

Jack O'Connor

2014 Newsletter 1st Quarter

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT CARD



By HOWARD ERDMAN,
CO-CHAIRMAN

During the December meeting, elections were held for Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage Education Center officers. Shirley Phillips was re-elected Board Secretary and Calvin Hogg was re-elected Treasurer. Mark Yokum announced that he did not wish to stand for re-election as Co-Chairman. Mandy Miles agreed to serve as Co-Chair and I agreed to continue as Co-Chair.

Mark's tenure as Co-Chair has been one of energy, commitment, vision and superb leadership. Mark's leadership

and service has shaped Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center (JOHHEC) and will continue to have an impact. Mark will continue to serve as a Board member.

The target date for launching the Youth Hunter Education Challenge (YHEC) program is early spring 2014. This program offers JOHHEC an opportunity to play a vital role in preserving the hunting heritage by providing training for our future outdoor leaders. This is a program with which JOHHEC can rightfully take pride in associating.

Kudos to Buck Buckner for introducing us to YHEC and Mike Butler, who continues to provide energy and leadership in getting this program operational.

The upcoming year holds the promise of continued success for JOHHEC.

I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year!

About the Co-Chair: Howard Erdman has been elected to serve as Co-Chair of the JOHHEC. He is an endowment member of the NRA and charter member of Friends of Jack O'Connor. An ardent fan of JOC since his mother gave him his first Outdoor Life subscription in 1957, Howard has served on the Board since 2011. He is a Navy veteran, lives in Pullman,

*Washington and is the Director
of Institutional Planning, Research, &
Assessment at Lewis-Clark State College.*

From the Director's Chair



By MIKE BUTLER, DIRECTOR

Reflections.....

The year 2013 was a great year for the Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center. We saw our summer visitation at the Center the highest since 2007, the week-long Jack O'Connor Days, first of its kind for us, showed great potential as a template for future years and the Youth Hunter Education Challenge Program is gaining support through the steering committee.

Looking forward, 2014 looks to be an even more exciting and busier year than ever! Our marketing committee will

begin fleshing out the 2014 Jack O'Connor Days, the NRA sanctioned Youth Hunter Education Challenge Program, through the JOC Center, will launch sometime in March, and we will enter a national advertising campaign to hopefully gain new members and a larger reading audience.

With that said, one of the "things" we, as hunters, should focus on is our renewed belief in "Fair Chase" principles, thus keeping our hunting philosophy true to that spirit. There are many things, material and non-material, that enamors us as hunters; fine guns, expert marksmanship, an in-depth study of the wildlife we pursue, and a strong sense of personal freedom, in the American spirit of our first and second amendment rights. We are lucky amigos that way!!

Many of us hunters have strong ties to the natural history and ecological lessons of Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, and John Burrows, to name a few.

It is important for us as hunters to remain vigilant in our passion for the animals we hunt. We need to assure that we are "doing the right thing" when

it comes to this thing we call hunting, for hunting is not always about "killing". We, as hunters, know it is much more than that! One of our contributors recently shared with me a favorite quote by John Burrows the famous American-Naturalist, **"I go to nature to be soothed and healed and to have my senses put in order."**

I hope you will ponder these thoughts while out hunting during the New Year.

Wishing you all good hunting in 2014.....!!!! MB

By The Way – Be sure and check out our website and forum area and chime in on the thread; hunting ethics and long range shooting. The website location is: www.jack-oconnor.org Archived newsletters are also located within.

About the Director: Mike Butler started his wildlife career in 1975 with the Missouri Department of Conservation. Mike recently completed a 30 year stint with the Federal Government as a wildlife biologist, mainly focused on wildlife habitat restoration. He is an Endowment member of the NRA, a Life member of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, a supporter of Ducks Unlimited and The National Wild Turkey Federation and is also an NRA certified Range Safety Officer. He is an avid turkey and elk hunter, and enjoys Alaska salmon fishing at least once a year.

Tech Corner



“Modern Rifle Bullets”

By ALLAN JONES

Volunteer Host, Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center

For many years, premium and ultra-premium bullets were the domain of the handloader. If you wanted ammo loaded with a Nosler Partition, a Speer Grand Slam, a Barnes, or something from Bitterroot, you either handloaded it or found someone to do it for you.

All that changed in the late 1980s. Big ammo factories that made their own standard bullets opted to partner with component bullet companies rather than develop high-grade bullets on their own. I suppose that falls under, "You don't fix what ain't broke." After all, the component companies had done all the marketing for years. Outsourcing makes the accountants happy so this action was probably not hard to sell to the bean counters and others responsible for the "bottom line."

