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The Greatest Hunters Convention on the Planet.

· *DSC photos*

The Director's Corner

Last year, Buck Buckner notified the Board that his friend, Ben F. Carter, Dallas Safari Club Executive Director, had donated a booth at the 2015 DSC Convention. The Board unanimously agreed to attend and take the Pilot Ram. The DSC Convention ran from January 15-18.

A lot of people made JOCHH&EC's participation in the DSC Convention possible and the Center is indebted to them for their contributions. As I think about it, I am humbled by working with such a talented, intelligent, and motivated group.

Dave Weisel, Ken and Dax Wareham, Wayne Van Zwooll, Joel Ristau, Shirley Phillips, Bradford and Anne O'Connor, Mandy Miles, Buck Buckner, and I attended the DSC convention. Darrel Inman's display stands for the rams were true works of art and made the exhibit possible. Jeff Nasset coordinated the Marketing Committee's efforts in planning for the Convention and kept our efforts on track. Stephanie Inman's ad in the program was beautiful. JOCHH&EC is fortunate to have such a talented graphic designer.

The exhibit booth donated by Ken Wareham's brother was perfect and made our booth look very attractive and professional.

Thanks to Mandy, Ken, Tony Caligiuri, and Blair Hansen, we were able to locate and borrow Herb Klein's beautiful dall ram that was taken on the same trip that Jack collected the *Pilot Mountain Ram*. Karen Morton, with the Perot Museum of Nature and Science, was extremely helpful and instrumental in facilitating our borrowing the Klein ram. The last time these two trophies were together was 1950, when they were taken. There are several pictures of both rams in the photos included in this newsletter. One interesting encounter occurred when Herb Klein's grandson stopped by the booth and

commented that it had been a long time since Herb's ram had been exhibited.

The DSC Convention has grown dramatically since I last attended in 2003. The 2015 convention had over 1,000 exhibitors, 1,730 booths, and covered 850,000 square feet. Attendance was 45,000 over the 4-day event. I have included quite a few Convention photos in this newsletter and plan to post more on the website in the future.

We printed and distributed copies of Jack's January and February 1951 *Outdoor Life* articles about the two trophy rams. A copy of the January article, *The Big Ram of Pilot Mountain*, is posted on our website right below this issue of the newsletter.

We had 20 people join Friends of Jack O'Connor and pose with Jack's .270s built by Al Biesen. Many thanks are in order for Bradford and Hank Kaufman for their generosity in allowing us to exhibit O'Connor #1 & #2.

Long-time friend of the Center, Jim Zumbo, stopped by and visited. Diana Rupp, author and editor-in-chief of *Sports Afield* magazine also came by. Author and television star Larry Weishuhn visited our booth and joined Friends of Jack O'Connor.

Our booth was close to the Wild Sheep Foundation's booth, so I stopped by and inquired about the cost of a booth at their convention. Becky Layne, WSF exhibit coordinator, offered JOCHH&EC a complimentary booth at their 2016 convention in Reno, Nevada. During the February meeting, the Board agreed to attend the WSF Convention and the completed application has been mailed.

We also had the pleasure of meeting Theresa, Steve, and Jamie Belknap at the Convention. They are from Spokane and are active in a great organization, *Northwest Sportsman's Club* (<http://www.northwestsportsmansclub.com>). *Northwest Sportsman's Club* funds non-profit organizations and they invited us to submit a

funding request, which we did. We received word last week that they awarded JOCHH&EC \$2,100 for 3-D archery targets for the YHEC program and YHEC travel. Take a look at their Web site and consider joining and supporting NWSC; they are an excellent group.

These are exciting times for JOCHH&EC.



About the Director: Howard Erdman is a Benefactor member of the NRA and charter member of Friends of Jack O'Connor. He is also a member of Dallas Safari Club, Wild Sheep Foundation, and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. An ardent fan of JOC since his mother gave him his first Outdoor Life subscription in 1957. Howard served on the JOCHH&EC Board from 2011-2015, when he accepted the Director position. He is a Navy veteran and lives in Pullman, Washington with his wife of 44 years, Phyllis. He recently retired from Lewis-Clark State College where he served as the Director of Institutional Planning, Research & Assessment.

