



Old Hemlock *Letter*

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Greetings to all,

We had a nice season traveling to Michigan, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Kansas. The dogs enjoyed every hunt and traveled well. We are down to three setters, having lost Charm. Losing an older dog is supposed to be easier, but it isn't. It is never easy! I can see her on point and prancing in with her bird, she was always one of the most reliable retrievers I've had. Fortunately having the other dogs does make it a little easier.

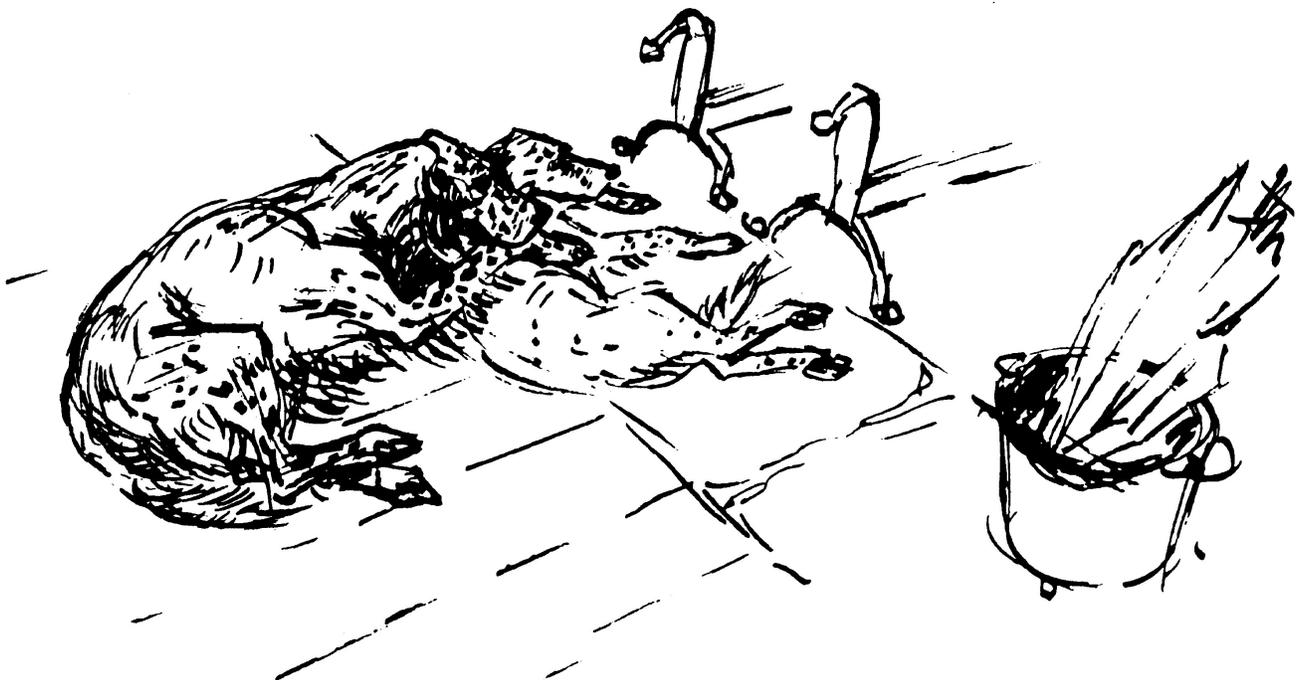
We had a great litter of puppies out of Katie and October John. Karen and Jim Killay did an outstanding job of raising and socializing the puppies. I am looking forward to seeing some of them at our Reunion in March.

We have plans to breed Willy Carter's Old Hemlock Iris when she comes in season to October John. These too should be some great puppies.

I am looking forward to the Reunion and hope to see many of you there.

Sincerely,

Roger



Puppy Reminders

Mike McDonald

In the years that pass between new setter puppies, we tend to forget the joy and challenge they can be. Fortunately, a puppy quickly reminds us that first and foremost they are now in charge and lest we suffer the torments of barking, whining, and wetting, we better get used to it. Old Hemlock Seth came to us from the recent Killay litter through the grace and generosity of the OH Family. He was sufficiently spoiled by his host family, and found little task in securing complete dominance over our household by the end of his first week – thank you so much Karen and Jim!



He began by reminding me just how sharp puppy teeth can be and the damage they can inflict on woodwork, chair legs, and bare ankles. Likewise, my eardrums are tested to the limits of endurance with high frequency cries when I hold young Seth too closely when he would rather not be. Our patience is stretched by his constant exploration outside immediate supervision, with high speed escapes despite threats of retribution that he blithely passes off as unenforceable. Like any new baby, puppies remind you that they are completely innocent of wrong doing, incapable of understanding anything but their needs, and totally dependent on you for everything. Personally, I think they know more than they let on, all the while thrilling in the disruption they cause to your previously peaceful world.

On the bright side, they remind us that the true definition of “soft” is beyond anything we can immediately recall. Cotton, silk and chiffon can’t compare to puppy fur, especially just as they are about to fall asleep in your arms. “Puppy soft” has no equal to those who have experienced it. Puppies also remind you what unconditional trust means as you cradle them, tummy up, and gaze into eyes that are confident you

will let nothing bad happen to them. They speak to you in silence – a skill you must resurrect from memories of your last puppy, or develop quickly if this is your first. They tell you when they are hungry, need to go out, are unhappy or don’t feel well, but you must pay attention or be reminded yet again that you are just not getting it – the choice is yours. The transition can be eased a bit by religious scheduling of potty trips just after naps or dinner time, or if that fails, every hour until you are sufficiently trained. This is only the beginning of the training principles prescribed by our mentors; first, behavior lessons for civil obedience and then field exercises to mold their hunting instincts. At this stage too much seriousness can backfire, and I get yet another reminder that aggressive training simply does not work on a determined puppy.

Our other pets offer their reminders too – primarily that they did not ask for this addition to the family, nor were they even consulted. My veteran setter is affronted by the attention being squandered on an undeserving whelp who can’t retrieve and wets on the floor. We have obviously forgotten that he was here first, had to earn such praise, and now he will

require special attention to get through this crisis. As for the cats, well they will eventually come out from hiding and begin ignoring the new puppy in public, as they do most things they find annoying. They have the tools necessary to inflict their own form of discipline, if need be, a reminder to the puppy that some lessons will be hard learned.