In one of my first contributions to the JOC Newsletter emphasized the fact that you could not count on Jack's handloads to be safe today with modern components. Everything—cases, primers, bullets, and even propellants—has changed since Jack developed the loads that served him so well. I'd like to refocus that older discussion to the bullets. I have a classification system for rifle bullets:

- **Standard grade:** conventional lead and gilding metal construction with a jacket wall that is roughly the same thickness from bottom and a simple soft- or hollow-point tip.
- **Premium grade:** one upgrade, such as a distinctly tapered jacket to reinforce the shank, a partition, bonding, or other feature intended to increase retained weight and length after expansion.
- **Ultra-premium grade:** two or more upgrade features, including all-copper or majority copper construction, tips, and special low-friction coatings.

Many shooters today have been so exposed to ultra-premium bullets they may never have used a standard grade bullet. But in Jack's time, there were few premium bullets. The only real volume player during his life was the Nosler Partition. The Speer Grand Slam was not available until 1975 or 1976, and Jack left this world in early 1978. There were other custom bullets but, in what JOC reading I've done (and I've not read everything he wrote), the only premium bullet that he mentioned with regularity was the Nosler Partition.

Ultra-premium (UP) and some premium bullets introduce a major factor that affects safe reloading: bullet length. Features that "upscale" the bullet tend to create one that is longer than a standard-class bullet of the same weight. Today we see a huge increase in the amount of copper or gilding metal in UP bullets. A standard bullet may be no more than 15-20 percent copper alloy by weight; a UP bullet can be all copper. As every extra gram of copper alloy that replaces lead alloy adds volume, a UP bullet can be much longer than a standard bullet of the same diameter and weight.

All cartridges have a finite maximum loaded length. In some chambers it may be possible to handload a little longer than industry specs but the change is seldom significant. This means that, if you seat a standard bullet and a UP to the same safe cartridge over-all length (COAL), the UP bullet will intrude much farther into the propellant space in the case. In a cartridge where a nearly full case is *de rigueur* with standard bullets, the UP bullet will require a charge

weight reduction with a commensurate reduction in velocity.

Factories loaded UP bullets often do not see this much loss, but you must remember that factories have access to many more propellant types than the handloader. We tested some factory 300 WSM ammo loaded with a long, ultra-premium 180-grain bullet that posted decent velocities. When we pulled a bullet, the powder would not pour out of the case—it was a solid cake. It was one of the special super-compressible propellants available only to big factories. The cartridge case has to be completely enclosed in a die during compression after charging, as the pressure required to compress the propellant would blow out the case walls were they not fully constrained.

There are benefits even to us mere mortals. Where the user of a standard bullet was once ecstatic to see a 65-percent retained weight after expansion, he can see 90+ percent retained weights with some premium and ultra-premium bullets. Plastic tips have increased ballistic coefficients to levels once though almost mythical.

Retained length after expansion is as important as retained weight to insure deep penetration, and most UP bullets excel in this area. My comparison testing of 308-180 grain premium and UP hunting bullets showed there wasn't an accuracy problem in the lot. Most shot well under 1 MOA from our accuracy mount barrels.

So what would Jack O'Connor do if faced with the wide selection of upscale bullets we enjoy? I tend to think he'd try them in factory ammo to find those that fit his accuracy and trajectory goals. It would save a lot of time reloading and have him "on the gold" in the shortest possible time. Then he'd go hunting!

About the Author: Allan Jones had a 16-year career as a forensic firearms examiner before moving to Lewiston ID and taking over the roles of data developer and technical editor for Speer Bullets. He produced Speer Reloading Manuals 12, 13, and 14. He retired in 2007 and now volunteers at the Jack O'Connor Center and writes a monthly ballistics column for Shooting Times magazine.

Growing Up O'Connor



“Cooking with Eleanor”

By CAROLINE O'CONNOR-MCCULLAM

DUCK WITH GIN SAUCE

My mother was a creative and resourceful cook. Even during the leanest times she managed to put delicious meals on the table.

During The War, my brothers would set out on their bikes with rifles to the desert and bring back quail and jack rabbits. Mother would dredge

the quail in seasoned flour, sauté them, set them aside while she made gravy from the juices. Then she would place them into a casserole, then topped with her famous flaky pastry. Voila! Caile en croute! The rabbits would be cut into pieces, floured and fried, then served with mashed potatoes, gravy, biscuits, and fresh peas. If we were very lucky, she might have had the energy to make a pie, but usually not. Venison was made into steaks and roasts, but they were tough and gamey. The best way the venison was cooked was her venison chile recipe, which comes to you later.