The Old Bull of Red Rock Creek

By

Chet Fitzgerald

There is a painting of a bull elk that hangs above the fireplace in the corner of my old log cabin. It is an evocative image by a very accomplished painter from Eastern Idaho. I don't know exactly where the inspiration for the painting came from, but by the look of the landscape, I'd say it is set somewhere in the Book Cliffs or Wasatch Plateau country of Central Utah. Big red sandstone cliffs surround rolling parkland of aspen and sagebrush cut by big grassy meadows. In the foreground, a massive bull guards his harem of several cows, looking directly through you with the bristling anger of peak rut. His antlers are so fantastic as to almost be fictional. They start with heavy bases and long brow tines before bolting out horizontally for two feet in both directions. They then make a sharp 90 degree sweep to the rear, creating that perfect boxy symmetrical shape with long royal tines and drooping main beams that make the heart of any elk hunter swoon.

I first fell in love with the image while still in college. I saw the print hanging on the wall of a local sporting goods store and couldn't help but stare. At \$250, it was a lot of money for a cash-strapped student, so I dismissed it as being out of my league and

walked away. But, try as I may, I could not get the image out of my mind, so after several trips to the store I broke down and bought it, took it home and hung it its spot above the fireplace.

That was fifteen years ago now, and I can't tell you how many times I have sat before a crackling fire on an icy winter evening, watching the bull as he seemed to move in the flickering firelight like a pictograph on the wall of some ancient hunter's cave. Over time, that bull became etched into my subconscious mind as the epitome of what a trophy bull elk should look like, but, as with many things too good to be true, I never found his equal in the field.

Then, in 2012, my luck began to turn. I picked up my mail on the way home from work one day and it contained a letter from the Utah Fish and Game. I figured it was just a general deer license, as in 14 years of applying I had never drawn a limited tag in Utah. With guarded enthusiasm, I opened the envelope and into my lap fell a tag for the Wasatch Mountains elk unit. In that moment all of my fall hunting plans changed, as I had exactly nine days to experience this once in a lifetime hunt.

The summer flew by. I made several scouting trips to the unit and settled on two basic areas. One was at the head of the Currant Creek drainage on the eastern edge of the Wasatch Plateau, the other was along Reservation Ridge on the Plateau's south rim.

The landscape is just like that in the painting, a big rolling country of aspen parklands dotted with high peaks and steep canyons. Most of the country is very high, ranging from 8,000-11,000 feet. It is blessed with plenty of grass, cool patches of timber and live water. In other words, it is perfect elk habitat.

The hunt was slated to start on the 15th of September. In most years, that should put you directly in the peak of the rut. I was a little worried though as the summer of 2012 was one of the hottest and driest in recent history, so, I wasn't sure what to expect when I pulled into camp two days before the opener and began to scout in earnest. I didn't see much that first evening and was a little discouraged as I banked the wood stove and turned in.

Then, something magical happened. During the night a cold but dry low pressure system moved in, and when I threw the flap to the wall tent open, I was greeted by bitter cold air and heavy frost on the sun cured grass by the creek. It was 17 degrees. The old-timers always told me that elk will hit 'full bugle' when the temperature drops into the teens after the first full moon in mid-September. And right they were. Bull elk came out of the woodwork. Every canyon seemed to have several bulls bugling, chasing cows, fending off other bulls. I saw over 20 bulls that day, 12 were big mature six points and any would make an excellent trophy.

Opening day dawned clear and still bitter cold. It was 15 degrees as we left camp, a full 60 degrees colder than it had been the day before. We hiked eight miles and saw several bulls that day but none of them spoke to me. After waiting 14 years, I was not being too hasty.

