

Jack O'Connor

2014 Newsletter 3rd Quarter

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT CARD



By HOWARD ERDMAN,
CO-CHAIRMAN

This year the Center had another successful auction and JOC Day. The Friday night auction featured excellent hors d'oeuvres, drink, and conversation. Husband and wife authors, John Barsness and Eileen Clarke delivered an excellent presentation which drew parallels between their marital/hunting partnership and that of Jack and Eleanor O'Connor. The presentation was funny, informative and genuinely entertaining. A big thanks to John and Eileen for coming to Lewiston! Attendance at the auction was a bit less than last year but the net proceeds were

very close. We had some really fine-quality items that piqued several extended bidding battles. Bill McCann served as auctioneer and did a superlative job. In addition to being a great auctioneer, Bill is a local attorney so he focused quite a bit of his humor at the other attorneys in attendance. The atmosphere was great and conducive to enthusiastic bidding. Thanks, Bill.

Judging Saturday's JOC Day by the number of visitors, it was a great success. While we didn't keep an exact count of visitors, the general consensus was that it was as well attended as last year. We had excellent exhibits on the tables and in the parking lot as well as great concessions. Everyone who worked on the Friday auction and Saturday gun show/ raffle, and there were many, deserves our heartfelt thanks for a great event!

Following tradition, Bradford O'Connor drew the winning raffle tickets. The raffle drawing yielded our first winner from Canada, who won the beautiful Biesen/Winchester .375 H&H. Roger Biesen has always urged that his rifles be used and not sequestered to "gun safe queen" status. This year's winner will certainly have plenty of opportunity to use his .375 H&H in Canada.

Similarly, the second prize and third prizes were won by out of state residents (Wisconsin and Texas). Next year, we will raffle the last .375 H&H in the series and, unfortunately, the last

rifle from Roger Biesen who has decided to retire. We all hate to see such a talented craftsman retire, but at some point it's a decision that everyone must make.

In fact, Mike Butler has decided to enjoy his hard-earned retirement and has tendered his resignation effective July 31. Mike has served as director for the last three years as JOCHHEC's longest serving director. During his tenure he has made an indelible impression on JOCHHEC. He submitted two successful grant proposals to the Friends of NRA that resulted in over \$20,000 for our Youth Hunter Education Challenge program. Additionally, he has ordered equipment, secured instructors, organized schedules, and the myriad of things that need to be done to get the YHEC program off the ground. He also initiated the newsletter that you are currently reading. The Board wanted a newsletter and Mike delivered with a plus. Mike accomplished all of this plus he ran the day-to-day operation of the center. In three years, Mike has accomplished so much because he's one of those rare tenacious people who stays focused on objectives and commits to delivering the desired

outcome. On top of all that, Mike is one of the best "people persons" that I know.

He has been an outstanding ambassador for JOCHHEC, carrying the message of what we represent to anyone who would listen. To say he is likable is inadequate: he knows everyone and is liked by all. The only solace in his leaving is that he will remain connected to JOCHHEC as a volunteer. Mike will be missed by all and me especially. Thanks, Mike—for all you've done!

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

Favorite Sayings.....

I have always enjoyed a couple of sayings, "All good things eventually come to an end!"... and "Time flies when you are having fun!" These two sayings sum up my feelings after having been involved with The Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center over the course of the last three years. It has been a wonderful experience working with our board of directors and volunteers in the director's capacity. We, as a team, have accomplished much together.

As a kid I started reading Jack O'Connor articles in Outdoor Life magazine before I really understood the true meaning of adventure or technical writing. With age, I learned a deep appreciation of the written word, what safe firearms handling and shooting meant, and a lust for the Western lore of yesteryear. My

career choice as a wildlife biologist was molded by O'Connor's deep conservation ethic and his awareness of the world around him. During my college years I read Aldo Leopold to augment my formal biological training but I always came back to the excitement of Jack O'Connor's outdoor writing. It has never left me.

With all of this said, this will be the last "From the Director's Chair" I will pen. I am entering fully into retirement life the end of July. But like lots of things, you never walk completely away from things you love to do. I will still be walking around as a volunteer, helping out where I can and every now and then pen a good story to share. I will continue to keep my hand in the game so to speak.

There's still tons of work to do to make the Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center a viable and relevant organization to foster our hunting and shooting traditions and heritage.

In closing, I want to thank all of our volunteers and guest writers who have contributed to the newsletter and forum area development as a place to share information and to those whom have offered good suggestions to make us just a little bit better at what we do. I also want to thank our readers that have

emailed me with ideas and constructive comments. Thanks, guys!

Good Hunting and I hope to see you down the trail one of these days...!!!!

MB

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



“Beyond the 270 Winchester”

By ALLAN JONES

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

I've already written about two of Jack's favorite cartridge: the 270 Winchester and the 7mm Mauser (7x57mm). As Jack's readers know, he used the 375 H&H Magnum extensively on dangerous game hunts. Let's see why this cartridge worked for Jack and is still among the best of the medium bores today.

The 375 Holland & Holland Magnum rolled out from that fine old British purveyor of superb hunting rifles in 1912. Although not the first belted Magnum, its dimensions set the standard for powerful cartridges for a century. Let's talk about that belt.

