

The  Old Hemlock Letter

Volume XVIII Issue 1

[www.oldhemlock.org](http://www.oldhemlock.org)

March 2016



The Old Hemlock Foundation, Preserving and Promoting the Legacy of George Bird Evans and Kay Evans

---

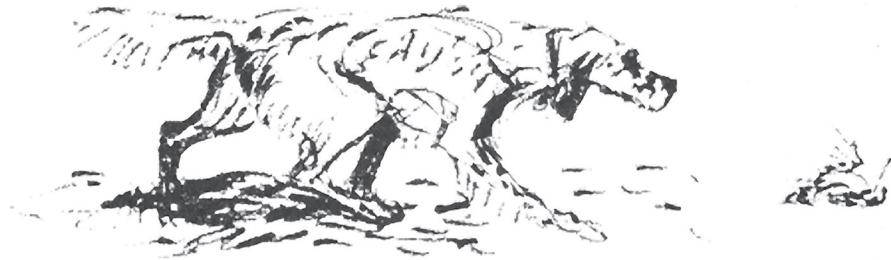
## Greetings to all,

The season seemed to fly by this year. It was a busy summer with Karma's puppies keeping us busy, but what a fun way to be busy. The placement of this litter pleases us, as we know we will hear about the puppies and actually get to see many of them in March. We do love to hear about the puppies and to see pictures as they develop. I was very pleased with how the litter turned out, and the trip to Wisconsin was well worth it to get the best possible sire to match up with Karma. Soon after placement of the puppies we were off to Michigan for grouse and woodcock; returning home to hunt Pennsylvania for pheasants between the doctor appointments for aging parents. We are planning a trip to Pennsylvania soon for grouse, and that will bring our season to a close. Hopefully we will get in a trip or two to a preserve before the reunion.

We have two possible litters planned for this spring. One In Minnesota, using Aaron Hislop's Old Hemlock Blue Sky and Scott Hanshue's Old Hemlock Copper. The other is Jim and Karen Killay's Old Hemlock Miss Kathryn and the best sire we can find for her, and I think I have found him. More details as they develop. We do hope to see you all in March at Hunting Hills. It is always great fun, and nice to connect and catch up on how the dogs are doing.

Best to all,

Roger



---

*"Days like that when I shot woodcock over my brace of lady beltons, days I know shooting 'cock over Dixie's grandson Briar, with Kay and me and the little Purdey, racing the failing light and the waning season make memories. As always, next October there will be flighting woodcock and with the Woodcock Moon another season with the same uncertainties, the sweet imponderables. There will be a dog, and a gun, and time enough."*

---

George Bird Evans The Woodcock Book (Amwell) 1997

---

---

## These Things I Love:

The setters serious, so much a part of me at home,  
but in the coverts their eyes are only for the Gun;  
A drumming log, the cock grouse so recently gone  
the moss is almost warm;  
a November redruff, and the gun I do not carry, lovely, slender,  
that engraving and smoky walnut so much a part of him.

I love blue distances of ridges, and grouse tracks in the snow,  
a woods road after rain, time out for lunch,  
and a powerline running like a ribbon over miles of mountains  
with no one there but the three of us and grouse.

I love each gunner's moon from the Woodcock Moon 'till Last Day  
Moon;  
Each raw windy day, each point that will live etched on brains  
where grouse and 'cock remain a fever; the sad beauty  
that is a fallen grouse, like the sorrow of an evening sky.

I love our moments shared.

My movie camera clasps the shooting days, keeping them forever  
young,  
prolonging points, making eternal those minutes of suspense  
on lanes winding into abandoned farms like roads into yesterday;  
spinning out a gunner's bliss through the season,  
from warm October to the sweet and bitter end.

Kay Evans Gray's Sporting Journal 1976

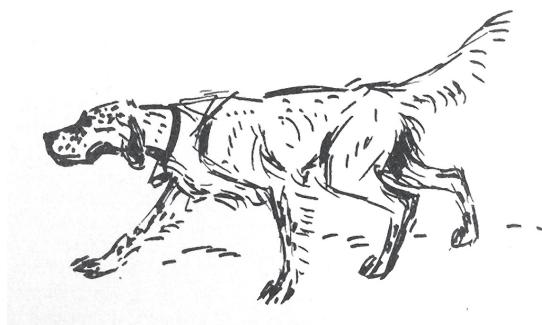


---

# The Girl and I

Karen Killay

I was twenty years old when I had my first encounter with an English setter. I knew of the breed but had never actually seen one. Due to an explosive population of rabbits, beagles were the go to dogs in our neck of the woods. At the time I didn't have a dog, so when a parishioner told me that the minister in our small town was giving away his female setter, I was very interested. I had grown up with a beautiful collie (the era of "Lassie"), and because I wanted to have a dog in my life again I decided to seek out the parson. A meeting with him the following evening directed me to the large barn behind the parsonage. "She's out there, and very friendly, so don't be afraid of her." I entered the barn, and lying in a generous bed of hay was one of the prettiest dogs I have ever seen, then or since. Her name was Ginger, a good size orange Belton, with a face that made my heart race. What a beauty she was. As I bent down to pat her, her soft brown eyes were smiling. Her tail thumped on that old barn floor vigorously, telling me she was happy to meet me. And what struck me then, and I remember with clarity now, was that there was this beautiful serenity about her.



Decision made. I wanted this setter. The minister was leaving within the month for his new assignment, so I could take her anytime. What I did not anticipate, or even consider, was the extreme resistance I was to get at home. My then partner was adamant - no dogs - not negotiable. After several fiery arguments, frustration and tears, I gave in to his "It's me or the dog" ultimatum.

