

The Old Hemlock Letter

*An Exclusive Publication Dedicated
to the Continued Development of the
Old Hemlock English Setter*

Greetings,

It has been a busy spring and summer. Two litters are now in their new homes and I am very excited to watch these puppies develop over the next few years. Thanks to LeJay and Helen Ann Graffious, Willow and Casey litter, and Mike Krol, Dream and Casey litter, for the fine job they did raising and socializing these puppies. It is a task that is greatly appreciated and it makes for a bold well adjusted puppy.

Welcome to the Old Hemlock Family. As many of you know one of those puppies has a place in our home and heart, she is Old Hemlock Maybe Karma out of O.H. Blackwillow and O.H. Casey. She is all puppy and very bold. She is resting from her first trip to the pond giving me some time to get some work done. One forgets how active and needy puppies can be, but oh what fun! All of our other dogs are adjusting to Karma's sharp teeth and activity well. I hope to see many of these puppies at our reunion in March as well as all of our owners.

Quail are ordered and plans are to introduce Karma at around 12 weeks to them. I like to start a puppy early with no pressure but just expose them to birds and watch their hunting instincts emerge. They can do nothing wrong and it is fun to see them become hunters seeking game, finding chasing and pointing. I like to transition to pigeons, due to lack of wild birds, when a good chase and a developing puppy make it likely that they can follow up a flush of the quail and catch them. If you can, start your puppy early

with no pressure. If you follow on Facebook, I will have pictures of Karma on the quail and on pigeons later in addition to how I like to introduce the gun.

We plan to go to the U.P. of Michigan in October and then on over to Minnesota for some grouse and woodcock hunting. In November we will be off to South Dakota and in December to Kansas. I hope you all have a safe and enjoyable time in the woods and fields this fall. Enjoy those wonderful dogs and the places they take us to make our lives more full.



Best,
Roger



With Sincerest Gratitude

This letter from Mike belies his claim to be unable to speak for himself. He sells himself short. This eloquent and humble statement of his love for Old Hemlock, and all of us, is at once sobering and uplifting. He is thanking us, but it is we who owe him a debt of gratitude for his vision and years of hard work that is the OH Letter. As you will see at the end, he claims retirement. We will not permit that. He remains on duty as Founder and Editor Emeritus of his Letter. (Ed.)

Now, let me see, how to begin....I guess that's as good a place to start as any. After all, I have one chance to get this right after bumbling my only other opportunity at this year's Old Hemlock Reunion. Expressing true appreciation requires serious consideration of words and phrases that will convey the fullest measure of gratitude for friendships I possess but hardly deserve. How does one begin to say "thank you" for gifts, compliments, and recognition that, in themselves, are beyond words? Being recognized by a group you admire, and among whom you are but a guest, is seriously humbling. It becomes knee-buckling when you were only hoping to earn the right to be there. The right words may not come, but let me attempt to say now what I could not, then.

After George Bird Evans' death in 1998, and again after the first Old Hemlock Reunion in March of 1999, I was troubled by how much I was going to miss getting mail from George and Kay. Arriving just a few times a year, and often in response to a letter I had sent them, Old Hemlock stationery never failed to please me, peeking from beneath the utility bills and credit card ads. You see, George and Kay taught me the pleasure of correspondence by letter – a ritual I fear has been lost in our current electronic generation of paperless messages, dominated by acronyms and short-cut spelling. They taught me that Time given to thought between pen and paper represents moments of life dedicated to the person they are addressing. And for the recipient, that Time, that life, lasts for as long as they keep the letter. Today, chopped-up E-thoughts are gone with a key stroke, and so they should be – without lasting thought or meaning. I wanted to keep George and Kay's tradition of personal correspondence alive, like the gift it had been to me....for all to whom they wrote. I refused to believe I was the only one who would miss those letters and cards in Kay's hammered key strokes, with George's brown-ink signature. We could not reproduce the latter, but we could save the tradition of anticipation at the mailbox, if only a couple times a year. If not maintained, our once precious connection to Old Hemlock would fade and be gone.

How would we hear about new litters of puppies...who would let us know when a special dog had passed...when would we ever hear from others with Old Hemlock setters? With the first Reunion there was an immediate desire for more, but how would we know when and where? It seemed to me a mailing of some sort would be necessary to keep all this news flowing. Some would keep in touch by phone and

email was but a recent discovery at that time - available then to just a few. Words on paper seemed to be the best answer, lest the US Postal Service close up shop. I suggested that perhaps a newsletter might serve that purpose. Roger Brown and Bob Rose responded nearly in unison, "When can you have the first issue out?" Whoa, I didn't mean me...I don't have the skills, the know-how, or the time. This required someone with more intelligence than I possessed. All I got in return were two smiling stares and thus The Old Hemlock Letter was born. I began researching news letters from groups I was familiar with. Some were simple enough, just a single page, but woefully lacking in content. Others were multi-page, glossy publications on heavy stock that I could never produce or justify. I knew one thing immediately; any contribution of mine would be just that, my contribution and a way to give something back to the ideals that had elevated me from just another hunter to a "shooting man" - a more enjoyable place, among very special friends.