Centerfire cartridges require some feature on the case to act as a positive stop to prevent the blow of the firing pin from driving the case deeper into the chamber. This is headspace control. Without it you get misfires and lousy accuracy.

In 1912, the two most common ways to control headspace were a protruding rim (30-30 Winchester; 45-70 Government) or a pronounced shoulder where the case body narrows to accommodate bullets of smaller diameter than the case body (30-06; 7mm and 8mm Mauser). There were two reasons why Holland & Holland could not make this work for the 375 H&H:

- The cartridge was designed for bolt-action repeating rifles. In that class of firearm, a conventional protruding rim greatly limits magazine capacity, and complicates reliable feeding. The last thing you want when you've wounded a lion is a jammed cartridge turning your rifle into an expensive yet poorly designed club.
- In 1912, the British affinity for loading long sticks of Cordite propellant—long enough to reach from the web of the case to the base of the bullet—dictated the shape of the “bullet end” of the case. In applying this design demand, H&H was left with a shallow shoulder of minimum width. Many rifles have enough firing pin energy to set back a narrow shoulder with the risk of a misfire and a guarantee of poor accuracy.

H&H first applied a belt to their little-known 400/375 Belted Nitro Express, an older cartridge that was 500-600 ft/sec behind the 375 H&H with equivalent bullet weights. The belt was longer and more pronounced than what we know today. As I look at it with the eye of someone who knows something about case-making tooling, I see a manufacturing headache.

The belt H&H chose for the 375 H&H was more subtle and shorter yet had enough surface area to support the firing pin blow. It must have worked, as it set the dimensional standard for belted Magnums for over a century. And we gained a magnificent cartridge that is as valid today as in 1912.

For years the 375 had a limited selection of bullet weights. You either shot 270- or 300-grain bullets. The fact that there is only 10 percent difference

in weight led to myth about the 375 that is still posited today: the cartridge shoots to the same point of aim with bullets of different weights. We now have a wider range of factory bullet weights and even more available to the handloader. I know from personal experience that you will find some loads that do not march to the beat of that old chestnut.

That's a minor quibble, and more with those who parrot what someone else wrote decades earlier. The 375 H&H is a serious cartridge capable of taking heavy and/or dangerous game over long ranges.

When a friend was considering a rifle he could use on just about any game he was called on to hunt, we looked at the trajectory numbers of the 375 H&H and compared it to modern cartridges that have a reputation as long-range specialists. The path of a factory 375 H&H 270-grain spitzer across 400 yards is remarkably close to one of the oft-cited “flat-shooters,” the 300 Winchester Magnum. In hunting large African plains game, that is a very good thing.

If you are a handloader, the 375 H&H becomes one of most flexible cartridge. Just because a Ferrari can do 150mph doesn't mean you'll drive that fast all the time. So it is with the 375 in the hands of one who reloads; you can adjust the power level for a particular type of hunting.

A case in point: the same friend who was looking at 375 trajectories ended up buying a Ruger #1 just like mine. He needed to hunt East Texas whitetail and knew full-power loads were overkill, so we started working with lighter bullets at

lower velocity. Some of the experiments ended up producing inconsistent loads but we settled on one that he has used ever since. We loaded the Speer 235-grain semi-spitzer SP—a bullet that can be safely driven to 2900 ft/sec with max loads—to run at about 2600 ft/sec using 66.0 grains of IMR 4064. The load was consistent in spite of the spacious case (we used Magnum primers; that helped). This load had three great attributes:

- It produced very good accuracy in my friend's 375
- It's perceived recoil is about like a 30-06 with 165-grain bullet in a standard weight rifle
- It spoils very little usable meat due to its modest velocity

There have been challengers to the 375 H&H. Roy Weatherby created an "improved" 375 H&H with his 375 Weatherby and, later, a real bruiser in the 378 Weatherby. Its massive case can be traced back to another Jack O'Connor cartridge, the 416 Rigby. The fairly recent 375 Ruger gives about the same performance as the H&H but from a much shorter barrel and in rifles with

standard-length actions. It also avoided using a belt, a feature that can get in the way of top accuracy if not needed for headspacing.

In spite of this, the 375 H&H remains one of the more popular cartridges, and enjoys nearly worldwide availability of ammo in case the airline loses you ammo on the way to an exotic hunt. Of the 37-caliber cartridges available today, the H&H is chambered by the most riflemakers. So, even after over a century on the throne, nothing has yet to usurp its dominance.

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



“The Car Accident”

By CAROLINE O'CONNOR-MCCULLAM

The January of 1956 was bitterly cold, so Mother's elderly father thought it would be a grand idea to treat her to a cruise to Hawaii. Mother jumped at the chance. They were to meet in San Francisco -- he from Missouri and she from Lewiston -- and board the ship there.

So she and my dad decided to drive up to Spokane, spend the night at the Davenport Hotel for a romantic evening, and my dad would drive her to the airport the next morning. They even had a bottle of very good champagne in the trunk of the car to toast the cruise.