After my parents died, I somehow wound up with Mother's recipe file. I still thumb through it for inspiration, though what she created out of thin air was usually better than anything a recipe could capture. Below is a recipe which she got from one of my father's friends, a well-known Seattle restaurateur and chef, Gilbert Barthe. He and some of his hunting friends drove over one chilly day in October and they all went duck hunting. I think my brother Brad was in on it as

well. Anyway, they returned to our house with a beautiful bunch (brace?) of mallards, which they hung by the feet in the unheated "trophy room" behind the house. Everyone was ordered to leave the birds alone to age un-gutted, until Gilbert and company could return the following week to clean and pluck them. Apparently the secret is to age them and not to over-cook them.

Here is the recipe for DUCK WITH GIN SAUCE:

Separate breasts from the rest of the bird. Split down the middle. Salt and pepper and sprinkle with chopped garlic. Top breasts with strips of bacon and add a generous amount of claret. Simmer for a short while on the top of the stove and then bake 1/2 hour at 400 degrees. Meanwhile, gently fry sliced mushrooms in butter. When breasts are done, remove to a warm platter and discard bacon. Pour juices into a sauce pan to boil down. Add a pint of sour cream, the mushrooms, and a cup of Gordon's Dry Gin. Sprinkle breasts with more gin before pouring sauce over.

This is a recipe I have never tried, but Mother said it was worth every hour of clean-up she did after festivities were over. Every pot, pan, and utensil in the house used, every surface splattered. Chefs are notoriously messy, perhaps because they rarely have to clean up after themselves.

I hope some of you are courageous enough to try the recipe! If Eleanor was right, it will be worth the effort!

Bon appétit!

About the Author: Caroline O'Connor McCullam, Jack O'Connor's youngest child, lives on Mercer Island, Washington, and works in Seattle as a registered nurse. She has 3 sons, all of whom live in the area, and 8 grandchildren. Her hobbies are traveling, doing watercolors (badly), learning languages, cooking, music, and reading good stuff.

Guest Writers

“Trout Creek Muley”

BY ALEX SHARIF



My older son Sergio came to me last year and said, “Dad, when can I get my own deer?”

I was in jubilation as he had gotten deeply into astronomy and astro-physics and I wasn’t sure, nor did I want to push him towards hunting. Of course by then, he had tagged along with his brother Miguel on my last year’s Pronghorn hunt and had an idea what a big game hunt is all about.

To prepare him for the hunt and making sure he doesn’t develop a flinch, I cooked a low recoil load with my wife’s 243W, pushing a 100 grain Spitzer at a modest 2,550 fps. This load printed repeatable cloverleaves at the range, had the advantage of a very low felt recoil (7 ft-lbs) and would be perfectly adequate to take down a deer within a

200 yard circle. With this load at hand, Sergio practiced at our local range 3 or 4 times on a ¾ life size deer target that I had made for him. He was in the zone, if you know what I mean.

On November 2nd, Sergio and his younger brother Miguel were up at 5:30 with much anticipation. Our next stop was at Timmy’s for their breakfast sandwich. These little “goodies” are what they will always remember as a child, out with pa for a hunt. In addition, my trusted pal Hank came along to help and witness Sergio’s first big game hunt.

Just as we were entering the foothills, the mighty sun shone her last rays before a cold Northern front was due to arrive. Since I wanted Sergio to learn all aspects of hunting, I asked him that he needed to walk in on his own and ask for permission from the land owner. In his own words: *“My name is Sergio. I want to ask permission to hunt deer on your land. I will respect your property, watch for the cattle, never litter, play it safe and will stop by to tell you what happened after the hunt.”* Of course he got the permission and was told he could come back anytime.

What a great time to be out with your youngsters, doing what you love the most, eh?

We had talked strategy prior to the hunt and were going to “hunt” and not “snipe” a deer. No shooting from a fence post nor at running game was on the agenda.

I also made sure they understood the concept of “wind in your face” as we all walked along this shallow coulee. We saw deer tracks and the boys learned how to distinguish the direction of travel

from the hoof marks. As we proceeded, I spotted 3 mule deer does about 1,000 yards away.

With the wind in our faces, we dropped further down in the coulee, out of sight and walked slowly. Miguel was as excited as Sergio and was absorbing every step like a sponge. After a 15 min approach, I slowly poked out of the coulee and ranged the does. They were 240 yards out; still too long for a sure shot for a beginner. This exercise taught the boys a great lesson and that is; we are "hunting" our quarry and are not in combat, hence have to close the distance if we can.