As the weeks and months passed, I would get an occasional inquiry from Roger, or someone else who heard rumors of what I was up to. I began to think that if everyone was so interested, why not press them into service...let them do the hard part...write the news that was out there. I began soliciting bits of information, which soon evolved into short articles and while the first issue was no prize winner, it was truly by and for a group now known as The Old Hemlock Family. There were four issues the first year or two, but I found it too difficult to gather enough material to fill 4 - 5 pages, so we dropped back to twice a year – mid-winter and mid-summer. Some issues have been extensive, others just three pages, recently, however, 6 to 8 pages has become the norm. Though unsolicited, generous monetary contributions found their way to me and were put to good use. One beneficial result from all this was that my writing, spelling, and grammar improved...not perfect but improved, such that looking back at it now, that first issue makes me cringe. I thank all those who have contributed and pointed out my mis-steps along the way. You are The Old Hemlock Letter far more than I.

That brings me to the present and the purpose of my mission. I need to publicly thank The Old Hemlock Family for their many gifts to me, not only for your invaluable help with The Letter, but for their friendship these many years. At the 2012 Old Hemlock Reunion I was presented a thoughtfully written letter of recognition from the Old Hemlock

Foundation for my work on The Letter. I will treasure their "Letter" far longer than any of mine. LeJay also presented to me a beautifully matted and framed, limited edition print of George's only painting of a setter, Tony's Mayhawk Speck, 1931. By this time a lump had formed at the base of my throat that I knew would keep me from expressing any level of appreciation, let alone the deep feelings quaking inside me. Roger leveled my collapsing emotions by reading a certificate signed by Jeff Kauffman and himself, granting me an Old Hemlock puppy of my choosing! I remember handshakes and hugs as I fumbled my way to my seat and yet I uttered not so much as a "thank you"...the words just would not come out. That they did not require that I make this effort - a poor substitute, I fear - and for that I beg your indulgence.

I appreciate what all of you did for me that night...more than I could say then, or now. The Foundation's Letter and

Tony's Mayhawk Speck hang on the wall of my gunroom near a book case where GBE's books take up an entire shelf of their own. My puppy certificate is locked in the gun safe for a time yet to be determined. There is also, close by, a binder containing nearly 50 letters and cards addressed to me from Old Hemlock...thoughts that generated a tradition that will hopefully last long after I'm gone. In time, that tradition will hopefully work its magic and turn other hunters into shooting men and women.

Thank you,

Mike McDonald

Editor, The Old Hemlock Letter - Retired



Puppies at Old Hemlock!

Helen Ann Graffious

From the time LeJay assumed care of Manton, George and Kay's last dog to live his life at Old Hemlock, we dreamed of retiring and having our own OH setter. That dream came true in July 2008 when we acquired our own OH Black Willow, thanks to OH Blackwater (Kauffman litter) and DeCoverly's Double Down. As we brought this small puppy home, our next dream was to raise her to be a great hunter, a devoted friend, and eventually a good mother.

After our move to Old Hemlock in October 2011, we began a new journey; full of promise, but alas no heat in sight for Willow. Our patience was rewarded in March 2012 with a full blown heat, enough to entice five mile jaunts of a neighbor's dog, Dash, to visit regularly in hopes of romance.

We enlisted our vets, Dr. George Seiler who attended the Evans's last litter, and a former student of LeJay's, Dr. Melinda Thomas Deal. Along with progesterone levels they determined Willow should not attend her fourth OH Reunion. Roger Brown picked OH Buckeye Casey (Rick and Maura Baylor), a beautiful three year old orange male to breed with Willow. We kept Casey after the reunion for a week, but unfortunately these two inexperienced dogs could just not figure it out. Two AI's were done as a substitute. What joy we had when Dr. Seiler announced two pups for sure, and maybe a third, after Willow's ultrasound a month later.

Five weeks later, we were still waiting. Due date came and went. Our Willow hardly looked pregnant and her activity level was still high.

Finally, on Wednesday, May 16, at 9 am, thirteen days after her fourth birthday, labor began. P1 came out in a blob at 11:10 am. Mistakenly, we thought if we used P1 and P2 instead of names, then we would not become so attached.

Willow instinctively tore open the sack and began to lick. We called Roger with the news and his first question was "Is it a girl?" We thought so, but couldn't say for sure. At 12:30 pm with no further pups, we called the vet who suggested we come in for an x-ray. At the vet's office, one more puppy was yet to come, and it was a big one. We settled in to wait, and at 2:30 pm out came two purple feet and a tail. Next came a body, but the head was stuck! The vet corkscrewed it out and immediately took it to the back, seeming to confirm our worst fears. Fifteen seconds later we heard, "You little rascal, you gave me quite a scare!" It was then we knew we had two healthy pups. Female and female were confirmed by the vet and off we went with our new little family: P1 - 9oz., P2 - 13 oz. Two snow beltons!

We were in awe of our two little miracles who were nursing vigorously. A trip to the vet next morning was for a retained placenta, and another car ride the next day for dew claw removal. Dr. Deal said P2 was so active and noisy, she couldn't even hear a heart beat!

Willow has been an excellent mother, instinctively knowing what to do. Milk is plentiful with only two to suckle. We are amazed at the growth of these young'uns, sometimes gaining 3 and 4 oz each day.

