

19

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JANUARY

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J. F.  
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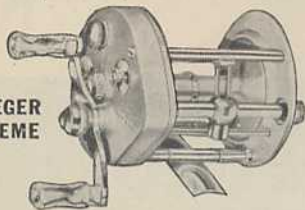
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VOLUME 93  
NO. 1

# Outdoor Life

Reg. U. S.  
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REGINALD A. HAWLEY, Art Editor

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# THIRD RIDGE-1200 MILES



It was dusk when I called in our two little hounds

**D**YED-IN-THE-WOOD sportsmen will travel thousands of miles for a shot at a lion or a rhino. They'll go many hundreds of miles to hunt bear, or moose, or even deer. Only the completely daft, however, would travel 2,400 miles, round trip, for an afternoon of rabbit and squirrel shooting.

But I had hunted the Third Ridge when I was a kid, and I wanted to hunt it once more. So early one morning, down in Texas, I climbed into my faithful jalopy and pointed its nose toward my home in Portage, Wisconsin—toward the Smoky Hollow country; toward Third Ridge, and memories of a hundred happy boyhood hunts. This, of course, was before gas rationing, and my only worry, as each hour, each fifty miles of that long trip sped by, was whether I'd get there ahead of the annual first blizzard of Smoky Hollow—

always a rip-snorthing affair that makes hot-stove hunters out of even the most ardent sportsmen.

I arrived late one night, and was greeted by my family and two squealing, leaping little hounds. Dad, my brother Tom, and I headed for the kitchen and slices of country-cured ham, homemade bread, and tall glasses of rich, icy-cold milk. When we finally decided to turn in, the air was thick with armchair-powder smoke, and the hands of the clock pointed to half-past three.

**T**HE next morning Toge and Trump had no doubt about the appropriateness of an immediate departure for Third Ridge and, though grizzled by eight and eleven seasons respectively, filled the house with puppy capers. Getting our licenses, however, took longer than we had planned, and it was nearly noon of a dark overcast day when we finally set forth.

Three ridges flank the upper two fingers of Smoky Hollow. High oaks grow on the fertile limestone slopes, and snarls of berry bushes cover the approaches. Lying well inland from any highways, the ridges are a retreat for rabbits, squirrels, foxes, deer, and an occasional wild turkey.

We parked alongside the woods fence, at the edge of a cornfield. Dad bounded out and was first to load up. Toge and old Trump were through the fence before I could uncase my 20 gauge. A few minutes later I jumped our first

bunny of the hunt.

He exploded the leaves like a booby trap and sped away. I jerked up my gun for a snapshot, and pulled. He faltered, then went on. The brush intercepted most of the shot, but part of the pattern got through and crippled a hind leg.

At the report both dogs wheeled back to cross the hot scent, chorused loudly, and headed uphill in swift pursuit. Then, as abruptly as it had begun, their bugling stopped. Pressing forward, we discovered Trump and Toge, heads down on a rock pile. By removing a few stones, Tom, to the great delight of the little hounds, was able to retrieve the wounded rabbit. I slit and dressed the bunny so that it might be docketed for the frying pan that night.

No sooner were we under way again, guns ready for action, than the dogs jumped another rabbit. Branching out,

we raced forward to find stands. The bugling grew fainter, then stronger, then faint again. Finally I lifted a furred earlap—the baying had stopped. Eventually I found the dogs running in circles out in an open field, trying to pick up a scent blown away by the rising north wind. I called them off, and headed back toward where I had last seen Tom.

He was still at his stand atop a high stump. "Dad's getting his wind back," he said. "Remember how he used to keep us tuckered out?" I did remember, and I was aware that this time dad had elected to handle the shorter, easier pivot position on all turns and maneuvers. We stood silent, and thoughtful.

Soon dad appeared from around a brush-covered knoll. He was smiling and seemed to be having such a good time we immediately felt light-hearted again.

Just then, "*Ah-arr-rock! Ah-ar-romph!*" Trump was on a hot trail, and soon Toge's "*Ee-arf-yarf-earf!*" added tenor harmony to the rolling bass. Up over the ridge they were serenading a bunny around an old woods pasture. We sprinted for the woods, and labored up the slope. The chase led through fairly open country, and after about ten minutes I saw the rabbit—a big fat one—heading back toward me, with the dogs still on the out trail.