And so it went the next few days. We would rise at 4:00, be in the field before light and stalk several bulls each day, but I never saw the bull from the painting. We heard so many bulls bugle that the sound seemed to get stuck in our heads. They bugled all day and we fell asleep each night listening to bulls in the surrounding canyons.

As it turns out, I had been walking right by the old bull each day. The bull was a loner, so old that he no longer kept a harem. He lived up in the head of a deep, rocky, timber filled canyon just a mile or so from camp. I would love to say that I called him in or stalked him in his bed in the black timber, but that is not what happened at all. The bull found me.

We were walking back to camp after another long day hunting in the roadless area. It was late, but there was still 30 minutes of light left, so I decided to stop by a little beaver pond in the bottom of the canyon below camp. I had heard bulls bugle from this spot for several nights and the mud around the pond reeked with the pungent smell of rutting bulls. I did not have to wait long. After about five minutes a nice six point pushed his little herd of cows out of the timber across the meadow and they

eagerly ran to the pond. The day had been warm and the cows seemed excited to drink as the bull milled around and bugled. It was late in the hunt and I nearly shot the bull. I raised the rifle and looked at the crosshair stark and black against his tan, sun-bleached shoulder, but something just wasn't right. It would be the bull of my dreams or none at all.

Then, as if on some prearranged cue, a twig snapped behind us. Another elk was coming to water. We froze in place as we heard each step bring the unseen animal closer.

I slowly turned my head. At first, the elk was screened by a line of low fir trees, but he soon stepped out at 16 yards and stood glaring at the bull at the pond behind me. The old bull was breathtaking. His rack was over 50 inches wide and had that perfect, square, symmetrical look of the bull in the painting. He was massive too, with long heavy points and main beams that nearly touched his rump. And then he bugled. I can tell you that at 16 yards, the bugle of a massive old patriarch bull is something to behold. It was so loud that you could feel it vibrate in your chest. This was the bull I was destined to take. In one motion, I raised my 30-06 and switched the safety off. The bull saw the movement and spun to go back the way he came. As he turned broadside, the crosshair touched the crease behind his shoulder and I pressed the trigger.

It did not take long for the old bull to die. He dropped at the shot and lay on his left side. He stretched out his legs, sighed and

for the first time in days, the woods fell silent.

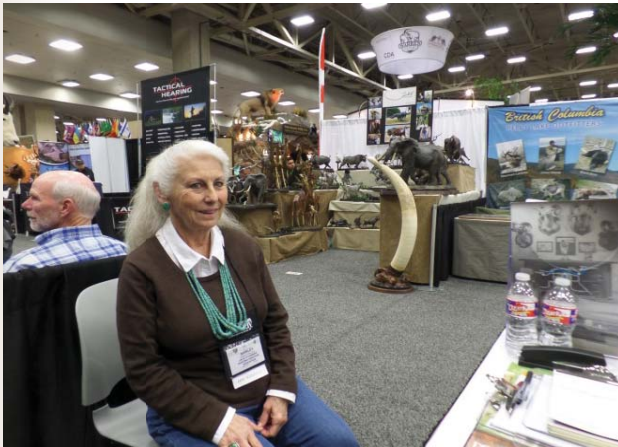
The biologist determined that the old bull had spent 10 years on the plateau. After all that time, I don't know what twist of fate brought us together. I am sure he had dodged hundreds of hunters, fought countless battles and sired dozens of calves. He now hangs on the log wall above the fireplace, in the same place where the painting once was. And on those cold winter nights, he too seems to move in the flickering firelight.