All these reminders are simply experiences repeated from four prior OH puppies, the scars on chair legs, torn draperies, pulled rugs, and carpet stains

are all part of the bargain. No doubt little Seth will leave marks reminding us that this too shall pass and that we'll get over it. The memories he will make for us, and hopefully those we will show him, makes him a member of our family...his family...the Old Hemlock family. He can't know the legacy from which he comes nor the richness of his blood and breeding. Right now, to him, life is a big adventure with every new experience, sight, sound, and smell. I will be sure to remind *him* that he is the result of something very special, and that his coming to be mine is nothing less.



“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 Dog, a Gun, and Time Enough 1987

Amazing Things I Didn't Know... Before I Went to Pennsylvania

Moe Lee

The following is an account of my very first "tag-along" hunting experience with Ken Alexander in 2001. This was many years before I began hunting with Setters. Imagine a twenty-something year old person who knows nothing about bird dogs and was even afraid of dogs in general; that was my perspective. I wrote this originally about fifteen years ago, as part of a work that also contains other passages about hunting, fishing for brook trout, the Vintagers, and their family accomplishments.

I married Christy Alexander without meeting her family. I'm still questioning if that was fate or choice. Being that she accepted the proposal I think it was fate. After reading this passage about bird dogs you will begin to understand what a joy and wonder it has been for me. There have been some truly amazing things that I have seen in Pennsylvania since our marriage February 24, 2001.

Ginger and Elwood

Christy told me a little about her family and where they lived in Pennsylvania. She told me her father was a "hunting-dog" breeder. Being from Louisiana, I had always heard of hunting dogs but immediately thought

of the beagle. I was told the English setter is a bird dog that "sets", or points, and retrieves downed birds. Of course I didn't believe this...because my Uncle had beagles that he used for rabbit hunting...but that was mainly a pack-o-beagles running through the field to scare up rabbits; little or no skill involved. Then came my first experience with English Setters (I capitalize them out of respect that I now have for the breed).

Kenneth took me on a small jaunt through the DeCoverly compound; we got a few ring-neck pheasants and took his two office dogs Elwood and Ginger with us. Elwood was a stately looking setter and Ginger was shorter and had more "curly" hair. I immediately thought the better looking dog would produce better results. Ken planted pheasants in four different places in the front three fields, each about five acres. Surely the dogs would only find one of the four. As we brought the dogs out they took off like greyhounds with their noses up and down...then they slowed to a very graceful gallop as they searched the fields. The whole time I'm thinking "yeah, we're going to be here a while". Approximately three minutes later, Ginger froze at a patch of tall grass in the field. Ken said she had "found the bird". Of course I couldn't see a damn thing...thinking again "yeah right". Ken gathered his over-under 28 gauge shotgun and went over to the patch of grass and kicked it; out popped one of the big ring-necks! No way, Ginger found the bird! That's amazing! The two dogs repeated this performance twice more in twenty minutes. Let's replay this; they covered what I thought to be fifteen acres of land and found three of the four birds placed in less than an hour start to finish.



Book Recommendation: Corey Ford's Every Dog Should Have a Man, the care and feeding of dog's best friend. Henry Holt, 1952.

In case you might have missed it, in this humorous account Corey Ford takes the unique perspective of writing in first dog-person. His book is addressed to all those who have been selected by their dogs and trained by them. The short book made me laugh out loud reading it to my wife who has personally witnessed our dogs "training" me for the last fifteen years. Passages include sections on: Selecting the Man, Housebreaking and Early Training, Some Helpful Hints on Man-care, and more! The passage below is on "Feeding", page 28.

"The average house-man leads a sedentary life and is apt to eat too much. His dog must keep a sharp eye on his feeding habits and never let him forage for himself. The best plan is to sit right at the table beside him and snatch any items of food off his plate which might prove too filling, such as a juicy piece of steak or the eye of a lamb chop."

Corey Ford's English setter Cider is the book's main voice and instructor. Beautiful illustrations by the author and photographs by Dan Holland make this a must have for all who have been adopted by their Setters. Corey Ford is one of the featured gentlemen in the book George Bird Evans Introduces. Every dog owner will agree that he definitely got this one right!

Moe



"Corey Ford created a Camelot on the edge of the Dartmouth campus, a fleeting wisp of glory based on youth. Youth is fine, but it doesn't last. Like Tinkhamtown, it has been and gone, a place on a map no longer there. Camelots and Tinkhamtowns and Youth are with us only if they are in our minds – and in the pages of a book."

George Bird Evans George Bird Evans Introduces 1990

Last September I received a message from LeJay that, as a result of their conversations about George's books, led to my contacting Gary Schweitzer.

My resulting correspondence with Gary regarding a poem he had written years ago and sent along for possible use in the Letter led to my request for a little personal background. I intended to write a brief introduction to it, as his name would not be a familiar one to most of the OH family.

As soon as I received the first installment of the story that follows, I realized we had stumbled onto an almost lost member of our family, as well as a fascinating and important slice of our history and the Evans legacy. I immediately lost interest in that "brief bio", and invite you to share the full and wonderful journey that follows.

Editor

Old Hemlock Memories

Gary Schweitzer

I was born into a hunting family in the West Mifflin suburb of Pittsburgh and was fortunate enough to have a father who loved the outdoors. Several generations of my family hunted near the small town of Mt. Morris, Greene County, PA, just a mid-range rifle shot north of the West Virginia state line, a few miles north of Morgantown. Here we hunted rabbits and squirrels and pheasants and gathered nuts in the fall and wild berries in the summer. But there were few grouse in this part of Pennsylvania in those days. There were some, however, and it was here in 1963 that I lucked into my first grouse at the age of sixteen. I was carrying my dad's old Oxford Arms double gun, choked tight and too tight.

A few years later at the age of twenty, I met a man on the skeet range of my local gun club who was a dedicated grouse hunter, and although I hunted grouse but sporadically in those years, I knew that I wanted to become a grouse guy, too.

Ray and I began hunting grouse together in southwestern Pennsylvania that season of 1967, and continued to do so for many years. At first we used Ray's little part-beagle, Scooter, and she was a good flusher but not a retriever. In 1969 I bought a Brittany, Jack, who was a driving grouse finder and a reliable retriever. However, Jack was also a rock-head to whom my commands were mere suggestions. Most often he thought I ordered him to flush the grouse he pointed! So after three seasons we parted company, most reluctantly.

