



The Bunkhouse Chronicle

Craig Rullman
Columnist

A hunting story

Last week I went elk-hunting with some friends, out past Hampton, in the big and mostly empty desert and juniper country.

We were an odd collection of hunters, precisely the kind of guys that columnist Victor Davis Hanson calls “alienated Americans.” Which is to say, slightly cynical, brushed by, but mostly tuned out from election hysterics, from popular culture, and harboring a kind of bemused pessimism about what the future holds.

For us, hunting is both religion and ritual. It is a way of reaching back and finding something in ourselves that defies the entitlement gyrations that seem to surround us. It is a way of slapping ourselves back into reality, of acknowledging that nothing good comes easy, and embracing a deeper sense of kinship and community that is the inevitable result of working together to achieve a common goal. In this case,

the goal is food.

I like hunting with generations older than my own, guys who have been at it long enough that they aren’t trying to prove something. Men who have been to the wars, done their bit in the salt mines, and find a mostly unspoken solace and meaning in that oldest of human activities. We aren’t horn-hunters. We hunt for meat, and for the respite it gives us from what Hanson calls the “harsh voices” and “grating beat” of contemporary culture.

And there is nothing quite like being out on the country at dawn, when it is just waking up, quietly glassing the coulees and bluffs, nurturing the warm anticipation of a stalk, and knowing that a good hunt will provide healthy food for our families and friends.

We were out on the ground early on opening day. It had rained all night in our camp, one of those Old Testament desert-drenchings where you cease noticing the rain — until it finally stops. Heavy gusts of wind bullied our spike tent and water dripped and hissed down the flue of the little three-dog stove. We warmed a pot of chili on the stovetop and shopped hunting strategies for the morning, each of us imagining our bull out there in the dark, bedded down in the junipers or moving through the rocks.

Sometimes you just know. All night I had been hugging a kind of premonition. Something was telling

me that I had rung the bell, read the book, and lit the candle in the proper order, and that I would have a bull down early. I can’t say why I knew it, I just did, and so only an hour into our hunt that vision came true.

At first I thought it was a cow. But the play of morning light, the angle, the distance, all conspired to hide his horns. I glassed again, the bull stepped forward, and my senses shunted the way they do when those inescapable physical realities take hold of our bodies. Time slows down. We get tunnel-vision. Our hearing plays tricks.

He was a young bull, maybe three. Where he went down in the sage it was hard to find him, but we did, and then took a few minutes to honor him, because that’s what we do. We don’t hoot and rant and caterwaul like television jackasses. The young bull gave his life to enrich ours, and without that respect and acknowledgment, I wouldn’t want to be a part of any kind of hunt.

A great morning soon got better. As we worked, doing what was necessary to pack the bull out, a pair of F-15 Strike Eagles came screaming in over the desert from somewhere, the jet-wash rolling like thunder in the overcast. They played in the box directly over us, showing off perhaps, and having seen us, three guys out in all that desert, decided to treat us to a low-level, full-burner run directly overhead, so close you might reach up and

shake hands with the pilot.

I was lucky. Back home, my wife was preparing a feast for a gathering of friends down from Alaska, and up from California. She had indulged my need to hunt, and I had promised I would be home, meat or no meat.

Somehow, and it truly is a miracle, I filled my tag, broke down my camp, delivered the bull to a processor, and made it home before the guests arrived.

And so what I think may have been the most perfect day of my life kept getting better. The food was great, the wine was flowing, the company magnificent, and then the guitars came out. We ate, we drank, we sang great songs, and our oldest dog wandered around in canine ecstasy.

I think that’s how we begin to defeat this alienation, this creeping cynicism some of us are experiencing. How we reach back and pull out the best parts of us and share them with each other even as the world keeps spinning faster and we are launched off in a thousand directions. Aren’t we all hunting for something like that? Things that bind us together rather than drive us apart?

It seems we always win if we slow things down, turn things off, harvest our own food, go acoustic, and just spend time together as our forebears once did in the caves of Lascaux, singing, feasting, and telling stories in the flickering light.

Officials issue health alert for pesticide-tainted pot

MCMINNVILLE (AP) — State health officials have issued a health alert about marijuana products that may have been tainted with high levels of a pesticide and sold to about 130 people southwest of Portland.

The Oregon Health Authority said Friday the alert concerns dried-flower marijuana sold by a medical marijuana dispensary called New Leaf in McMinnville.

The strain names are Dr. Jack, batch number G6J0051-02, and Marion Berry, batch number G6J0051-01.

The products were sold to customers between Oct. 17 and 19 and came from batches that failed a pesticide test, containing high levels of a chemical known as spinosad.

Anyone finding the tainted product can return it to the dispensary or dispose of it.

Effects of smoking marijuana containing spinosad are not known. According to the National Pesticide Information Center at Oregon State University, spinosad is a natural substance made by a soil bacterium that can be toxic to insects.

Those worried about exposure can call Oregon Poison Center at 800-222-1222.

*Rejuvenate, Reclaim,
Redefine your own Beauty*

**HOPE AESTHETICS
& WELLNESS**

.....

November Specials

*10% off plus a FREE Microdermabrasion Facial
with the purchase of any Laser Treatment*

CALL TO BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT
541.588.6503
354 W. ADAMS AVE., STE C

You didn't count on this...

*...but you can count on
Fullhart Insurance!*

*Competitive pricing & great
service for over 20 years.*

FULLHART
INSURANCE OF SISTERS

AUTO • HOME • HEALTH • LIFE • BUSINESS
541-549-3172 • 1-800-752-8540 • 704 W. Hood Ave.
A member of Fullhart Insurance Agency, Inc.

WE'VE GOT SMALL DOGS COVERED!

If you need a small dog coat, pick one up at The Nugget office.

Now taking donations of dog coats in all sizes, but we **ESPECIALLY NEED LARGE!**

New or clean and in good condition, please.

You can help Furry Friends Foundation in our **PET COAT DRIVE**. Donations may be dropped off at The Nugget office, 442 E. Main Ave.

FurryFriendsFoundation.org

Furry Friends Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization