



# Old Hemlock *Letter*

Volume XVIII Issue 2

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

Fall 2017



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



## Apollo says “The Water is Lovely”

Moe Lee

As soon as LeJay sent out the e-mail to sign up for fields for the Old Hemlock Reunion, I was on it; at work no less. We wanted to go early in the morning, and back to back, to make sure we got both boys run twice for the weekend. I thought it was luck that I found a field wide open virtually all day! I thought, “Ah ha! I’ve got ‘em, I got in early!” But there’s always a reason some fields are wide open and some are packed full. Never underestimate the wisdom of the experienced. Well, WE didn’t find out until we got there.

Field D, how come no one told us?

We drove to the bottom of the field, and I stared up to the top...of Mt Fuji! Indeed a Louisiana boy like myself had not yet seen elevations like this.

There were two large ponds at the bottom of Field D. Our guide, Todd, says “The birds are up there”. At the top. Okay no problem; but with fresh snow on the ground, Christy and the kids and Jeff and Kendra Kauffman all in tow, yes it was a problem. But not for Apollo. Did I mention it was about 25 degrees?

Our puppy is motivated.

Apollo was here yesterday, he already knew where the birds were, and at least one was at the summit of Mt Fuji. Why not get that one done first? So, blazing up the hill he went, circling around twice. I’m on the whistle and the beeper collar to no avail. Yes, he would show us his backside a few times and tease us; we were hoping he’d point the bird at the base of the hill first so we could go in order, like yesterday, and climb gently... just as planned. Did I mention the two big ponds?

Back up the hill Apollo zooms. In a few seconds we see a chukar flying. It’s flying at least fifty yards high in the sky, toward the pond. Apollo follows in full flight—and stops at the base of the hill where we are, watching the bird the whole time.

By now the bird is well on its way across the pond to the trees on the other side. He’s intensely staring at the bird in flight. As soon as the bird touched down it was as if the bird had ignited a rocket inside of Apollo. MARK! Ignition... Houston, we have lift-off!

Did I mention it was about 25 degrees?

Apollo hits the water, spread-eagle, at terminal velocity! At that very moment, Kendra asked Christy “Can he swim?!” No one knows, not even Apollo, but why let that stop ya ... He starts swimming to the other side, realizes he lacks a Labrador pedigree and heads directly for the exit stage right and shakes himself off, twice. Now I’m thinking, we’re calling it a day and Apollo will be much too cold to continue.

No.

He gets back on the bird across the pond...in the woods...POINT. So, I carry myself, still in shock and disbelief, down one hill and up through the woods to another. The bird is in the thick woods, I flush it out toward the pond again. I put the bird down for Apollo, who is very proud of himself. Apollo continued to hunt for the remaining hour and a half at full speed, up and down Mt Fuji, as if nothing has happened. He even found a scratch bird deeper in the woods for us.

And as if he were at the finest country club with a monogram robe on and towel around his neck, he greets brace mate Dubbs, still in the back of our truck, and says “You should really try the water today, it’s Lovely!”

We will be back next year, on Field D!



---

*“It is the Glorious Twenty-Fifth and the Woodcock Moon was gold last night without a cloud. Today there is sunshine and sherry smell on damp air so still I can hear each yellow aspen leaf fall.”*

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

# Walking Through the Pages of Time

LeJay Graffious

*Fishing notes 1933.*  
*April 15 - Opening day! Overcast and sprinkled and at last rained. Fished Braddock. Had new creel and refinished rods. Kay caught the first trout but it was too small to keep.*



1933



1949



1955



**EVERYTHING RIGHT**

GBE's last journal grouse sketched on Jan. 13, 1995

These five sentences are the first words in over 8000 hand-written, illustrated pages to become George Bird Evans's Shooting Notes. His entries began as fishing journals, but over the years focused exclusively on his upland bird hunts. These recorded experiences served as the source of numerous magazine articles and books. His journal sketches became the illustrations to accent his writings. Kay would take the journal pages to the local bank and photocopy them. George would then trim and mock up the folios. We still have the layout for the end papers of George's book The Upland Shooting Life in our archives.

I became fascinated by his sketches upon my first introduction. His use of line produced life and movement which reminded me of Asian calligraphy. As I studied his journals, it became evident his form evolved during the first ten years of journaling. I was surprised that his early entries contained few setters. In fact, 1933 only had one setter sketch. He did include drawings of 18 grouse, 6 woodcock, 1 bobwhite, 1 mallard, 7 trout, 2 flowers, 4 vistas, and 3 of Kay. Whereas in 1994-97 he included only 1 grouse and 3 setter sketches. I would like to share how his setters and grouse drawings evolved through the years.



Only setter in the first year



1949



1955



GBE's last journal sketch—Manton on Feb. 22, 1996

Below are the last words he entered in the journal, on February 8, 1998 at the age of ninety-one.

*It was nearly dark when we reached the station wagon.  
 Glory be! grouse! Next year?*

*“It was another eon, a long ago 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

---

## The Old Hemlock Family

Jim Recktenwald

Over the past twenty five years I have hunted with my Old Hemlock setters from Quebec to southern Georgia, from coastal South Carolina to the bad lands of South Dakota, and most states in between. We have enjoyed the hospitality of the Evanses, the Larsons, the Hislops, the Browns, the Kauffmans, and the Bowmans, at their homes or cabins and walked through swamps, mountains, the high plains, and wheat fields chasing quail, grouse, woodcock, and pheasants.

I could have had an Elhew pointer from Bob Wehle, but I chose the romantic notion of owning an Old Hemlock setter from George and Kay. Kay became the voice of comfort and encouragement after my mother succumbed to Alzheimer's. She was especially supportive when I would call her from the Mayo Clinic and she would tell me stories from when her father moved their family from Virginia to Rochester, Minnesota for a chance to practice with the Mayo brothers. We have been given helping hands by our fellow OH family members, from

sharing their favorite covert, taking care of a dog while I traveled on business, or giving us a place to stay while we waited to close on our new home in Cashiers, North Carolina. There will always be a room in our home for the Old Hemlock family.

We are an eclectic group of men and women who work with their hands in the operating room, or create wonders from wood, or bring machinery and engines back to life. We have gone through trade apprenticeships or graduate programs, live on farms and in cities. We share a common love of the dogs and a respect for our fellow man and the birds we hunt. Regardless of the background, I am a richer man today because of my Old Hemlock family and the relationships we have built together. Barb and I consider ourselves fortunate to be part of the family and hope we can be good stewards of the tradition that was handed down to us.

We hope to see more new faces at this year's Old Hemlock Reunion.



# A Different Kind of Double

Bob Rose

Much to the dismay of Fionn the bird dog, my wife Susan and I packed our bags and on August 17 of this year headed to the eastern lowveld of Zimbabwe for a ten day hunt that included on the menu Cape buffalo, Cape eland, and blue wildebeest. This would be our second hunting trip to Africa, the first was in 2012, a successful trip to the Zambezi Valley in northern Zimbabwe.

The double in question is a George Gibbs side by side double rifle, built in 1905 and chambered for the .450 Nitro Express. Built on the famous Webley Screw Grip action, it is a box lock sporting 28 inch barrels. The long barrels of this rifle, compared to the customary 24 to 25 inch barrels of later large bores, are a last vestige of black powder days yet it balances and swings like a shotgun, and at ten and a half pounds it is a joy to carry and shoot.

The Gibbs had accompanied me on my previous trip to Africa, and after many days of carrying and successful shooting it had become an old friend; it was to now be my primary weapon for the buffalo and wildebeest.

A British double rifle, like a British shotgun, should fit properly. Length of pull, cast, and drop, are familiar words to the shotgunner and are just as important to the shooter of a double rifle. You want the gun to come up quickly and point naturally in case something big and angry and close decides to come your way.

Shooting with a double rifle with open express sights is not as precise as with a modern scoped sporting rifle. It requires the hunter to close the distance with the intended quarry, asking as much of their skill in the stalk as of their shooting ability, making for a more exciting and rewarding hunt.

Hunting methods in today's Africa have not changed much in the last sixty-five years. A hunting party usually consists of a professional hunter (PH), a client, one or more trackers, perhaps an observer, and in Zimbabwe an armed government game scout who is there to make sure no harm befalls the group and

that the game laws are followed. This group will more than likely load into a Toyota Land Cruiser truck with a special rack built onto the bed, with high seats offering elevation to see the surrounding countryside. The hunters will either drive to an intended destination or just wander, all the while looking for fresh sign on the dirt tracks, perhaps ending up at one of many watering points where the PH and the trackers will cast about looking for fresh spoor of the intended quarry. It was at one of these watering points that our PH, Butch Coaton, and his trackers found sign of four buffalo bulls that had come to water that morning.

This is proper buffalo hunting, finding and tracking bachelor bulls that have left the herd and are no longer part of the breeding effort. These are old bulls that spend their last days wandering about feeding, rolling in mud, and looking for shade to escape the midday sun. These are the bulls that have been smart enough and mean enough to survive lions, wild dogs, poachers, and hunters. These are the cantankerous bulls of legend, the bulls that when bothered seem to look through you not at you, the bulls that author Robert Ruark wrote about in many of his Africa stories, and in his book *Use Enough Gun* said, "A Cape Buffalo looks at you as if you owe him money".

We found the tracks an hour or so after first light. Butch and his head tracker, Ringi, spoke softly together as they walked along a game trail moving away from the water hole. I followed along silently, listening, but could only make out one or two words spoken in Shona. I could see a few buffalo tracks in the softer sand that was littered with the tracks of animals that had visited the water during the night, impala, eland, zebra, giraffe, and baboons. Butch told us that there were four bulls and the tracks were fresh. To someone who has hunted Africa before, this meant that it was time to get ready. Time to get rid of the morning coffee, take a long pull on a bottle of water, shed your sweater, and buckle on your ammo belt. The number one tracker would be buckling on a belt carrying extra ammo for the PH's rifle and a

knife. He will grab the shooting sticks, an adjustable tripod sometimes used to help steady the hunter's rifle. The number two tracker would have pulled on a backpack full of water, a first aid bag, and any other piece of kit the PH thinks necessary. He would also have in his hand the ubiquitous machete that all Africans in the bush seem to carry. He will have pulled your rifle from the rack and be patiently waiting to hand it to you. Guns loaded and safeties checked, the group moves out.

Ringi starts out quickly, followed by second tracker Bonny, then Butch, myself, Susan, and the game scout. During the hunt this single file procession is a hierarchy that is seldom violated until the animal is spotted and the PH and the client move to the front for the last approach. Somewhere along this trek the trackers have picked up sticks about four feet in length that they use to point at faint signs as they move along, occasionally making a scratch on the ground near the track as they walk. These scratches will be later used when the track is momentarily lost, allowing them to find where a track was last seen. The skills that these trackers and some PH's have are remarkable. They see marks and impressions on the ground that we may eventually learn to see, but not any time soon. They see where the animal has browsed or grazed and they form a good idea where it is going. They can look at dung and tell you how old it is. As a hunter who wants to grow, you strain to see what they see, you hope to learn along the way, but most of the time it is to no avail. It is your job to look up and ahead and to make a good shot when the trackers bring you to the animal you want. As you move along in this procession you mentally rehearse the various shot angles that you may be presented with. You visualize making the shot and quickly reloading. The last thing you want to do is let down the trackers and the PH by making a poor shot.

We had been moving for about an hour and a half across differing terrain, and through various types of vegetation. Occasionally the trackers would lose the spoor and the procession would stop. The trackers, like bird dogs, would cast back and forth until the spoor was found and the procession would move forward.