In 1972 Ray bought a setter, Buck, from Joe Riggs, owner of a sporting goods store in Waynesburg. Buck had some Ryman lineage, and he proved to be a great grouse dog. Ray's success with Buck inspired me to get a



setter, and in the spring of 1974 Joe Riggs put me in touch with Roy Sisler, who had a litter of puppies due in May. They were out of Roy's dog, Sassy, by Old Hemlock Briar. I visited Hunting Hills when the litter was ready for placement (I may have done so a few weeks earlier too, but memory fails). I chose a blue Belton female with a black eye patch, Hunting Hills Kimberly.

I was familiar with George Bird Evans through his articles in the *Pennsylvania Game News* and through The Upland Shooting Life, which I had bought shortly after it appeared in 1971. Then as now I was drawn to George's writings.

Throughout the summer and early fall of 1974 I worked on Kim's obedience; she responded beautifully. Several times in September I took her to grouse country for a turn through some coverts. She hunted well, flash-pointing a few times before flushing the birds. Mid-October brought the grouse season, and we were ready to go hunting. Ray and I took both dogs, and Kim learned a great deal from Buck.

Kim's first productive point came in early November in Washington County, PA. We were hunting alone along a steep sidehill when she hit scent, then stalked to a point. A dog's first grouse point is her owner's treasured memory, and I wanted a photo of this. I strode up to her, lay my old Parker 16 gauge on the leaf litter, and dropped to one knee to snap the picture. Then I was able to grab my gun, rise and walk downhill toward a patch of greenbrier where I flushed and shot the bird. What a day! Kim had 22 productive grouse points her first season, with 21 retrieves -- I was ecstatic!

Sometime during the 1974 season I sent my picture of Kim's first point to a photo lab to create an intermediate negative from the original transparency and then to make two 11" x 14" prints. I had one print framed; the other I decided to give to George, whom I had neither met nor spoken with via phone.

So in late March 1975, I decided to drive the seventy miles from my home to the Bruceton Mills area to find Old Hemlock, taking Kim along of course. After inquiring at the local Post Office, I made my way to the home place and became one of those people who "... turned up in the driveway, unannounced".

George and Kay were very gracious, but they were also working on a book so my visit was short. They were very pleased with Kim and with the photograph I gave them. And they asked me to return in several weeks. We also agreed to speak by phone and exchange letters in the interim.

I did return in April, '75, and we had a long and pleasant visit. We ran Kim and Briar in a nearby covert, moving three grouse for no points. Kim got on with Briar very well. I visited Old Hemlock several times that summer and early fall. And we hunted one of George's home coverts that October. My details of this period are a bit sketchy, as they come from memory because unfortunately parts of my journal were lost





in the several moves I've made since those days.

Sometime in late November I took George and Kay to one of my coverts in Washington County, PA. We hunted for several hours and had seven flushes. George missed a shot over Briar's point, and I also missed a bird over Kim's point. And I missed another un-pointed grouse. George was surprised that this country of low eroded hills had good grouse numbers.

Kim's second season was wonderful, with 47 productives on grouse.

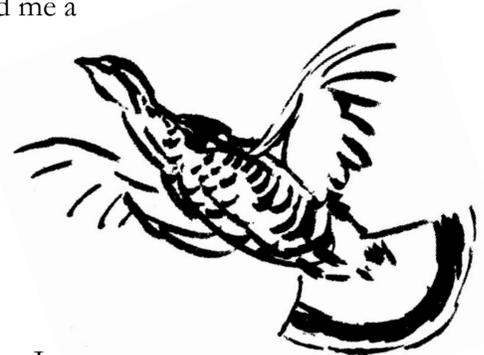
In October, 1976, George asked if I would consider spending about a week at Old Hemlock while he and Kay traveled to upstate New York to hunt grouse with, I believe, Art Currier. Though this involved commuting to my job near Pittsburgh, about eighty miles, I readily agreed. It was an honor and a pleasure to be entrusted with this charge, and I had a wonderful time!

On October 25, after the Evanses returned from New York, George and I sat out a morning rainstorm hugging the fireplace at Old Hemlock. Eventually the rain stopped, so we loaded our gear into the car and headed to a nearby abandoned farm where the dogs worked well, but we had no points. We had one wild flush and I walked into a grouse that the dogs had somehow missed. I too missed with the right barrel, but caught the bird with my left. Briar made a nice retrieve! This was my first bird of the season, and I was gratified that it came while I was in George's company. Then the rains began again, this time in earnest, so we got thoroughly soaked before reaching the car. On returning to Old Hemlock, Kay drew hot baths for us, then prepared a great dinner.

It was during this visit that George asked me if I would agree to breed Kim back to Briar. I happily replied "yes", so we decided that at Kim's next estrus we would try to mate the pair. This was to be the following February. George asked that I also change Kim's registered name to Old Hemlock Kimberly, and once again, I was happy to do so.

On November 19, I drove to Old Hemlock to meet George, then we drove west to Thomas Run near Blacksville, West Virginia where I had a few coverts that I had been hunting for several seasons. The weather was beautiful, but the birds were sparse. We moved three grouse for five flushes. I missed a good chance with both barrels and George missed a tough one. Kim had one point, but I could not get a shot at the bird. We followed Kim's grouse and got it up again. It offered me a decent chance and I hit with my first shot. Kim made a nice retrieve.

In the autumn of 1976 I was working on a degree at the University of Pittsburgh, and George was working on his first two anthologies, The Ruffed Grouse Book and The Woodcock Book. As I was near the Hillman Library, a great research institution, George asked if I would undertake the copyright research on the works of those authors to be included in the anthologies. I agreed, but knew little about copyright research. So I researched researching. Having learned the basics, I began the task. As I found the owners of the copyrights, I would pass these



along to George, and he would contact the owners for permission to use their work. In the following years, I also did the research for The Bird Dog Book and The Upland Gunner's Book. And I'm certainly proud to have been a small part of George's work.

In February of 1977 Kim came in season, so I phoned George and Kay and drove to Old Hemlock the next day. As I recall I spent a few days there so the dogs could get several couplings.

Then on April 20, Kim whelped nine pups. I was still single then and living in an apartment (at my gun club!), so Kim had her pups at my parents' home. My mother took great care of those pups, and I gave her all the help I could. Here's the information on the pups:

4:10 pm - male, OH Glade, orange Belton, placed with Vic Prislipsky, then of Roscommon, Michigan, now Arkansas. Vic was a friend of mine

4:27 - female, OH Flair, orange Belton, placed with Bob Bishop of Brampton, Ontario, Canada

4:46 - male, OH Wind, orange Belton, placed with Barry and Bonnie McMillan of Morgantown, WV

5:11 - male, OH Aspenbud, orange Belton, placed with Larry and Kathy Campeau of Racine, WI

5:31 - male, OH Purdeygun (registered as OH Windsor) blue Belton, placed with Dick Lea of Atlanta, GA

6:35 - female, OH Stardust, blue Belton, placed with Howard Bruce of New Castle, PA

7:50 - male, OH Drummer, orange Belton, placed with Dr. Mark Leadbetter of Norfolk, MA

8:10 - female, OH Partridge, blue Belton, placed with Tony Bougere of New Hartford, CT

10:54 - male, OH Dash, tri-color Belton, placed with Ken Gregware of Marblehead, MA

I believe it was in late May that George and Kay made the seventy mile drive to my parents' home in West Mifflin, PA to see the pups and to have dinner with my family.

By the time the pups arrived I had found Maggie, the girl who was to become my wife in September of 1979. We had but a short time for our honeymoon, and we spent it in the Blackwater/Canaan. Last September we celebrated our thirty-seventh wedding anniversary.

1977 was a great hunting year for Kim and me. The highlight was the week a friend and I spent in the Blackwater/Canaan. There were plenty of woodcock and quite a few grouse. George and Kay were there also, staying at the Knight's Apartments. So we got to spend several evenings with them.

George asked me to meet Roger Brown and Kim Heller and show them some spots where they could find birds, as they were new to the Blackwater/Canaan.

Kim had 32 points on woodcock that week, but, although there were plenty of grouse, she only had six points. For the entire '77-'78 season she had twenty-nine points on grouse.

I have no journal entries for most of the next several seasons, alas. I made the mistake of making some of my entries in a spiral-bound note book, and some of them on single sheets as George did. Somehow many of the sheets were lost in one of my four moves as I mentioned earlier. I did record Kim's points on a calendar, however so I have those.

Kim and I continued hunting grouse through the 1984 season. Then on June 10, 1985 Kim died of liver failure. She was eleven. One of the saddest days of my life! Kim's last grouse point, number 247, came in late December of '84 at the head of Marlowe Run just south of interstate 70 near the Dallas Pike in the northern panhandle of West Virginia.

Also in late 1984 the plant where I worked closed, and I found myself unemployed. Maggie was a teacher, and although she continued with her job, declining enrollment meant that it was likely she would be laid off in the next few years. These were especially difficult times for us, but I was able to find several part-time jobs to help keep us going. I hunted just a few days that fall of '85 as my heart was not in it. And my grouse coverts seemed bare and unfriendly places.

In 1988 Maggie and I relocated to south-central Pennsylvania for work, and one year later we moved into a new home in Hagerstown, Maryland, just south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

During this time I kept in touch with George and Kay by phone and letter, buying each new book as it became available. But we gradually lost touch. Grouse hunting was poor in my area, so it became normal for me to hunt only two or three times per year. In hindsight I should have gotten another Old Hemlock puppy soon after Kim's death, but our lives were in a state of flux, and the pain of losing Kim was far greater than I would have thought. It saddens me to say that I did not learn of George's death until several years after he passed. Nor did I learn of Kay's passing for several years. I am sorry that I did not make a better effort to stay in touch. I let life's demands get in the way of maintaining my relationship with the Evanses, and I regret it deeply!

As I mentioned, my earliest recollection of George Bird Evans was through his stories in the pages of *The Pennsylvania Game News*, and I was fascinated by these pieces and by George's writing style. When I read The Upland Shooting Life, I was moved by just what a wonderful writer George was, and I could feel his love for Kay, for the birds, for his dogs, and for his rugged Allegheny Mountains in every line he wrote. He was an admirable man who lived an enviable life with Kay and those glorious setters! He was also a man who had the rare ability to enrich the lives of all who knew him and read his work. I will remember George in the fall of the leaf and the frost on the hill, in the trickle of the rill and the rasp of the briar, in the glory of a point and the beat of wings. And in the pages of shelf-worn books.

"It was another eon, a longago faraway place where sunshine came through dappled. Those days in my gun diary are like the chaff in the corners of my game pocket mixed with peacocked back feathers conjuring old coverts. I lived the dream and the grouse were there, Heaven each time Indian Summer came, Paradise Lost each time it went.

George Bird Evans Grouse on the Mountain 1994

Trespassing Tales

Mike Krol

What follows here are the true confessions of what once was a flagrant trespasser, and his subsequent redemption. No names have been changed to protect the innocent, for in this case there are no innocent parties, only guilty (moi).

Let me lay it right out there: back in my early days I had no qualms whatsoever about trespassing for birds. Deer were another subject completely, you didn't want to mess with a posted sign when it came to deer hunting. Deer in my neck of the woods are viewed as sacred animals and the exclusive property of the landowner, and said landowners can be ruthless in protecting what they feel has been given to them by God. So no, you do not want to be trespassing for deer, ever.

Birds, on the other hand used to be viewed as simply incidental species. Many landowners would grant permission for grouse and woodcock, game they simply didn't care much about. Back in the 80's I was seldom refused, and some of those properties I hunt to this very day. I always made it a point to give the

landowner a token of thanks for the privilege of hunting: a gift card to a favorite restaurant or sporting goods store, a bottle of their favorite beverage, a magazine subscription, etc. Such a simple gesture goes a long way in cementing landowner relationships, and serves as some insurance in the event the owner one day decides that they have changed their mind about granting permission.

So why, you may ask, why did I trespass? A few reasons:

The property was not posted.

The property, although posted, provided ingress and egress through other property that I had permission to hunt (this was always a prerequisite to any trespassing activity).

The property was posted, but by landowners who lived many miles away.

The property had such magnificent bird cover that God the Father himself would risk getting caught simply to enjoy its riches.



Allow me to expand on each of these...

The first, unposted property, is pretty simple and one could argue that it really doesn't represent trespassing. Back when I started chasing birds in the late 70's there were vast amounts of unposted property in my southern New York covers. I took George and Kay to a number of these when they hunted with me in 1980 and 1986, and we chatted a bit about trespassing. George freely confessed to stretching things in this area when conditions dictated, so I felt some sense of relief in knowing the man I held in such high esteem had morals akin to mine when it came to bird covers.