Their little hearts were beating fast with excitement and vigor.

We finally rose above the coulee and ranged the does at 120 yards. Now, we are talking! With Miguel and Hank out of sight, we went prone and lined up for the shot. Sergio waited for his quarry to go fully broadside and slowly squeezed the trigger when he felt comfortable. The familiar "thump" of the spitzer hitting the rib cage echoed back at us and the boys clearly heard it as I had previously talked about it with them.



She took 5 steps and folded. Well done Sergio, you did good son!



She was a full grown doe with no fawns, perfect for the pot. And look at that shot placement; right thru the rib cage for a humane harvest! What an awesome feeling for Sergio to have this moment shared with his brother, pa and Hank. The deer weighed more than the two of them combined and then some.

After the field dressing session which was an education on its own and as a Blackfoot ritual, Sergio got his face painted with his first deer. The big smile in the picture tells it all. After Hank & I deboned the venison, I made sure they each carried at least 15 lbs of meat in their packs back to the truck, so that

they know how it is done the old fashioned way.



Slowly but surely, we marched the 1 mile trail back to the truck and the cold front moved in just as we closed the truck's doors ☺

This had been a phenomenal day and we were all thankful to the good Lord for this blessing.

Hunt with (and not for) your kids and they will always remember it. Hopefully, they will pass it on to their youngsters so that our sport and pastime stays alive.



True, Teddy Roosevelt, Aldo Leupold et al started it all, but the responsibility of teaching and preserving the essence of

conservation starts right here in our home and in our own back forty.

Amen

About the Author: Alexander Sharif is a principal structural engineer by trade working for Fluor Corporation but with great passion for anything to do with the outdoors and everything that involves a projectile. He lives in Calgary, Alberta and enjoys a modest 220 plus days in the great Canadian outdoors, hiking, biking, xc/bc skiing, fishing, shooting and of course hunting big game and upland. He loves sharing his passions with his brethren thru his weekly pictorial slideshows.

“Caribou in the Clouds”

BY CHET A. FITZGERALD



I was awakened in the middle of the night and for a moment I thought a wolverine had made its way under the thin plywood floor of our little cabin. As I gained consciousness, I could hear the sound of claws scratching on wood and

began to think the intruder was actually on the roof. Then the porcelain coated washbasin on the table at the foot of our bunk crashed to the floor and I became painfully aware that that whatever it may be was huffing and snarling at the toe of my sleeping bag. My wife, who up to this time had been sleeping through the whole affair, reached over, grabbed my arm and whispered, "Do you think it's a bear, where is your rifle?" To the first question I had no response, as I was unable to tell in the dim shadows of our windowless cabin just what it was that had invaded our little refuge. The answer to the second question was even worse, as my rifle laid field stripped and unusable on the table near the wood stove, drying out from the previous days soaking. With little alternative, I reached for my flashlight and a can of bear spray, not really looking forward to using the acrid substance in the tight confines of the little cabin. As the light went on I was greeted with a terrible growl and two intensely glowing eyes not six feet in front of our faces. Fortunately, they were not attached to a bear, or a wolverine for that matter, but to a large male pine marten that had apparently smelled the fresh caribou blood on our clothes and boots and had come looking for a meal.

You could almost hear the collective sigh of relief from the two of us as my wife sleepily encouraged me to expedite the process of evicting our visitor so she could get back to sleep. I proceeded to shimmy past the now highly agitated and snarling marten to open the door,

which had closed behind the little ball of fury. I then slid back to my original position, grabbed an old straw broom and gave the little fellow a jab to the nose. This was enough for him and he bolted through the now open doorway. Having learned my lesson, I donned some boots and went out to grab a large rock to brace the door shut.

As I walked to the shore of what my guide, Tony McCormick, referred to as 'Desolution Lake', I was greeted by a different sound, the howling of a single wolf on the far side of the mirror still water. For a moment I forgot about the rock and just stood, soaking in my surroundings. The air was crisp, frosty and filled with the resinous scent of the scrubby firs that surrounded the lake. The moon and stars were visible for the first time since we had arrived at our little camp in the Cassiars and the lake was glassy smooth, another first in this windy drainage that bears the appropriate name of Hurricane Creek. Then a great howling erupted behind me, back on the divide with the Taku River as a pack of wolves answered the call of the lone trespasser. There are few sounds that so invoke the spirit of the wilderness than the howling of a wolf. Perhaps the dawn roaring of a pride of lions, the shrill whistle of a bull elk or the call of a northern loon, but at that moment, there was no better place to be.