I passed up a forty-yard shot in the hope that he'd come within closer range of another gun. Several seconds passed. Then *Wham! Wham-am!* and I knew that father's full choke had been warmed. When the dogs came up the rabbit in my coat had lost its lonesome feeling.

"LET'S try the bramble slope now," Tom suggested. "It's good cover and hasn't been disturbed—coming up the ridge we passed alongside of it."

It proved to be a good idea. When we were all but through the patch, Trump emitted a startled bellow, and from my position on the sidehill I saw a rabbit scuttling along not two yards ahead of the hound's nose. I gripped my gun and waited for an opening. Instead of circling back, however, Br'er Rabbit held straight on down the ridge and holed up in a den half a mile away.

We spent the next quarter hour beating another old woods pasture. The dogs were ahead in a ravine, and just as I was crawling through the rusty remains of an old barbed-wire fence I heard a lusty "*Brrr-oomph!*" from Toge, then three quick shots. When I'd extricated myself from the wires, two guns were smoking, and two hounds



# Race against a blizzard! The prize? Half-day hunt with the folks, and home-fried rabbits

By **ROB F. SANDERSON**

having a tug-o'-war with a limp bunny. Being the only member of our trio equipped with a skinning knife, I slit the rabbit's belly, and was whirling the carcass above my head to expel the intestines by centrifugal force, when from a pile of leaves near my feet another rabbit exploded his nest and lit out for less sanguinary parts. Startled, I dropped knife and carcass, made a grab for my gun, fumbled the safety, and jerked the trigger. The result was a clean miss. And before another shot could restore my reputation, the rabbit had zigzagged into a clump of saplings, where he holed up beneath some washed-out roots.

Father tugged at the shoestring on his belt, and brought out his big silver watch. "Quarter past three," he announced. We looked at dad, and then up at the lowering sky. It was the same old question, and we all knew what the answer would be—we would go on hunting and, as usual, get caught in the woods after dark.

TEN minutes later, pushing slowly along the summit, Togey opened tongue, and a rabbit went leaping away from us down the ridge. Father climbed up on a woodpile. Tom took the right flank, and I the left. The run was a slow one. The dogs were steady and sure. I rather expected the rabbit to slip back along the lower slope, where I could blast him. But I was a poor prophet. A single burst from Tom's gun, followed by words of praise for the dogs, told me that another bunny was destined for the supper table.

Again the dogs disappeared, and for quite a while there was no sound from them. Then, in the distance, we heard

Tom transferred the bushy-tails to dad's serviceable old coat

a tree bark. It was Togey and, knowing Togey, I knew that a squirrel was involved. The tree was a big white oak with closely spaced, bent branches. I circled the tree several times without getting so much as a glimpse of the bushy-tail. Then Tom came up, and between us we worked the squirrel into view, and downed him before he could dodge back.

Trump was bugling again, so I slipped the squirrel into my game pouch and hustled for high ground and a likely stand. The baying grew louder; and suddenly a big buck rabbit bounded into view. I jumped my gun half up to my shoulder, and pulled. The fat buck collapsed mid-leap in my neatest shot of the day.

"Got him!" I called, and went on. The dogs were performing with the consistency of skill and experience. I felt  
*(Continued on page 83)*

The zigzagging rabbit had holed up beneath some washed-out roots

We parked the car at the edge of a cornfield. Dad was first out, and the first to load up



Togey, as usual, was after another squirrel





# Third Ridge—1200 Miles

(Continued from page 33)

pleased with them. Just then, and very faintly, I heard another bark from Toge, whose peculiar talent seems limited to finding squirrels at but one range—almost out of earshot. Tom elected to answer the hound's announcement. Shortly, dad and I heard two shots, and when Tom returned a reddish tail plumed from each side pocket. As he was transferring the squirrels to dad's capacious hunting coat, Trump started another rabbit. Toge joined him, and soon both canines were howling eagerly.

The stands we selected proved of no avail. The rabbit kept out of range in a large abandoned field grown high with weeds. The chase got back into the woods only after we beat through the field in formation, and discovered that the wily bunny had slipped by us. Then he took to circling the top of the ridge. I followed up, and he scurried back down, entering the weeds again by the very portal I had been guarding. Twenty minutes more in the weeds, and we pushed him back into the woods. Dusk was spilling into the valley now, and would soon drown our shooting light. I was beginning to lose hope when Tom fired two quick shots into a briar patch, detoured painfully through the waist-high brambles, and came out with a medium-size rabbit.