In the second example, property was posted but provided legal access in one way, shape, or form. This was always table stakes on any trespassing endeavor. You had to plan for the eventuality that you would get caught, and have your explanation readily available, i.e. "Gee, I'm sorry, I thought this was Joe Smith's land". This would always grant you one get out of jail free card, but from that point forward that land would be off limits forever. See, even as blatant a trespasser as I had rules of engagement that I followed. There was one time that I broke that rule, in which the response to my feeble offering of "I thought this was Joe's land" was met with "You know goddamn well it isn't 'cause that's the same excuse you gave me last year!" Thoroughly busted, I apologized and promptly exited, never to return. A lovely woodcock cover that still

tempts me. A hard lesson on following one's own rules!

In example three we have property posted by distant landowners. These signs could almost always be ignored as long as the property met the ingress/egress criteria and was hunted mid-week. I might add that nearly all trespassing occurred during non-weekend times. I used to dread the weekends because my coverts were seemingly halved. A few properties were posted by folks from out of state. Are you kidding me? If ever there was a green light for trespassing that was it! I was never, ever busted by non-resident posters. I

did, however, almost make a huge blunder: a favorite cover that for years was not posted suddenly had fresh posted signs up one autumn. In my initial drive by, I could see the address at the bottom ended in ME. It was the weekend, so I smiled and made plans to return the following

week; to think someone from Maine would keep me out was ludicrous. Back mid-week, a closer look at the signs revealed the print at the bottom said BELIEVE ME. Now that, my friend, is not a property to mess with.

In the fourth example, I will freely admit there were only a few of these. When embarking on the trespassing path, there is one fundamental decision one must make: do I ask permission, or do I not? If you opt for asking, you must accept the answer whether you like it or not. If the answer is no, that property is off limits forever and there will be no get out of jail free cards forthcoming. On the other hand, if you don't ask and follow the ingress/egress/mid-week rules, there is a chance you can hunt this property for

as long as you like. And there were a small handful that I hunted for more than two decades without incident.

Such was the manner in which I lived my upland life in the past. Sadly those days are long gone, for the following reasons (listed in the order of their importance):

1. As I have become older, I no longer have the stomach for any sort of confrontation, even the one that results in a get out of jail free card.
2. Landowners within the past ten years or so have changed dramatically. It isn't the old farmer who owns a big chunk of land anymore; that land has been broken up into smaller parcels that have been sold or leased to other hunters. The prevailing attitude is "this is mine and ALL mine". You won't get permission to hunt, and you sure as heck don't even want to think about trespassing.
3. Trail cameras are everywhere these days; you can get busted without even knowing it happened. I had one case a couple of years ago in which I was

hunting on property where I had permission to do so for many years. The landowner had sold off a big portion of his land, but the new landowner hadn't put up new posters. I had walked in front of the same trail cameras the prior two seasons, thinking nothing of it. I was just starting my hunt when the new owner showed up, threw me off, and told me he had been looking for me for two years! I of course apologized, and it wasn't like I was sneaking onto the land. I parked on the main road, was dressed in blaze orange, and the dang beeper collars were sounding off loudly. But trail cameras and ATV's (folks can get to you real quick when they want to!) have changed my ways.

They say that confession is good for the soul, so there you have it. I am a reformed trespasser. Well, maybe a recovering trespasser is a better way to put it. Were I to be presented with a pristine piece cover into which I had gained ingress, I might just be tempted to hope there was one more get out of jail free card in the deck!



“The years can do good and bad for the shooting man. They can remove people from the land, rotting empty houses and turning old fields backward to regrowth that, during periods of transition, is a perfect setting for grouse and woodcock. “Progress” doesn’t like this happening to good saleable acres, but in New England and the Alleghenies with their sleepy version of Time, thousands of square miles remain in this suspended state, removed from man and his bright ideas.”

George Bird Evans Living with Gun Dogs 1992

What Would George and Kay Have Said?

Jim Recktenwald

I can imagine Kay stroking Old Hemlock Thatcher's silky coat and talking softly to her just as she did during the first Reunion when she greeted OH Argyle. I am still trying to find the picture of her sitting on my SUV's tailgate, talking to Argyle. George would have asked me if I worked Thatcher on pigeons during the summer and I would have respectfully acknowledged I did. When talking to George I always felt I was talking to a man who was head taller than I instead of head shorter. I would tell him that Thatcher has become a retrieving phenomenon in our neighborhood, as people drive by in the morning watching her tackle the newspaper. It is always fun

watching her race to the paper, give it a couple of death bites, and on those days we have ice she slides by it. George would quiz me on how much land I had to work her, how many birds she had seen, and how she handled them. I would tell them that she had some good teachers: Bécasse her grandmother, Patches McNab her mother, Kodiak her aunt, and Sky her cousin.

I would tell them that Minnesota has had a record year for rain and most of our coverts had an excessive amount of water, leaves, and ticks, in early September. Minnesota grouse season starts the week before woodcock season opens, so as George might expect,

we saw a record number of woodcock on the opening of grouse season. We started the season on state land near Bill Laron's farm. This year Bill had numerous farm projects that interfered with his hunting. However, they didn't hamper his hospitality. Every time I stopped by I was greeted with a warm smile and left with a bag of apples or a winter squash that I cherished. The state land near his farm has some great aspen that provides grouse and woodcock the protection they need from avian predators. There is a small lake created by beavers, and a stream that flows from it throughout the year. Yellow leaves were starting to appear on the trees, but the understory was extremely thick. We moved a dozen grouse and an equal number of woodcock. Thatcher enjoyed chasing the grouse and she finally pointed a woodcock that needed to be chased once it flushed. As we



approached the edge of a clearing all three dogs were birdy and Patches, backed by Thatcher, stopped for a split second and a grouse exploded quartering across the clearing. The 28 gauge seemed to move instinctively in front of the grouse which fell into a thicket. At the sound of the gun all three dogs were charged up, and finally Patches McNab found the bird with Thatcher at her side. This is when George would have instructed me to run the puppy alone, but with warm humid air I didn't feel it was safe to leave any of the dogs in the car. George would tell me how much he loved his 28 gauge and would ask if I had taken mine with me to Hunting Hills.

