

# GRANDPA'S ELK FROM BARN TO BARN



In 1991, Joe Jessel was on vacation visiting Rich Eckert, a part-time taxidermist. Joe asked Rich if he could restore an old set of antlers that hung in an oak tree at his mother's home. Joe was excited to learn Rich could not only restore the antlers, but could also mount them on a head.

Upon returning home from vacation, Joe asked his mother, JoAnne, if he could have the rack and explained why. She thought it was a great idea and suggested he also tell his grandmother what he intended to do. The rack belonged to JoAnne's late father and she had ended up with them in the early 1970s.

Joe spent time with his grandmother, asking questions about how and when the bull was shot. Opal Evans Sexton told Joe that his grandfather, Hugh Evans, shot the elk in 1942 near Mitchell. She gave him some old black and white photographs of the antlers strapped to the front of their 1935 Chevy pickup. In one photo, Hugh was sitting in the crotch of the rack. Soon after this conversation, Joe's wife, Paula, and his mother-in-law Pat strapped the antlers to the top of Pat's car and traveled across Oregon to leave

them with Rich Eckert. On the way, the women were cited for speeding, although they both felt the officer really pulled them over to get a closer look at the rack.

After the restoration was complete, Eckert told the couple the mount was the largest he had ever seen and they had a records book elk on their hands. He suggested they contact a Boone and Crockett Club official measurer to score it. After returning the U-Haul trailer they had rented to bring the head home the couple hung it in their family room.

In February of 1993, Joe took the mount to the Pacific Northwest Sportsmen's Show in Portland, Oregon, where it was scored unofficially at 419-3/8 points. Joe was told the mount would be considered the largest shot in Oregon and would probably rank in the top ten in the world, if scored officially.

The mount hung in the couple's home until the house was sold in September 1993. The rack went into a local museum for several months before moving to a local auto parts store for display. Charles "Rusty" Lindberg, an official measurer for the Boone and Crockett Club, measured the rack in September 1994. This time the score was 418 points, but it was finally official.

At this time, Joe went back to his grandmother for more information about the hunt. Opal and her brother, Leonard, told Joe about the day this record elk was taken.

On a cool November afternoon in 1942, in the Ochoco National Forest near Mitchell, Oregon, Opal Evans was in camp preparing for the evening

meal when she heard a crashing sound coming through the brush behind her. Looking up, Opal saw a huge bull elk approaching camp. The animal so frightened her she jumped into the pickup and locked the doors.

Later in the day, when Hugh Evans and Opal's brother, Leonard, returned to camp, Opal told the men about the elk. She said it was a large bull with a gray beard and a huge set of antlers. The next morning the men went out on their hunt. About 10 a.m., Hugh shot a bull with his 300 Savage rifle. When they returned to camp with the elk, Opal told the men it was the same bull she saw the previous day.

Not realizing the trophy they had, the antlers were tossed from barn to barn for the next 35 years. Opal remarried after Hugh died, and in the early 1970s her second husband suggested they give the antlers to a local tavern. Even though she had no idea what she had, Opal wanted the antlers to stay in the family, so she called her son-in-law, Joe Jessel, Sr., and asked him if he would come get them. After bringing them home, the rack was once again resigned to the barn. In 1977, when Joe and JoAnne built their new home, the rack was nailed to an oak tree in the back yard, where it was used as a flower pot hanger.

After being scored officially, the antlers were remounted and are displayed with Trophy Show Productions. Joe enjoys taking time from his entrepreneurial pursuits to spend time with Roger Selner of Trophy Show Productions, talking about how his grandfather shot this record elk more than 50 years ago. This magnificent trophy will be on display with Roger Selner's World Record Elk Tour through 1996.

BY JOSEPH S. JESSEL, JR.  
B&C Associate



HUGH P. EVANS SITTING ON HIS ELK RACK THAT WAS STRAPPED TO HIS 1935 CHEVY. THE ELK WAS TAKEN IN 1942 AND SCORED 418 POINTS WHEN IT WAS FINALLY MEASURED IN SEPTEMBER OF 1994.