They didn't get there. Somewhere outside of Rosalia, Washington an oncoming car slid on the icy road and hit them head-on. There were no seat belts then. It was miraculous that they didn't sustain worse injuries. (The man

in the other car was killed.) Dad, who was in the passenger seat, was slammed into the dashboard, breaking off the head of his left femur -- an injury that would affect him for the rest of his life. The slanted scar on his forehead that you see in his photographs dates from this injury. He must have bled like a hog. Mother was driving, saw the oncoming car, and braced tightly to the steering wheel. She had a concussion and hideous facial bruising. She was kept in Deaconess Hospital in Spokane for a couple of days. Dad didn't come home for many weeks.

Dad had a wonderful secretary named Dorothy, who drove up twice a week to bring him his mail and take dictation. I doubt that he missed a beat with his commitment to Outdoor Life and his fans.

The family all went to Deaconess for his birthday on January 22. We found him pinioned in a complicated metal apparatus, with his left leg high in traction. (He literally had a pin in that hip all the rest of his life, and he liked to show friends X-rays of it.) Our powerful father, whom we adored and counted on for almost everything, was lying there helpless, looking pale and shrunken. Mother had brought a cake, and when the candles were lit and we sang "Happy Birthday" he bawled like a baby. Anyway, he wanted to be in Lewiston, so arrangements were made for ambulance transport to St. Joseph's. He was enthroned in his single room, still in traction. Dorothy the secretary came and went with her brief case of steno pads, letters, and manuscripts.

Mother visited at least once a day, the rest of the family when possible. Friends often crowded the room. A priest from the church next door found an excuse to drop by each evening after his pious duties to partake of the Scotch kept in the bedside table. Dad got a huge kick out of that. The priest was apparently very funny and very, very Irish.

But Dad wanted to go home. Of course, it was utterly impossible -- the traction apparatus with its weights, urinals, bed pans, bed baths, etc. He basically bullied everyone into making it happen. When I got home from school one day, there he was, the traction devices somehow attached to the four-poster bed. He remained there for weeks, driving Mother nuts. He was Jack O'Connor, and as always restless and impatient, and he had many needs. He kept a police whistle at the ready and used it to summon help....A lot of help! That whistle was shrilling night a day. Poor Mother.

Eventually, probably with the help of a physical therapist, he stood at the bedside -- and promptly fainted dead away. It took what seemed a very long time to get around downstairs with the walker, and then eventually to get up the stairs to his beloved typewriter. And life slowly began to go on as usual.

The following year there was a lawsuit brought against the other guy's insurance company, which refused to pay damages. The trial was in Spokane. My sister Cathy and I went up to observe the goings-on. I was bored silly. Little did we know that the verdict, which clearly should have been in my father's favor, was in favor of the

defendants! It came out later that the retired plumbers and farmers' wives on the jury found my dad's self-assurance and stentorian voice offensive. There was much made of the "open" bottle of champagne found in the wrecked car (it was in fact in the trunk of the car and had frozen, popping the cork out.) So much for the legal system. It embittered him for the rest of his life, and certainly gave him a much lower opinion of the human race, and especially of attorneys.

His left leg always remained slightly thinner and weaker than his right. He was 52 when the injury happened. He lived another 22 amazing years, traveling and hunting all over the world and doing some of his best writing ever. As always, he soldiered on.

That was my father.

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

“From The Column, No. 12: Jack O'Connor and the Cult of High Velocity”

BY CHUCK HAWKS

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The late Jack O'Connor, the Dean of American Gun Writers, seems to be have become stereotyped as the historical proponent of small bore, high velocity rifle cartridges. There is no question that O'Connor wrote extensively about such cartridges; in fact, he wrote about virtually all of the popular rifle cartridges of his day.

However, what many commentators today seem to have forgotten is that

Jack O'Connor killed many large and dangerous game animals, including all of the African Big 5, as well as the heavy and dangerous game of India and North America. He used and wrote very highly of the .375 H&H, .416 Rigby and .450 Watts (equivalent of the .458 Lott), among others, for such use. O'Connor was, in fact, almost single-handedly responsible for the popularity of the .416 Rigby and subsequent .416 caliber cartridges in North America.

What differentiated Jack O'Connor from Elmer Keith (aside from the fact that Jack was a literate guy and a fine writer) was that he had enough sense to employ such cannons when required, and used more sensible cartridges such as the .257 Roberts, .270 Winchester, 7x57 and .30-06 for thin-skinned non-dangerous game.

Writers today usually summarize Jack O'Connor as the small bore, high velocity proponent so that they can contrast his accomplishments with Elmer Keith (the big bullet for everything guy). But in reality it just ain't so.

I've read just about everything Jack O'Connor ever wrote and talked to the man. The reality is that he advocated bullet placement first and then choosing a rifle/cartridge that allowed the hunter to place his bullet precisely. Most of the time, for most shooters and most game, that is one of the smaller (.24 to .30) calibers, due to less recoil and muzzle blast. However, for big and dangerous game, he used and recommended rifles and cartridges designed for the purpose.

O'Connor was never a high velocity "true believer" like Roy Weatherby, who went to Africa and knocked off a Cape

buffalo with a .257 Wby. Magnum to prove that it could be done. Nor was he particularly a fan of "Magnum" cartridges, although he owned and used some magnum rifles. Jack always recommended appropriate calibers for the job at hand.

