretty high on the side of the road, and thank goodness they had just run a plow through the area.

The sound of the wipers and the fan from the heater, and the static from the radio in the early morning made me think about my walk to my tree stand. How deep was the snow going to be, lots of thoughts raced through my mind. George asked me how hard would it be to find his stand in the snow. I said I am not sure, because I never had this hap-

pen to me on opening day. As we drove up to the farm, I floored it to get through the deep snow to get up the gravel driveway, and we did just fine. I turned off the car, and noticed that the trailer home was dark. I wondered if Earl was up, Paul went in and checked, and returned and said that pa said that we should go ahead and head to our stands. I got my rifle out of the case, placed it against the tire, put on my orange hunting coat, and put on my day-pack. George and Paul did the same. We talked and said good luck, and headed to our area to hunt. The snow was still falling, and it was dark. Paul and I walked towards our stand together as we had done for several years. We whispered as we spoke, about where the deer would be during this storm. We passed the standing corn and the ditch bank, and that's where we separated, Paul went along the ditch bank, as I headed to the woods. I looked at the trees, and it looked as if someone had put a white sheet over all the trees. The closer I got, the more nervous I got. I didn't recognize where I was to go in to my stand. All the saplings were bent over from the heavy wet snow, nothing looked the same. I have been hunting from this one tree stand for years and scored every year from it.

I looked at my watch it was now 6:15 and I wondered where the time went. My walk was about 30 minutes from the farm, and slowed down by the deep snow. I figured that the depth of the snow was about 16 inches, I looked for land markers that I used every year to find my stand in the dark trees. Everything was unrecognizable, every sapling was bent over, as all the trees were full of snow, if this was a winter wonderland, I wanted no part of it. I went in the forest looking for anything I could get my bearings on. My tree stand was a stand that I built for comfort, it had a roof, side railings, a comfortable seat, considering it was a 2 by 10 piece of wood. I would sit on my army scarf to make it doable over several hours of sitting. Anyway, I thought that I could find my stand silhouetted against the rest of the other trees. There was not a sign of my tree stand anywhere and it was getting later by the minute, I was sweating, worried and angry at myself for not finding my stand, I have hunted from this tree for over 8 years. I wandered

in the general area of my invisible tree stand, and still no luck! Finally after about 45 minutes I saw some horizontal shapes 18 feet up in a tree about 15 yards away, and lo and behold, there was my home in the woods, my tree stand. I had walked by this area several times, I didn't realize how camouflaged my stand was, I was told by other friends that hunted on the farm, that I had a great spot and it was hard to see the tree stand, it blended in so well.

I walked over to the base of the tree, then took off my daypack, and rifle, and tied the rope tethered from the railing above to my gear. I brushed the snow off each nailed down step that I nailed in 8 years earlier. The climb was quick and slippery. I crawled under the rails when I got to the top, then turned around on my hands and knees, and I leaned over and pulled up my rifle, and daypack. Once I had my gear up and lying on the 2X10 board, I proceeded to kick the snow off the base of my stand, and then shake off the snow from my carpet shag over the side, and laid it back down, where I would stand. The last thing I had to do with the snow is shake off the snow from the canvas that was my overhead roof. It rested on top of the boards that I had nailed overhead for support of the canvas.

I sat down on the board, opened my daypack and pulled out my shells for my 44 Ruger Mag, and loaded 3 shells. I placed my rifle sling on a nail, and let it hang. I pulled out what necessary items that I needed for my hunt. I placed my hot cocoa, cookies, and my extra pair of gloves by my side, and hung my binoculars on a broken branch.

Now, here is where my prayer begins, I nestled back against the tree, moved side to side against it to get comfortable. As I sat and looked at my surroundings, the snow was gently falling, I was relaxing, then I took a sip of my cocoa, and smiled, this was hunting, oh it was hunting. The fir trees across the way, made me think of Christmas just a month away, as the snow blanketed all the trees. I looked up and said "Lord, I sure would like a nice buck today, a nice 8 pointer would be good, and Lord, if he could be over two hundred pounds, I sure would

appreciate it, and Lord thanks for the snow, its awesome" that was it. I watched my area and enjoyed every second of it, and then about 10 minutes after this prayer, out of the corner of my left eye, I catch some movement. I look and about 45 yards away and walking away from me is a huge buck. I quickly get my 44 and as the buck is walking through the trees, I scope the deer, see the deer and falling snow through the scope, and slowly squeeze the trigger, kapow..the sound reverberates through the woods. The buck falls between some red elm trees. I sat and started shaking, not from the cold but the excitement of the hunt.

I wait about 5 minutes, because that's all I could stand to wait, most experts say wait 30 minutes, well, I am looking where the was deer last seen, I tie the rope to my sling and lower my rifle, and let it hang about 3 feet from the ground. I climb down the steps of the ladder to the deep snow and then untie my rifle. I try to figure, which is the best way to find my deer. I start walking and the snow is now falling very heavily. The snow is up to my knees, I am looking all around and cannot find a trace of the deer, blood, or hair or anything. I go back to the tree stand and try to get my bearings. I start circling again and locate the tracks the deer had made just moments before. I see tips of horns barely visible in the snow 20 yards away. I walk over to my deer and look up and say thanks Lord with a big smile on my face, I sit down on the hind quarters and admire my trophy buck, its an 8 pointer and about 200 pounds.