THIS ELK, NOW OWNED BY JOSEPH JESSEL, JR., RECEIVED A CERTIFICATE OF MERIT AT THE 22ND BIG GAME AWARDS BANQUET IN DALLAS THIS PAST JUNE.

# PERSEVERANCE

## TEAMWORK LEADS TO A TROPHY COUES', AGAIN.

I was glad to see my hunting partner, Mike Duperret, finally turn off his flashlight up ahead. This signaled we had arrived at our pre-planned glassing peak, after hiking for more than two hours in the darkness. The hike had been difficult in the steep, rocky terrain that the tenacious Apache Indians once called their home.

Drenched in sweat, we caught our breath and then stripped off our wet shirts. It seemed like a race with dawn as we quickly layered on synthetic clothing topped with goose down in preparation for several hours of motionless, long-range glassing in the freezing morning air. We did not want to miss a single moment of what we term the "bewitching hour"; the first glassing hour of the morning in which the petite Coues' whitetail deer is most active.

Although the sun had not yet risen, the southern Arizona chaparral glowed through our 10x40 Leitz binoculars as we systematically dissected the beautiful landscape for signs of the rut. The morning was cold and clear with little wind, a perfect combination to stimulate the whitetail's urge to rut.

Suddenly, the morning silence was broken by the piercing nasal blows of a whitetail. We immediately swung our binoculars in the direction of the noise, and after several minutes of glassing, Mike whispered, "I've got a great buck! See that scrub oak in the draw 200 yards away; it's standing right below the scrub oak."

I frantically searched the area he described but couldn't locate the deer. Eventually Mike told me to look through his binoculars which were now locked into position on his tripod. Although we both carried tags, he



MIKE DUPERRET MAKES HIS WAY DOWN A PRECARIOUS ROCK OUTCROPPING. IT'S NOT EASY TO HUNT THE PETITE COUES' WHITETAIL, ESPECIALLY THE TROPHIES THESE TWO ARE AFTER.

insisted I be the first to shoot since he'd taken an exceptional typical Coues' buck on a hunt two years ago that scored 133 B&C points.

I crawled behind Mike's tripod and peered through his binoculars to see the most massive whitetail buck I had ever seen running sideways to us. The buck then turned away and climbed up a steep ridge. By now, Mike had picked up my binoculars and the two of us watched, with our lower jaws dropped, as the buck worked his way to the top of the ridge 450 yards away.

As the monarch ran directly away from us we took special note of its non-typical antler configuration which we later termed "Mickey Mouse" ears. Each back tine had a "V" antler formation protruding away from the buck's head. This oddity gave the deer the appearance of having a second pair of ears coming off his antlers.

Within seconds the deer had reached the ridge line and then demonstrated a rarely seen Coues' behavior; it stopped and looked back in our direction, as if searching for the nuisance that had ruined its morning search for does. The buck was now silhouetted against a blue sky, and we marveled at how its massive head gear dwarfed his body and gave him the appearance of a very respectable 4x4 mule deer. Without speaking, each of us knew that the deer standing on that ridge was an exceptional animal.

Suddenly, the buck spun head-for-tail and vanished over the ridge. That was December 28, 1991, the third consecutive day of a seven-day hunt. It was the coveted late whitetail hunt of Arizona, which typically opens in mid-December and always closes December 31. We had purposely selected the last part of the season knowing that the Coues' rut peaks in January.

As one might expect, the remaining days of our hunt were spent in the vicinity in which we had last seen the "Mickey Mouse" buck. We hoped that its ways would be betrayed by the magic of the rut. However, by the time December 30 rolled around, we still had not located the non-typical buck. Therefore, that evening I decided to take a beautiful 3x3 typical buck which later scored 100 B&C points. My decision to harvest that deer was made easy knowing that Mike still held a tag.