A week later we hunted about six hundred acres along the St Croix River which has numerous ponds and swamps. I always come back from this covert with wet socks and a countless number of ticks. The morning was a warm sixty degrees with a slight breeze from the south. I wanted to finish up before the temperature approached seventy, so we ran all three dogs (grandmother, mother and Thatcher). We moved numerous grouse and no woodcock, but Thatcher got to bump at least a few grouse before she settled down. As we turned to go back to the car we had a nice breeze in our faces. Thatcher and Patches cast about 60 to 75 yards away from us in some thick pine clumps that are separated by potholes filed with water. Both of the dogs went on point and would then move ten yards and point again, repeating this ritual as they moved towards Bécasse and me. Bécasse approached the edge of this cover and pointed, moved five yards and pointed once more. A grouse shot out from the forest floor, going up the side of a hill and passed behind green leaves. At that moment I pulled the trigger and thought I saw a shadow of something falling. At the sound of the gun both

Thatcher and McNab appeared from the other side of the hill and Thatcher plunged into a thorny depression and came up with the grouse. She had her first grouse retrieve. I could hear George talk about how there was no substitute for having a young dog engage wild birds, and Kay asking if I had captured it on a camera.

Going into October we finally started seeing woodcock flight birds and Thatcher was pointing and backing the little birds consistently. I have one cover that has a cathedral of trees along the dirt lane to our parking spot. It has the most beautiful birch and aspen forest with beautiful yellow leaves. The birch leaves shimmer and make a rustling sound when a breeze blows through them. On one of our visits we hit the beginning of the flight birds and Thatcher had her first point and retrieve of a woodcock, but she also had plucked one woodcock out of the air. I could hear Kay and George saying "oh dear", but she was getting some individual hunting time. Mid October was the start of pheasant season, but we had record hot dry weather in early October. We had a light rain on Monday following opening weekend and Tuesday



morning was cool, so I called two friends who had recently retired from United Health Care and Boeing. Our plan was to hit a few waterfowl production areas with the hope of seeing a few pheasants. It would be Thatcher's introduction to 12 gauges and my 16 gauge, and she passed with flying colors. With three setters hitting the field at once, I was unsure what to expect. All stayed within eyesight: Bécasse at age 10 ½ was within 25 yards, Patches McNab was 50 plus yards, and Thatcher, a year old at the time, quartered across the field at 70 to 80 yards. The first bird Patches pointed and retrieved. The next was all Thatcher. As we came up over a small hill, Patches was pointing in one direction, Bécasse was backing but Thatcher was pointing in a different direction between them. I was thinking that Thatcher was pointing old scent. As I passed Bécasse and approached Thatcher a pheasant exploded under her nose. One blast from the 16 gauge and Thatcher was on top of the dead bird, and with a little coaching she brought it to me. I could see George and Kay smile. We moved three more roosters in the next ninety minutes and we bagged two of them. The dogs also found a skunk and it was a very long ride home. Fortunately it was a warm day and my friends and I rolled down the windows. We called Barb and she got the ingredients for the remedy. I knew we were ready for our annual trip to the Paul Nelson Farm in Gettysburg, South Dakota even though we were a little fragrant.

The Paul Nelson Farm is Disneyland for pheasant hunters. We hunt thousands of acres, and over two days the dogs and I will see more pheasants than we will see in a lifetime in Minnesota. It was Thatcher's introduction to corn and milo fields along with grasslands that stretched for a half mile. Fortunately, those fields were only a hundred yards wide. The three setters were the only pointing dogs on the property, so I had to watch their range and make sure they were not bumping birds while sharing the fields with labs. Anytime there was a natural grass field next to planted grain or a tree line we ran all three of them. Watching three setters quarter a field in three different directions is a thing of beauty. They backed each other and retrieved the birds I shot. Thatcher also learned that she can't catch a jack rabbit, but

she gave it a try for a quarter mile. She didn't try it again. I think this would have brought a smile to George and Kay's faces, seeing a little dog try to catch a jack rabbit with a half dozen hunters laughing.

Over the next two months I ran her by herself and with the older dogs. Thatcher was pointing grouse but I was not getting a clean shot at one. It was on my next to the last grouse hunt that I ran her alone in some big country along the Kettle River. I can walk the Soo line trail which is elevated and watch her quarter from 100 yards on one side to 100 yards on the other side. I wanted her to sleep that night. We were fortunate that we had a few inches of fresh snow and the temperature rose gradually above freezing which made for improved scenting. During the first hour, we had several birds flush wild, but at least Thatcher was scenting them. She was quartering beautifully but getting tired. As we returned to the SUV she darted down a narrow trail. The trail had a wall of ten year old aspen on the south side and seed bearing bushes on the north side. Thatcher pointed, but her tail was flagging. The wind was at her back so scenting was difficult. She pointed and then went to the opposite side and stopped, and I assumed it was old scent. At that moment, a grouse exploded in a classic low house skeet shot on the last station. The gray phase grouse dropped in some deep snow between the trunks of two downed oaks. After a frantic search, Thatcher found



the bird. However, we now had a little different problem as she didn't want to release her prize. It will give us something to improve upon during the months leading up to the Reunion, and I could hear George telling me to stay calm, get a good check cord, and work little Thatcher at my local club.

The last couple of hunts this year were hampered by high winds, deep snow, and very cold temperatures. The dogs were not picking up scent even when the birds were visible to us. One pheasant I hit was hidden in the snow. We found it when I spotted the tail

sticking out of the snow. George would tell me there is a time to put the guns up and enjoy the warmth of the fire. I would agree with him and suggest we get a cocktail. At this point I would tell George and Kay about how Barb prepared our woodcock pate and then the grouse for dinner with butternut squash or a soup made with Hubbard squash, and of course our favorite Pinot Noir. As we talked all three dogs would curl up together and go to sleep. I do miss talking to George and especially Kay, that dear sweet lady who talked to me just like I was her son.



END OF DAY

“Looking out my studio window at the bare winter bones of the scarlet maple across the north clearing and remembering its flame in October, I understand the meaning of experience.”

George Bird Evans Grouse along the Tramroad 1986

He Left a Legacy

LeJay Graffious

“Over the years, there have been people who left lasting impacts on the hunting, shooting, bird dog, and writing world. Some had special niches of one category or another, but few had a following in multiple disciplines. George Bird Evans was one of those who continue to have following in all these categories.”

