

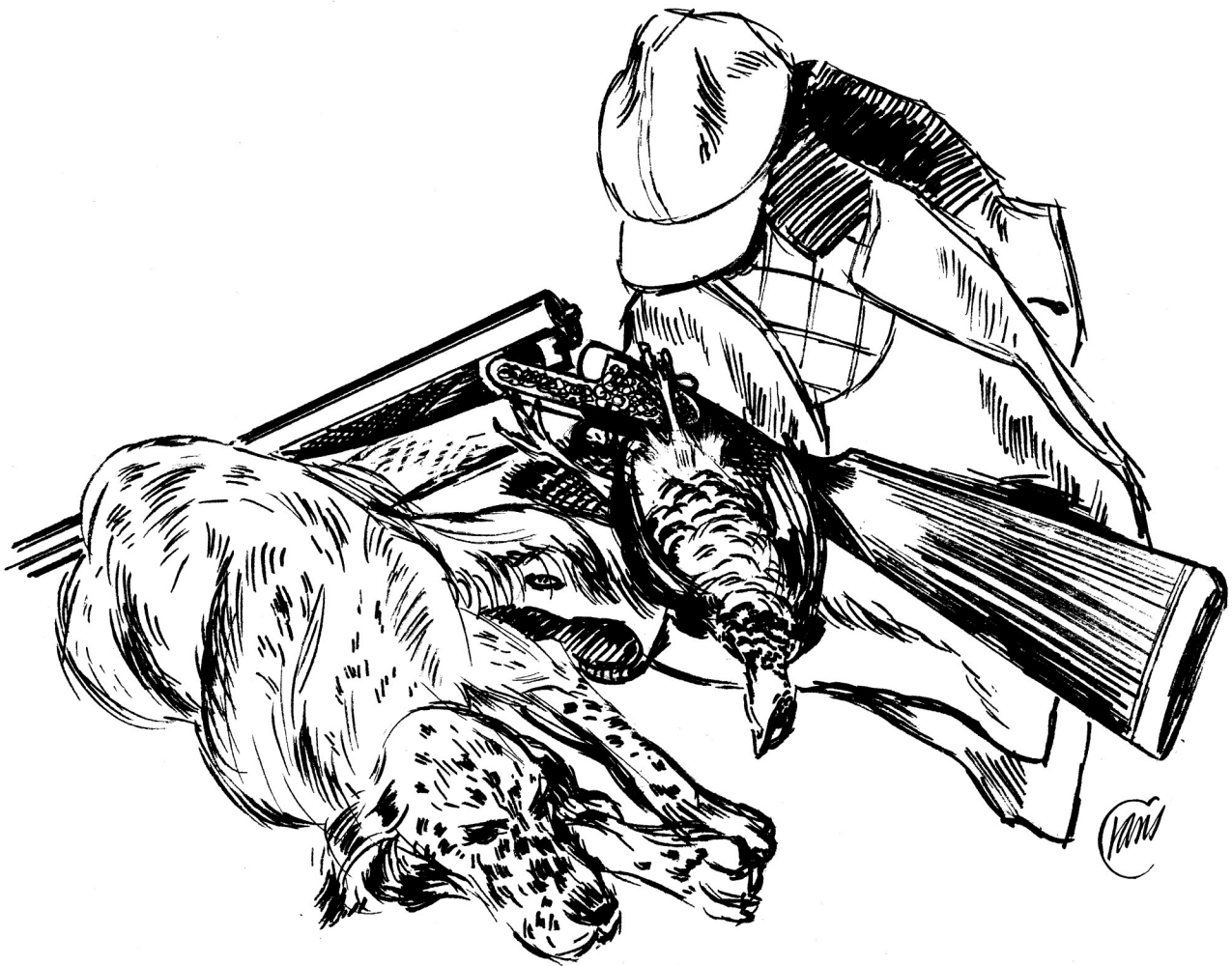


# Old Hemlock *Letter*

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Fall 2018



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

# Coming of Age

Mike Krol

Our 20th Old Hemlock Reunion was just this past weekend. (*March, 2018 Ed.*) It was our biggest ever with many new faces, young pups and old, noteworthy guests like Ken Alexander and Frank Jezioro, and happy times had by all. It was also the first time many folks got to see the puppies of the fantastic Killay litter (d. OH Miss Kathryn, s. October John [FDSB Early Frost] ) of November 2016 perform. This is the story of our boy Old Hemlock Gibson, from that litter.