It was the wrong decision and I have deeply regretted it my entire life. It was, however, the start of my love affair with setters. Looking back in my mind's eye and with a little more knowledge under my belt I realize that this lovely girl was of the Ryman type. The good news is that Ginger went to live with a close friend and lived out a long and happy life, a hunting life. Years later when Jim introduced me to George Bird Evans and the Old Hemlock setters, my love for setters was rekindled and a most wonderful future was ahead of us.

The setting is almost four years ago, and two Old Hemlock litters have been born, the Krol litter and the Graffious litter. Jim and I are sitting at the kitchen table delighting in the news of all those pups. Conversation turns to our Old Hemlocks and the fact that we have always had males. I said to him, "You know Jim that I love our boys but I wish we could have gotten a female one of these times." Jim really looked quite surprised, which surprised me as I thought he might have gleaned that from time to time. But his response was quick and he said "Call Roger, and tell him if there is a female pup not spoken for, you would like it." I countered with "Are you really serious? Because if you are, you don't have to say it twice."

"Call Roger, Karen. It is fine with me." So I placed the call. This time I hopefully would not be denied.

Talking with Roger, it sounded like there was a good chance I would get my female, although he couldn't say whether she would be a blue or an orange. He asked if I had a preference. And although I did say orange, a blue would have been just as welcome. Fast forward a few weeks and the much desired call came. There was a female from the Graffious litter available, and she was an orange. I really cannot adequately express how thrilled I was at that call, and how the feeling continues. Here was my Old Hemlock Miss Kathryn. Admittedly I was to become protective of Katie from the

---

first moment I knew she was to be ours, probably to the point of being defensive. But I was to find out within her first year we had a special setter. Katie and I have bonded, with a connection that I haven't shared with our other setters except perhaps for Becasse. I don't kid myself; the difference is because I hunt her. I know our boys are attached to me - after all I am the "cookie" lady - but it is Jim who is their hero, who gives them what they live for, and this is what I try to do for Katie. All those years hunting with Jim I had unconsciously made some decisions on how I would train a hunting dog if ever given the opportunity. My first thought was that I wanted a female. Why? My loaded answer is that I think they are more in the moment, and less apt to be distracted. I saw this in female pointers that we had owned years before the setters. I've been informed that this is an opinion that will not necessarily be shared by many. As to training there was nothing original about my yet to be proven concepts, merely a consortium of other trainers' methods, some of which I personally could relate to and others that I rejected as they did not suit my personality. Jim has done a great job with our boys (unfortunately not always evident at the Reunions) and they have an in depth relationship which suits man and dog. I wanted this relationship with Katie.

When Katie joined our family Jim graciously turned over her training to me, with his support and backup. Nearing four years now, Katie and I have done well together. To date I have never used an e-collar on Katie. It is not that I am against the collar, although I admit it took me a long time to appreciate its value, as unfortunately I have witnessed its abuse on a dog. Katie responds to my whistle, hand, and voice direction. Should this not continue, I will, of course, consider alternatives. Also, Katie has never worn a GPS. I am fortunate that her range is perfect for me. I can almost always hear her bell, and those few times I haven't, it has been for less than four or five minutes and most times she has been on a bird. Fortunately my hearing is still pretty decent, and this brings me to the beeper. Katie does not wear a beeper collar. The first time Katie heard a beeper on

another dog, it confused her. What was it? A whistle? A command? What? Again, I certainly see their value. Roger recently told me that Katie would quickly learn to associate the beeper with a bird. I don't doubt that for a minute. But after I gave it some serious thought, I realized it's me that the beeper bothers. I find the high pitched tone most annoying. Katie would get used to it, but can I? So for now, Katie wears Becasse's bell. It suits her and me. Katie has been a joy for me. I've been around enough hunting dogs to know she is good, very good. Is she perfect? Pretty close in my eyes. Does she do it all correctly? Not quite. She retrieves, but will not deliver to hand. She brings the bird close to me, making sure that I see it, and then spits it out and is done with it (personally, I don't think she likes the feathers in her mouth). But prior to this, I am witness to a beautifully moving setter with an incredible nose, hunting with zeal, ranging at a comfortable distance and hunting with a head held high, naturally coursing the covers. She is attentive to my whistle, voice, and hand signals, finding birds other dogs miss, and pointing with style.

So I wonder, is my need for perfection really that necessary, or am I making an excuse for my own training inadequacy? Will my hunting be the ultimate experience if she puts the bird in my hand? Or, do I accept that Katie doesn't like the bird in her mouth. Should I be grateful that I have a setter who hunts with joy and shares her joy with me? Do I allow her to display her personality or do I demand dominance, my will over hers? Katie graciously accepts me with my inadequacies, and yet my intelligence is supposedly superior to hers. Well, I'm still trying to work all that out.

To my delight Katie validates my presence in the fields and woods, and nothing is more pleasing to me.

---

*"Trust – an article of faith between  
a gunner and his gun dog."*

---

George Bird Evans (*handwritten book inscription*)

---

# Wayward Mr. Bob for a Vigilant Setter

By Mike McDonald

Like most of you, I utilize penned birds as a training aid when starting young dogs and honing their skills as they mature. Training birds are very accommodating when wild birds are neither plentiful nor accessible due the distance to coverts or regulatory restrictions on running dogs in the spring and summer months. Once you find a good source for quail, pigeons, or other game birds, you can keep your training pens well stocked with healthy fliers in numbers sufficient for your training needs. Bob White quail and Homing Pigeons have suited my needs very well when simulating hunting conditions or working on more specific problems in a dog's training program.