This was Frank Jezioro’s opening in the December 2016 issue of *Pointing Dog Journal* magazine. He went on to describe the Old Hemlock family get-together at Hunting Hills. My only regret was that he failed to mention the role of Bob Rose in planning the inaugural event in 1999. This article was one of three published in major magazines in 2016. Last spring, *PDJ* also reprinted an article of George’s on woodcock hunting. *WV Living* magazine gave us five pages with many photographs taken at Old Hemlock. We also have an article the February 2017 edition of the state’s *Wonderful West Virginia* magazine.

Jezioro mentions “special niches” referring to hunting, but The Old Hemlock Foundation represents a variety of interests related to the legacy of George and Kay. As a result of my work with West Virginia University Public History Professor Melissa Bingmann, we have stepped away from the traditional museum house concept toward the idea of a study house. We offer a wide variety of study opportunities for our local and national communities. Old Hemlock is a multi-faceted gem nestled in Appalachia; we have George and Kay’s writings, our setters, and the Evans’ home with

its artifacts and art available for study and enjoyment. More recent developments have highlighted the land that George and Kay preserved, including hiking and nature study, understanding early American life, old and new home construction techniques, modern energy

efficiency, and living off the grid, as George and Kay did for ten years.

Additionally, we make philanthropic donations to the Preston County Humane Society, and for scholarship and education.

The study house concept centers on providing opportunities for young folks from elementary through college to visit Old

Hemlock and learn about George and Kay and their legacy. During the summer of 2016, we hosted a “Curious Kids in Science” and “Curious Kids in History” series. For three consecutive Tuesdays in July, volunteer instructors taught three classes each day on nature or geology. Kids went on nature walks, did soil profiles, worked with environmental scientists to monitor stream quality, and assisted with bird banding. On Thursdays, volunteers provided three classes on history. The five to ten year old students participated in a variety of activities, including tinsmithing, dancing the reel, learning what the area was like in 1782 from the president of the local historical society, and matching tools and equipment of the nineteenth century to items they know today. They even had the opportunity to



meet and talk to General “Stonewall” Jackson, as portrayed by Doug Riley. There, they learned that the famous general was Kay’s grandmother’s cousin!

Other study house activities in 2016 included a dendrochronology project, conducted by a West Virginia University PhD student, to date the house timbers and precisely calculate when Old Hemlock was built. While at Old Hemlock, she taught the techniques to dendroarchaeology students from the WVU School of Geography. We also have a relationship with the West Virginia University School of History where our AmeriCorps member receives intern credit in public history. Having a graduate student working at Old Hemlock half-time is valuable in several ways. The student can apply her course work to projects here, and working with AmeriCorps gives us state and national recognition. It adds projects that I do not have time or expertise to do and brings a young perspective to the Foundation.

We also work with the WVU Reed College of Media. Students in Public Relations and Communications 315, the Strategic Communications Service Learning Course, do all their required class projects about Old Hemlock, which include creating a press release, radio and TV announcements, and brochures to help advertise our programs. This gives students an opportunity to apply their academic skills in a practical situation and learn how to interact with a client to produce media products. I am also on the advisory board for the WVU Center of Service and Learning. This school provides outlets for students to volunteer in the community. Last year The Old Hemlock Foundation hosted 122 volunteers who logged 619.5 hours of work at Old Hemlock. Samples of their work include scanning documents and sketches for archiving, preparing sketches in Photoshop for the

newsletter, trail maintenance, grounds work, invasive species abatement, and packing note cards into boxes. Also, a WVU Leadership class planned a movie premiere night to present the Old Hemlock movie for the community, and a second class planned a reading night where excerpts of the writings of George Bird Evans were shared with the public.

Our video, “Old Hemlock Setters: The Legacy of George Bird Evans” was finally completed in 2016. This was a labor of love and collaboration for Roger

Brown, Hall Carter, Craig Kulchak and me. This was my first endeavor into this type of project and proved to be quite a learning experience. I am proud of the final product. I am sure if I were to start it today, it would be a different production.

In 2016 the Old Hemlock Foundation developed its own YouTube Channel. Ian Gray, our previous AmeriCorps member, did a great job setting this up and posting edited oral histories. In

fact, he was accepted to present his work about using the digital scene to disseminate history at the National Conference on Public History in Indianapolis in April. You can see his efforts by visiting www.oldhemlock.org/news/oral-histories, and clicking on our link to the YouTube Channel.

George and Kay were dedicated to leading healthy lives, and promoted good health for West Virginia by setting up medical scholarships to be distributed by the WVU Foundation. Medical School doctors select eligible scholars, with preference given to the local students who are planning on serving in West Virginia. This year, we awarded a scholarship to Vanessa Sypolt of Kingwood, WV. When she completes her studies, Vanessa hopes to practice family medicine within the local region. To date we have given seven scholarships and all have been to Preston County residents.





In December 2016, we established a scholarship through the WVU English Department for an upper classman. It requires that the winner of the scholarship produce a work of writing related to or about the work of George Bird Evans and his legacy as a writer, hunter, and/or artist. We are in the process of receiving applications as of this writing to be awarded the first week of March 2017.

Four Old Hemlock Foundation scholarships were distributed to undergraduates by the Bruceton High School Alumni Association in July 2017. Scholarships were awarded to two co-eds in the nursing program. This is the third year the Foundation has awarded these scholarships, and we do so on the basis of academic performance and service to the community. A young man received a second scholarship from us to study geographic information systems in the geography school and a fourth grant was given to a student entering Fairmont State University who is the first person in her family to go to college.

When the lawyers and the Evanses set up the non-profit status, one of the mission statements was “to help further educate the public by understanding and studying various ecological systems and natural resources through the preservation of the same.” Due to my interest in ornithology and the Evans’ efforts to preserve 232 acres in the Appalachian Mountains which

is critical to the survival of many neo-tropical migrants, I was able to apply, through the United States Geological Survey and The Institute for Bird Population in Point Reyes Station, CA to establish a bird banding site for the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship program. The name of our station is Old Hemlock Bird Observatory. Volunteers help me use a standardized constant effort protocol with a system of fine mesh nets to capture birds during the summer nesting season. I band the birds and collect information on their age, sex, body condition, and reproductive status. Captured birds are given a lightweight numbered aluminum leg band and released unharmed. Subsequent recapture data provide information on survival, reproductive rates, and sometimes movement patterns. The birds of interest to the scientific community that I banded at Old Hemlock are Wood Thrushes, Scarlet Tanagers, Ovenbirds, and Hooded Warblers. These target birds represent 65% of the species tagged at our OHBO. Old Hemlock is an island of diminishing habitat for these birds, and the continuing project will monitor the population and survivorship of these neo-tropical migrants.