Gibson had a lot of field time in the autumn of 2017, and although both grouse and woodcock were scarce in our New York covers, Gibby had pointed both during the season, and had birds killed over him. I was well pleased with his development. He worked at a comfortable range, regularly checked back to the gun, and covered his ground well. The scarcity of wild game had also caused us to use game farm birds to further his development, something that has become necessary for us in recent years and likely to continue for the foreseeable future. It takes birds to build a bird dog, and I am fortunate to have several game farms within an easy drive that will ensure game exposure to him nearly every time I take him afield. By the time the Reunion arrived he knew the fundamentals, but this would be the first time that others would see him work. Of course he is not capable of apprehension (lucky boy!), but such was not the case with his master. I was a nervous wreck as we ventured forth on that first hunt Friday morning with a large gallery in tow.

From the instant Gibby was released he began to naturally quarter the switchgrass, head high seeking scent and moving with style, speed, and grace. His points were rock solid, holding patiently while my wife Merely took pictures, never budging while I searched the ground in front of him for the chukars. I managed to kill nearly all of his birds for him, a few of them sloppy hits that gave Gibson much needed exposure to tracking down and recovering cripples. One of these was a very long shot that I even surprised myself on, dropping the bird on the opposite side of a thick hedgerow from which Gibson had pointed. Gibby had to find his way through the hedgerow, chase

down the running bird, and navigate back through the hedgerow to complete the delivery. At the time I feared this bird would be lost, but Gibby had complete control of the situation and completed the task quickly. I think it was at about this time in our initial hunt that Roger Brown came to me and said “Mike, you’ve got your next great dog” and my heart nearly burst with pride. Ken Alexander and Bruce Buckley were also in the gallery, and when our hunt concluded both gentlemen spoke glowingly of Gibson. Ken later approached me in the clubhouse and spoke at length of how impressed he was with Gibson, “proud” barely captured the depth of my feelings.

And so the weekend went. Gibson continued to hunt his heart out, and the accolades from friends and guides continued. Several guides mentioned they couldn’t believe my pup was only 16 months old, a general comment that seemed to be occurring with all of the Killay pups. This is indeed one exceptional litter. For our final hunt we were treated to have Frank Jezioro as our guest guide. Frank is a well known upland author, frequent contributor to *Pointing Dog Journal* magazine, and a seasoned grouse hunter with many years of experience. Earlier that day I had made his acquaintance and purchased his latest book, [Fifty-Five Years a Grouse Hunter](#), which he was kind enough to inscribe for me, just as George had done on all of his books so many years ago. To say that Frank is a man who knows grouse and grouse dogs is a vast understatement; you could not ask for a more seasoned and knowledgeable judge. Most of that hunt went the way of all of our prior ones, with Gibson never missing a bird. His first point was one of those heart-stoppers, where the dog is moving at top speed, hits scent and literally slams into his point. Truly breathtaking to see; I will never tire of such a sight. Gibby’s performance continued to be nearly flawless, the only weak point being the final delivery. He greatly enjoys prancing around with his birds and is reluctant to completely deliver to hand, something he and I will work on this year. But just the simple fact that he is so intent on getting to his birds on the ground and recovering them is huge. I think it was on our fourth bird that I didn’t execute a good shot,

missing with the right barrel and only drawing a few feathers with the left, the bird flying strongly and long into the deep valley below. Gibson had marked the bird and was in hot pursuit, and I turned to Frank and said, "let's just give him his head, let him go and see what happens."