It was time to corral the dogs. I called them in by horn and leashed them, then

we started down the valley toward our car. Halfway there, night blacked out the woods. The wind had risen and it was bitterly cold. As we stumbled along, groping for landmarks, a brilliant white light showed up ahead. It was a friend of ours from the valley below. He knew we were still out in the woods, and had come looking for us with a gasoline lantern. The rest of the way was quick and easy.

That night we gathered around a great platter of fried rabbit and thick brown gravy. Nothing could have tasted better. Right after supper, tired and happy, I bungled into bed with my hunting shirt still on.

Next morning I jumped out of bed disgruntled. Nine o'clock already—and why hadn't I been called earlier? We had agreed to get up with the sun for a full day of shooting!

Then I stood still and listened. There was a soft rustling in the air, and through the frosted windowpane I could see snow feathering down so thick and steadily that I could barely make out the white-swollen gable of Trump's kennel. Smoky Hollow was firm in the grip of its first blizzard of the year, and hunting was out of the question.

Did I care? Well, not really. I'd beaten the storm by a full half day; and after all, 1,200 miles isn't far to go for an afternoon of shooting on Third Ridge!

## Dog Questions

### Setter for Rabbits

**Question:** How would you advise me to start training my young dog to hunt rabbits? Should I train him alone, or with another dog? Also, do you think a setter could be trained for this work?—C. M., Mich.

**Answer:** The best way to train a young dog to hunt rabbits is to yard-break him at home, then take him out to learn for himself. Training with another dog is all right for a short time, but if continued, may make your dog dependent instead of independent in his hunting. I do not think setters are suited for rabbit hunting. They are not true trailers and, when they jump a rabbit, they usually push him so hard he holes up.—W. C. D.

### Trap Trick

**Question:** I am going to do some trapping this season, and want to take my dog with me. How can I train him to keep away from traps?—C. M., Mass.

**Answer:** There is no way that I know of to train a dog to stay away from traps. By employing the following device, however, you may be able to keep him from getting caught: Cut a sapling, lop off the branches, and stick each end firmly in the ground so as to form an arc over the trap. This will allow small game to spring the trap, but force a dog to jump over it.—W. C. D.

### Chases Deer

**Question:** My 3-year-old beagle performs very well on rabbits, pheasants, and an occasional fox. However, his desire to chase everything has extended itself to deer. Since I hunt in New York State, and in a section where deer abound, this habit is dangerous as well as annoying. I have heard of putting deer musk in the kennel; of starting the dog on a goat's trail, and

letting the goat butt him; and of whipping the dog off a laid trail of deer musk. Do you know of a better method?—J. C. L., New York.

**Answer:** I'll hand it to you—you certainly know most of the answers already. But there is one which, if you are able to arrange it, is about as good as any:

Make a bib of a piece of deerskin—with the hair on—and tie it around your hound's neck, so that he can lie and chew it. After he has chewed it awhile, doctor the bib with a good dose of something very bitter, like aloes or bitter olive; and keep it doctored with the stuff. A deer hoof works about as well as the bib. This is no sure cure, but it is worth a try.—W. C. D.

### Barks

**Question:** I have a 3-year-old dachshund. She is quiet when I am around, but when I leave the house, my neighbors complain that she barks continually. Is there anything that I can do about it?—Mrs. A. C. B., Calif.

**Answer:** If your dachshund barks when in her kennel (if she has one), punish her with a folded newspaper, or scold her severely. If she barks only when you are not in the neighborhood, why not put a strap muzzle on her before you leave?—W. C. D.

### Same Breed

**Question:** Will you please tell me how the black Labrador retriever differs from the golden Labrador retriever? Is it just a matter of color?—J. K. L., Ill.

**Answer:** I have an idea you are confusing two different breeds—the Labrador retriever and the golden retriever. The Labrador is usually black, but other colors, especially brown or tan, are occasional. The coat is short and hard. The golden, as its name implies, is a rich golden tan. Its coat, flat or wavy, is much longer than that of the Labrador.—W. C. D.

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(Continued on page 84)