The trackers had started to slow, and you could see

by their actions that we were getting close. Then Bonny stopped and everyone else did the same. He raised his cupped hands to his ears and as we all strained to help him listen, he slowly pointed not to the buffalo we were after, but to a big bodied bull elephant that slowly fed into our vision. Butch's attention was drawn to the elephant, as he had a future client interested in a bull elephant, but this would not be the one. Even though his body was big, his ivory was small. We had started to turn our concentration back towards the buffalo when more elephants fed into few. This was a herd of about twenty cows and calves. A cow-calf herd of elephants can be one of the more dangerous things to encounter in the African bush, and the utmost respect should be given. An extremely protective group, they may just wander along peacefully, but if they catch your scent they will become quite agitated and may either move off quickly or come your way with hostile intent. Butch had us slowly back away, and fortunately the wind was in our favor as the elephants quietly moved on. While we were in the process of backing away, Ringi pointed towards a group of bushes. Behind them were our Buffalo, some standing some lying down. Fortunately they were upwind and had not seen us.

After glassing this group Butch decided there was a shooter amongst them and reaching into his pocket produced a small bottle which he squeezed producing a fine powder that floated in the air showing the direction of the wind. PHs and trackers all carry ash bags or small squeeze bottles filled with the fine ash left from the night's mopani fire. A quick shake or squeeze will send a small puff of ash into the air to check the wind. Leaving our trackers to trail behind, we slowly began our stalk. Two of the bulls had drifted off to the left, while our bull fed away from us. Quietly we followed, trying to keep the wind in our favor and close the distance. After a hundred yards or so our bull stopped in a small clearing, there quietly feeding and giving us the chance to close within forty-five yards using a small tree that was the last of our cover. Steadying my rifle on the tree, I waited for him to turn broadside. Looking through the sights I found my shot seemed just as I had rehearsed it in my mind while we tracked this group. When Butch whispered to take him, I pressed the front trigger. The bull bucked and I quickly sent the left barrel his way as he bolted into brush and out of sight



over a small rise, immediately reloading both barrels as everything became quiet.

We waited, knowing that the bull had been well hit not once but twice, letting him settle, not wanting to perhaps push him into long chase, or worse provoke a charge. When we decided to follow, he was standing not far away under a tree, head down. While we circled to our right to get a better look, he slowly lay down, letting out the rasping moan that hunters of Cape buffalo refer to as the death bellow. Both initial shots were good, but Butch had me shoot him one more time for insurance. Professional hunters know all too well it's the dead ones that get up and kill you.

Everyone is different, but when you slowly approach an animal on the ground at the end of the hunt there is always a release of complex emotions; some are silent some are not. These emotions run the gamut from elation to depression. Your pulse and breathing become part of you again, and the heightened awareness that let you feel every twig under your foot and see your quarry in slow motion disappears. Someone mentions that your leg is bleeding from the thorns you never felt, and the slight tremor in your hands begins to subside. All of the mental and physical preparations to get to this point eight thousand miles from my porch have reached their conclusion when I put my hand on the animal, and somewhere inside a small and sad voice says it's over.

A good hunter and his trackers will give you some time and space to sort out these feelings; then mutual congratulations and thanks and appreciation for each other's skills begin. Foremost is admiration for the buffalo bull and life that it must have led, judging from the scars on his back from failed lion attacks to the marks on his face from fighting for position in the herd. Length of horns and the thickness of the boss will be discussed, and pictures taken.

Then the work begins. The walk back to the Cruiser will take a while. The truck is driven back to the buffalo, trackers, scouts and client using machetes and

axes to clear the way. The buffalo is winched onto the back of the Cruiser, and you follow your tracks out. The carcass is delivered to the skinning shed, and if the hunter is keen he will stay around to help, and to critically examine his bullet placement and the effect that his shot had so he can learn and do even better next time.

Back in camp a long shower is awaiting to relieve you of the sweat and dust, and to help settle any lingering emotions from a successful hunt. Then there is the fire and dinner, and the reliving and sharing of the experience.

This hunt started for me eighteen months ago. Many discussions followed with the outfitter and Butch, my professional hunter, and also with my hunting companions. There were travel plans to arrange, rifles and proper ammunition to choose, and endless details to anticipate. Increasing my physical fitness, spending more time at the range, and saying no to dessert also became priority parts of my daily regimen.

You learn of Africa through hunting friends, and books that soon become worn and cherished. It's a pull to a crescendo you cannot ignore, drawing you to a strange land full of exotic names and strange animals. Once there your senses are assaulted with new sounds, sights, and smells. Sunsets are of the like that you have never seen, often framed through the silhouette of a flat topped Acacia tree. Nights are filled with roaring lions, coughing leopards and the whoop of hyenas. The cool dawn spent huddled by a mopani fire is full of promise.

You will find you have lived more fully having faced truly wild dangerous big game like the elephant and Cape buffalo at close quarters on their own ground.

This is what dreams are made of; this is lure that keeps the hunter up at night figuring ways to get back to Africa.

---

*"When you come by a fine gun you become a little of the man who loved it, for the shooter lives on in proportion to the manner in which his gun is used and enjoyed after he is gone – a nice way to be remembered."*

# What Our Pups Teach Us

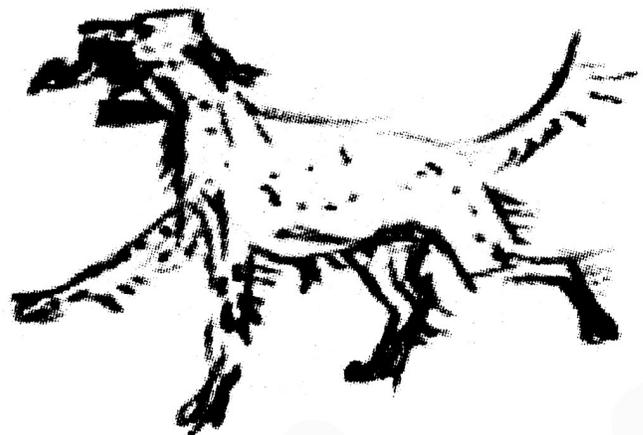
Mike McDonald

With each new Old Hemlock setter puppy, I vow to perfect my training approach in order to give them the very best start I can and make them the best setter I've had or ever hope to have. Each attempt teaches me that I know less about training this pup than I did with the previous one. Either they are getting smarter as the bloodline is refined or I am losing my perspective with the passing years. In short, I believe each new pup ends up teaching me more about bird hunting than I teach them. My most recent charge, nine month old Seth, is no exception and has taken his place in a long line called "the smartest young setter I've ever had." We all believe that our pup must be the best of his or her litter and I defy any of you to say otherwise! (Seth is from the 11/16 Litter, s. October John [Buckley], d. OH Kathryn [Killay], ed.) With that in mind, I'll try to focus more on my shortcomings as a dog trainer and less on his annoying propensity to validate the same.