It had been a tremendous experience, the last few days. It seemed only hours ago we had arrived on the lake via the

second of two float plane flights from Atlin B. C.



We had come all this way to hunt mountain caribou. Those large bodied caribou that make their home in Northern British Columbia and the southern portions of the Yukon and Northwest Territories. The place names where these, the largest of the North American caribou exist are the stuff of hunting legend. Names like Atlin, Telegraph Creek and Whitehorse, dotted the map. Names I had read in sporting literature since I was a schoolboy. Jack O'Connor himself had hunted in this same area for Stone's Sheep, caribou and mountain goat back in 1951. His son Bradford had taken a tremendous bull in the same area where I now stood over 50 years later. Not much had changed in that timeless wilderness. We were still over 50 air miles from the nearest dirt track and the country is still filled with a bountiful variety of game. From this camp alone one can hunt sheep, large Canadian moose, grizzly, goat, wolf wolverine and caribou. Short of Africa, there are few places where a hunter can choose from

such a wide selection of game on a single hunt.

We were there for the caribou, and on the morning of August 28th we set out at dawn. We mounted up and headed southeast down the east shore, then after crossing the little river that flows out of the lake we turned northwest and began to climb a long ridge that rose gradually up to some nameless peak about four miles away. It had rained all night and the saturated fir trees that lined the ancient game trail made you think you were riding through a carwash. We soon climbed above timberline onto the bare ridge itself as the horses labored through the thick layer of caribou lichen that covers the thin mineral soil.

After about an hour of riding, Tony pulled up at a patch of willow growing in a small, muskeg filled bowl and dismounted. He wanted to tie the horses there, where they would be hidden and go on foot to the lookout where we would spend the morning glassing. I was beginning to like the man, for only a few seconds after we arrived at the lookout, he pointed across the basin at a herd of caribou on a wide bench near the top of the mountain. One glance through the spotting scope revealed a herd of cows, calves and two small bulls, but what a way to start a hunt! I began to think that this business would be over quickly and started picturing not only a nice caribou bull, but also a big moose and goat headed for the

taxidermist. I may have been a little hasty.

We spent the next few hours glassing over the Hurricane Creek drainage. I spotted a cow moose with her calf feeding in the willows below us and Leslie found a small bull caribou as it topped out on the pass at the head of the canyon. And so went the next five days. It would rain and the fog would move in, first up the Taku River and then up the smaller drainages until on several days glassing was impossible. We would sit through the drizzle waiting for the short periods when the fog would roll back allowing us to catch a quick glimpse of the surrounding countryside. We saw more herds of cows and calves, more small bulls and more moose, but nothing that was enticing enough to shoot.

Then, on the afternoon of the sixth day, as we were making our way across a far flung area known as 'Lost Gun Pass', the weather began to change. We stopped in the pass, named for the rusted old Model 54 Winchester that was found near the train a few years before, and began glassing off into what Tony called 'Caribou Flat'.

The afternoon was the type of day that just made you happy to be alive. The sun was out and the countryside was shimmering from the prismatic effect of the water drops that still clung to the arctic birch. As we glassed the flat, we noticed a lone bull caribou trotting around, and yes, I mean literally trotting around in circles. The bull would buck

like a horse, run for a spell, come to an abrupt halt, shake his waterlogged hide and repeat the whole process. We quickly found him in the spotting scope and what a bull he was! He carried long heavy main beams, good tops and a double shovel.

Tony said the bull was a very good specimen and asked if I wanted to try and get closer. I looked the bull over again and decided it definitely warranted a closer look. We hurried to the horses and began a long, sinuous arc that would take us over to the ridge where the bull was located. When we were about a mile from where we had last seen the bull, we tied the horses and began to climb up to the bull on foot. After about 1000 yards I spotted something white in a patch of scrub fir. Closer inspection through the binocular found it to be the bull, now dozing on his feet in the warm September sunshine. All that running must have tired him out, but it left us in a precarious position. From the bull's vantage point, he could easily spot us making our way up the small draw that we had hoped would conceal our approach. Tony had the rangefinder and he determined the bull was 450 yards away. A long shot for sure, so I decided to get closer.