Husbandry of game birds is not difficult and requires minimal equipment save a Johnnie house or loft. Quail recall to the pen and pigeons "home" to the loft, allowing them to be released again and again without diminishing your stocks. As such, you also tend to keep them well beyond the period that a young dog finds them interesting and after your seasoned setter recognizes planted birds as a "set-up" and begins ignoring them.

At this point your training birds become family pets unless you can place them with another bird dog enthusiast. If they remain with you, nature starts taking its toll. Age slowly depletes your flock, or it happens all at once courtesy of some night-time predator. I've had quail that did not recall well, preferring to establish home territories outside the training pen especially when a male can find a female or two willing to elope with him. It's nice to hear quail calling in the evening from a side lot or to occasionally catch sight of them under a backyard bird feeder. Likewise, pigeons can leave and not return, although they tend to be dependable "homers" once they establish to your loft. Pigeons that have gone missing will sometimes surprise you by returning to the loft with a friend they've abducted from

a local farm or feed mill. The latter is best eliminated lest they introduce parasites or inferior blood to your line.

On one particular occasion, I recall a male Bob White showing up along the hedgerow behind the house, months after the rest of our flock and been killed off by a weasel. If this bird had been a member of our covey it seems unlikely he could have survived alone all that time in the unfavorable weather conditions of late fall and early winter. Yet there he was, and with no known flocks being kept by neighbors, we could only assume he had originated from our penned covey.

My lead setter at the time, OH Link from the Ice Storm litter, was the first to spot the wayward Mr. Bob, pointing solidly under viburnum that grew heavy there. At first I thought he'd found a late season woodcock, but checked that when the white cheek patch of a quail buzzed past my head at the flush. With nothing more than a leaf rake in my hand, I could only mark its descent for further investigation and possible recapture. We never band training birds so it would be impossible to say for certain that he was one of ours, but if he would stand any handling at all there was a likely chance this quail knew us. It was not to be since he re-flushed before we got within twenty feet of him. If he was from our "home covey" he'd been on his own too long now to tolerate any close inspection let alone a man swooping down with a fishing net. Link seemed to enjoy the encounter, although at five he was long past the foolishness of training birds. Then again, it had been sometime since he'd pointed anything, what with the wild birds so thin.

Mr. Bob was seen every few days well into winter, and I suspect he fed well on the black oil sunflower seeds and millet from our bird feeder. I'll admit to relenting to Wendy's petition for supplemental feed along the hedgerow where Link had discovered him, and if he beat the mice and squirrels to the cracked corn placed

---

there I was fine with that. Link continued to enjoy the diversion of Mr. Bob's presence. What Old Hemlock wouldn't appreciate the steady play on the olfactory of quail scent lingering at the edge of the yard? Each time I let Link out he seemed to have a single purpose before all others: scanning our yard and side lot for his friend. It was difficult to call him in on the days he located Mr. Bob, and impossible if he had him pinned under a point. I got my exercise too, along with the pleasure of flushing a quail over a nice point. Link would continue to ignore other training birds, but for some reason did not view Mr. Bob as such. Perhaps this bird had so reverted to the wild that wild scent again defined him as game. Just as likely, Link simply enjoyed the hunt, just to see if Mr. Bob was still around.

Along about Christmas we began missing our wayward quail. Snows too deep and predators too hungry had likely as not consumed Mr. Bob in one

fashion or another. We kept looking for a few weeks but the effort faded as the obvious became more obvious. Some other critter cleaned up the last of the corn that I kept putting out just in case Mr. Bob was simply staying out of sight. Link abandoned his search long before we did; they always catch on more quickly to the presence or absence of game birds, and we should learn to trust their judgment sooner than we do.

I could tell similar stories of special pigeons from our past, and they all end in similar fashion. Nature has her way of providing and removing diversions from our routine lives, and that's what makes it all so interesting. A surprise occurrence rarely repeats and never stays, but keeps us interested and looking for the next one. I wish you a surprise pleasure this spring that will carry you through the off season and back to autumn again. And let your dogs help you find it.



---

*"Autumn is the Season, colors and smells and fantasies, a sense of transience, magic lost with the sweet hurt of its passing making it sweeter."*

George Bird Evans Living with Gun Dogs 1992

---



---

# Memories of Miss Beretta

Mike Krol

As many of you know, we had to put Beretta down this autumn. She was fourteen years, four and one half months old. With a dog this old you think you are prepared for it, but I took it much harder than I thought I would. Little things that had become routine with Beretta suddenly didn't need to be done. For the past year or so when she had become a finicky eater, I would buy a rotisserie chicken for her every week to get her to eat. For weeks after she was gone, I would find myself in the grocery store reaching for a chicken, only to remind myself that I didn't need that anymore. For as long as I could remember, I always took her to deer camp for company and to have her sleeping on the pillow beside me. When getting ready for camp this fall, I started to pack dog food, only to recall I didn't need to do that either. And that empty pillow beside me only served as a sad reminder that she was gone.

I thought I'd take a moment to reflect back on her life and the many joys she brought to our family.

Beretta came to us in July of 2001. How happy and excited I was to visit my dear friends Jeff and Kendra Kauffman, and select her from that lovely litter! It was a case of love at first sight for us both. Her facial markings showed a perfect "7" on the right side, and I knew I was the lucky one. We spent the summer just enjoying one another, doing simple obedience stuff, and keenly anticipating our first season together. Our daughter Marisa was working at a local nursing home then, and on several occasions brought Beretta there to share with the residents. What joy a puppy can bring to people, smiles and laughter to folks who hadn't smiled in days. As we entered September, all was looking golden. Until the 11th.