He preferred reasonably flat-shooting cartridges, because he hunted a great deal in open country and found that they made accurate bullet placement easier. He did not advocate velocity as the key to killing power. He advocated bullet placement as the key to killing power.

Lastly, the much ballyhooed Elmer Keith vs. Jack O'Connor debate in print was actually pretty one sided: mostly Elmer attacking Jack. Jack seemed to stick in Elmer's craw. For whatever reason, Elmer disliked O'Connor and it was often apparent in his articles.

I have always suspected that envy of a superior writer was at the root of Elmer's antipathy. It is not too well known, but Keith's manuscripts were crude in the extreme. The finished product that appeared in magazines and books was largely the work of his editors. Jack O'Connor, on the other hand, was a former college English professor and a polished writer. He was also more highly paid than Elmer Keith.

For his part, Jack largely ignored Elmer. He tried hard to report accurately, factually, and not to ride hobbies. He wrote the truth as he saw it, based on his vast experience and considerable research, and let the chips fall where they may. As far as I know, O'Connor never publicly expressed a personal opinion about Elmer Keith and he never seemed very interested in Elmer's

opinions or articles. In reality, I doubt that he thought much about Elmer one way or the other.

About the Author: Founder and Managing Editor of Guns and Shooting Online (an online reference source for information and articles of interest to shooters. It is written by shooters for shooters) Chuck Hawks has been an avid recreational shooter for over 50 years. He is, in addition, a noted researcher, writer and professional photographer. His shooting career started when he was selected to join his high school rifle team in his freshman year. He has sold guns and outdoor accessories at the retail level. He qualified "Expert" with both rifle and pistol while in the United States Air Force and was invited to try out for the USAF national shooting team. He was the instructor for a guns and shooting seminar offered by his local community college. He is a Benefactor member of the NRA (USA) and was made a complimentary member of the National Firearms Association (Canada). He has been writing about guns and shooting since his college days and founded Guns and Shooting Online in 1997.

Blast from The Past

*Reprinted with permission from the
Lewiston Morning Tribune*

This story was published in the Lewiston Tribune on July 15, 1955.

“Tiger Hunt in India Dull Stuff, Lewiston Outdoor Writer Finds”

If you want to be bored stiff, just go to India for a tiger hunt, according to Jack O'Connor. Lewiston resident and shooting editor of Outdoor Life magazine, who returned this week from a two months shoot in India and Iran.

Trying to catch a tiger is worse than trying to hook a catfish, he said. “Too much depends on the mood of the tiger,” he thinks. “The poor hunter cannot go out and stalk the tiger. Mostly he just sits and waits for the tiger to show up.”

O'Connor sat up endlessly in trees all over northern India waiting for a shot at a tiger, and did not get one until his trip was almost over. The very large tiger he finally shot was living in tall grass and reeds and eating domestic hump back cows and tame water buffalo.

The country was so densely populated that hunting tigers there was like shooting one in Lewiston Orchards, he says. The big cats found refuge in the reeds and tall grass of the river bottom and whenever they felt hungry, they would go out, kill a cow, and drag it into the reeds. Cover was so thick that the only way to get a shot was to drive the tigers into the open with elephants.

Bagged Wild Boar

Besides tiger, O'Connor shot wild boar in India, black buck (a plains antelope), spotted Axis deer and hog deer. He and his hunting companion, Lee Sproul of Providence, R.I., who has hunted pheasants and deer near Lewiston on several occasions, shot many jungle fowl, which look like game fowl, and peacocks, which taste like a cross between a pheasant and a turkey. Sproul also shot a tiger.

From India the two hunters flew to Iran, where they were guests of Prince Abdorezza Pahlevi, brother of the Shah, on a 30-day hunt for mountain game. Members of the party got Persian red sheep, another wild sheep known as the urial, wild boar, red deer which are related to the American elk, and Persian brown bear, which are related to the American grizzly. One of O'Connor's rams was shot at 13,000 feet elevation.

Traveling from hunting spot to hunting spot by royal train, the party hunted sheep, ibex, and boar in three different localities in western Iran. They then moved to the mountains in the Caspian

Provinces, a few miles from the Russian border for urial, a wild sheep with a white back, and Persian red deer.

Prince A Great Hunter

O'Connor, who is one of the dozen or so men who have shot all four varieties of North American wild sheep, thinks Prince Abdorezza is the finest mountain hunter he has ever seen.

"The guy can make most professional Alberta and Yukon sheep guides look sick," O'Connor said yesterday. "He is a genius at using binoculars, he's a crack shot, and he will climb in places that would turn the hair of a New York steeplejack snow white!"

The prince plans to hunt sheep in North America in the fall of 1957 and will stop at Lewiston.

On the trip, the prince shot the No. 2 Persian ibex in the world's records after a climb so dangerous that O'Connor, who was watching with a binocular, couldn't bring himself to look at times.

The Asiatic trip was on assignment for Outdoor Life, and the first story of the series will appear in the October issue. In 1953 O'Connor hunted in British East Africa on assignment from the magazine and he has gathered story material from Mexico to the Alaska border.

He returned this week by car from the East with his daughter Catherine, who flew to New York to meet him. On the trip, O'Connor and Sproul flew to New

Delhi, India, by the way of London and Rome.