By J.K. VOLK & M.E. DUPERRET  
Photos by Authors

"Some of the guys I work with say they never see big deer," Volk said. "Well, you won't see big ones if you shoot the first deer you see. We hold back and that gives us the opportunity to see big deer."

—The Arizona Daily Star



LEFT: MIKE DUPERRRET WITH A NICE COUES' BUCK TAKEN IN DECEMBER OF 1988.

BELOW: THE TYPICAL COUES' WHITETAIL SCORING 133 POINTS WAS TAKEN BY MICHAEL DUPERRRET. THIS BUCK RECEIVED A FIRST AWARD AT THE 21ST AWARDS BANQUET. BOTH DUPERRRET AND VOLK ARE LISTED AS THE OWNERS.



Upon waking on the last day of the season, we were greeted by a heavy bank of fog which prevented glassing and thus forced a premature close to our hunt. As we backpacked out of the mountains and back to our vehicles, we excitedly talked about the beautiful buck we had taken, and of course, the "Mickey Mouse" buck.

The following off-season months from January to May were filled with numerous scouting trips to locate the monster non-typical. Mike and I felt if we could establish his core living area, we'd have an excellent chance of taking him during the November hunt when the deer are less mobile and more predictable.

Unfortunately, our efforts were unfruitful and we began to question his continued existence. Maybe he had become the dinner of a mountain lion; the fate of so many large Coues' bucks. Or had he died of old age? If the buck had passed away, we wondered why we hadn't found his antlers bleaching in the Arizona sun.

When the deer permit applications were due in June, our strategy was simple: maximize the number of days in the field to increase our probability of sighting the non-typical buck. We agreed Mike would put in for the November hunt, and I would put in for the late December hunt.

We resumed our scouting in late September once the scorching heat of the summer had subsided. By the time Mike's hunt had arrived, the outcome was the same: no "Mickey Mouse" buck.

Like our scouting trips, Mike's hunt came and went without seeing the non-typical buck. The "Mickey Mouse" buck was starting to seem like an apparition.

Our plan for the December 1992 hunt was identical to the previous year except my wife and I would celebrate Christmas in Oregon and Northern California.

Therefore, on the morning of December 26, I would fly to Arizona, drive to the mountains, backpack to our base camp and meet Mike for the evening hunt. Mike would have hiked into our hunting area before dawn to begin glassing. He was hoping to locate and bed a decent buck as a surprise for my afternoon arrival.

As I approached the base camp on December 26th, I cursed the abnormally hot December weather as sweat trickled down my forehead. When I arrived and met Mike, I was disappointed to hear he had seen only a few does and no signs of the rut.

After briefly discussing our options for the evening hunt, we grabbed our day packs and my rifle and headed for the exact hill where we had seen the non-typical buck the year before. By 4:00 p.m. we arrived at our destination.

We set up our tripods on the back side of the hill's ridge line to minimize any sound and movement, and then crawled over the top and began glassing. I saw a respectable Coues' buck in the 95 point class chasing a doe. I continued to glass other areas, but constantly checked the rutting pair with hopes that a larger buck would appear.

At 4:30 p.m. Mike whispered, "I have two does. No, I have three does and two of them are twitching their tails." Ten minutes later, he excitedly whispered, "Jeff, I've found a really nice buck!"

As I crept over to Mike, he began to describe the buck's exact

location. "He's standing approximately 800 yards from us in the shadows of that small cut. Look behind the dead juniper tree snag on the ground."

I put the spotting scope on .15x and located the buck's mousy gray coat behind the snag. I then zoomed the magnification to 35x. His head was obscured by some branches of the dead tree and I struggled to see his antlers.

The buck took several steps from behind the snag, and I exclaimed to Mike, "Oh my God, Oh my God, you won't believe this buck!" All I could see was its side profile. The G2 and G3 points arched so far above its head it looked abnormal.