Today, June 9, as I write this, they are 3 ½ weeks old and nothing could be cuter. Already, I am dreading the thought of giving these girls away, but we decided early on not to keep a pup at this time. Mike Krol has warned me there will be tears on puppy day, and I have no doubt he will be right.

P1's personality is a miniature Willow in every way: cute and cuddly, soft silky fur, and a higher pitched bark.

P2 is our bulldozer. Now at one pound over her sister, her bark is deeper, hair is wavy and she is so vocal! She grunts, growls, moans, purrs, barks, etc. Her personality is vivacious!

And so the legacy begins again at Old Hemlock after 60 years. We hope to breed Willow again and eventually keep a pup who would be great, great, great granddaughter to Manton, our first "adopted" OH setter.

Thank you, Roger, for orchestrating this amazing journey for us. Your advice and trust in us has been greatly appreciated. Being new to whelping a litter of pups, we very much valued Rick Baylor's advice and freely shared veterinary knowledge. Baby sitters and socialization support at OH included Steve and Carla Marshall and their boys with OH Carmel, Helen Carter, and Tom and Pam Bowman with Boswell. It has been great sharing our joy with all of you.
July 15, 2012

P.S. To our surprise, our girls turned out to be both orange belttons! (Thank you Casey)

On teary eyed puppy days of July 8 and 9, we sent them off to their new homes. P1 became Maybe Karma with Roger and Anna Brown, and P2 was named Miss Kathryn "Katie" by Karen and Jim Killay.

Our house seems quite empty now and I am having a tough time adjusting. Willow only occasionally seems to look for her girls, but always perks up when a walk is mentioned. So we are giving her lots of love and attention (not much different than before) as Kendra Kauffman suggested. Hopefully in a year or two, we will again be filled with the joy and love an Old Hemlock litter provides.



So remember- To sit with a dog on a hillside on a glorious afternoon is to be back in Eden, where doing nothing was not boring- it was peace.

Milan Kundera (As quoted in The Canine Hiker's Bible (2000) by Doug Gelbert, p. 8)

Evolution of a Shooting Wife

Karen Killay

Five years ago at age 64 I took up trap shooting for the first time. In the fall of the same year I again hunted with Jim, my husband, as I have for many, many years. While trap shooting was new to me, hunting was not. But if the truth be told all those years hunting found me involved with my camera much more than my gun. I only needed two hands to count the number of birds I had shot! But that fall so much had changed for me. The camera went to the back pocket of the vest, freeing the ammo pocket for shells. I had arrived, for better or worse (a new interpretation of those vows) and Jim now had a serious shooting companion. And the setters... well... even they looked at me differently. Trap shooting afforded me the opportunity to become one with my gun, and nurtured a certain amount of proficiency in shooting targets. I have never been a "natural" at anything. Any skills that I may possess, in varying degrees of mediocrity, have come from study, practice, hard work, more hard work, and a stubborn desire to succeed.

I provide this background (and my age which is now close to 69) because at the last Old Hemlock reunion I was intrigued about how few of the women who attend this gathering carry a gun. In conversations with a few of the gals I heard various reasons as to why they do not shoot, and almost all of those reasons I had embraced at one time or another. So in the hopes that some of the Old Hemlock gals will read and

possibly relate to this article, I share my experiences, albeit with some degree of embarrassment. Here is my story.

My first gun was an Ithaca pump "featherweight" 20 gauge shotgun that Jim had purchased for me so many years ago. It is in ridiculously good shape. The stock is almost mint...I carried it very carefully in the woods, almost as an accessory to my hunting garb. Jim chose this particular shotgun because it was light, and at the time one of the few light guns available and affordable (I had always whined about how heavy his guns were). The fact that it was a pump gun never was an issue - getting off one shot was enough of a challenge for me - worrying about the second shot was never a serious consideration. This gives you an idea of the level of my shooting competence at that time.

One hunting folly has always remained with me. Jim and I, and October Joe - a beautiful Blue Belton setter who was not only smart as a whip, but very forgiving - had been hunting for the better part of a day with little to show for it. Because dense brush and a stand of tamaracks kept Jim out my line of sight, I suddenly heard him yell (bellow actually) in rapid succession "Woodcock! Woodcock! Woodcock!" I'd like to say that Jim was helping me through my game bird identification process, but it was really a call to arms. Yet I never got off a shot. "Why didn't you shoot?" (words I was beginning to hate) asked Jim, totally incredulous. "They were coming right to you!" (More accurately three birds were aiming for my left nostril.) "Just wasn't quick enough!" I answered

(words Jim was beginning to hate.) Should I have gotten off a shot? Absolutely, probably even two shots. So what happened? Simply put, I froze.