Now there are retrieves that we all know, and there are what I call "epic retrieves". These are retrieves that defy all logical sense, birds recovered hundreds of yards from where they were first hit, some of them you didn't even know you connected on. My girl Beretta was most famous for these, and probably did more epic retrieves than any of my other setters. I have written about her here before. Her daughter Dream is a close second. George used to write of the bird-dog-gun triad, and there is a second related triad I think of as point-shot-retrieve. The first and last are dependent on the dog, the shot being totally the responsibility of the gunner. We all love to see our dogs point, but I have always felt the retrieve to be equally important, completing the sequence, as George wrote: "making the angels hum softly". And so as Gibby headed off into the distance and out of sight, I looked at my GPS seeing him go 150, 160, 170 yards out, I turned to Merely and said an epic retrieve would make this weekend even more perfect than it had already

been. Another glance at the GPS showed Gibby swinging back up the hill headed our way, and as he came into view he had his bird in his mouth. I shouted "He's got it!" at the top of my lungs, and my smile could not have been broader. Sue Buckley and others were there as my witnesses, and Sue smiled and said "That's quite a dog you have there, Michael". Once again, "proud" only scratches the surface of my emotions at the time.

Our weekend was as perfect as it could have possibly been. We returned to the clubhouse to enjoy our final feast with the entire Old Hemlock family, a wonderful dinner with camaraderie and fellowship with friends old and new, with eloquent words provided by Bob Rose, Roger Brown, Roy Sisler, and LeJay Graffious in closing the event. As we said our farewells, Roger approached me and gave me the ultimate compliment, expressing his desire to use Gibson in his closely managed breeding program. A dog simply cannot get higher praise in the Old Hemlock family. And so we will embark on OFA certification when Gibson becomes two years of age, and if that is successful we will again be providing the genes of one of our dogs in the continuation of the Old Hemlock line, "those proud-headed dogs who hunt game birds in Autumn".



*"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

# Living with Three Generations of Old Hemlock Ladies

Jim Recktenwald

Having three generations of English setters in our home is a challenge, but rewarding: Becasse, who has turned 12 1/2 and retired from hunting. Becasse's daughter Patches McNab who is nine. Finally, there is Thatcher, Patches' daughter, who will turn three in October. In January we worked all three of them on a farm near Anderson SC, beautiful country. We chased quail all day! Thatcher had the most points and showed great promise, while Becasse had the last point of her career in a fifteen minute run.

This past winter I thought we were going to lose both Patches and Becasse. Patches had two mass cell tumors and the prognosis initially was not good. However, our veterinarian is an excellent surgeon and detected them early. So far, the only cysts that we have seen were fatty tissue tumors.

Then it was Becasse's turn, she was losing muscle and had lost 20% of her body weight in six months. After an initial exam we had thirty blood tests set for the following week. In the meantime, I remembered my animal nutrition work and we tried Pro Plan's Forti Flora, a canine probiotic. It worked; a week later she had gained half the weight back and had perfect scores on all her blood tests. I know we will not have her forever, but she is the treasure trove of my best hunting, most loving and warmest memories.

And then there is the little princess, Thatcher. We had decided after the issues with Patches and Becasse to breed her in the next year. The first OFA x-ray was inconclusive and OFA sent us a letter telling us to let her mature and in six months redo the x-ray. I had never heard of them telling someone that they couldn't reach an agreement nor advising someone to do it again. We knew our veterinarian hadn't a lot of experience with OFA x-rays and enlisted the help of Rick Baylor to help our veterinarian. However, the day of the new x-ray I fed her breakfast and had wasted poor Rick's assistance. Then I turned to my friend Tom Bowman and got his veterinarian's name in Hendersonville, NC. She is the dog whisperer. No sedative is used for an x-ray; she made it idiot proof for me. We got to the vet, they had to drag her in the back but after a few minutes she came out as happy as she could be. The

vet showed me the x-ray and it was much better than the first one, but it needed to be judged by the OFA experts. It came back GOOD! Then Thatcher surprised me again by coming into season in August. Ugh we had five people coming to visit. We used this heat to get a feel for the timing of her progesterone peaks. Although they can vary slightly, they will not be significantly different. We now know by day 12 we need to have her with the stud. We still need to pass the brucellosis test, and work with Roger to pick the right stud. Breeding a female is a long-term time and financial commitment, but the reward of seeing those little faces is well worth it. There is a wealth of knowledge in our OH group that wants to help others in the breeding process.

In couple of weeks we hunt in Minnesota for grouse and woodcock, and look forward to seeing our extended MN Old Hemlock family. Furthermore, we have gotten an invitation from a retired Marine Corps Major General to hunt quail with him in South Carolina. The future is looking great!