To begin with, I need to point out that Seth is fast at everything he does. He moves fast, eats fast, and reacts to sights and sounds before my human senses are even aware of them. His response to commands, when undistracted by something more interesting, is equally impressive at such a young age. All of this has to be rooted in a quick mind and things he knows that I do not? He's "sharp", and I less so – an observation not wasted on those who know me, even if they don't know Seth. In that he taught me my first lesson: Never second guess the nose, eyes or mind of a young bird dog. If he reacts, chances are certain there is something out there that he believes both of you should be interested in. It might only be a butterfly or even dandelion fluff. Then again it might be a training bird, wild game bird, or a skunk! Regardless, in his opinion

we should investigate further and consequences be damned, thus teaching me not to ignore his good senses lest we miss out on the fun. With regard to the dandelion fluff, he learned very quickly that by "snuffing" at it he can make it move so he can chase it some more! Tell me that's not intelligent reasoning? Thankfully, we have not been tested with regard to what his interest might be in a skunk....not yet, anyway!

In the training fields, despite my attempts to plant pigeons at distances and in situations intended to make him work for them, Seth makes a bee-line to each one as if someone told him where to look. At nine months he is pointing by both sight and scent, nose twitching at the latter while eyes scan the cover for visual confirmation. Lesson number two: Don't ever think you can hide a planted bird from a sharp young dog – they simply follow your scent to the bird you just planted....silly man. This intensity makes training to be "steady to wing" difficult without an assistant to flush the bird while I restrain a lunging pup. His reaction to the flush is undoubtedly intended to teach me that "He's getting away you fool!" It also might explain his habit of attacking his dinner bowl like it's going to get away if he doesn't eat



it all in the next thirty seconds! And, it teaches me to count my fingers regularly.

Seth has taught me that I need to adjust my approach to training to match his quick brain – avoiding spontaneous and reactionary commands intended to direct his reaction to stimuli. He has already assessed the incoming data and determined the appropriate response based on his instinctive reasoning and coupled with repetition of the particular training event. Another lesson: If you’ve already run a particular exercise, he knows and remembers what he did last time, regardless of what the trainer may want him to do – why should he change? See what I mean about the difficulty presented by a pup that’s smarter than you are? It teaches me that I need to predict his response before it’s triggered by the stimuli of sight, sound or scent... yes, he’s that quick! This is not something I learned from setters I’ve previously trained.

It sounds like I’m placing this pup on a pedestal, which is perhaps unavoidable since his skills thus far are quite different from what I’m used to. One thing he does share with my other setters is his determination – “stubbornness” is actually a better word. One thing I have been taught by all my setters is that, as a breed, they must do things their way. I do not see this so much in other hunting breeds although I’m sure there are exceptions. My brother’s labs, for instance, seem willing enough to follow directions, in fact they are machine-like in response to his commands. A friend’s pointers are likewise accepting of

commands, with little fallback to undesirable habits. Even my son’s young cocker goes out of his way to do as he is told if only for a little praise. Setters, on the other hand, seem to be unable to break away from whatever their brain tells them despite my directions or the increasing crescendo of my voice. Focus of the eyes and nose above human direction can be an admirable trait in the bird field, considering the limited nature of the gunner’s senses, but it also makes it difficult to call them off non-target animals, turn them away from danger, or keep them off the couch. Setters simply must do it their way and are willing to risk reprimand in the attempt – just another effort to teach me that their way is better and that anything I have in mind is secondary.

One more note about training birds and young dogs; George Evans wrote of his dog’s intensity on training quail but showing a lack of interest in those same birds housed in a recall pen. Seth defies this rule, showing equal enthusiasm for his training birds whether in the field or in an enclosed pen. He delights in running full-tilt around the pigeon loft to see if he can keep all the birds in the air at the same time – like lottery balls on drawing night. I have a terrible time tending to their feed and water each day with the loft in sight of Seth’s kennel run and the ruckus he raises. He can’t stand that I’m out there having fun with his birds without him. Sorry, George, but not all your teachings stand the test of time. There will always be pups coming along who feel the need to teach us a thing or two. (By the

way...that was lesson number 4!)



---

*“Gun dogs are precious, these alter egos of the gunning man – tough, vital, fragile benedictions bestowed upon us for the short years we have them.”*

George Bird Evans Living with Gun Dogs 1992



## Preseason Planning Tidings from Maine

Glenn Jonsson

If you're like me, the first few nights in the 40's and the sight of an early swamp maple turning its leaves brings on a sense of mourning of summer but also a longing for October. Here in Maine, this can happen as early as mid- August, which is not a moment too soon to start planning our all too short season. Many of these thoughts swirl in our minds all year but it's in late August when such sentiments tend to overflow. The Maine Gazetteer, google maps, and logbooks are pored over with greater anticipation than at any other time of year. While I never want to wish away our all too short summer, it's hard to ignore the pull of our finest season in the uplands.

My first thoughts are always: where and when to go. Balancing family time, school, sports, and work schedules makes this probably the most important decision of all. Do you go for quantity or quality; one big road trip or lots of closer, shorter trips? Somewhere in the middle is usually where I land. I'm fortunate enough to have decent hunting within twenty minutes of home, but no matter where you live it's always better at least two hours away (it has to be, right?).

There are so many opportunities here that a hunter could spend several lifetimes hunting in the Pine Tree State alone.