From that day forward, everything changed. I have so many different memories from that season, and they all seem especially sharp and clear. We were under attack, we were at war, and fear seemed to be

the common theme. Rumors were abundant: reservoirs being poisoned, oil tank trucks would be exploded in traffic tunnels, the next act of terror was only days or minutes away. You started to look at an airplane and worry about its flight path and what the target might be. And to this very day I cannot look at a plane in flight without being reminded of what happened on 9/11.

But this is about Beretta. We entered that season with her being just a wee pup, tagging along behind Purdey. Back then I had sufficient grouse and woodcock to introduce a dog to birds with only wild game, no real need for game farm birds (although I'm sure they would have helped greatly). That's just the way we rolled back then. Beretta had been exposed to gunfire, but other than that was as green as can be. From here on I am going to quote quite a bit from my gunning log, with clarification added as needed.

10/7/01

*Purdey worked his heart out today, but few birds found. Was pleased to put two woodcock on the ground for him, and little Beretta has been officially bleded. She doesn't know quite what to make of this, but is a real trooper keeping up with us and sure enjoys eating deer turds.*

(An addiction that she would continue for as long as she lived!)

That entire October and into November had a recurring theme: hard work and few bird contacts, certainly not what you want for introducing a young dog to the wonders of the uplands. Back then I hunted harder than I do now, being driven by the need for success, and that compulsion led to Purdey blowing out his shoulder in early November, caused by me pushing too hard, something that shames me still. And so it was that I found myself in the heart of the bird season without a bird dog. This brief entry from my journal says it all:

---

11/3/01

Hunting without my Purdey, who is home healing his blown-out shoulder thanks to his dipshit Master. Beretta continues to be clueless, but given the lack of birds who can blame her? From what she's shown me so far, I might as well be hunting with a Chihuahua.

Another 9/11 flashback from that 11/3 hunt: I was hunting up north with my friend Lionel Andalo. We would routinely go to Fort Drum several times each year, a massive military base north of Watertown, NY. That year the base was closed to hunting because of the attacks, so we moved our hunting area further north, near the town of Governeur. As we were returning to our motel at the end of a misty, rainy day, I looked to the southwest and on the horizon I saw a huge bright orange ball, unlike anything I had ever seen. I was certain that terrorists had blown up the Ginna nuclear power plant, located near the shores of Lake Ontario. When we reached our motel I rushed to turn on the TV, but saw with great relief there was nothing about such a thing. What I had seen was the setting sun greatly magnified by the mist. But such is the way fear gripped me in 2001.

Back to our home covers the following weekend, with Purdey still on the injured reserve list, "it" finally happened:

11/10/01

This is being written figuratively in red, for today little Beretta started what will be a long career as a bona fide bird dog. We started our day at Karr Valley. Our jaunt up through the Mystery Camp was uneventful and we didn't move a bird until we had returned to the edge of the cove, where a grouse flushed wild as I clucked for Beretta. We tried to move this bird again to no avail, and worked our way back down to the cove. We were working the dogwood thickets near the road when "it" happened: little Beretta locked up solidly in a lovely and slightly scrunched-up point! I saw the grouse briefly on the ground before it ran and busted, crossing the road and into the pines. I tried a poke at the near-impossible shot, but drew a blank. Although I would have loved to kill this bird



for my little girl, the miss didn't bother me that much in the excitement of her first point. We followed for a reflush, which we got, but no shooting opportunity was presented. After a brief lunch, we tried the Valentine cover, working down to the dogwood thickets where Blossom often saved the day for us. In the big clump next to the old well Beretta locked up in a lovely point, looking so much like Old Hemlock Dixie. She then relocated twice, just like a seasoned pro, and was in the process of relocating a third time when the grouse blew out the opposite side. As before we followed for a reflush, this time drawing a blank. On up though the pines to the middle, and here in the dogwood patch that borders the little stand of hardwoods Beretta went solid yet again! As in the previous point she began a series of relocations, and to my frustration this bird too blew out the far side offering only a brief glimpse and sadly this ended our action for the day- but the light bulb has officially turned on, and for the first time in many weeks I am eager for tomorrow!

11/11/01

Today is literally going down in red, for the Angels hummed for Beretta and me on this glorious November day. We started the day at Davidson Road, where we moved only a single in all of that wonderful cover. We moved to the vast cover behind my friend Steve's camp to end our weekend. We moved a grouse

---

wild out of the clump, and our half-hearted follow up had us working the edge of Mazzola's. Beretta went solid on the edge of a dogwood clump, then dashed forward, possibly seeing the bird on the ground. The grouse erupted presenting a strong low left to right crossing shot, folding at the report of the Piotti. I called Beretta in for the find, but she was a bit timid with the still lively bird, so I picked it up and dispatched it. We paused for ceremonial pictures, and were on our way again. The old orchard and subsequent honey clump yielded nothing, as did the little bowl. We were working our way up the hillside when Beretta on the ground in front of me and I moved a few steps forward to get it to flush. It ran a few feet before blowing out presenting a rising away shot that I fluffed. I had broken the Piotti and was reaching for another shell when a second bird busted and I had the presence of mind to quickly close the gun and fire the left barrel, this time connecting (thank God for non-auto safeties). I hurried forward, calling for Beretta, and found a very lively wing-tipped grouse flopping around. I was about to grab it when I thought this would really fire Beretta up, and let her make the find herself. She was quickly upon the bird and I must say it emerged much the worse for wear, but I got a pseudo retrieve by tugging on her check cord, so the sequence was completed. Feeling plenty flush (pardon the pun) with two grouse in my pocket, we continued up the hill. At the crest a grouse flushed wild ahead of me, and I foolishly banged away R&L, missing. Our pursuit of this bird brought us to the remains of the old cabin in which I killed a woodchuck some 30-odd years ago. Near the old cellar Beretta swung around in mid-stride, locking up so intensely her left rear leg was raised and frozen, and a grouse blew out presenting a R&L away chance that I blew, but it was a tough one at best. We chose not to follow for it had flown into the big hillside. We continued to work the downhill side of this cover, which is really nice, and Beretta got into another bird that she would not give up on, and I heard it lift as only a sound. We returned to the middle hardwoods for pictures, and ended our day in a quiet personal moment together. The stuff dreams are made of!