The reasons I did not shoot are a little complex. For starters I do not, and still do not, enjoy killing any living thing. I can remember the first game bird, a beautiful cock pheasant that I shot and killed over our liver and white pointer, Blaze. The details could not be clearer than if it had happened yesterday, yet this incident took place over thirty years ago. The weather was foul and I was wet and cold, and more than ready to call it a day. But Blaze had started working some scent growing more and more frenzied as she tracked the bird. Somehow Jim and I had gotten separated from each other, but his last words to me “stay with the dog” rang in my ears. Then about thirty feet ahead of me Blaze went on a beautiful, solid point. Where the hell was Jim? I waited as long as I dared, with Blaze quivering from head to stiff tail, nostrils flaring. She held as I came up alongside her. It was not lost on me the expectant look in her eyes. I had to reward that look, but scared to death because it was all on me. I moved ahead and suddenly the bird cackled and lifted in a small explosion. I had a nice straight shot, fired, and the cock bird dropped. In a flash Blaze took off in the direction she saw the bird come down. Moments later she came back to me proudly carrying the beautiful pheasant in her smiling mouth. By now Jim had reached us, and the look on his face told me how proud he was of both of us. I took the warm pheasant from Blaze’s mouth praising her for all I was worth, but shielding my wet eyes from Jim. It saddened me that I was responsible for the death of such a beautiful creature. Conversely, it gladdened me to give Blaze the prize she had worked so hard to earn. At that moment I had completed the full cycle of the hunting experience. And I could acknowledge that hunting is not just about “getting” the bird, but rather to keep dancing until the song is over.

Intimidation was another reason for my reticence to shoot. Jim has hunted and carried a gun since he was fourteen, a total of a mere 62 years to date. Shooting for him is as natural as breathing, and he is an excellent gunner. Although I could not have asked for more encouragement and support from him, his hunting history hung over me like a dark cloud. I was not that comfortable with the gun, or with shooting, even though I had completed a hunter’s safety course. And talk about a mixed bag of emotions. Although I cringed at “killing” the birds, I was equally afraid of “missing” the birds. Of course it was not a competition with Jim, but still I felt so inadequate. Sadly this intimidation factor I brought on entirely myself. Jim would never have been critical of my shooting, nor would he have been upset if I missed birds. His only frustration came, I’m sure, was from my lack of trying.

What precipitated the onslaught of the change of attitude for me was attending an NRA sponsored event designed strictly for women. I enlisted our daughter, Lynn, to join me and along with thirty-eight other women we spent a lovely summer day from 8 am to dusk at a local gun club. With instructors’ assistance we handled and shot handguns, rifles, and shotguns. We tried our hand at trap, and skeet, and shooting at non-moving targets, and we had a terrific time. Our daughter enjoyed it so much she immediately wanted to join our gun club and take up trap shooting. Thus began a family affair and we all signed on. Jim, Lynn, Tommy (Lynn’s husband) and I still shoot twice a week at the club. Lynn and Tommy have become terrific shooters. And I...well for an old girl I do all right.

Do I still worry about my shooting prowess? No, because it is no longer of consequence to me. Do I care about the birds I kill? Yes, because I should. What has become important to me is that I am comfortable with myself, and my gun (I have graduated to a side by side, and yes, I use both barrels.) Now when I hunt with Jim, and watch the setters do their thing, I am fully vested in the experience and thoroughly enjoy it.

While I understand there are some women who will never carry a gun because they simply do not want to, I also am sure that there are those who would like to become a member of the hunting fraternity, but need to be encouraged to do so. To those women I say age should never be a deterrent. It is never too late to enjoy something new. And fear of the unknown should never prevent a new adventure. Knowledge is the power to overcoming obstacles. And lastly, intimidation is a distortion of the truth that we foolishly buy into, and can easily be rejected. It is my hope that this article will provoke some of the Old Hemlock gals to reconsider, and give serious thought to carrying a gun.

This past reunion on one of the trips in the hunting field, Jim missed (very rare for him) a bird over a nice point by Gunny, one of our Old Hemlocks. Kind of surprised at his miss, I got off a late and long shot. Miraculously the bird dropped. The guide laughed and said to me “Well, this isn’t your first rodeo! Great shot! I thanked him, then turned away tucking my chin into my chest, whispering to myself “Oh, if you only knew!”



Dream's Litter



Mike Krol

As I type this, I am five days away from bidding adieu to nine wonderful puppies... and in spite of the poop, am getting depressed. So much of me went into raising this Old Hemlock litter, our fourth. Parting with our puppies is always a very difficult thing for Merely and me. Early on, I had said to Merely that with so many pups perhaps we wouldn't get so attached; just keeping track of who was who was difficult when they were tiny... heck, I didn't even know one of 'em was a male until I returned from having their dew claws removed! But over the past weeks each has found a special niche in our hearts, and tears will be shed on Saturday as each of them leaves for their new home. We will find comfort in knowing they are going to loving families, families who will take the baton we pass to them and provide them with even more attention than we have provided; being the center of attention versus having to share the love with their brothers and sisters.

This was our second litter with ten puppies, the first being Blossom's litter in 1988. That first one didn't go as we had hoped. Although I had done my research, built my whelping box with a heating pad, and back then got regular advice from George and Kay, once the pups were born I assumed Blossom would take on the bulk of the work until weaning time. We watched over all that first day, Blossom seemed to have the situation under control, and we went to bed that first night leaving the pups solely in her care. I'll never forget that first morning after, coming downstairs and finding Merely at the whelping box, weeping with a dead puppy in her hands. We couldn't believe our misfortune, and there is nothing sadder than digging a grave for a tiny puppy. Of course it couldn't happen again... but the next day I saw the same sorrowful sight, another little soul lost. We can only surmise that Blossom had lain on these pups, suffocating them. What should have been a happy time for the Krols had become a nightmare; both Merely and I vowed we would never raise another litter. Unbelievable as it may seem, misfortune would visit us once again on that litter, with yet one more pup dying at about three weeks of age, attributed to "fading puppy syndrome". Just writing this brings back all of those sad memories so fresh and clear.