We began stalking towards the bull, walking when he would drop his head, stopping when he would shake his antlers in an attempt to rid himself of the small biting black flies that had emerged with the sunny weather. We continued to close the distance yard by yard until

we came to a wide open slab of granite with a small creek in its center. We needed to cross this opening to be able to gain a clear view of the bull's vitals, as from here all we could see were his antlers above his hideout in the firs. I would go first, followed by Tony while Leslie would stay behind and observe the show. We quickly scrambled across the granite slab without disturbing our resting caribou only to find that we could not see him at all now that we were on the same hillside.

The only choices we had now were to risk getting closer or back off and attempt a long shot from the draw below. I really like stalking in close to an animal whenever possible, so, on we went. We were able to close the distance to about 80 yards, but I still could not get a good view of the bull's vitals, then, as often happens, I felt the wind hit the back of my neck. A few seconds later the bull perked up his head and in one motion spun 180 degrees and began trotting out of view up the draw, obscured by a small fold of land only about five feet high. I took off running as well, hoping to catch him before he plunged off in to the thick timber on the north slope of the hill. As I made it to the edge, I looked up to find the bull silhouetted against the horizon about 150 yards away and making fast for the timber. I shouldered the D'Arcy Echols built Model 70, swung through the body of the rapidly departing bull and tapped the trigger as the crosshairs appeared black on his neck. You could hear the 200 grain Nosler hit flesh and

the bull dropped in his tracks as I slid another round into the chamber.

It was the perfect end to the perfect afternoon.



After the usual congratulations and photos we caped and quartered the bull and headed for camp where we would spend the night swapping stories, fleshing the cape, drinking good Canadian whiskey and chasing martens out of the cabin. We would go on to hunt moose for the rest of the trip, but without success. The moose were there, to be sure, but I did not see one of the big wide bulls that this area is famous for. Not to worry, all the more excuses to go back again.

About the Author: After growing up on a large ranching operation in Northern Utah, Chet Fitzgerald earned a Masters

Degree in Natural Resources Management from Utah State University in 1998. He has worked for the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service for the last fourteen years in Utah and Alaska. He enjoys fine rifles and is an avid big game and waterfowl hunter, having hunted throughout Alaska, Canada and the Western U.S. He currently lives on a small farm in Northern Utah with his wife Leslie and his little pack of English Foxhounds.

“The Irwin Springs Buck”

BY Phil Andresen



My wife Kim and I were working over one of our favorite ridge-top areas during our annual ten-day mule deer hunt in the Methow Valley of Washington. It was another beautiful blue bird day in the Okanogan clear, crisp frosty mornings with sunny warm afternoons. It was late afternoon; we'd been out since before dawn. Thanks to my new boots my toes felt like they were

on fire. I was worn out; plenty dry and could hear the cold beers back at our log house calling my name.

The migration was on, we'd seen about a hundred-fifty deer that day but watching does and fawns with an occasional spike or crab pincher two-point was downright boring.

As we dropped down Coyote Ridge onto the old Stokes Ranch, the terrain changed from steep scattered timber to open rolling hills of grass, sage and bitter brush. Soon we jumped another bunch of bedded deer... as usual it was more does and kids.

A few minutes later as we topped another finger-ridge, we ran into the same bunch. Kim knelt to watch them. She enjoys hunting and is fascinated by mule deer. Often if I don't see anything worthwhile I'll lay back for a catnap – while Kim keeps a lookout.

She's a darn good spotter and like most women she differentiates colors better than me. She really enjoys the hunting experience of hiking the mountains, living with nature, and finding bucks...

Irwin Springs is a broad secluded basin, north of it a tight rocky spine creates a steep sided canyon that climbs north and drops off into heavily timbered Wolf Canyon. We casually strolled to the canyon's edge where we had a panoramic view of both steep sides, as we did deer began rising from their beds. They weren't spooked so we knew they were tired from traveling and

had probably just arrived from the back country.

Kim whispered loudly, "There's a rack!"

She was behind me looking to her left toward the lower end of the canyon. I searched the hillside but couldn't single him out of all the does and brush.

"He's right there Phil, can't you see him?" Urgency was building in her voice. "See that big rock on the end of the ridge? Look below it and to the right; he's right in there with those does. He's standing broadside, about fifty yards..."

She was obviously excited; I squinted into the sun, eyes darting from deer to deer as a wave of frustration and adrenaline began to boil in my gut. She was twenty feet downhill; her view could be much different...

"He's going uphill, can't you see him? He's right out in the open, walking slowly! See that rock on the hillside? He's right by it. OK, OK, see that bigger bitter brush that's mostly dead?" Her excited tone was turning to anger. "He's going over the top, can't you see him?"

"No! I don't see the SOB!" I blurted as I stomped to where she knelt.

