

FROM THE EDITOR

It's Not Just About the Chase of a Grand Head



Debra Bradbury

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Boone and Crockett Club

Even before I shot my first big game animal, a mule deer, I had heard about the Boone and Crockett Club. The concept of hunting with a greater goal than obtaining meat for the table was a source of encouragement. For me, like so many other trophy hunters, it became a dream to someday be fortunate or skilled enough to get an animal in "The Book." Not only did B&C offer the opportunity to pursue a grand goal in the form of a trophy, it also illustrated hope for the future of my new sport. B&C was not just about the chase of the grand head, it was about the conservation and even the reestablishment of many species.

In my eyes, besides the conservation efforts of the Club, the main objective via the records book is the celebration of individual animals, celebration of the finest examples the species can produce.

Along with the knowledge of B&C came the attendant awareness of Theodore Roosevelt. Over the years I have acquired all of his books, reading about his dedication as a hunter, to conservation. That he, my hero, was a driving force behind B&C personally added great merit to the organization and its purposes.

In my eyes, besides the conservation efforts of the Club, the main objective via the records book is the celebration of individual animals, celebration of the finest examples the species can produce. This is how it should be, a celebration of the extraordinary creations of the natural world, combined with the noble and honorable methods of pursuit. Yes, beyond the animals themselves it is a celebration of the hunt. The chase is as

old as man the predator. Our methods have evolved along with our tools. While our spear has become a high powered rifle, so has our necessity to kill by any means, become a sport governed by the rules of fair chase, rules that have caused raw killing to evolve into hunting as a sport. Our definition of those "rules" continues to evolve.

In 1888, the Club's bylaws stated: "The term 'fair chase' shall not be held to include killing bear, wolf or cougar in traps, no fire hunting 'nor crusting' moose, elk or deer in deep snow, or killing game from a boat while it is swimming in the water." At that time, such practices were both legal and popular. B&C has upgraded its fair chase code to keep pace with technology. The rules of fair chase now include restrictions on the use of vehicles, airplanes and radios while hunting. By very definition, B&C's fair chase code has strengthened the ethics of sport hunting, and by becoming an example to all who care, our code of ethics leads to conservation and the longevity of the sport.

Beyond the animals and the pursuit, our organization and book of records can also be a forum to celebrate the efforts of extraordinary hunters. Granted, many times, hunters are just plain lucky and happen across the trophy of their dreams. However, in many cases, it has required skill, knowledge and extreme dedication to secure "the holy grail," that exceedingly rare animal that has attained such enormous size to qualify for the B&C records.

My late husband had 32 entries in the records book. None were secured by accident. In our garage are boxes of maps that he used to research, study, and define areas where records book animals had been collected in the past. He used the maps as the beginning of his hunts, many of which were measured not in hours or days, but years. The maps defined places where there was at least a historical chance of finding the exceptional. After defining a place to hunt, the hours and miles in the field began. I remember well his stories of the very big ones that got away. No, not because he could not shoot them, but because he did not. He realized the most basic rule of a trophy hunter; to pull the trigger on a lesser animal means

the chance of taking the giant is forfeit. In his pursuit of game that was equal to our standards he walked away from many trophies that represent the life's dream of other hunters. Within our organization there are many more hunters with similar and perhaps even greater dedication. However, just as we realize the giant B&C buck or bull is one in a million, so too we should realize that not all hunters live for the pursuit of exceptional trophies. For the rest of the hunters we offer our morals and standards as an example. An example to be followed to increase their understanding and enjoyment of the hunt itself.

Thus, I will make it part of my role in *Fair Chase* magazine to bring you a wide variety of stories and articles. Some will spotlight the grand accomplishments that catch the rare Boone and Crockett trophy. Others will offer knowledge and skill to help you in the pursuit of your hunting goals. Another facet will be as simple as the celebration of hunting itself. We may hunt waterfowl in some wonderful place, or show a young hunter that a doe or a fork horn is a noble trophy in its own right. We will show them that a tape is not the only measure of a trophy. At times trophies are simply measured by difficulty. It could be the blizzard, or the scorching desert, the primitive arm, or most important of all, inexperience that makes the trophy huge in that hunter's eyes. For a young man or woman, just taking their first deer may be as difficult as the harvest of a record-books trophy may be to a veteran. We need to let them know that it is okay to start at the beginning. In this way we can lead the next generation into our sport and into conservation. For all we know the greatest bull has not yet been born, nor has the man or woman who is worthy and skilled enough to take it. We shall not forget our past, nor ignore our future. ■

EDITOR'S NOTE: In an effort to continue to provide the same color and quality you have come to expect in *Fair Chase*, we will be accepting more than one advertiser per issue. Rest assured, *Fair Chase* will continue to always provide more of our unique content than advertisements. If you don't like the ads, please pass over them, however, please consider them as an excellent source of information to locate new and exciting products