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A quick update and report on our Minnesota hunt. I was excited to see Patches working woodcock, and she had the first find of the day. The point wasn't stylish, but effective. My elation was soon extinguished when she disobeyed an order and ran through a barbed wire fence, ughh. \$400 later and a lot of stitches, we had her restricted to kennel duty for ten days. The silver lining was that the veterinarian wanted an English setter puppy, and her dad knew Bill Larson. We might get a new member of the Old Hemlock family. The other silver lining was Thatcher was going to have to carry the load and she did. She left the other dogs alone but checked in consistently. Her points were fifty yards out, short for pheasant and quail hunting but tough on old tired legs. She pinned both woodcock and grouse at the edges of cover and held them there until I arrived. Seeing her perform made the trip worthwhile. The majority of woodcock I found were near major rivers, not creeks. The grouse were deep in the forest near water and food sources.



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*“The perfection of a life with a gun dog, like the perfection of an autumn, is disturbing because you know, even as it begins, that it must end. Time bestows the gift and steals it in the process.”*

George Bird Evans     An Affair with Grouse 1982

# Bull?!?! ...SH\*T!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! ----- "Dog Tails"

Moe Lee

Today was the final hunt of the season for both Dubbs and Apollo. We went to our usual spot at Shady Grove Preserve in Remington, Virginia. Josh, from the preserve, called up and offered to reserve the last 6 quail and last 6 chukar for me. I was excited and headed to the "Flushing Dog Field", which is the large field we've spent a lot of time in this season. The one with the cedars in the middle; and the one where Ken and I got all those extra birds, found primarily by Amber. Previously we found a rooster on the fence line, and the bobwhite that was right in front of the truck which sprung forth like "The Birth of Venus". I was back at it again today in hopes to find more of those "extra" birds.

First out of the chute was Apollo. Put down 4 chukar for him and left the remaining chukar and quail for rounds 2 and 3. Of course Apollo quickly found two birds, and then the hunt REALLY began. By "REALLY began" of course I mean only hitting birds with the edges of the pattern and not solidly. A point of chukar #3 and a flush. Only to see it fly fast and hard to the same fence line that held the "extra" rooster. I did fire both barrels, saw feathers fly and the signature "left leg dangle", as I know I hit the bird with the edges of the pattern. So I quickly headed towards

the fence in hopes of retrieving the wounded bird. Apollo wasn't finding it quickly and started hunting in the opposite direction, but I was insistent. I wanted that chukar found and followed up. After a brief period of gallivanting, Reddy Killowatt convinced him that he should listen to me. So being an exceptional bird dog he did indeed search a few times, never coming up with anything. Then he found a hole in the fence and went underneath to the ditch.

About this time I was blowing the whistle and noticed some shadows moving in the field. And then Apollo went solid on point. I couldn't get my butt under the fence, but that was probably better, considering what was about to happen in this situation. Right there, about twenty yards in front of Apollo was 1300 pounds of pure Angus beef, WITH HORNS worthy enough for Boss Hogg's triple white Cadillac DeVille. Bull?!?! SH\*T!!!!

Quickly I tossed my gun to the ground, put elastic extensions on my arms, blew the whistle, called upon the power of Mr. Kilowatt, and reached through the fence to grab Apollo (who was still on point) and pulled him back to the other side of the fence.