I pick one final journal entry, but from my years with Beretta I have so many I could share. It is now 2007. Beretta has grown into a seasoned bird dog, headstrong at times, a retrieving dog unlike any that preceded her

(actually not completely true; Shay was every bit as good, and Beretta's daughter Dream is now her equal). Our son Grayson was hunting with me. He had completed his basic and specialist training with the Army, and was about to be deployed to Iraq in May. Until putting this tale to paper, I hadn't thought about how much terror and war weaved themselves into Beretta's life. But my thoughts in the autumn of 2007 were overshadowed by fear and apprehension. I worried for our son, and wanted so much for our remaining time together to be happy times.

11/12/07

Our final hunt of the early season ended in grand fashion, but it certainly didn't start that way. Gray has been frustrated with his lack of shooting opportunities and his failure to connect when he gets them. When we started today's hunt I took a moment to remove my undershirt and as a result of this delay Gray missed a chance to shoot at a bird bumped by the dogs as they had entered the cover. This put him in a bit of a funk, and when he missed R&L at another bird 20 minutes later this negative attitude was only reinforced. We moved birds sporadically as we traversed this cover, nice to have contacts but maddening to not have shooting chances. Fresh posted signs at the top of the hill made me reconsider my initial plans to work the upper portions, so we worked our



---

way downhill to the road with no bird contacts to show for our efforts. With a long walk facing us to get to the truck and Miss Beretta showing her usual signs of wanderlust, we leashed her and Gray jogged ahead of me with her in tow, needing some alone time. Gunner continued to work the cover to the left of Gray, and when his bell went silent Gray dropped Beretta's lead and readied for the shot. A big cock grouse erupted from the cover crossing the field and Gray fired R&L. At his second shot I saw the bird flinch ever-so-slightly and begin towering. Higher and higher it went, becoming a speck in the sky and swinging over the road, where I finally lost it from my view. I hollered to Gray to mark it well, and when I asked Gray where it went he said over the pines. The pines that border the Sugar Shack! The four of us crossed the newly plowed field to get to where the bird went, and once in the cover Gray had a bit of confusion on where he last saw the bird. Gunner was with him, while Beretta and I went to the deep Sugar Shack valley. As is her wont, Beretta had her own ideas on what to do and headed down into the deep valley out of sight and sound. Gunner had now joined me and I heard Gray yelling for him up the hill from me, so I whistled for Beretta so that we could join Gray. As I saw her white form coming up the valley towards me I thought she was holding something but I said "no way". And then she drew nearer and I saw Gray's grouse in her mouth. I think I said "holy shit!" out loud, went

to her to accept the prize, and began whooping and hollering for Gray. He ran down the hill towards me, as incredulous and excited as I over the happy turn of events. Of course we paused for celebratory pictures, and opted to end our hunt on such a wonderful turn of luck. What remarkable creatures our gun dogs are!

Beretta continued to be an amazing retrieving dog to the end of her days. In my retirement years I have enjoyed guiding on a couple of local game farms, presenting my dogs with more bird contacts in a single season than they would see in ten years in the uplands. Beretta was a big part of this. Some of my sports are marginal shots at best, and we all know how a wing-tipped rooster can run.

I don't know how many times I have had my clients ask "Where is she going, what the heck is she doing?", to which I reply "Just give her a few minutes to work it out", and invariably she would come trotting back with that bird in her mouth, much to the amazement of my clients.

Beretta touched our lives in so many ways: so many happy times and memories, such love and devotion, such a sweet spirit. She left a hole in my heart that is still mending.



---

"Wood ferns, once more frost-russet, have closed in over Briar's grave under the hemlocks, embracing him with Ruff and Bliss. Briar is gone as far as he will ever go, if far is in my heart and my brain and everywhere on Old Hemlock and in those coverts he graced so gallantly."

---

George Bird Evans Men Who Shot 1983

---

# Greetings

Maurice L. Lee

We joined the Old Hemlock family on 27 September 2015 with the arrival of our puppy, Apollo Baxter. He's been a fabulous puppy and has already grown to 51 pounds. We're previous English setter owners from the original DeCoverly kennels in Factoryville, Pennsylvania. My wife Christy is a daughter of Ken Alexander who is quite noteworthy to all of us in our line of interest. Ken was on hand during that warm September puppy day at Old Hemlock to tell stories and to advise us on how each one of our new puppies stacked up. We took the time to listen, laugh and have a wondrous time as we received Apollo into our lives.

I am only in my second season as a wing shooter, and have had the chance to learn and train under Ken, my father-in-law. As a fisherman for many years, I'm no stranger to the outdoors but I was a stranger to wing shooting. What I can tell you from a beginner's perspective is that the sport is more about the experience than about bagging lots of birds. Taking the time to understand and bond with your dog has been the most valuable lesson. The second most valuable lesson is to listen to those who have preceded us in the sport and lifestyle. Among these, the very first book that Ken recommended to me for training was Troubles with Bird Dogs by his friend George Bird Evans. It has been an extremely valuable tool and reference for me as a new shooter. In its pages you will find the spirit of the sport

and the spirit of Old Hemlock. I picked up another copy of it, and the other books written about wing shooting and upland life by George Evans. These books have given me the correct perspective on upland shooting. With every page turn it has been humbling to become increasingly familiar and appreciative of the history of the northern English setters.