Suddenly the buck turned his head and faced directly away from us to reveal his true identity; it was the "Mickey Mouse" buck we'd seen last year. The antlers had dropped and regrown, but the non-typical protrusions off the G2 tines had remained exactly as I remembered. Mike took a quick look through the spotting scope to confirm his identity and said, "Let's come up with a quick strategy."

There were three options, none of which were very good because the deer was located in a natural fortress. The first option was to sneak down the hill we were sitting on, in plain view of the deer. This would put us about 400 yards away from him with a 10 mile per hour cross-wind. The second option was to sneak to the bottom of the hill and then cross the canyon bottom separating our hill from the buck's hill. This would put us approximately 250 to 300 yards below the deer with a 45-degree upward shot. Like the first option, we would have to expose ourselves to the buck and its does. The third option was to make a two-mile blind stalk and drop behind our hill, out-of-sight, then circle around to the backside of the buck's hill. This would put us between 80 to 100 yards from the deer with a 45-degree downward shot.

After a brief discussion, I decided to go with the third option. My rationale was simple: Coues' whitetail have excellent eyesight and the deer were sure to see us if we moved on them in the open. Secondly, I was using a Ruger model M77 chambered in 22-250 with handloads topped with a Nosler 55 grain Ballistic Tip. I did not want to risk a long shot with such a

**"It stopped on the ridge  
before it went out of sight.  
We spent the whole year  
talking about it, kind of like  
the big fish that got away."**

— The Arizona Daily Star

light load, especially in the presence of a cross wind.

Mike checked his watch; it was 4:51 p.m. Under normal circumstances we had less than one hour to make a two-mile blind stalk. However, circumstances were worse than normal. The clear morning had turned into an overcast evening; our light would run out by 5:30 p.m.

As we stuffed our gear into our day packs, we took special note of a rocky outcropping on the ridge line above the dead snag. This would be our land mark when we reached the back side of the hill the buck was on.

I grabbed my rifle and turned to see Mike fly off the back side of the ridge. I followed him in reckless abandon, leaping from rocky ledge to rocky ledge. The run took only eight minutes, normally a half-hour hike, and we felt fortunate not to have twisted an ankle or broken a leg.

We stashed our non-essential gear in the sandy canyon bottom separating our glassing hill from the buck's hill. We kept our binoculars, the rifle, two flashlights and a knife. We knew we had to lighten our weight if we were going to make it to the buck before darkness.

We then ran uphill to circle around the deer. It was 5:18 p.m. when we arrived at our landmark, the rocky outcropping. We descended over the crest of the hill into the catclaw underbrush that was extremely thick, making noiseless travel impossible. Also the visibility in the trees was worse than we expected. Frustrated with the visibility and the noise, I suggested we turn back and try for the buck in the morning. But Mike pointed out that it took a year to locate the buck. "Let's go for it," he said. "If we don't get a shot, we don't get a shot."

As we moved down the hill we continued to pan the open areas below us with our binoculars. Forty yards to our left was the juniper snag but no sign of the buck. We continued to move down the hill and I no longer felt comfortable looking through my binoculars; afraid that I might only have a split second to shoot if the deer saw us first.

Holding my rifle like a shotgun, we slowly crept out onto a rocky ledge that provided a vantage point over the

steep slope below us. Mike stood on my right side with his binoculars glued to his face. As Mike panned the brush below us, a gray body suddenly appeared. He confirmed it was the buck. "Jeff, he's down there about 100 yards. See those two big trees; he's right between us and the small bush."

I immediately sat down on the rocky ledge to establish a solid shooting position. Following Mike's directions, I found the deer through my 3x9 scope. It was standing broadside with its head facing to our left. It knew something was amiss, and was frozen like a statue and looking up at us.

The cross hairs settled behind the left shoulder and I began to squeeze the trigger. I struggled to block out the image of his awesome head gear that had the appearance of a rack in velvet because of its incredible mass and tine webbing.