Time has a way of healing pain, and Miss Beretta would go on to produce two litters, the first with only four pups, the

second with six. After that first awful experience, I vowed that never again on my watch would we lose a puppy... and we didn't. I was there for every feeding, observing everything that I could, and on the first few nights slept in the whelping box myself... not real comfortable with me, Momma, and babies in a 4X4 confined area! But those being smaller litters, they were easier for her and me to manage.

Fast forward to 2012...

I knew that Dream was due to come in season sometime in the spring, and in March I began to check her daily, looking for signs. Believe me, when you look at a dog's vulva day after day you can start to convince yourself that it's bigger today than it was yesterday! But finally I noted a wee spot of blood, and was quite certain I knew the exact day she started her heat. We did two progesterone tests, and when the second came back at 4.5 just seven days into her heat, my vet said I had best get her to the sire, she's further along than we thought. A quick call to Rick Baylor to confirm he'd be able to accommodate us, and the next day we were off to Ohio. As I had suspected, we were too early, and although Casey and Dream had a lovely time together, the relationship didn't get as far as we (and certainly Casey!) had hoped. Back home to Churchville, another progesterone test on Wednesday, and this one came back 14.5, meaning Dream had likely ovulated the day prior. A hurried return trip to Ohio, and fearing we had a very narrow window of opportunity coupled with two inexperienced dogs, I opted for an artificial insemination (AI) to get things started. After the AI, I rested Dream in her dog box for 2-3 hours per the vets recommendation, and I no sooner let her out into Rick's yard when Casey greeted her, they chased around for maybe a minute or so, and bingo, we've got a tie... right in the back yard, with Dream bellowing and Rick's son and buddies not believing what they're seeing. Rick and I were equally surprised. After a good night's rest, and feeling good about the way things were progressing, we arose the next day, let the two newlyweds out in the back yard, and immediately have a repeat of the night before (with the exception of not having teenagers as our audience). Back to Churchville, feeling pretty good about our timing and the success of the ties coupled with the AI, and sure enough, an ultrasound twenty one days later showed five puppies.

As time went on and Dream grew bigger and bigger, we were pretty sure we'd have more than five pups.

Roger predicted eight to ten, and we prepared ourselves for the big day. I had marked day 63 on my calendar, and about two weeks prior to that began taking Dream's temperature daily, looking for that 2-3 degree drop that means whelping will occur within 24 hours. Dream was also now sleeping in her whelping box to acclimate her to it, and all was going according to plan. I was aroused from sleep at around 2:00 AM on day 61, with Dream yelping in the basement. I ran downstairs to find her a bit frantic, going through nesting behavior that is typical a few days prior to whelping. A quick check of her temperature confirmed it was the same as it was the morning prior, and with my arrival Dream quickly calmed down. I decided it would be best to spend the remainder of the night with her, so she and I settled into the downstairs bed and dozed off. Merely left for work around 6:45, with Dream and I still snoozing.

At about 7:15 Dream got up, bounced over to the other couch, and started tearing away at the cushions... again, I think, nesting stuff and completely to be expected. The next thing I know, I see her squat like she's about to poop; I can't believe she would do such a thing, right on the couch no less, and I fly out of bed, saying "Dream, what the heck are you doing?", and when I get to her, the pup we call Blackie is halfway out! I try to get Dream over to the whelping box, but before we move five feet Blackie is in my hands, and I see the wonder of nature as Dream instinctively opens the embryonic sac and severs the umbilical. We no sooner get to the whelping box when number two is on the way, and in the next thirty minutes Dream delivers three pups... I in my underwear, and my phone upstairs! Finally we have a brief break in the action, I dash upstairs, grab some pants and my phone, and I call Merely, telling her to get back home ASAP. I also place a call to our daughter Marisa, who had never seen a puppy being born and wanted to share in the experience.

Merely arrives in time to see numbers 7 and 8 delivered, and Marisa gets there in time to see number 9, and finally we have a lull in the action and we think we're done. I take Dream for a couple of quick walks, thinking if there's another this will "shake it loose", but nothing happens for about 45 minutes... and then she starts laboring again. I call for Merely and Marisa to come quickly, and they are there when number 10 is delivered... and the pup is not breathing. Frantic cries

from my wife and daughter, and I pick up the pup, grasp firmly, turn it upside down and shake and rub briskly... and glory be, the pup comes to life! We three breathe a serious sigh of relief, and the drama and miracle of delivery is now over.

Dream's motherly instincts had her well in control, but a bit overwhelmed by the numbers. In those initial post-delivery hours, there were times she would rise, re-settle, and mistakenly lie on a pup. Those sad memories from long ago came back fresh, and I was determined that they would not be repeated... and so for the next eight or nine days, I stayed by her side, overseeing feedings every 2-3 hours, each lasting for 45 minutes or more. Dream has 9 nipples, and two of the pups were smaller than the others, so it was important that they got to feed first. The puppies competed vigorously for nipples, the bigger ones pushing the little ones away... my, what an ordeal that was for Dream and me, and at the end we both were exhausted, I emotionally as well as physically. The whole experience brought greater understanding and respect for what Larry and Vicky Catlett endured with the Ice Storm Litter, and Mark Kucera's amazing litter of 14. My hat is off to you guys; I don't know how you did it!