We are also in the process of redesigning our webpage, oldhemlock.org. This has been another learning curve for me. Although I have had course work in HyperText Markup Language and Adobe Dreamweaver CS4 to design web sites, the new formats



1,030 National Register listings in West Virginia. We were one of 50 who were honored for our work by the WV Division of Culture and History in October in Charleston. According to Susan M. Pierce, deputy state historic preservation officer, “Each is important to telling the stories of our history and heritage. We chose those listings which represent the varied themes of our state’s rich past.” I was proud to cross the stage to accept the award and share the story of Old Hemlock with an auditorium full of folks.

on desktops, laptops, notebooks, and smart-phones all have different parameters to conform to the various screens. After a lot of research I decided on using a public domain program called *Word Press* to maintain our web presence. We contracted a graphic artist, Dolton Richards, who I met when he volunteered his services as a senior at WVU. He now lives in central WV with his young family trying to start his own online graphics arts business. He designed our “Be Worthy of Your Game” posters. Dolton set up the structure and gave his artist’s eye to its design. Maureen Lavelle and I have been updating the content. We always welcome ideas from the Old Hemlock family to make the webpage valuable to you and the public.

We continue our web presence to promote the Old Hemlock Foundation. In 2016 our webpage averaged 203 visits per day for 31061 visits. I am able to track use, and we get a spike in hits beginning in August and growing through October. The Old Hemlock Foundation Facebook page continues to grow with 1101 fans. Of these 57% are men. We have fans in 21 countries who speak 15 languages. In the last 28 days we were viewed by nearly 14000 different computer IP addresses. AmeriCorps member Maureen Lavelle has raised the bar with her weekly creations pairing photos from the archives with quotes from George’s writings.

Our work at the Old Hemlock Foundation was recognized by the state in 2016. There are more than

Helen Ann also tracks the number of visitors to Old Hemlock annually. In 2016 we greeted 721 people and 64 dogs. Visitors come to experience any of the characteristics that represent the Old Hemlock Foundation, including those who hike our trails for nature or to find the two Geo-cache locations. Our sites are registered on www.geocaching.com. As always we welcome members of the Old Hemlock Family to come to stay at Old Hemlock and experience the life and word of the Evanses. We also get visits from folks who are just learning of George’s writings. I have made friends with many of these including wildlife biologists from Michigan and a retired CIA agent who spent much of his career in the Middle East. I thank George and Kay daily for giving this rural kid from central Pennsylvania a “window on the world” that I would have never had a chance to view without them.

Frank Jezioro’s article in *Pointing Dog Journal* is entitled, “He left a Legacy of Dogs. George Bird Evans’ following continues today, and is getting stronger.” Our Old Hemlock Setters are but one facet of the Legacy. As you can see from this report, the work of the Foundation has many more and lasting effects from the lives of George and Kay. They are touching the lives of many through a variety of disciplines. Our mission is to preserve and promote the legacy of George and Kay. With your assistance, I believe we are making strides toward that goal.

This poem, written years ago and shared with George and Kay, was originally published in the fall 1988 issue of Gray's Sporting Journal.
Editor

The Soundless Shot

Gary M. Schweitzer

Like chill and rare October air,
Like browning windfalls, cider-sweet,
My fancies drift to uplands where
My setter hunts through scenes replete

With red'ning swales and ridges crowned
In gold, with ancient hemlock rills
And Autumn grouse that strut and sound
Haunting drumbeats in secret hills.

With wings and russet fans flared wide
Like fleur-de-lis in regal flight
Birds knife the wind in flashing glide-
Quicksilver wraiths through scattered light.

Near foxgrapes swirled with mists of blue,
In sodden coves where springs seep cold,
The setter breathes for essence true,
By scented wisps her bird to hold.

A vision sleek in ermine coat
With streaming tail and questing nose,
She lilts to the air of her bell's thin note;
From coverts dark her presence glows.

She braves rasping canes with a surge,
Then steals to a point, head cocked,
Tensed by the spring of instinctive urge,
Drawn to a check like a tumbler locked.

Around her bird the bramble weaves
A mantle green of saw-toothed lace;
The writhing stems and withered leaves
To all but dog betray no trace.

Alone before the pressing night,
Edged lightly in gilt by the raking sun,
With quarry fixed and huddled tight,
She waits for wing and flash of gun.

Our days distill to this single rise
Amid spicewood seared by killing frost;
Satin steel speeds toward straining eyes-
So swift the soundless shot is lost.

Like earth-toned leaves and feathers blown
By empty winds she'll never know,
My setter's grouse have flushed and flown
These timeless hollows long ago.



Editor's Note

Finding ourselves on the eve of our nineteenth Old Hemlock Reunion, it seems appropriate to take a step back to consider how fortunate we have been to have had each of them at Hunting Hills. We have watched their operation grow through the years, and they have watched and often guided us to do the same. The Sisler family would be an unusual asset in any environment, but in their chosen one they truly set the standard. Our association is a long and valued one. The Reunion is a high point for all who attend, a fitting bow to the end of another fine hunting year.

And it will provide a good look forward to the prospects of another, with the arrival of puppies last November at the Hislop and Killay households! Chances are good that as many as seven from the Killay litter, from their OH Miss Kathryn by our October John, will be at the Reunion. Ras Sisler will hopefully do his introduction to birds class for them. Perfect timing, as they will be just four months old. This is a very important event in their lives, and those who have seen Ras do this know it is also quite a show.

I repeat my appeal for more new bylines for the Letter. Many of you who are perfectly capable of producing an article or story are not doing it. Writing is not at all difficult in the computer age, but sitting down and getting started sometimes is. There's only one solution for that. If you have a good story to tell (you do), or you ever think "I could do that" (you can), then this is a good time to get off the dime and begin. You have until September, after all.

Permanent and personal thanks to those who do support the Old Hemlock Letter, and do it faithfully and well. You know who they are; their names head the articles and poems. The only one missing from that list is Jim Jones, whose very generous behind the scenes support helps us do more with the Letter than we otherwise could.

The Old Hemlock family is saddened by the loss of Dr. Paul Hermann. I spent time with him on only a couple of occasions, but enough to understand the forever lost opportunity to know him better. He was a man of many talents, as anyone who has seen the lovely Bogdan style fly reels he made over the years can appreciate.

Bruce Buckley

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