I leave you with George Evan's words: "A finely trained gun dog is one of the most well adjusted organisms I know; he knows what to do in a given situation and does it. To criticize such a dog is like finding fault with the colors of the sunset."

George Bird Evans Troubles with Bird Dogs 1975

Until next season!

---

*"We do well to carry with us into  
coverts a concept of gunning to  
match the elegance of our gun  
dogs, worthy of those gunners of the  
shooting past."*

---

George Bird Evans  
A Dog, a Gun, and Time Enough 1987



---

# ‘15

*Richard Baylor*

Our Brit, companion, excelled bird finder, passed.  
Awful, struggling disease–  
His fear filled his eyes, met mine  
Calm then, with offered peace.  
Memories of hunts, days with my Dad–  
His collar hunts in my vest always, His Spirit in my heart forever.

Casey, six, white mane, Fit, long ever questing nose–  
Instinctively Close on Grouse, farther on Pheasant.  
End of Day, at my side–  
Growls away interlopers,  
Black eyes see my soul—and I into his.  
My Best ever, Briar’s Ghost, with a look to me–  
Reading each other’s mind– then he Hunts,  
No whistle; no collar—only the sound of his bell; quiet—a Bird.

Now, little Covey—three; fast, driven–  
Nose as his father—those ancestors.  
His Season—held Grouse, Woodcock, Sharptail, Pheasant, Chukar, and Quail–  
First to Retrieve, to please, to sleep with head on my lap–, in the truck to GO!  
Stubborn—Stalwart—Thinker.

Time caught me, briefly—now push on.  
Mind says go—body slower,  
Still shot well—must get their prize.  
Time to do, as Time allows, with beautiful Maura and them.  
'16 ahead; another Golden Season, “asking”.

---

\*See photo page 9 October Fever 1989 . That looks like Casey and Covey, at least to me this year.  
The term “asking” is from text in the Prelude of the same book.

---



---

## Finding Yellow Creek

Kandice Tuttle - with memory support by Bob Tuttle

For the second year in a row we were looking forward to our trip to the Canaan Valley in West Virginia. We met the Bowmans at the home we would share the first week in November with hopes that the woodcock flights had followed us from Maine. As with our first trip to the Canaan, Tom and Pam and Boswell generously shared the coverts they had discovered over their years of hunting there. Prior to our trips we would reread George's book Grouse and Woodcock in the Blackwater/Canaan to acquaint ourselves with the coverts we would revisit from George and Kay's hunts.

The house we shared was below Cabin Mountain and just down the road from "The Gates" (a spot George and Kay consistently returned to) and in the heart of so many of the coverts mentioned in the book.

The weather was unseasonably warm, in sharp contrast to the cold and snow we experienced the previous year. The woodcock numbers were low and the grouse even more so but we still had daily woodcock encounters and some fine points, double points and triple points. OH Boswell, OH Sage and OH Breeze (grandson to Boswell) worked beautifully together. They were such gentlemen backing and honoring each other's points. It was pure pleasure watching them work. We enjoyed the opportunity to shoot over our boys and Pam documented it all with her camera.

Tom mentioned wanting to try to find Yellow Creek near the Blackwater River where George had written about finding grouse. We headed out of Davis on Camp

70 Road along the Blackwater River and parked at the spot that we hoped would lead us to Yellow Creek. We hunted down the hill and came upon an abandoned camp at the bend of a stream in thick cover. Not far from the camp we saw Breeze on point with Sage and Boswell nearby. Two grouse flushed early but offered no shots. We followed up on the birds and traveled along the winding stream. Boswell had a nice point on a single grouse (perhaps one of the two originally flushed). This too offered no shot. We crossed the stream several times which "was the color and clarity of sherry" and offered the dogs plenty of opportunities to cool off and drink.

Following the stream back to the abandoned camp, we flushed three more grouse that were roosting in trees nearby. As we headed back to the cars we remarked how beautiful the stream was, and how fortunate we were to have found Yellow Creek and grouse as a bonus. The next morning at breakfast we read the pages from Grouse and Woodcock in the Blackwater/Canaan that chronicled George and Kay's hunt there.

The trip was made more special because LeJay and Helen Ann Graffious and Jeff and Gabby Leach and their setters were in the Valley at the same time, and Carla Marshall and OH Carmel made a trip there to welcome us on our arrival.

There is something very special about hunting over beautiful setters and this is magnified by knowing that our pups were hunting the same coverts that their ancestors did with George and Kay.

---

*"Once more along the stream rushing dark green between ice-covered boulders, I moved two grouse, missing a crowded shot at one. Clotted snow clouds were shutting out the light, and I hurriedly finished my sandwich, leaning against an oak, and started back downstream."*

---

George Bird Evans Upland Gunner's Book Amwell 1986

---

# Your New Gun Dog

LeJay Graffious

*"You ask: How do I raise him? How do I train him?"*

*"Some of our best Old Hemlock setters have been developed by men who never owned a shooting dog. They learned as their dog learned and became half of an efficient man/dog sporting combination (man before dog because he has less inborn hunting instinct and more to learn than the puppy). I don't have all the answers. But, briefly, this is what we do:"*

Thus begins the twenty five page pamphlet, a prequel to his book Troubles with Bird Dogs. When George and Kay began placing puppies, they produced this mimeographed document entitled "Your New Gun Dog" which gave new owners guidelines on care and training. I have placed this manuscript on our webpage; it is available for you to read on-line at <http://oldhemlock.org/History/YourNewGunDog>.