First, the commercial forests of The North Woods area, from Rangeley to the Allagash, have very distinct differences within the region itself based on the type of end product that they are managed for. Based on the reduction in demand for paper, we are now seeing more land being managed for mature timber than for pulp. This has caused a shift in some of these areas away from the large clear cut strategies and more towards selective cutting in order to harvest higher grade mature timber. Consequently, we move on from areas that previously had been hotspots, in search of early successional forests. Often times we can narrow down the search by learning which forestry company is managing the land. While the North Woods can contain the most grouse of any type of region in the state, the terrain is not for everyone. Many of the cuts we hunt contain an overabundance of slash that makes for challenging walking. Add in the hilly terrain and it can become a different experience than hunting in the lake states. Seeing pictures of the walking trails planted in clover and bordered by endless aspen can leave us pining for a trip to the upper mid-west. On the flip side, we can go days without seeing another hunter with dogs in this area, and there is no shortage of cover. Hitting a flight of woodcock along with some grouse in a clear cut covert like this, with no houses, hunters, or even

towns for miles and miles can make for a pretty special day.

Second, the alder runs and reverting farmland coverts of down-east. These are the coverts from a Lynn Bogue Hunt painting. This is classic cover: overgrown apples, viburnum, aspen, alder. These are the places that even though they may be miles from a town and three to four hours from home are guarded secrets, and admittedly my favorites. Like the commercial forests, it's possible to find these coverts simply by driving the roads. There aren't too many bird hunters in this area due to the drive time – it is a commitment to get here and with grouse numbers lower in this area compared to the North Woods, many hunters leave this area alone. While grouse may be king, we are big fans of the “'il russet fella”. Most days we say we are woodcock and grouse hunting rather than grouse and woodcock hunting.

Third, local coverts: much the same as above but even more carefully guarded, and due to development, diminishing in size and number every year. A good number of coverts has been lost over the past twenty-five years due to the sprawl of greater Portland. Most of this land is posted, unlike the other two areas. However, during flights the hunting can be just as good down here as up north or down-east. Additionally, due to proximity, we're able to get out on these coverts three to five times per week. For these reasons, staying tight with the landowners is critical and a good bottle of wine or single malt can keep the doors open. With flights coming in later than in years past, many are coming through during deer season, which has

complicated our hunting a bit. Vests, bells, and beepers are a must and if there are vehicles anywhere near the covert we move on. While I enjoy finding birds in November, it's never quite as relaxing as during October, the exception being on private land where no other hunters have permission to hunt. Regardless, you need to take precautions as if other hunters are in the area. Many of us in Maine wish they simply would push back the opener for deer season one week to allow for the late flights which are seemingly the norm these days. Keeping their season open a week later would also afford deer hunters a greater chance for tracking snow, a true win/win.

While Maine certainly has more areas than are described above, these are the three I plan to hunt this season. So while we're still about a month away, plans are being made, new gear ordered, and dogs are in conditioning mode. Flicka is ready to go. Now at three, she has exceeded my expectations in every way and we're hoping my brother's dog, OH Boone Brook (Boone), is ready to join the ranks this season. We won't expect much from a five month old, but a fall of woodcock could turn the light on in a hurry. Simply cannot wait for when it clicks for him and the post hunt toast is made - there is nothing better.

While it is still August, the smells of wood smoke and gunpowder, the sight of shimmering golden aspen leaves back dropped by bright blue skies, and the sounds of dog bells and the whir of wings will be here before we know it. Wishing all of the Old Hemlock family members and their dogs a great season – “let there be birds”.





## My Second Season

Carla Marshall

Bird hunting season is near and it will be my first full season afield. I cannot say that it is my first hunting season, but it is my first season as a bird hunter over my lovely Carmel. I look forward to those special moments in the field with her. She welcomes my attention, and I think she knows this year might be just a little different. She will have two shooters this year. I will try my best for her.

I am not a stranger to hunting though it has been many years. I am the younger of two daughters. My father was an only son of an only son. I was born into a family of hunting men in central West Virginia. Hunting was always a serious affair within the family. It was providing for family as well as a tradition; a way of life. We only took what we were going to eat and always hunted within laws and limits.

It was considered a great moment when you got to go on your first hunt with my grandfather, Papap. You had to earn the opportunity to accompany Papap. I held many a squirrel's legs while Papap skinned them in my preseason years. I guess you could say I was doubly tasked. I would skin with my grandfather and then carry them inside and cook with my grandmother. Both tasks were expected of me, to fully appreciate the game which we were about to enjoy. Squirrel, rabbit, and deer were the game. I never looked at any of it as a chore. It was an honor. I was at their side and preparing for the family.

I was very much the tomboy sort as I always wanted to be near my Dad when he wasn't at work. I would help with all the outside chores and then shadow my Dad in whatever he would allow. In my younger years the extended family gathered every weekend at the home place. I was his little boy. I got to be one of the boys. I would get to target shoot with the guys. My Dad was proud of me. I was

proud to be with him.

I hunted with my father every fall in those early formative years. It was just he and I. As the years passed, the frequency of our hunts also passed. Deer hunting was all that we did together by the time I reached high school. Going deer hunting in my family was never done with a tree stand or a big drive. You waited and you watched and maybe you got a shot at a deer. I would stand in one spot and freeze for hours but I was in the woods with Dad. I was allowed a 20 gauge slug. So the shot had to be the right one. Let's just say Dad brought home the deer, not I.

I had other responsibilities and commitments in the years to follow. I went off to college, got a job, and got married. Steve and I built a house. We had our first son twenty three years ago. I was home with my two month old son and saw a nice little buck on our property behind the house. Times were a little leaner in those early married years and I saw an opportunity to put some meat in the freezer for winter. I laid our two month old son down, snuck out around the house and



took the shot. I dropped the deer where he stood. He was in the shade and would be fine until Steve could get home from work. I went back inside to attend Dean and the feeding that I had postponed.

In that moment I recognized that my sporting life had changed. The shot was too easy. It was a kill. I did not feel like a sportsman. I did not hunt again.

Now fast forward if you will to 2015. We are now on our third English setter. Carmel is our first Old Hemlock. My sons Dean and Wade are grown and I feel as if I have crossed a new threshold. I decided I would like to do a little target shooting. Clays this time. I wanted to see if I could be successful. It had been a long time since I shot. I opened up to Steve and Tom Bowman that I was interested. They were very supportive and helpful.