"Muley Bucks"

BY PHIL ANDRESEN



My wife Kim has been on a hunting hiatus, so I've been hunting alone for about twelve years now. Our partners Jimmy & Sharon, and Kim's Uncle Joe & Aunt Maggie quit the team; then both her grandparents Dot & Rich Blake passed away... sadly; our family hunting party is on the downhill...

I've also changed my tactics; these days I'm on top as dawn and legal shooting time arrive, after that I can be found most anywhere. With this new approach I'm often the first guy on the hill, but plenty of others come in afoot and on quads from all directions. Still, I honestly believe if you stay out all-day, every day, you'll eventually notch a tag... and a good buck can pop up most anywhere.

I hunt the same north-south ridge each morning; it's about a forty-five minute

hike to get on top of the north end; from there the hunt is to the south where the main ridge rises into a timbered high-point, from there it turns west, across a saddle, and ends on a lightly timbered knob. A one-way hike to the knob is about a mile and a half.

West of the high-point, below the saddle, is a broad basin; its home away-from-home for migrating deer; bears and coyotes live there and wolves prowl it periodically. It's one of those unique north-facing places with elevation, panoramic visibility, plenty of feed and shady cover... it provides everything deer need along with a feeling of quiet remoteness, like their summer-range. Depending on the weather, moon phase and where they're coming from, migrating groups will lounge around feeding for several days, but with any hunting pressure they'll bail out and won't hole-up again for miles... later arrivals winter here.

As usual, legal shooting time found me up on top. I always hunt it in a southerly S pattern, constantly glassing down into all the small finger ridges and draws on each side of the main ridge. The migration had started; a couple groups of does and fawns were headed south and another bunch fed across the top headed east.

Watching your back-trail is a must in this wide-open country; it takes nothing at all to conceal a deer and migrators can cover miles in no time. When they're moving, mule deer travel like caribou: they follow each other's scent trails; the

lead-doe knows where to go, where to feed, and where it's best to hole up and rest.

It was Wednesday, the middle of our nine-day season; out of habit I turned to check my back-trail just in time to see a half-dozen does come running around the top of a hill; in the middle of the bunch was a pretty good buck. They stayed tightly grouped as they slowed to a walk; quickly I ranged them at 525 yards. Between us was a shallow swale at about 200 yards, getting to that little groove was going to be the best chance I'd have to ambush that buck.

Crawling in sagebrush is never easy; sharp rocks, old barbed-wire, dry grass, rattlesnakes, yellow-jackets... heck, there're plenty of things that can make it very ugly to travel on your hands and knees; but none of them mattered. Immediately I was down in the brush, out of the deer's sight and crawling to that shallow swale. Just as I crossed the bottom and started up the other side I glassed and ranged them again. Somehow they still hadn't seen me, but something or someone must've jumped them, they were hot and panting, and still very skittish; the buck was a good three-point.

Crawling that last ten or fifteen yards I felt like I had this in the bag; just as I took off my pack and pushed it ahead of me to use for a rest, two does popped up from my left. All I saw was their heads... they couldn't have been more than fifteen or twenty feet away. That's the beauty of hunting high in the

morning; the thermals lift your scent, game can't smell you from below... But, at that close range they didn't need to smell me... The lead-doe saw me first; we were eye-to-eye when she snorted, then swapped ends and bailed off the edge in an airborne escape. Quickly I looked back to the buck, he was fidgeting and obviously nervous; his does didn't hesitate a second, they'd seen the other deer bail out and weren't sticking around to find out why... one of 'em hit the panic-button and the rest followed, off they went bouncing out of sight around the hillside.

The next day my son Jeff joined me, we decided to take my usual route in, but to separate about half-way up; he would side-hill through the eastern finger-ridges and we'd meet at the base of the high-point.

I couldn't get that buck off my mind, but didn't really expect to see him alive again either... There's never a shortage of hunters here, so it seemed pretty likely one of the 'locals' would kill him... it also seemed likely this bunch could be living here somewhere close... So I expanded my hunt further east hoping to bump them to Jeff or vice-versa. Later, before going to meet Jeff, I swung far to the west to glass down into a private ranch, there I spotted a doe and fawn feeding in the open and about eighty yards above them, sticking out of a bitterbrush was a huge deer butt. That big butt had to be a buck – it was just too big to be anything else...

Not wanting to spook them, I left to go poke around the knob where all the deer had been yesterday... A half-hour later while walking back to check on the big-butt, I remember feeling like this was just another dry run, like the deer will just disappear into their trap doors like they usually do...

That west face is very steep; it only took about ten short paces to get a good view down the hillside. As I cautiously approached the edge the buck was suddenly RIGHT THERE!! He was alone, feeding in a small depression; casually he raised his head to look at me... as he did I quickly turned and walked away: no eye contact, no scent, and no threat...

My mind was racing... Was that the buck from yesterday? Might've been... no time to dawdle... Dropped the pack and coat in the first couple steps, walked as close as I dared, shouldered the gun like shooting trap and took the last couple steps to him... Again he looked up; the shot took him through the upper shoulders from 30 yards; the Federal .270 BTSP dropped him where he stood.