George could have been talking about me when he penned, "man....has...more to learn than the puppy". I was blessed to have my first solo experiences with Manton. This GBE trained setter lived with Kay several years after George passed. Although I only shot preserve birds over him, I had the pleasure to spend many hours in grouse cover with him and to walk the Old Hemlock grounds almost daily. With George's advanced age and failing shoulders, Manton did not have much experience on a lead or heeling. Using the lead was a challenge,

and Manton never quite mastered heeling while on it. Heeling off lead never happened. One man/dog command did evolve from our relationship: "Easy". This started as "Go Easy" out of necessity. I usually walked Manton after work when the light was failing. Manton would be on a check cord ten to fifteen feet in front of me. When he would pull or jerk, my response was, "Go Easy". Manton translated this into: go this distance and not pull hard on the cord. This command became handy when I learned that it worked off the check cord. When we would take a trail on Old Hemlock, Manton would start as usual on a big run after being in the house all day with Kay, after a two-blast whistle command. Then, as the darkness would overcome us, I would call Manton in to me and use the "Easy" command. Manton could easily discern the trail with his better-than-human senses. I would then follow him through the dark woods back to Old Hemlock. I would be able to see the white moving mass at check cord length leading me through the forest better than the edges of the trail. I trusted him to lead me back to Kay. This trust deepened our relationship; Manton seemed to know this was a benefit to both of us.

When Old Hemlock Black Willow came into our lives, I relied on the Old Hemlock training bible, Troubles with Bird Dogs, for guidance to train this



---

genetically programmed bird dog. I made many mistakes, but Willow was very forgiving. My largest error was inconsistency. I would read George's words to develop a plan, but then I would see and talk to others about their training methods. I would try these, only to confuse us both. As Willow trained me, we developed into a sporting team where I trust her instincts and she trusts me.

Now we have five month old Old Hemlock Mountain Laurel in our home. What a joy to experience these little brains develop a bird sense and social skills. Of course, the GBE bible is still my go to guide for care and training; I view her training as my training. I also keep George's words in the forefront: "Remember, he has off days, just like you. Unless you are the kind who never miss (!!!) don't expect him to always be in top form."

Now that Laurel has some basic commands, especially "come here", she is gaining experience walking the Old Hemlock trails and trailing along in the grouse woods. My reactions to Laurel now reflect the little experience I have had with one setter. Consistency is the key. George's original intended title for his guide book was The Trouble with Bird Dogs. The publisher requested the change. From my point of view, it should have been The Trouble with Bird Dog Trainers. Willow was smart enough to become an excellent sporting dog despite my inexperience. With George's book as my guide, I continue on with our new puppy. I still seek advice from more experienced trainers, but now I am more cognizant of the conflicts that I may introduce. So the joys continue of "Living with a Bird Dog".



---

*"Fine dogs have been talked about when gunners gather and some stunning ones have been seen in action. But the bird dog who gave you, alone, the glory of flawless moment, with some in-between mistakes like the misses between hits, is the dog in your heart and in the blue distances of your mind who transported you on the level of a Titan from one autumn to the next. Troubles with bird dogs? When Fortune lets you live your dream with a dog in wind-bare thorns and on blazing hillsides, there is very little that is wrong. "*

---

George Bird Evans Troubles with Bird Dogs 1975

# Round and About Old Hemlock

LeJay Graffious

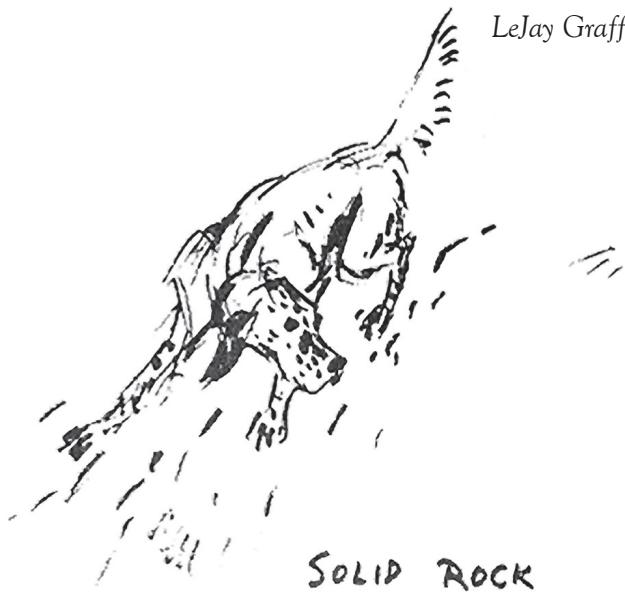
The legacy of George and Kay continues to grow through the work of the Foundation. Of course, everyone who receives this newsletter is directly involved with the legacy of setters first registered at Old Hemlock. This small group has a blood tie through our setters. I truly believe we are the Old Hemlock Family.

The legacy goes beyond Old Hemlock Setters though. We have George's land and home that are being preserved. We have his art. To me the most valuable asset is the quality of his writing promoting the experiences of gunner and dog over the quantity of the quarry taken. I am pleased that Steve Smith, editor of *Pointing Dog Journal*, wants to continue to publish George's writing. Steve feels it is important to introduce his younger readers to GBE's words. Look for an article about woodcock reprinted in the August, 2016 issue.

On a local level, the NCWV (North Central West Virginia) Life magazine sent a reporter to do a story about Old Hemlock. I spent three hours with her sharing the legacy of the Evanses and telling of their love of each other, love of the mountains, love of music and literature, love of their setters and setter family, and love of enjoying life at Old Hemlock. I will be interested in how she shares the story in 750 words or less.