Steve and I like to say that I have attended and continue to attend "The Bowman Shooting Academy". Tom has been very supportive and patient in his instruction with me. I have been making slow progress. I have had lessons in North Carolina when visiting Tom and Pam, and we all go to Hunting Hills when they are visiting West Virginia. The Hunting Hills staff has also been very patient and helpful.

The 2016 and 2017 Old Hemlock Reunions have been extra special to me. At the 2016 OH Reunion, I was going out as a shooter for the first time over setters. Steve, LeJay, and myself were going out with Willow and Carmel. There was a small gallery that had me a bit nervous but I did not want to let the girls down. Willow had the first point. I followed LeJay's shot since it was Willow's point, but I had a bit better position. I eased the shot off with heart pounding. In the next instant came the sound of Kandice Tuttle exclaiming "that's Carla's bird!" Indeed it was Willow's bird, but it was my first over an Old Hemlock.

The next point was Carmel's. The bird flushed and flew back to my left and I was turning uphill to make the shot. She pointed for me and I shot for her. We did it together. Her retrieve in that moment was like no other. A beautiful first experience that I had never

known for myself; I had only watched her retrieve to Steve.

Little did I know what was about to happen. Later that same outing came a new first. The girls went on simultaneous points on separate birds. Fear of disappointing Carmel and Willow was growing. Could I possibly get her bird? Had I used up all my luck? Would I ruin it for both girls? What pressure! Birds flushed and LeJay got Willow's chukar and I got Carmel's chukar. It was beautiful. I must admit I teared at retrieve and now the hunt was complete. If I never got another chance I had experienced something I would never forget.

There have since been other unforgettable moments. I have been blessed with being able to go afield with Sage and Carmel (brother and sister). Kandice and I both getting to experience the feeling of your heart pouring over as the two siblings hunted together. To know that you have gotten to meet and share these firsts, these feelings, these moments in life with people you never knew before your life was touched by a dog, a gun, and time enough.

The 2017 Reunion brought me a new challenge. I found it a bit concerning. But I knew I had support in the OH family. Steve was not going to be able to be at the Reunion the first couple of days in 2017. He was out of town due to work that could not be delayed. Could I be everything that Carmel needed me to be? Could I do it? Could I handle her and shoot for her and actually get it all right? I knew I would not let Carmel down. There was not a choice to be made. I would find the way. I had family there to support me. Mr. Tuttle and Mr. Bowman, God bless you. If I felt I needed help in doing the right thing, or reassurance, they were there. Whether holding Carmel steady to shot or releasing her to retrieve, I was not alone. I had family. As much as I wanted Steve there to share in those moments, I learned that I could do it.

2017 afforded Kandice and me a true pleasure once again. We went afield with Sage and Carmel a few

more times, having no idea it would be our last. Brother and sister were doing what they love to do. We have been truly blessed. We both experienced the point, the hold, the flush, the shot, and the retrieve, over these beautiful orange siblings. A boy, and a girl, and their two moms gunning for them. Something I will never forget. Something special shared between family members. Sage, we will miss you. Thank you for showing little sister how it is done.

I had scheduled a late afternoon hunt in C field, the golden hour. I knew it was time. It was time for me to take my little girl out by myself. This one was just her and me. Well, Bob Joseph was guiding for us. I found the comfort I needed within. My girl and I had a date. I was in my favorite field at my favorite time. We can do this together. What a date it was about to be. There were four chukar out there for her. The sky was beautiful. The clouds and the sun were doing their dance. The switchgrass was lit up. We were at the corner of the field. I bent over and whispered to her and then I rose up and released her. She was off to work. A work I now better understand her love of. A lot of what happened in the field is in our hearts for her and me to share. She didn't let me down and I tried to not let her down. It was certainly a moment in our time together. But I will share that we came out of that



field with three of her chukar and one beautiful pheasant. Carmel has always preferred pheasant to chukar. She found it, and I was not about to let her

down. She had given me a gift in that moment. It was my first pheasant. What a gorgeous beautiful retrieve to hand. We could not wait to share in the rest of the Reunion with Steve.

We are now well into 2017 and I have attempted sporting clays at Hunting Hills and greatly enjoyed it. I shot the course this summer with Steve and Tom and received all the support a girl could ask for. I

did not do very well by most standards but enjoyed the outing enough that I asked the guys if they would mind if I shot the course again before we left. Off we went for another round. My score on the second round was identical to the first, but I was pleased that this time I got a bird at each station. That was a victory for me. I haven't shot sporting clays since that day, as I want to focus on five stand for now. I need to build a little confidence. Steve and I frequent Hunting Hills for five stand as our schedules allow. I am making slow progress.

Just the other day Roy gave me a few pointers. He takes the time to watch my form and suggest how I can improve. I appreciate his tutelage and support. Thank you Roy. Steve has even graciously volunteered to reload every shot shell that I empty. He has a recipe for a light load that allows me to keep shooting with comfort rather than growing weary and frustrated. Believe me, that helps. It is hard for a girl to fail with so much support.

I have yet to have the time in my work schedule to hunt wild birds over Carmel. Steve has been the one to share that with her. However, I do hope that I am able to join them this fall.

Life does indeed change, there are many seasons. I am enjoying this new journey that I have merely started, and hope to become a shooter for Carmel and myself. I am sharing the sport with my husband and friends and look forward to this fall over Carmel. I love her enthusiasm for fall. It is in the air. I want to take part in her enjoyment. I want to share as many of those golden hours of fall with her as possible. Old Hemlock Carmel and the Old Hemlock family have given me a new season.





## Summer Shooting

Moe Lee

Sporting clays, target loads, skeet  
We shoot from a gun down always  
Funny looks, whispers we get  
From “shooters” who’s score they never forget  
...just look at the clubhouse wall



PULL!!!

Only when “ready”  
Guns up, always steady  
With glasses the right hue  
Shoot one, then shoot two.

For us its Manton’s intent  
Not a day, not a shell misspent  
On shooting from a position preplanned, predisposed  
The two styles together heavily contrast, juxtapose!

Gun down, casual stance  
More rhythm than clay-bird trance  
More lead, less lead they say  
For us it’s the poor passing of a day, without hunting.