Now the work began, I had to field dress the buck, all the while I was one happy hunter thanks to the Lord, again Lord I want to say thanks! Oh Lord, I will see you in church this Wednesday evening..

What does the word say about praying? How important is it? When do you pray? When you need help or when you feel like it? How often are you talking with the Lord, serious talk, not just a few seconds a day?

Success On An Empty Tag

By Chad Baart

The night time darkness of the canyon was slowly eroding away as I made my way up the trail. I was half a world away from the northeast hardwoods where I first cut my teeth on hunting. I was now in the familiar woods in the Idaho back country. Far away from any man made features, I found myself in the heart of elk country.

I worked my way from camp up the meandering streambed snarled in a mess of chaparral and pine. The banks of the creek were littered with elk sign as I worked my way a mile or so up the canyon from the rudimentary pack in camp which was miles from the trailhead bustling with activity.

Once again, as I have in many years past, I reached the creek crossing and made my way up the shadowed slope of the drainage. The ancient trails were still being used by the elk as they have been for decades before me. I am most at home in the back-country and I am very comfortable even when I am the only one there.



I was happy to see that my old friends were there to greet me again for another round of fair chase. The bulls answered my location bugle one by one. Several of them I recognized from years gone by, and several were new players to the game. I sat for a few minutes to take in all of the sounds of nature's beauty, sounds that haunt me the whole year through. I was not only in admiration of the regal sound of the bulls bugling, but was also gripped by the sound of chattering pine squirrels, the bag pipe whistling of a pine thrush, and the whispering of the breeze as it

passed over through the tops of the trees above.

I worked my way further up the mountain to intercept the herds of elk working their way from their feeding areas high in the alpine meadows, to where they would spend the warmer part of the day resting in the deep spring filled draws. I passed an old bedding ground with fresh beds along the way. The area was tucked in some old growth pines which towered above the forest floor. The beds were in the soft earth and void of all plant life. Two of the beds were soaked in urine from bulls feeling the urge to bring new life to such a wonderful place. As I stood there I could hear the trickling of a nearby spring. Such a place could be used by the elk to water throughout the day.

The hillside was speckled with wallows. Some of the wallows had not been used and were clear, while others were murky and bubbling. I knew now that the elk must be close. I knew that this was where it was going to happen.

I carefully set up on the edge of a strip of chaparral with the hopes of a bull not being able to pinpoint my location if he were to come in. I went into a series of cow in heat calls followed by the huffs and grunts of a tending bull. Immediately, after only one series of calls, I was answered by a raging bull just up the hill from where I sat. He was extremely horrified at the fact that another satellite bull had hooked one of his ladies from the herd and was not going to stand for it any longer.



The sound of thundering hooves came down the mountain towards me. The brush crashed and he was quickly covering the distance between us. Some of the most intimidating sounds were coming from the dark timber above. He was making loud huffing and grunting noises as he made his way.

The first glimpse was of his white tipped antlers as he covered the final approach. At this point my arrow was nocked and my release was on the string. I quickly began to judge yardages for the shot. The bull was on his way into a small clearing in front of me which would have put him at twenty yards. I was confident that this was going to be it. This was my moment of glory.

The large six point was entering the clearing when he decided to stop. Something was wrong. His sixth sense kicked in. The same sense a hunter feels just before he sees his quarry, the sense that may never be explained and the one that is seldom wrong. Two more steps was all I needed, and the freezer is full. Unfortunate for me, the bull turned around and headed back to where he came, further up the mountain.

By this time, the day was getting late and I knew that it was time to head back to the comfort of my camp, and share my story with those I hunt with. I worked my way back down the trail as another day was coming to a close. Another day stored in the chronicles within. Another experience to draw on if the situation should arise.

I was fortunate enough to take a bull later that season. I have been blessed through many seasons to take fine animals, but I will never gauge my success on filling my tags. I gauge success on the experience of the outdoors and what nature has to offer. The best days of hunting that I have had, have found me coming home empty handed, filled with the satisfaction of being where I love it the most, in the cool mountain air on a frosty September morning, with the bulls screaming, squirrels chattering, and the breeze whispering through the tree-tops.....

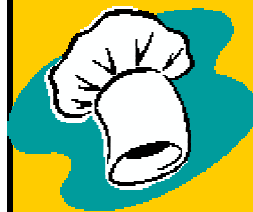


GRANDPA'S VENISON STEW

- One pound of venison
- 4 medium size potatoes
- 3 medium size onions
- 4 to 6 large carrots
- One can beef broth
- 3 stalks of celery
- Catsup

Cut the venison into bite size chunks and place in a crock pot. Cut your potatoes into the size you like and add. Dice the onions and add them. Cut your carrots into thin slices and add them. Cut your celery stocks and add. Add one can of beef broth. Add enough water to cover everything. Add about 4 tablespoons of catsup, and mix everything well. Let the stew simmer in the crock pot for at least 6 to eight hours. This is an especially good recipe for those tough cuts such as neck and shoulder meat. When dressing out a deer, I keep EVERYTHING knowing that even the toughest parts come out tender and tasty in what my grandkids call "GRANDPA'S VENISON STEW".

David Quick



Have a favorite? Send it to me to be added to our file. I plan to have one issue of the E-mag be all the favorite recipes of you, our readers. Yours just might turn out to be a favorite of all who try it...

Grizz