By the time the pups were about two weeks old we felt somewhat out of the danger zone. What a comfort to be relieved from all that worry and stress. Weaning started at three weeks, and went well; you could immediately see substantial weight gain and strength, and before you knew it we went from worry to work, and lots of it. Amazing to experience the output from ten squirming rascals, and I'm living that right now, but only a few days to go. The pups at seven weeks are a joy to behold, and so much fun.

Overall it has been a privilege to raise the litters that we have. I think George and Kay would be well pleased, and we are proud to make our meager contribution to this very special Old Hemlock family that truly is "family" in every sense of the word. These "proud headed dogs who hunt game birds in autumn" and their owners have enriched our lives beyond description. And although Merely cringes at the thought right now, I wouldn't be surprised if we raise another litter one day!



When you start out with a puppy, you are shaping a life, his and yours, which should be one. Like your gunning, your puppy will be what you make him by your attitude toward him, not as a tool to get birds but a bond between you that is the finest thing a human and a dog can know.

George Bird Evans

A Fine Ending

Jim Recktenwald

The last hunt of the season was an unexpected yet pleasant surprise. For several months now the game farms in Minnesota have been rationing pheasants and gradually shutting down their operations for the season. However, The MN Horse and Hunt Club sent me a note on April 15th that they had extra pheasants and had a deal on twenty pheasants. About the same time two colleagues of mine mentioned that they would like an opportunity to have their sons hunt over our setters.

The next day I sent an email to my friends desiring a hunt, along with another to a friend, Jody, at work who has a good wire haired pointer. We then contacted the club and settled on April 22nd for our hunt. The club reserved four fields (about 100 acres if you include ponds) for us so we could spread out the hunt and split into two groups. Each gun got an even split for the costs. Both Brian Harrington and Kent Rudeen asked if they could pick up our share but we insisted we were going to have as much fun as anyone handling our dogs.

Sunday morning I ran Bécasse and Patches McNab because they had been following me around the house all morning. They were not happy about me going to church wearing my hunting attire. When I returned I was greeted by Bécasse's whining and McNab's deep bark protesting the situation. All was forgiven after we loaded them into the SUV.

We all met by 11am at the club. After the birds were set we split into two groups. Brian and Noah Harrington started with team Bécasse & McNab. Noah is 14 and already 6' 1" and had gotten his hunter safety certificate the year before. He had hunted with his dad on northern MN logging trails but never with dogs. We discussed basic rules and the cost of a dog. Interestingly his dad carried the shells and worked with Noah on his safety skills as he handed him shells throughout the hunt. It was a nice way to discuss safety.

When we unleashed the hounds they tore out into the field. Both girls quartered nicely, ignoring each other, racing to see who would find the first bird. It had rained the night before and we had to traverse running water throughout the field. As we hit a dry corn field McNab locked up on point: tail high and an intense look. Bécasse backed her but I could tell she was not enjoying that experience. I flushed the bird and it soared high over Noah's right shoulder, going over the crest of the hill. Noah turned slightly and dropped the bird. Bécasse reached the prize first, growled at McNab, and brought the bird back to Noah. It was a sunny day but the glow from Noah's and Brian's faces was even brighter. Their faces were beaming. Noah went on to hit four other

birds cleanly. One of them went into a pond about twenty yards from the shore. Once again Bécasse, having had to back for McNab, swam out and retrieved the bird while her daughter gave me a grin. I was a little concerned I was going to have to ask my friend to send his wire haired pointer into the water for the retrieve, but Bécasse saved me from that embarrassment.

Midway through the fields we switched hunters and we started hunting with Kent and Nathan Rudeen. Nathan shot his first pheasant over Bécasse four years ago. Since then he had been diagnosed with a heart disorder that needs to be regulated with special medicine. This fall he starts college at St. Thomas; time does fly. Bécasse had always liked Nathan and she made sure he gave her a lot of attention. Both dogs had points but they saved the best for last. Bécasse locked up on a young rooster that decided it would run across standing water and open fields. Nathan and I tried to pin it down but to no avail. I barked out fetch and the girls obliged us by putting the bird in the air. Nathan shot three times and then I shot two more. The bird flew behind a large clump of cedars and dogwood. My friend Jody and the Harringtons were walking up the back side of the field and didn't see the bird fly out of the clump. They also let us know that they had seen us miss the bird. We placed all three dogs in the cedars, however my girls would not stay there. As I turned to admonish them I found them both locked up side by side pointing about ten yards from me. What a sight! I quickly had Nathan come up to the right of them as I spotted the brilliant red and blue colors of the rooster creeping in the tall grass. The bird would not flush and I released the dogs. The bird had been hit and we quickly complimented Nathan on hitting the bird. Bécasse retrieved the bird the long way around the cedars, having become a little disoriented. Seeing the joy in Nathan's eyes and the pride of his father was worth more than you can imagine. I was so proud of the dogs finding that bird and holding point for everyone to see. For the past week both fathers have let me know that their sons have asked repeatedly about when we are going again. We may just have another generation of Old Hemlock owners in the making.