Rather than field-dress the buck I went to fetch Jeff, this would be his first muley; he'd want to see him while he was still in one-piece... and I needed help dragging that potbellied sucker around the steep hill-side to the truck.



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.

“FORTRESS OF THE BEARS”

Part I. Of Magic and Monsters

BY JIM COX



I think I know about brown bear now. They are extraordinarily tough animals to put down. Their legendary strength and power is, perhaps, a bit exaggerated. I mean, after all, they are mortal. But I assure you, if my experience is as typical as I am told that it is, the legend is not far from reality. Not far at all. Awesome!

It was my third attempt at hunting brown bear. For this trip, I decided to hunt a recognized bastion of the creatures, Admiralty Island, in the Southeast panhandle of Alaska. I hunted near the village of Angoon. The strait leading from Angoon to Mitchell and Kanalku Bays where we did most of our hunting

is named Kootznahoo Inlet. Kootznahoo, the literal translation: Fortress of the Bears. And so, it seems, it is. If not a fortress, then surely it is a portal. Going through the straits is like passing through a corridor to the wilderness that lies beyond. There's a sense of mystery, timelessness and adventure to it. And, there is an element of danger, too.

As in most of Alaska, the tides are great, 15 to 20 feet or more. The tidal waters from Mitchell Bay, Kanalku Bay and Salt Lake funnel through Kootznahoo Inlet. It's a huge and turbulent surge. It's not whitewater, exactly, although deep water rapids and some standing waves do form. Rather, it is a mad rushing, boiling sort of flow that pushes you around and makes you worry at times.

Traveling against this flow in our little inflatable was not possible with any kind of load, but two guys on plane, maximum throttle, can manage to crawl along. The best bet is to follow the tides. Go in when it's surging in, come out when it's surging out. We tried hitting the "slack tide", but there is none to speak of in these inland bays. The water is either rushing in, or it's rushing out with little pause in-between.

Then, too, there are many rocks and shoals that one learns of. The smart money makes the first run about the area at low tide to identify these hazards. Yours truly didn't do it that way and so discovered the hidden shoals by smacking into them, they being only slightly submerged at higher tides. For

my being impetuous, the ten-horse Mercury gets a new prop. Ah, well, it's the price of doing business.

In retrospect, the area is a fortress of sorts, protected by the huge surge and flow of the tides. And, it is beautiful with sapphire water surrounded by huge trees, old-growth forest rising vertically on the steep, rocky shores. The inner sanctum is Kanalku Bay, protected by another strait, Davis Creek, where some serious rapids form and boat eating shoals are abundant. The crown jewel, however, is Salt Lake. At low tide it is protected by a virtual ten foot waterfall.

What a strange phenomenon to encounter in sea water! But, it's true. Salt Lake is a protected bear sanctuary where no bear hunting is allowed. After taking our animals, we explored it and were enchanted by its singular beauty.

They say that the third time is charmed. I guess it's true. We saw brown bear every day and stopped counting on day three. Yet it was not until the fifth day of the hunt that the magic worked and I got my grizzly. It wasn't that we were being all that selective, but the creatures simply wouldn't stay out long enough for us to approach within range. The only visibility was along the rocky shore, interspersed at intervals with grassy patches, and in the tidal flats which had grass around the periphery. All else was dense old-growth forest. The bears would come out, snatch a bite or two, and then trundle back into their forest security. They'd typically be out for less than half an hour. You've got to be

quick to catch them, especially since you usually spot them on the opposite shore. Visibility on the near shore where you're sitting is pretty much limited to the immediate area.

Mine is not a great bear in size. Rather, it is about average for Admiralty, squaring out a tad over seven feet, skull measurement at 22 inches and estimated to be eight years old. But, what this animal may have lacked in size, it more than made up for in stamina and grit. It surely had the heart of a great bear. I hammered it as hard as I could. I clobbered it with multiple rounds, any one of which would have put another animal down for keeps. But not this bear. It kept up the fight, far beyond reason, until I literally smashed the life from it. What incredible vitality!

By the afternoon of our fourth day, my hunting partner, Rick Caswell, was feeling better. He'd spent most of the day in the sack, suffering from the shakes and a case of Montezuma's revenge. Earlier that day, the other half of our party flew in from Sitka and were out scouting, getting a feel for the lay of the land. With them settled and his spirits improved, Rick was up for adventure. While we had seen many bear in the immediate area, there was another bay that we had not yet explored, Favorite Bay.

To get there, we'd have to travel to Angoon, then South via another narrow channel to this new inland bay. The trip, one way, would be about 12 miles. Rick observed that a trip to Angoon to refuel

our two 15 gallon bulk fuel containers would be required anyway. Why not go prepared to spend the night and hunt Favorite Bay as well? So, we did. Departing camp the next morning, we carried a small tent, sleeping bags, food for two days, a stove and the two empty fuel containers.

Arriving at Angoon an hour later, running with the tide at full throttle, we filled the gas cans right away. The fuel station operates only a few hours daily and we had no idea what time we might be returning. On the dock we met a native man, Floyd Kookesh, and struck up an immediate friendship. He was to prove very helpful to us and generous later in the trip as we prepared to leave for home. But for the moment, he advised us about where to camp and the best areas to look for bear. We spent a couple of hours with him.