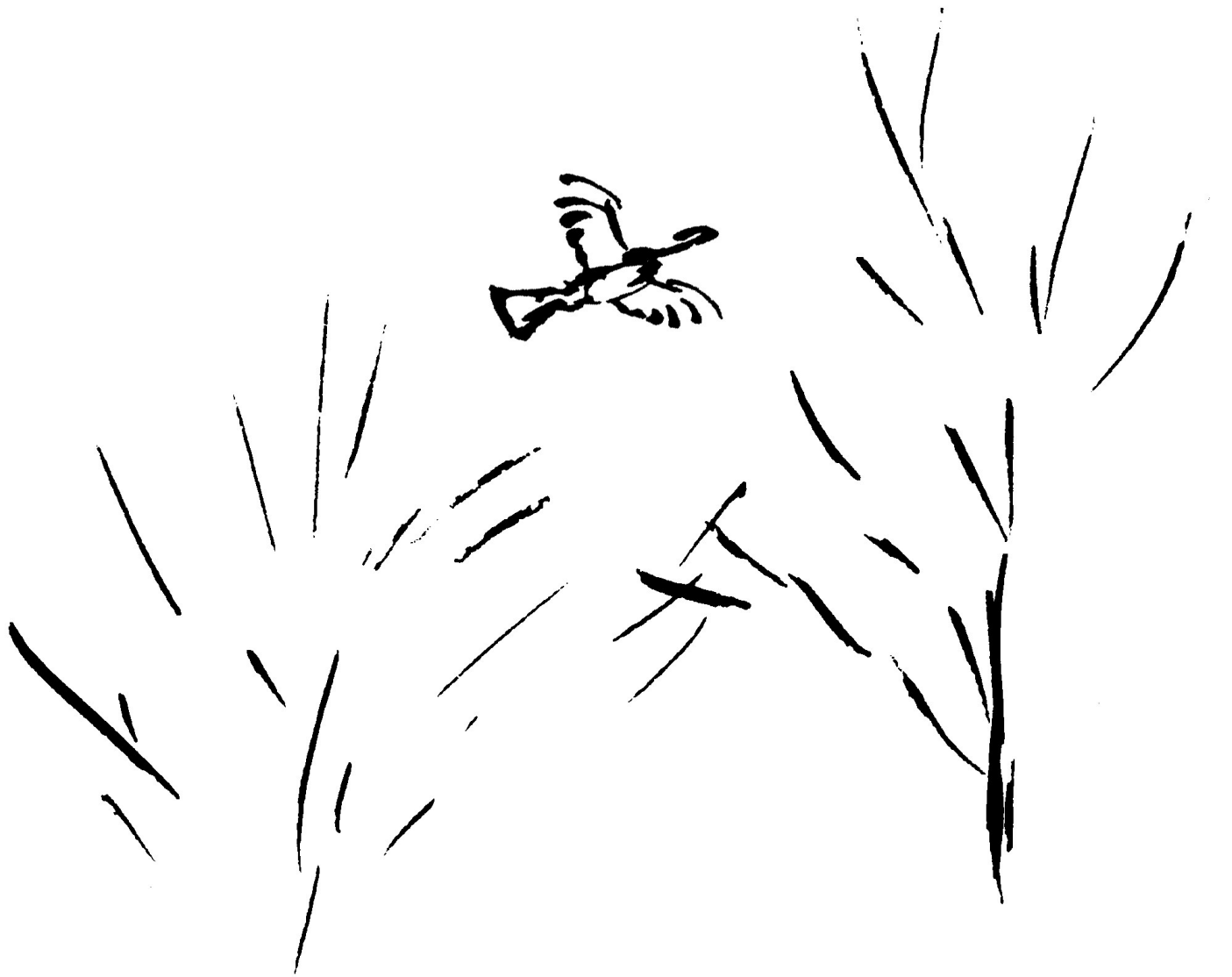
Three lessons come to mind after this situation:

Never buy a gun so expensive or so ornate that you're not willing to slam it without thought to the ground – I'm glad I don't have one of those.

One breast of chukar is exactly \$12.50. That's 3 gallons of gas or one Subway sandwich. You can buy more.

Your bird dog has infinitely bigger balls than you...even when outmatched by 1250 pounds!





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

George Bird Evans Living with Gun Dogs 1992

# Bucket List Hunt

Richard Baylor

An often used theme of late has been one's bucket list, but that is exactly what I embarked upon in the fall of '17. Our son Charlie was entering his second year of college at the Vermont Woodworking School, and Johnson State College. As we have come to know, these eastern university schools think like their European counterparts by taking a week off after every six weeks of class – therefore we had a great opportunity to broaden Charlie's educational horizon. We could go grouse hunting together in Maine, and he wouldn't miss a beat in school. So I loaded up the rig with our two beautiful OH setters and headed to Vermont. I was there Monday night by 8pm, and we had a nice dinner at a place near his apartment, simply named 158. I then dropped him off with an agreement that I would be back at 0-dark hundred to pick up him and his gear. I headed to my hotel, and just when I was about to turn into the parking lot blue flashing lights erupted in my rearview mirror. I only had one glass of wine with dinner, so I should be OK, right? A polite and very Canadian accented young man, asked for my license and registration. I immediately informed him, with my hands on the dash, that there were firearms in the truck. He calmly said he thought as much, and thanked me for the heads up. He then let me know that I was speeding in a school zone and since there was a football game going on, I needed to slow it down. Asked why I was in town, I told him of our plans to go grouse hunting in Maine. He smiled, and then asked if he could see the Old Hemlock setters, and of course I couldn't accommodate his request fast enough. He enjoyed seeing the