Suddenly, the still evening air was filled with the piercing nasal blows of the buck's does that were less than 20 yards to our left. The noise had the effect of a fire alarm going off unexpectedly. The cross hairs began to move erratically above and below the deer's body. I relaxed the pressure on the trigger while I tried to bring the cross hairs under control. Within seconds I was back on the trigger and the gun roared.

The buck ran full out into a thicket of oak trees to our left. We heard a loud snapping sound from that direction and the buck suddenly appeared on its far side. It stopped and stood facing down hill and Mike said, "You'd better shoot again!" My cross hairs found their mark behind the right shoulder and the rifle roared again.

The buck leaped behind the oak tree. We heard a series of clanking sounds below the tree, and then silence. We sat on the rocky ledge for an additional five minutes to verify the buck was down. As we approached the oak tree we discovered the deer had collapsed and rolled down the hillside. Twenty yards down the hill we found the buck dead; its magnificent rack had wedged between two rocks, preventing him from rolling farther down the hill. The clanking we had heard was caused by the antlers battering against rocks during the 20-yard tumble. Unbelievably, it was not damaged.

We tagged the deer and admired its awesome antlers. Although the rack was immense, his body was emaciated. His hindquarters were shrunken and he had a callused bone spur protruding from his left shoulder blade. The insides of his nostrils were scarred from the hooking action of other rutting bucks and a chunk of its left ear was missing. We felt the buck would not have made it through the winter.

We field dressed the deer and hung it in an oak tree. By the time we made it back to our base camp, ate dinner and crawled into our sleeping bags, it was midnight.

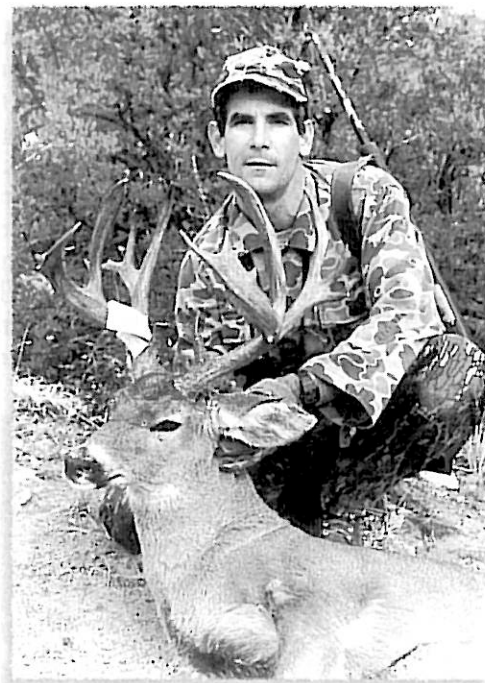
The following morning was filled with excitement as we broke our base camp and hiked to the deer. We took several rolls of film and then deboned and caped the deer in preparation for the long backpack hike out of the mountains.

After the 60-day drying period,

our buck scored 150-3/8 points according to the Tucson taxidermist Jimmie Engelmenn. Jimmie estimated the buck's age at 10 years based on the condition of its teeth. Although it has seven scorable points on each antler, the most remarkable aspect of the rack is its symmetry. There were no odd or grotesque points protruding from the antlers like so many non-typical deer. Instead the deer was a perfect typical 3x3 with symmetrical V's coming off his G2 points. In fact, the "Mickey Mouse" buck has been described by many respectable Coues' whitetail hunters as one of the most beautiful Coues' whitetail bucks ever taken.

**"Just because Mike didn't pull the trigger, it doesn't mean the deer isn't as much his as it is mine."**  
says Volk.

— The Arizona Daily Star



JEFFREY K. VOLK WITH THE COUES' WHITETAIL SCORING 150-3/8 POINTS THAT WAS TAKEN IN 1992. THIS BUCK RECEIVED A FIRST AWARD AT THE 22ND AWARDS BANQUET. BOTH VOLK AND DUPERRET ARE LISTED AS OWNERS.