When I got to Kim, I dropped to one knee just in time to see his rump and antlers going over the ridge. "There goes another one," I thought, noting his antler tips were just outside his ears...

"Pretty nice buck huh? He was right there to start with." she grinned.

"Yeah, I can't believe I couldn't see him!"

"What do we do now? He didn't seem spooked."

"I don't know... let's go up here to the top... maybe we can spot him again," I mumbled as we turned and picked our way up along the canyon's steep edge. Sure enough, as we approached the top Kim spotted him again. At first all we could see were his antlers silhouetted on the skyline, we hunkered down in the rocks to watch and got ready in case he gave us a shot.

Waiting was a killer. We were smack in the middle of public land within a mile walking distance from a couple access points. We didn't want to spook the herd but dang, we needed to make something happen before dark or someone came stumbling in on us and screwed it all up.

After about a half-hour the buck worked his way around the top to check the does on our side of the ridge. I guessed the distance at about two hundred yards but he looked pretty small in the scope.

As he slowly picked his way across the rocky hillside; brush and other deer blocked any chance to shoot. As he finally stepped past a doe feeding below him I touched it off. The report was still rolling out across the countryside when I caught a glimpse of him lunging forward in the scope, then he was gone.

"Was he hit? Could you tell?"

"Didn't look like it; he just jumped and went out of sight."

As a kid I cut my teeth on Outdoor Life Magazine and lived for Jack O'Connor stories. Jack was my hero and role model. My father was an O'Connor fan too but he was also a very committed archer; the only way I could hunt was with Dad, so I was also an archer. One day Dad came home with a brand new .270 Remington Model 700 with a Burris 3X9. He never filled a tag with it but a few years later he gave it to me just before he died.

Prior to this trip I found a new article of O'Connor's; the subject was shooting moving game. Like most every hunter I've missed and/or wasted a few steaks with poor or hurried shots. I read the article several times and the gist of his closing statement really stuck with me: "It's pretty hard to over-lead running game."

After waiting the longest five minutes of the year, and intently glassing the area where we'd watched the buck, we were both eager to get across that canyon.

Kim held back to keep an eye on the hill. I crept across to the spot where I thought the buck might be lying dead, maybe hidden in the rocks... but when I got there, my heart sank... "No buck... no blood, I must've missed... Damn it!"

The whole time I was crossing the canyon and sneaking around, deer were getting up and bouncing downhill to the south. I circled the crest as the buck

had, trying to read the ground, hoping to find blood or some clue of where he'd gone, but in my heart I knew he was with the others, far downhill.

Finally I relaxed and resigned myself to the idea that all the deer were headed south, long gone and the buck was probably somewhere out there with them... maybe we could jump him again on our way to the truck...

Suddenly I was startled by an old doe that appeared from nowhere, she came trotting past me within twenty yards. "Last one bringing up the rear." I thought, still kicking myself for blowing such an easy shot at a good buck.

In the blink of an eye the buck was there, came right in behind the doe. Maybe he'd hung back because he was smart, maybe he was just too necked up and lovesick, but if he thought he was going to catch this old doe he was dead wrong.

The buck's eye bulged with alarm as he passed me, he knew we were far too close and he quickly bolted; his hooves dug into the ground like a race horse as he shifted gears into a high speed sprint to escape.

My rifle rose effortlessly, the safety somehow slid off... as he stretched it out everything went into slow motion. I felt no excitement, just detachment as if I was watching someone else. I realized I was following his lunging run in the scope, but caught myself; "Hold the center line; be calm!" O'Connor's article

raced through my mind. “Not when he’s moving up, get out ahead of him a little;” ... “a few inches ought to be enough... he’s so close... wait ‘til he’s on the ground... and... FIRE!” I felt some sort of a presence and could swear someone else yelled inside my head.

The rifle roared and the buck went limp piling up in a clatter of antlers, hooves and dust. Our hunt was over, this whole grand finale couldn’t have taken more than five or six seconds... at the time it seemed ironic to kill a mulie buck at such very close range in such huge wide-open country.

Standing over him admiring his body size and antlers, a lifetime of memories came flashing back. Kim topped the hill above me beaming with excitement; caught me ogling the buck like some goofy kid.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing, I’m just full of emotion right now; thinking about Dad and this gun, how O’Connor helped me shoot and how hard we’ve both worked for this.”

The buck’s neck was swollen with the rut and his heavy musk was almost sickening. Deep chested, with a huge potbelly, sporting three-point antlers on each side, he probably weighed 200 pounds field dressed. He wasn’t the whopper I’m always dreaming of, but he was a darn good buck for us. My first shot was a clean miss; the second broke his neck at the base.