Gamebirds don’t come from high house or low

They come from where our Setters show

Is it October?

No? Not yet?

Back to the store to get...more shells

# Old Hemlock Update

LeJay Graffious

How can one measure the effect that someone has had on your life? I have wonderful memories of sharing time with George and Kay. Now, I truly appreciate my Old Hemlock family and our connections beyond our setters. I look to the northeast and I see where the magic of George's word physically originated and regret not asking more questions, not taking more photographs, not recording more interviews and conversations, and not seeing the future with George more clearly. But, I have the memories from those years. Now that I am more mature and have the opportunity to share those memories with those who truly appreciate the depth of George's thoughts, I feel so fortunate to be in a position to meet and share Old Hemlock and my interpretation of our time together.

*"Memories are moments stretched from seconds into years,"* George wrote in his book, Men Who Shot. The 2017-2018 grouse season is the twentieth anniversary of George's last season. His accounts and his

recollections of his time over Old Hemlock setters have touched, and continue to touch, us deeply. Today (9/5/17) a game biologist from upstate New York came to Old Hemlock to see where George wrote and lived. He is a reader and was enthralled with the George's words coming to life. He knew of the long room, the setters, objects around the house like the long rifle, and the wishbones George and Kay had saved from each grouse taken over a particular setter. He is fifty, and has been reading George since he was a teenager. What a joy it was for me to share in his experience at Old Hemlock. The biologist was introduced to George's writing by his father who was a grouse hunter.

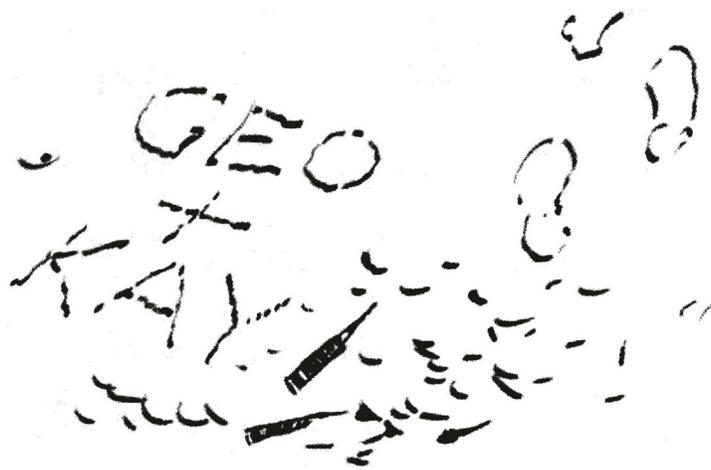
I struggle to devise ways to introduce his words to others, particularly to the generations X and Y. The low grouse populations do not help to stimulate excitement in upland hunting. I continue to cast the net. One never knows what the result will be.

One successful endeavor to share the word has been AmeriCorps member Maureen Lavelle's ability to select a GBE quote and photo to merge very professionally as a weekly post on our Facebook Page. If the numbers of views and likes are any indication of getting the word out, then we have had an increase this year. We have 1376 persons who like our page, and some posts have over 5000 views from most states and 26 countries. Maureen's history background and organizational skills have been assets to the Foundation. We wish her well as she finishes her Master's Degree in Public History this year.



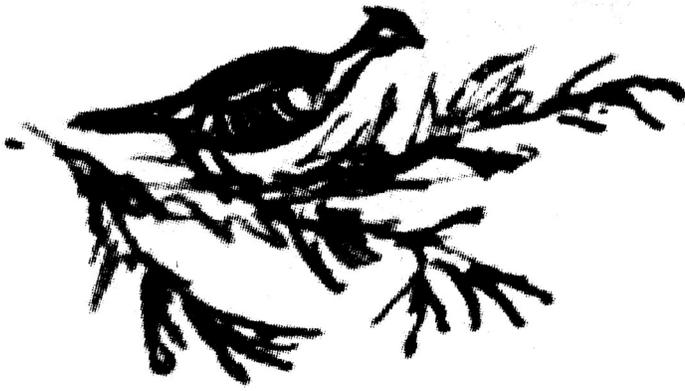
I continue to work with West Virginia University students in basically two capacities. First, I provide volunteer opportunities for students. WVU has a strong sense of community and many courses encourage volunteerism. For example, on August 9, we had ten entering freshman here to provide five hours of service. We always include a tour of Old Hemlock and share the George and Kay story. While here, they helped set the posts for the winter deer fence around the shrubbery, cleaned up some blow-down from a summer storm, and trimmed trail edges. I also work with wildlife students to give them experience with bird identification through sight and sound, techniques to monitor breeding bird populations on Old Hemlock, and basic bird banding techniques in handling and aging birds. I feel sharing the Old Hemlock experience with these students, who may be interacting with hunters in future jobs, is like finding the best fishing hole on a bass stream. Second, I provide authentic experiences for students. Students often are given projects to gain experience in their field of study. These are often contrived, pseudo examples of real world problems. For example, this semester I am working with a three member team of seniors doing MDS 489- Multidisciplinary Studies Capstone class. This capstone bridges practical and academic knowledge, while stressing the integration of the students' three areas of study through a community based service-learning project. These students will do a project based on the Old Hemlock Foundation. They gain experience, and I gain understanding of the younger generation's viewpoints.

We continued our scholarship program this year. Our seventh medical scholarship was presented to a local woman. She plans on becoming an internist and serving the medical needs of folks in Preston County.



This is exactly what George and Kay had hoped and intended with their scholarship program. We gave three college scholarships through the Bruceton High School Alumni Association. Two students in the Registered Nurse program received their fourth consecutive annual scholarship. Both have had high grade point averages and plan to work locally. Another student received his third scholarship in the area of industrial engineering. New this spring was the George Bird Evans Literary Scholarship. This was awarded to Elana Zambori, a graduating senior who entered the master's degree program this fall. Elana hails from Wheeling, WV and what a pleasure it has been to get to know her. She has spent several days with us reading and learning about George and Kay. I have found her reflections very interesting and perceptive. Watch for some of her work in newsletters and on our webpages.