Notes from Rangeley, Maine

Kandice Tuttle

In my rookie season two years ago I had my first gun and with our first Old Hemlock Setter, Rangeley, all the stars aligned on my initial foray. I have since learned that shooting, while instinctive, requires much practice and time. Bob has been so patient. In potential shooting situations he would always put me in the prime spot, and if we shot simultaneously he would claim the bird was mine. I do love that man, but I am not a fool.

While I have had nice success on stocked birds, to date I have yet to be able to say unequivocally that a wild bird fell to my gun.

Our most recent season saw much more grouse work than in years past, and we have watched Sage morph into a fine grouse dog. His father, Rangeley, heightened the season with solid, staunch points on grouse which were a thrill to watch. As a seasoned veteran, he works methodically through the woods, while Sage tries to cover the entire area at breakneck speed. Wisdom versus youth, but it is amazing how they kick it up a notch when grouse scent is in the air.

I have to share some run-ins we've had with moose (in hindsight they were comical, at the time they were not). We were in one of our favorite woodcock coverts in early October so the alders still had plenty of leaves. Bob's friend stepped up behind Sage who was on solid point. I could see some dark masses moving just beyond the alders and then heard a snort. After a short pause, there was another louder snort, the breaking of branches and a huge cow moose stomped through the alders toward Sage. Sage (named aptly) concluded it was not in his best interest to stay on point, and he retreated toward Bob and me. That left poor Dean as the next line of defense. You can imagine that while the alders are thick they do not offer adequate protection from a cranky moose with her calf. A quick retreat is tough in those clumps of trees. It makes you wonder how the moose move so easily through them.

In another encounter, Bob and I and both dogs were working through a narrow patch of alders. Sage was ahead of me and I saw a huge cow moose (again with her calf). She

snorted and stomped and charged at Sage. We were yelling madly at him and backing out as quickly as we could. With the dogs at heel on the dirt road, we were trying to get back to the truck and realized the cow had followed us and was coming out of the woods to charge us. Just as she crashed out, a truck came by and we flagged him to stop, then used him as a shield to walk past the moose. The driver was really amused that people with guns (they were only 28s) would need additional protection against moose. Our encounters with moose in the woods had usually been pretty benign, but evidently when you add a dog to the fray, the wheels can come off the wagon.



When you don't know what to do with all the birds we bring home from Hunting Hills (or if you're not a fan of chukar) you may want to consider the following:

Chukar Sausage

(Use in place of Italian Sausage)

1# ground chukar (I used the food processor to grind the meat)
½ # ground pork
1 ½ tsp Fennel Seeds
1 ½ tsp sugar
1 tsp dried oregano
2 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp salt
½ tsp pepper

Combine all ingredients and refrigerate overnight prior to use to let the flavors meld, or package for freezing. I do not have a sausage maker, so I usually freeze patties individually. If you are not a fan of fennel, this can be omitted. This recipe can be multiplied easily. I use it in pasta sauces, or to top pizza. Enjoy!!!!

~ Kandice Tuttle

The Search for Permanence

LeJay Graffious

“In a shooting life it is permanence we yearn for, a need to know that those things we cherish will be there each day we wake and look out on our world, each Autumn when the Season comes. If we have a brain, there is need to find beauty—a dog, a gun, a love – and having found it, to hold it for our forever, which for each of us is not too long. To come even close to keeping these things is bliss.”

George Bird Evans, Golden Hours, Grouse on the Mountain (1994, pg. 177).

Each of us was drawn to George and Kay for various reasons. For many, their style of writing about experiencing upland hunting over a setter was an attraction. Yet others were introduced through the Evans’ design of the Old Hemlock Setter line combining beauty, hunting prowess, intelligence, and companionship. Some were enticed by George’s artistic abilities. And still others identified with their lifestyle of independence, reverence for the natural world, ability to connect through conversation, and appreciation of quality in all things.

For most of us, those things we appreciate serve as only decoration to adorn the mantles of our lives. George and Kay were a different breed. They absorbed those things into their lives to elevate the very experience of living. An expertly crafted gun was no longer simply a blunt tool; it was a connection to both the spirits of Nature and our collective past. Well made clothing served as a bridge spanning necessity to artist’s inspiration. Fine food connected farm to home, and friend to friend. Good music provided not a distraction to the passage of time, but a means to invigorate memories to an everlasting note. And skillful writing has allowed us all to realize the value of the life well-lived. Each time I am reminded of Kay’s brilliant engagement ring, with all its gleaming facets, I see these facets of the Evans’ lives shining for us all to behold. This is a metaphor for their life’s work which should be passed on and shared.