After we got him dressed out and laced back up we started dragging; by the time we got to a county road about a mile away he was suede on both sides. Kim waited on an aspen bench above the road in the dark while I went for the pickup. Because we were so late our partners came looking for us and we all returned to ‘camp’ together.

Back at the log house dinner was ready and waiting. Afterwards, lounging around the blazing fireplace sipping kill-drinks we celebrated another great adventure; my screaming toes were long since forgotten, our whistles were wet, and we were with our closest family and friends. Could life possibly get any better?

About the Author: Phil Andresen grew up in Olympia Washington. He has been an avid Jack O'Connor fan since childhood and took his first black-tail deer with a bow when he was seventeen. Together, Phil and his wife Kim, hunted the Crazy Mountains of Montana for a number of years and have hunted, skied and vacationed all over the northwestern United States. Phil recently retired and attended the 2011 Jack O'Connor raffle ceremony at Lewiston in 2011; he enjoys writing and has submitted a couple of short stories to the Jack O'Connor website

Classic O'Connor

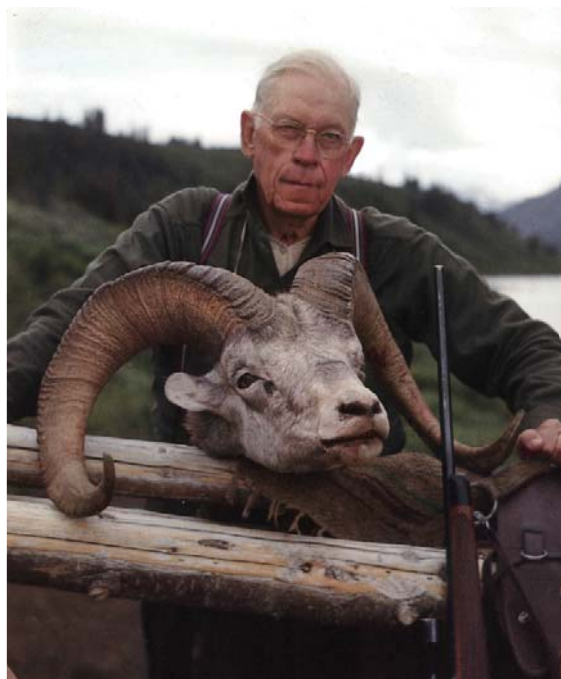
"What, No White-Tails?"

By Jack O'Connor- January 1939

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If I had to pick the American big game animal that has given me more real pleasure than any other, I think I'd choose the Arizona white-tail. I like the big mule deer, the majestic elk, the great, brown mountain sheep, the gaudy antelope.....

To read more about "What, No White-tail" please refer to our Jack O'Connor Archives within our website location!!!!



About the Author: Jack O'Connor's first love, besides his family, was the outdoors and writing about hunting, firearms, and the natural history of big game animals. As the longtime firearms editor for Outdoor Life magazine, O'Connor hunted and collected trophies throughout the world, and introduced millions of readers to hunting and firearms. He is still considered the undisputed dean of outdoor writing and journalism. Please visit our website at www.jack-oconnor.org to learn more about Jack, his family life, career, and conservation legacy.

Miscellany

At the Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center:

- *A copy of Jack O'Connor's .375H& H rifle, currently on display as the 2014 raffle gun of the year, will be raffled off to some lucky individual. This rifle, made by Roger and Paula Biesen, is the 2nd of three rifles to be built in the "African" series. The drawing will be held on June 7th, 2014 at the Jack O'Connor Center. Be sure to come out on that day!*
- *At the Jack O'Connor Center we now have an ample supply of books on O'Connor and also several of the out of print classics, such as The Rifle Book and The Shotgun Book. We also have others in limited supply. Call the Center for availability. 208-743-5043.*
- *The Winchester Model 70 Jack O'Connor Tribute Rifles are still on the street and supplies are drying up. If you are lucky enough to own one of these "limited run" rifles be sure to order your gun case from the Center. Please read the accompanying paperwork that came with your rifle for ordering details.*

In our next newsletter:

- *Allan Jones, an O'Connor fan, will discuss one of his favorite topics in the next Tech Corner.*
- *In the 2nd Quarter newsletter we will share some thoughts on "Fair Chase", women that hunt, and getting kids back outdoors.*
- *Contributor's favorite cooking recipes.*
- *Plus, another great article from the Jack O'Connor collection.*