Before leaving, we engaged a target of opportunity in the form of cheeseburgers and fries at a local restaurant, the only one in town.

By early afternoon we were on the water again, bound for Favorite Bay. As we travelled, the weather began to deteriorate, so we headed for the island that Floyd suggested we camp on and set up the tent. Not a moment too soon, the rain came as we set out to hunt and pelted us for the remainder of the day.

Discovering a rock overhang on the North shore, a cave really, we holed-up and entertained ourselves with a fire and small talk all afternoon and into the

evening. Snug, warm and dry, from our cave we could observe about a mile of the opposite shore and a sizable portion of the flats at the South end of the bay. It was a great spot to be in while all the countryside received a thorough drenching.

It must have been about 6:00 PM when a large bear stepped from the woods just 300 yards from our shelter. We immediately set out to close with him. The wind was in our favor. It was a perfect set-up. It proved to be a bust.

To get to him, we followed the undulating shoreline and the bear was out of sight for just a couple of minutes. During that time, he wandered back into the woods. But, we didn't know it. We figured that he had merely stepped around the next point of land extending into the bay. We never saw that bear again. But from the point where he disappeared, another bear, travelling alone, was spotted on the shoreline about a mile away. The bear entered a large grassy flat at the head of the bay and began feeding. It was obvious that it would be there for awhile. We made haste to close the gap.

At 200 yards, we ran out of cover. We continued the stalk, moving when the bear's head was down or facing away, freezing when it looked in our direction. At about 70 yards, I figured we were close enough and I settled into a prone shooting position. The bear had its back to us. Rick readied himself to back me up in the unlikely event of a charge. Then, we waited.

I think some sixth sense warned this bear. It could not have been the wind. Maybe it had seen us. It started acting antsy and proceeded to move directly away until curiosity, I guess, got the better of it. At 100 yards it stopped, paused, looked back, then postured broadside as though to say, "This is my land, why are you here?"

The crosshairs found the crease that defines the shoulder and the rifle bucked involuntarily. I must have pulled the trigger. I don't remember doing that, nor do I recall the noise of the shot. But I do remember hearing the slap and seeing the spray of water from the beast's coat as the bullet found the mark. The bear went down.

Then, on hind legs, facing directly at us, the bear came up! A shot to the center of the chest bowled it over backwards. Time passed. I saw no movement. "That's it!", I thought out-loud, "He's down for the count," and took my eyes off the beast as I started to stand.

"Down, Hell!", says Rick, "Shoot again, he's running!"

I flung myself back into the mud and shot hastily, a clean miss. Then, I settled down. With the crosshairs on it's nose my fourth shot (read last, four is all the gun holds) tumbled the bear in mid-stride. While I fumbled for another cartridge, Rick exclaimed, "Shoot! Shoot again! It's going into the trees!"

Hind legs paralyzed, the creature was rapidly pulling itself along using the

brute strength of its forelegs! As I steadied for the shot, it gained the cover of a blow-down. It was an improbable shot and ineffective. The bullet hit wood, not flesh. Then, the bear was gone, enveloped by the forest.

Darkness was fast approaching when we came to the place where it entered the wood. The bear was there, not 20 yards away, roaring and smashing brush. For long minutes we stared into the black gloom of trees and brush trying to see the form of the animal.

Only with the scope did the bear finally materialize, a profile, black on black. Head, neck, hump - BLAM! - orange flame belched, blinding us, followed by a heavy thud and silence. After a full ten minutes, "It's done", I said to Rick and I moved cautiously toward the impenetrable treeline just feet away.

ROAR! SMASH! CRASH!

Leaping back, "Jesus, Lord! It's still alive!", I cried, convinced that I was about to be ripped to shreds. For long moments we waited breathlessly for the attack that did not come.

Smart money would have walked away right then, to return in the morning. We discussed this in a whisper. But the animal was suffering. We couldn't just walk away. Rather, at Rick's suggestion, we entered the gloom 30 yards downwind and climbed to get above the bear. Once in the darkness of the forest, we could see better.

"There's the bear, below us! I can't believe this! It's getting to its feet! Safety Off!", I hissed.

The creature tumbled as we watched and lay at the foot of a tree, raking the air with mighty sweeps of its paws, its breathing clearly audible. "See the swipes of those claws! There's still power in them!", I thought. Then aloud, "Stay here and cover me, Rick, I've got to get closer, got to have a clear shot." There was brush in the way and the bear was merely a black blob in the scope.

I crept in, keeping the tree between me and the monster that refused to die. Reaching the tree, I leaned out and delivered the coup-de-grace at four feet.

Finally! It was over. For long minutes Rick and I stood there, each wrapped in private thoughts, a tribute to this magnificent warrior now at our feet.

I hammered this creature with everything but the kitchen sink. You can imagine my surprise when I learned that it was a female, an average size one at that, and not the tough old boar I thought I was shooting. If they come any tougher, I want nothing of it, thank you!

Sometime around midnight, the rain stopped. We hardly noticed. We were thoroughly soaked, having hours before abandoned our noisy wet-weather gear at the beginning of the stalk. By 1:00 AM the flashlight batteries failed. We had to quit our efforts at skinning the

beast. Slowly, we made our way back to the boat. Then, the magic began.