We get many visitors and phone calls inquiring about Old Hemlock and the Old Hemlock Foundation (OHF). I am always interested in the point of view of the questioner. When I was first introduced to Dr. Melissa Bingmann, Professor of Public History at WVU, her focus was on the house, an understandable focal point for those who did not know George and Kay. The house is definitely a treasure. But treating it as a family heirloom to be cached away in a safety deposit box, or as a chest of gold to be buried in the sand, seems wrong. In fact, George had a disdain for funerals. I feel that, to him, a funeral was like the period at the end of

sentence. Also known as full stops, periods show that an idea is finished. George did not want Old Hemlock to become a museum. I think, for the same reason, to him the idea of a museum represented a full stop. A museum is a reflection of the past. He wanted Old Hemlock to be a living place. Not everyone is a forward thinker like George, including our lawyers and the IRS. The paperwork requirements led, or rather forced, the Foundation directors into the museum concept to preserve the Evans’ wish to establish an educational foundation. This has been a lingering concern of mine, but fortunately museum science is evolving to include the living character and forward thinking of the Evanses. So, how do we move forward in promoting the essence of the Old Hemlock philosophy?

My years as a school administrator have proved to me the value of strategic planning. So I began the search for experts in the field of museum science to lead a group brainstorming session. Three names in the field were highly recommended. After reviewing their curricula vitae and talking with their references, Dr. Mark Howell’s credentials brought him to the top of our list. With fellow OHF Directors Jeff Leach and Roger Brown on board, plans were begun to invite a variety of people to brainstorm, “What is Old Hemlock? And where does it need to go?” Dr. Howell thought we should keep the group to a manageable number of fifteen contributors from a wide range of disciplines. At this time I was introduced to a new term, “charette”. With its origins in French architecture, a charette, according to Wikipedia, is “a method of organizing thoughts from experts and the users into a structured medium that is unrestricted and conducive to the creativity and the development of myriad scenarios.” Our roster was to be half OH folks and half experts in the fields of museums, archiving, literature, and architecture. We wanted to invite anybody and everybody in the Old Hemlock Family, so it was hard to bring the number down. I was mostly consoled by the knowledge that we will be able to involve the OH family during following steps. Everyone who was invited readily accepted and attended, save for two who had last minute complications.

On April 21, 2012, fifteen participants and four observers assembled in the meeting room of Old Hemlock Cottage for a full day of activities designed by Dr. Howell to lead us through defining Old Hemlock and brainstorming ways to promote the George and Kay Story. The directors will be using the charette report to continue the strategic planning through the next steps of defining our mission, our vision, and our actions. My hope is that Old Hemlock Family members will be able to participate throughout this process by responding to digital surveys, giving the directors your ideas on ways to take OHF into the future, and sharing your story of what

drew you into the Evans' life. We hope to collect these stories both in writing and/or recorded audio/visual files. The full charette report may be read on our website, <http://oldhemlock.org/Documents/Charette/Report2012.pdf>.

I started this newsletter article quoting George's search for permanence in [Grouse on the Mountain](#). To come close to this bliss, he has passed the torch to the directors and family members. When he gifted me [Grouse on the Mountain](#), his

inscription is, "For LeJay, Listening to the hills' spirits spoken by the wind... George Bird Evans & Kay, Christmas 1994". I still hear those spirits as I walk and hunt with Willow, as I read Old Hemlock Facebook entries, as I talk with kindred spirits about George and Kay, as I hear the wind blow through the Hemlocks, and as I smell the puppy breath while I compare their head structure with the sculpture of Ruff.



A Conversation with Kay

I am not in the group of individuals that have personally known George and Kay Evans. However, over the years I had a number of phone conversations with them. Sometime ago I called George. Kay answered the phone and said George was occupied writing a book, but she was available to talk. We exchanged pleasantries and then the conversation turned to photography. Kay explained how she photographed George and the dogs while they were hunting. She said George had an annoying habit of fiddling with his hat before he moved in to shoot. I was amused by that revelation because I do the same thing, a habit we had in common. When I told her that, we both had a good laugh.

In grouse hunting we take the shots as they are presented to us. However, as any experienced grouse hunter knows, positioning one's self for the shot gives you an advantage. Of particular importance is the position of the sun, hence the position of the brim of your hat. If it is too low you might not see the bird. If it is too high the sun might be in your eyes.

Good hunting,
Robert Tovarnak



Editor's Note

As the Old Hemlock Letter enters the next phase of its evolution, we can only try to be worthy of that which has gone before. Our purpose continues to be to actively appreciate all that Old Hemlock has become, and to honor the unique history and sense of community that has its genesis in the remarkable and varied life's work of George and Kay Evans.

Thanks are due to those who make the Old Hemlock Letter possible:

The McGranaghans, who have taken on the production and printing of the Letter, and lent their talents to the layout design and more extensive use of George's sketches.

To the Directors, past and present, of the Old Hemlock Foundation, who tread the minefield that is dealing with the successful implementation and administration of George and Kay's wishes and intentions for the future. There is a significant facility to manage, and not inconsiderable assets that must be guarded and nurtured. Each brings talent and ability to that heavy responsibility, and to the myriad challenges that arise. The remarkable transformation, which is at the same time no transformation at all, at Old Hemlock is living testament to their dedication and plain old hard work.

Thanks especially to all the contributors whose bylines you see here. There would be no Letter without them. Some of the articles you have read are intensely personal. Those stories are not necessarily easy to write, but they have been shared, and we're all better for it. If you enjoyed and appreciated what our writers have done – tell them personally. And write something of your own. The Letter is an ongoing project; it won't get written if you don't do it, and the February edition starts now.

~ Bruce Buckley



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