George got more attention locally this fall when the Morgantown History Museum hosted a three month exhibit of his graphic art. Sharing this facet of his life created more interest in George's writings and his life at Old Hemlock.

Visitors to Old Hemlock exceeded 500 folks interested in George and Kay, and activities here. We have a growing number of civic and educational groups scheduling tours to hear the story. We also hosted three children's events called "Curious Kids". Volunteer instructors planned science-based activities and adventures for 5-10 year old students to learn about



George and Kay. The kids then rotated through the three different classes. This year we plan to expand the program to a three course offering for both "Curious Kids in Science" and "Curious Kids in History". If you would like to volunteer to help with these, we would love to have you.

Social media continues to grow and promote the Evans' legacy and happenings here on the Old Hemlock Foundation Facebook page. The page has over seven hundred followers from ten countries. I use the page to share quotes of George with photos from our archives, plus mix in the happenings associated with the Foundation. I appreciate the feedback from commenting and clicking "Like" because that helps guide me on the interest of our followers. While the Foundation's page is open to the world, the Old Hemlock Facebook page (which I tried to change to "Old Hemlock Setters" and could not because we topped 600 followers) is a closed group. Its purpose is for the Old Hemlock family and friends to share photos and experiences with these dogs we love so much. Times change. George and Kay loved receiving photos of the OH Setters; they kept a large wooden bowl in the studio with stacks of dog photos from their circle of the Old Hemlock family. Now we share on social media. It keeps us all connected.

---

The dendrochronology project is coming to an end. The on-site and lab research of doctoral candidate Kristen DeGraauw supports the archival research AmeriCorps member Devin Scanlon did of the Richmond, Morgantown, Charleston, and Kingwood court house tax records. A West Virginia University leadership class is planning a social event and lecture at Old Hemlock to present the research and methods on the evening of March 15, at 6:30. We would love to have members of the Old Hemlock family present.

We are excited to add our third AmeriCorps member to Old Hemlock. Ian Gray started in mid-January. He will work part-time this semester and go full-time in the summer. Ian describes himself as: *"Hailing from a small rural town in north central Pennsylvania, I received my BA in History from the small state school of Clarion University and am wrapping up my MA in Public History at WVU. In my time at WVU, and a summer at Manassas battlefield, I've found discovering and sharing the rich tales of the past, especially those right in our own back yard, with the public to be the most enjoyable and rewarding experiences since starting grad school. At Old Hemlock, I'm looking forward to more of those experiences while passing on the legacy of George and Kay in, as George rightly described it, "...the loveliest land on earth...the Endless Mountains that are ours."*

Life would not be interesting if everything was fun and roses. Of concern now is that our hemlocks are under attack again, probably by Twig Rust caused by the fungus *Melampsora farlowii*. I have been treating the trees around Old Hemlock since 2001 for the Hemlock woolly adelgid. This summer I noticed the new growth of five trees around the Evans' home withering and dying. I contacted a friend who is a retired pediatric surgeon, and who has a master's degree in Forestry. She put us in touch with USGS Entomologist, Amy Hill. Amy examined the trees and took samples back to the laboratory. After determining it was not caused by an insect, she consulted a forest pathologist. The final determination is pending, but it looks like the first occurrence of this pathogen in West Virginia. It was previously known in Maine to northern Pennsylvania. The prognosis is weakened and thin canopy hemlocks but probably not death. We will do everything possible to maintain healthy hemlocks at Old Hemlock.

As always, we extend an invitation to all Old Hemlock Family to come to visit George and Kay's home and walk the trails on our 232 acres.



---

# Editor's Note

I hope this issue has helped ease the winter doldrums just a bit. If not, the Old Hemlock Reunion certainly will for those who have signed up. For those who could not, there's always the groundhog.

Thanks to our authors. They write your Letter, and the content continues to get stronger. We hope you think the presentation is keeping pace.

The articles tend this issue toward our preoccupation with training. Not methods per se, but approaches and attitudes and relationships. Personally, I like that. Surely there are right ways and wrong ways to train, but notice that is a pair of plurals. I prefer to think in terms of what works, and what doesn't, for each trainer and dog team. That mix changes for each person and each dog. It is situational, and not always easy to find.

Since the adults are supposed to be in control of the schoolhouse, the burden is on us to lead, think, sense, anticipate, and learn from experience. All that is complicated by the realization that our setters are smarter about this stuff than we are, and it is sometimes hard to recognize that and keep up.

Entirely missing from these pages are bluster and ego. That says a lot about Old Hemlockers, and is far from true of many of our experiences in the rest of the upland world. Our setters are better off for it, and so are we. You are to be congratulated, and I can't help thinking George and Kay must be smiling.

---

Old Hemlock Foundation Directors  
LeJay Grafflous, Jeff Leach, Roger Brown, Hall Carter

Past Director Jeff Kauffman  
Editor Bruce Buckley  
Graphics and Production Judi Hewett

Founder and Editor Emeritus Mike McDonald

Finally, a special word of thanks to the Directors of the Old Hemlock Foundation for the work they do and the responsibility they accept. LeJay is in the trenches daily. Take a look around Old Hemlock itself, read the Foundation activities report, consider the magnitude of his outreach, the proportions of what he has wrought, and his dedication to Old Hemlock and the memory of George and Kay. Then wonder for a moment, as I do, where Old Hemlock would be without him and Helen Ann.

Bruce Buckley

---

## THE LAST LEAF ON THE NORTH PORCH MAPLE

One small last leaf, not noticed until now  
except as one of thousands in their glory,  
a glory scarcely greater than its own lone brittle brown,  
all that is left of Indian summer.

One small leaf I hadn't noticed,  
until now that it is gone I see it even more.

*George Bird Evans*