Each foot-splash in the sea water produced a brief luminescent glittering, swirling, pale green light show as phytoplankton released its wonder of stored energy. It was fantastic! Rejuvenating! A tonic for our souls, the weariness washed away as we splashed along, merrily experimenting with new ways to splash and send the light emitting plankton into frenzy. We forgot all about being wet, cold, and miserable.

When we got to the boat and paddled to safe, deep water, we were transfixed by the shimmering droplets falling from the paddles. The motor's prop-wash produced a tail of pale green, the wake - a pale green vee! The faster we went, the longer the tail. So, in the middle of the bay we gunned it for all it was worth, put that hummer on plane, and delighted in the effects. Green sparks flew from the hull! A rocket tail a hundred yards long! The wake, a vee fifty yards across marking the passage of an arrow from the Gods! It was wonderful! We actually regretted that the magic would end upon reaching our island campsite. We slept very well that night despite the buffeting wind and the return of drenching rain.

The next morning, Rick got his bear while we were en route to finish skinning mine. That day, too, proved to be an adventure. It is a story that deserves its own telling. So, I'll save it for another time.

The hide is for the making of a rug mount, a very nice trophy. Typical of the Southeast, mink-like chocolate brown, this bear has golden tipped guard-hairs all across the shoulder hump and back, and no rubs. Were these guard-hairs a bit blonder, it would be called a "silver-tip grizzly". I guess that makes mine a "golden-tip", which is OK by me. I am completely and thoroughly happy with my bear. It is simply beautiful.

This hunt was everything and more than I had hoped for. The quantity and variety of wildlife, the natural beauty of an unspoiled wilderness, it was a trip to satisfy the most adventurous spirit. Even the weather was cooperative. One expects rain in Southeast Alaska, yet we enjoyed several days of crystalline bluebird weather.

I can't hunt grizzly bear again for another four years. What an awful long time that seems. But when that time has passed, I know exactly where to go and what to do when I get there. To have experienced it once is not enough.

I want to feel the heart pounding tension, the acid taste of anxiety and experience the thrill of the stalk on a grand and mighty bear. I want to enjoy again the frolic of sleek river otters, the proud soaring of eagles, the call of loons, the breathtaking surge and ebb of the sea, the loft and scent of an ancient forest.

I will come back to the Fortress of the Bears and the magic that is there.

I feel. I must.

About the Author: Jim Cox has hunted extensively in North America and Europe, including caribou, Dall sheep, grizzlies and black bears in Alaska, whitetail deer on the East Coast, deer and pronghorns in Wyoming and chamoix and red deer in Europe. He retired from the Army in 2000 with the rank of colonel. He lives in Lacey, Washington with his wife Peggy.

Classic O'Connor

"Grand Canyon Bucks"

By JACK O'CONNOR- September 1938

Reprinted with permission from Outdoor Life Magazine.



"Every hunter, I suppose, has his favorite deer country. For my part, I have hunted deer over a vast area, but were I pinned down to just one locality, I'd pick the beautiful Kaibab Forest on the....."

To read more about "Grand Canyon Bucks" 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.

Pictures



Blair Hansen (Maj Gen. USAF retired) and Eldon "Buck" Buckner enjoying a story or two around the keg during the Friday evening dinner event.



Bradford O'Connor pulls the winning ticket from "the cage". The lucky winner is from Alberta, Canada!!



Roger Biesen, builder of fine custom rifles shows off his 3rd and final "African Series" 375H&H built as our annual raffle rifle.

On Friday evening, June 6th another successful auction and JOC evening was had by all who attended. The dinner event and auction featured excellent hors d'oeuvres, drink, and conversation. Husband and wife authors, John Barsness and Eileen Clarke delivered an excellent presentation which drew parallels between their marital/hunting partnership and that of Jack and Eleanor O'Connor. Attendance at the auction was a bit less than last year but the net proceeds were very close.

Judging Saturday's JOC Day by the number of visitors, it was a great success. While we didn't keep an exact count of visitors, the general consensus was that it was as well attended as last year. We had excellent exhibits on the tables and in the parking lot as well as great concessions. Everyone who worked on the Friday auction and Saturday gun show/ raffle, and there were many, deserves our heartfelt thanks for a great event!

Miscellany

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

Our 3rd and final copy of Jack O'Connor's .375Holland & Holland rifle is currently on display as the 2015 raffle gun of the year. 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 in 2015 at the Jack O'Connor Center. Be sure to come out! We will announce the date in the near future in the Newsletter and on our website so be looking for it.

The Winchester Model 70 Jack O'Connor Tribute Rifles are pretty much gone. 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.

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, Sheep and Sheep Hunting and The Shotgun Book. We also have others in limited supply. Call the Center for availability. 208-743-5043.

In our next newsletter:

Our 4th Quarter Fall Hunting Edition will share some great hunting stories.

- *Allan Jones, an O'Connor fan, will discuss one of his favorite topics in the next Tech Corner.*
- *Contributor's favorite cooking recipes.*
- *Plus, another great article from the Jack O'Connor collection.*