dogs and told me he used to grouse hunt in Canada before moving to the states. So I handed him my business card, telling him he could call me anytime and we would make plans to go. He then issued me a warning and told me I could throw it away at my convenience! Point well taken from a good man.

I got up the next morning, aired out the dogs and got them fed with ProPlan and Fortiflora. I have always used that or yogurt to settle the dog's GI tract while traveling and it has helped to keep us hunting. Upon arrival to pick up Charlie, I noticed that there were no lights on in the apartment, not a good indication of his readiness. My call was his alarm to get up, and of course pack. I went to get coffee and came back in an hour. So, we were on our way at last and winding through Vermont, New Hampshire and then Maine. Two lane winding roads most of the way, but GPS got us to Oxbow Maine and our turn-off. An atlas called the Maine Gazetteer was recommended by our Old Hemlock friends Bob and Kandice Tuttle, of Maine. That map proved to be quite useful once we left the highway as it had every little two track road on it all the way to Libby Camp, our destination. The camp is located on Millinocket Lake, well north of Baxter State Park in logging country. Once we left the paved highway we reached the Oxbow gate where we paid the logging company their toll by depositing \$100 in a slot in the wall and phoning a message to a kindly attendant that we were embarking on their road to Libby Camp.

Libby Camp is an assortment of very old log cabins





and a large lodge cabin on a beautiful lake where one can fish, or hunt deer, moose, or grouse (usually called partridge in Maine), and eat better than most would need or expect. Originally built in the mid-1800s, the main lodge was moved to the mainland from an island in the lake and other cabins built around it as the camp grew in reputation. Outpost cabins are still fly-in destinations for hunters and fisherman, but the main camp is a great starting spot to do all that as well. Charlie and I moved into our non-electric or WIFI cabin; which was great for me, not for Charlie! The large cabin was very comfortable with gas lights, a woodstove, soft beds, and indoor plumbing with hot water and a deck overlooking the lake. Perfect!! And the dogs were welcome inside too. In the old days, guides would pole canoes with the paying sportsman, their food and gear, traveling back a river from Oxbow to an outpost cabin and left them for a few months. They did all that for fifty cents a day, or up to a dollar a day for some trips. Now you can drive to the lodge, but you will need just a wee bit more money. Being cut off from civilization is what I like about these places, yet one could use the WIFI at the main lodge if you just had to connect, although not permitted during meals as it disrupts the ambiance. As the owner put it, "your dining companions deserve your conversation".

The next day we departed early after a great breakfast in the lodge, prepared by Jess Libby and her band of great cooks. Our guide was appropriately named Terry Hunter, and yes, that is his real name. He already had lunch in his truck for all of us, and after we loaded OH Casey and Covey in crates in the back we headed off. Terry is a retired Maine Game Warden and as we quickly learned, had legs made of steel. He asked me if I was ready for a little walk in the woods and I knew I was in for long day. There is nothing little in Maine's back country. The first day out we traveled moose trails back into remote spots, through woods and mostly mountainous terrain. We walked from 9am to 1pm before heading back for lunch at the truck. I checked my GPS and learned that Casey had covered 11.5 miles and we had walked some four miles. After lunch, I put Covey on the ground and he covered 7.4 miles in two hours. We moved 10 grouse, shooting 5 over 2 points of Ca-

sey's and one point of Covey, with the rest from birds flushing ahead of us. On our way back to Libby Camp, we saw many folks road hunting, which is simply shooting grouse that are standing on the road. Each to their own, but why not just go the market and buy chickens? Our version of road hunting was a bit different. We occasionally stopped to watch a few grouse along the road getting grit, sometimes Charlie and I got out with our guns and walked up to flush them and we watched the birds disappear into the woods like the wind. The guide would then let the dogs out and we would try to hunt up the birds; some we found and some we didn't. Charlie got his very first grouse over Casey this day and it was all worth the trip just to see that look on his face!