End

About the author: *After growing up on a large ranching operation in Northern Utah, Chet Fitzgerald earned a Master's 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 fifteen years in Utah and Alaska. He enjoys fine rifles and is an avid big game, upland bird 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 an assortment of English Foxhounds and German Shorthaired Pointers.*



Dallas Safari Club Convention Photos



Board Member Shirley Phillips



Jack O'Connor's .270s built by Al Biesen (#1 Top;
#2 Bottom)



Herb Klein's Ram (L) and JOC's Pilot Mountain
Ram (R)



Board Member Mandy Miles



Author and Friend of JOC Member Larry Weishuhn
with JOC's favorite rifle



Board Member Joel Ristau

Jack O'Connor

HUNTING HERITAGE & EDUCATION CENTER
LEWISTON, IDAHO EST. 2006



Author and Board Member Wayne Van Zwoll with
JOC's favorite rifle and the Pilot Ram



Author Jim Zumbo and Bradford O'Connor



Board Member Buck Buckner



Anne and Bradford O'Connor



Wayne Van Zwoll, Mandy Miles, and Dax Wareham



A new member of FoJOC



Bradford autographing a copy of *The Big Ram of Pilot Mountain* for a new member of FoJOC



Bradford O'Connor with one of our new FoJOC members



Anne and Bradford O'Connor



Author John Mattera

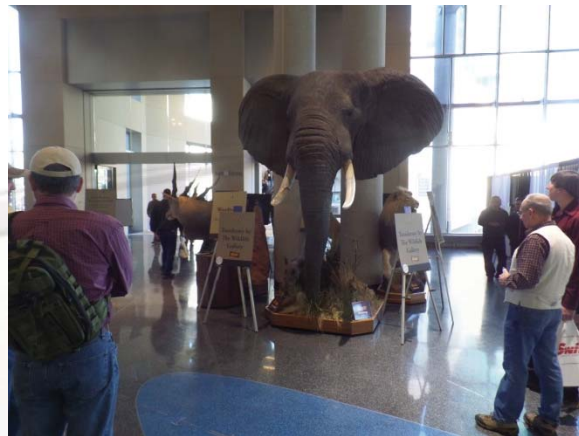


Howard Erdman, Director



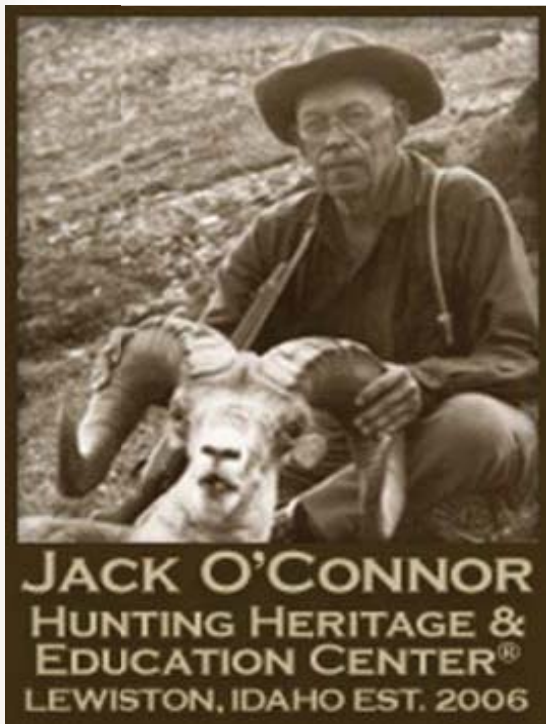
Ken Wareham, "Theodore Roosevelt", and Ken's son Dax

Dallas safari Club Convention Exhibits





JOC's Beretta 450 in the Beretta Exhibit



The Jack O'Connor Center opened June 3, 2006. It is the permanent home of the O'Connor wildlife collection, which is comprised of 65 mounted heads from around the world, numerous photographs and O'Connor memorabilia, as well as a complete collection of O'Connor books and many outdoor magazine articles.

Jack's famous Biesen stocked M-70 .270 is on display as is Eleanor O'Connor's 7x57 Mauser. These two rifles have appeared in more articles and had more written about them than any rifles in history. Other O'Connor firearms are also on display.

The Center houses a gift shop with clothing and other logoed merchandise as well as original O'Connor books for sale.

Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage & Education Center®

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