So far in 2017, we have had 429 visitors to Old Hemlock. Helen Ann has tracked that we have had 29 dog visitors, too. We continue to do open house tours twice a year, and mutually scheduled group tours. These are mostly locals who are just hearing about George Bird Evans for the first time. The tours which I enjoy the most are those who know of George and travel distances to visit Old Hemlock. One interesting visitor was Ron Boehme of The Hunting Dog podcast. He published our conversation on his blog.



We were surprised by the spike in Facebook contacts and the number of calls that we received from folks around the nation who want to visit after hearing the story of George and Kay on-line. We also had a spike in book inquiries. Locals whom I tell are surprised by our national audience. We will continue to broaden our audience with the hope that George's writings will continue to inspire. We know George's feelings about field trials, but this year, the 75th Anniversary of the Grand National Grouse Championship will be held on the Gladwin Field Trial Area in Michigan. Thanks to Bruce Barrow, MI DNR Field Biologist, Old Hemlock will have a presence in all the literature, banners, and promotional items. George's graphic of a grouse will be the logo for the event. Also, references to the Old Hemlock Foundation and web address will be included in their publications. Another net is cast.

On the citizen science side of projects on the grounds here, we completed the second year of data collection for the Monitoring Avian Population and Survivorship venture with The Institute for Bird Populations in Point Reyes Station, CA. The banding program proved that our neo-tropical migrants return to their breeding grounds. One in six birds survives the rigors of migration. Although I am still analyzing the current data, about 33% of the birds caught in mist-nets this year were banded by me last year. This means that the Wood Thrushes, Ovenbirds, and Hooded Warblers captured last year survived a trip south to their wintering grounds and the return to Old Hemlock. I look forward to working on this project in the years to come. In addition to providing the bird data, the operation has served as a natural education outreach to the community. I have several individuals who come and assist. Mainly, I have taught them how to extract birds from mist nets so I can concentrate on aging and sexing.

As grouse and woodcock hunters, you know the importance of young forest habitats. To that end, we are developing a plan with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to establish an early successional habitat through the implementation of science-based habitat guidelines. We plan to create 15 acres of this habitat on our western border. To



establish a baseline, a wildlife student, along with a retired trainer from the USFS National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV and I established and monitored bird species breeding on Old Hemlock. All the data is electronically maintained by Cornell Lab of Ornithology as part of an international data base. I am looking forward to this project moving forward.

I surely missed having a professional photographer at the Reunion when developing the Old Hemlock Setter Calendar for 2018. I was able to glean photos from those the family submitted, and some taken by the two college student volunteers. The calendar will be available and announced via the [family@oldhemlock.org](mailto:family@oldhemlock.org) list of family members.

Related to photographs, I have not decided how best to share the photos from the Reunion. Basically, it has come down to a lack of time and help to process and save to a media source. I hope to have a solution to announce soon. Thanks for your patience. Also, I appreciate all who have shared their favorite photos of Old Hemlock setters for the calendar project.

As always, I want to extend an invitation to the Old Hemlock family to visit and hang out here at the ancestral home of their setters. Also, I am consistently searching for ways to interact with the family, extend the message of the OH Foundation, and ways to support you. I welcome your involvement and ideas. Let us create memories this season.

**Breaking news! 20th Old Hemlock Reunion,  
March 8, 9, 10, 2018. Mark your OH Calendars.  
Details via [family@oldhemlock.org](mailto:family@oldhemlock.org)**



Cover photo: George and Kay after the end of a wartime hunt on leave - a brief reunion with Blue and Dawn

---

*“Without the gift of evoking a day past, of sharing a principle or concern, without the touch that lets the reader feel the pulse of excitement, the love for the dog, I see no reason for writing about gunning.”*

George Bird Evans The Woodcock Book (Amwell 1997)

## Of Omens, Harbingers and Such?



The coming of fall truly is special, a sentiment shared by anyone who is moved by the sound of the autumn bell and the slash of white setter carving golden and russet wakes through the fleeting changes that remind us that bare bark grays and snow will not be far behind.

Sometimes forgotten is that the intensity of this beginning fully matches that of the ending, though it usually does so with more nuance and subtlety, and at a more sedate pace. But not always.

This year's September first, here in northern Vermont, dawned clear and almost cold and stayed that way all morning. The soft maples have been practicing for fall, showing suggestions of the flaming reds soon to come, while the beeches are already thinking about yellowing. The sugar maples are as always poised but waiting.

Today, autumn announced its arrival with cymbals and horns and everyone knew it. At my age, I don't always feel good in the morning until October John and I clear the kitchen door and head for the fields and woods. This day we were both four years old.

I try to keep us out of our best cover in the spring and summer months, just because. That is at best an imperfect process due to a certain lack of cooperation. We all know you can't just take a bird dog for a walk, but still we try. And October John knows there aren't many birds to be found in the middle of even a narrow dirt road.

But this morning we were both ready. The air had a snap, the early sunlight was spectacular, and the coverts beckoned in a way they can't match in summer, so we shared a look and headed down the ridge.

Watching October John hunt is I suppose like watching a great conductor with his orchestra, if you know about such things. I do not, but I can admire from afar.

On this fine morning we were presented with all the intense colors of beauty in shades, under a cerulean sky: the bountiful and varicolored apples of our numerous scattered wild trees, an uncommon profusion of rose hips in glorious color, counterpointed by high bush cranberries and choke cherry. And flowers. Too many for me to know, but the purple asters (both purple stemmed and New England, I think) are special and everywhere this year. And the smells of the earth: they change, too.

And the birds. Woodcock and grouse both fell under John's spell, and once more so did I.

And so it all begins – again.

*"It is easy to be hypnotized into thinking it will last, and then the leaves of the North Porch Maple suddenly turn gypsy and are gone."*

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

---

### Old Hemlock Foundation Directors

LeJay Graffious      Jeff Leach

Roger Brown      Hall Carter

Past Director    Jeff Kauffman

Editor    Bruce Buckley

Graphics and Production    LeJay Graffious

Founder and Editor Emeritus    Mike McDonald