We went on a longer little walk the next day, again starting out with Casey, and I noticed something was distinctly different as he just wasn't searching out too far for the birds; almost staying in too close with untypical apprehension. I then started venturing out into the woods from the guide to about a hundred yards and Casey would follow, but became nervous and tentative. Then we realized that there were bear in the area as we found fresh tracks. Casey had not smelled bear before, but as we moved off in another direction, he finally calmed down and got back to hunting. Never doubt the dog or their nose. The grouse seemed nervous too and we were not seeing many, but the ones we did find were still in trees even at 1pm. Our guide seemed perplexed by this too, as we had not seen a man's track anywhere to give us the impression of too much hunting pressure. We pressed on deeper into the woods, but had only one productive point in the after-



noon that presented me with a shot and I took a big male grouse for Covey! We had moved some 11 grouse that day, which got up to sixty degrees and made for some warm hunting.

The third day I hunted alone with the guide as Charlie was feeling under the weather. Our guide Terry asked if I was up to a long walk. I said I came here to hunt grouse so let's go, although my knee was already screaming at me as if to say you FOOL. The day was about 45 to 50 degrees with a light rain in the morning. We drove about an hour to a mountain top at some 3000 feet and then walked about three miles down the mountain along a trail that Terry was following on his GPS. He had all his trails marked on GPS, and folks knew in advance where we were going. We hunted on out this long valley about four miles, then turning into another valley toward the truck, about five miles away, and then back a few miles up the mountain. Maybe the weather had spooked the birds, or we or the bears, but today we didn't move many grouse. I hunted Covey that morning and he really showed his great spirit, ability, and bird sense, working the slopes and looking in every cover. He worked hard and we moved five Grouse between 9am and 3pm. As we were walking out following a moose trail, Covey's bell went silent out

ahead. I walked up through evergreens to find him standing with a beautiful high head and tail point. He was looking up the hill and as I stepped to his side, a grouse flushed up the hill to escape. But the lower barrel of the 16 gauge caught the bird perfectly and I had a grouse for Covey! He retrieved it to me and we celebrated with a big drink of water and two more painkillers for my knee, although the adrenaline was better than any drug. In the afternoon of my last day I hunted over both dogs in about sixty degrees and overcast grey skies. We moved another five birds, but no shots presented for the gun. That's grouse hunting.

We had traveled some 2600 miles roundtrip from Ohio, met some great people, saw beautiful Maine scenery and were well cared by Libby Camp owners Jess and Matt Libby.

After getting a break back at work for a week teaching anesthesia and clinical techniques to Veterinary Nursing students, I was off to Wisconsin to chase more Ruffed Grouse and visit my friends Helen and Jim Palmquist.

*Part II of Richard's journey will be presented in the next issue. Ed.*





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*“Corey Ford created a Camelot on the edge of the Dartmouth campus, a wisp of glory based on fleeting 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

# Old Hemlock Foundation Update

LeJay Graffious

*“Girl, you really got me now  
You got me so I don't know what I'm doin'  
Girl, you really got me now  
You got me so I can't sleep at night  
Girl, you really got me now  
You got me so I don't know where I'm goin', yeah”*

Many of the Old Hemlock Family are of my generation. In my teens, I would never have dreamed that The Kinks' song, “You Really Got Me”, would advertise a Chevrolet. Advertisers know how to use the best, or shall I say popular, music to attract attention. The Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) knows quality for their ads, too. In the fall 2018, Ruffed Grouse Society magazine, there is a two full page spread. The left page is a family with their setters in sepia tint to look like twilight at the end of hunt gathering at their pickup, with what I first thought was a Purina product placement. The right page show a blurred field and woodland edge in the distance with a George Bird Evans quote dead center.

*“Good things seem to come at the end of the day – rare moments would be as rare, fair thoughts as fair at any hour, but because the day is dying each is the more precious as the lordly ridges swallow Time.”*  
George Bird Evans

Initially, I thought the layout was a collaboration between Purina and RGS. I had mixed emotions about using George's word for commercial attention. I enjoy seeing him quoted in various articles, usually highlighting another author's thoughts. A quality Brit-

ish hunting magazine once ran a full page photo of a black English cocker spaniel with a GBE quote, but for no commercial gain. Use of his words by the international corporation Nestlé (Purina) in an advertisement never had crossed my mind, and to me would be a copyright infringement. Should the Old Hemlock Foundation receive a monetary compensation? The product placement is subtle and overall a very attractive layout. I communicated with Matt Soberg, editor of the RGS magazine. He responded, “This photo was purchased from a photography website – it may have been used for a Purina promo sometime in the past. Purina is a longtime corporate sponsor of RGS, however Purina didn't have any role in this particular design. I matched the quote with the photo and our designer put it together”. I was relieved that Purina was not directly involved. Now the editor and I are on the same page about prior permission for copyrighted material.

Steve Smith of *Pointing Dog Journal* once told me that he wants to continue to reprint George's compositions to introduce his quality of writing to a new generation of bird hunters. To that end, they will soon reprint “On Being Keen” from *An Affair with Grouse* in an upcoming issue. So the RGS use of his quote is also keeping his legacy alive and furthering the mission of the Foundation.

We only have two public open tours of the Evans house a year. By the beginning of September we had 418 human visitors and 28 canine guests. I am privileged to share the George and Kay story with all visitors, but I take particular joy in sharing with readers of

his, especially young readers. At the July tour I was making casual conversation with a young couple. I like to know guests' interests, how they heard about the tour, and where they reside. I was surprised that they flew in from southern Maine just to see Old Hemlock. I told them that there are Old Hemlock Setters in Kittery. Their eyes lit with surprise, then they said, "So are we!" I provided contact information for the Tuttle. Maybe a new OH Family in the future.

Dick Weaver of Dark Hollow Setters sold a bird dog to another young married professional couple from central Pennsylvania. With the setter came a recommendation to read George Bird Evans. They fell in love with his books and made arrangements for a private tour. Another delightful encounter for us has brought on new readers.

I continue to have a strong relationship with various departments at West Virginia University. This semester we will give our eighth medical scholarship. We will also be a co-sponsor of a lecture with WVU School of Natural Resources, Mountaineer Chapter of

National Audubon, and the Friends of Maurice Brooks. I am working with Strategic Communication 315 students this semester. They will do all of their semester's projects as if the Old Hemlock Foundation is their client. They are also planning a six hour fall clean up at Old Hemlock as a leadership project for their class. I am scheduled to give a lecture on November 28 to a graduate Public History class about the administration of an educational foundation. I also serve on the governing board for the WVU's Center for Service and Learning. I enjoy sharing the George and Kay story with young folks and getting their perspective on promoting the Foundation's mission.

I am looking forward to the upland bird season this fall, with planned hunts in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Michigan. I look forward to hearing from the Old Hemlock Family about their experiences in the field, and to seeing photographs of our setters doing what they love.





A SHOT  
THROUGH SUMAC

Editor's Note

This issue of the Letter is a little thinner than usual. Reason why? I have no idea, but hope it's not a trend. We continue to have excellent support, mainly from our "regulars", who unfailingly step up, and are the reason there is an Old Hemlock Letter.

One thing is certain. All of you are part of that select group, the Old Hemlock family, and the success and future of the Letter is in your hands.

This issue appears later than usual. The reason for the delay is an almost perfect storm of events and commitments involving both LeJay and myself. Fortunately most of the news is good, not least of which was an enjoyable week LeJay and Helen Ann spent with us here in Vermont.

OH Mountain Laurel chose to come in season near the end of September, so she came north at the first week of our October hunting season (what else?) to be with October John for a long anticipated breeding. Of course there are birds everywhere around here, and John and Willow managed a few brief successful forays between times, but first things came first.

We had three good ties over a five day period, so as far as we're concerned we had the timing right and John and Laurel did their best. Now we have to wait and see if fortune smiles on the match. The prospect of puppies is always exciting, but tempered by the knowledge that so much can go wrong.

The best time of year is well underway; join me in making the most of it.

Bruce



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*"I think there are few sights more lovely than dusking woodcock in a sorrowing sunset sky."*

George Bird Evans Grouse and Woodcock in the Blackwater/Canaan 1997

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