

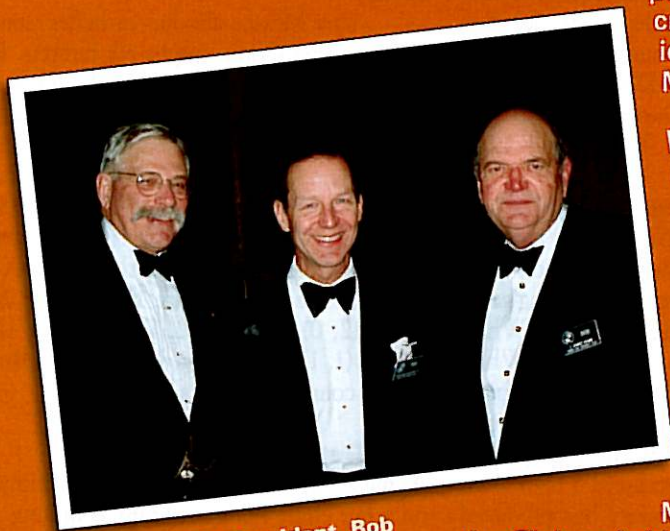
FAIR CHASE LAUNCHES NEW SERIES...

For the past year, I have been allowed the distinct honor of serving as the Boone and Crockett Club Publications Committee Chairman. I have had the pleasure of observing and assisting Julie Houk (Director of Publications), Keith Balfourd (Director of Marketing), and Greg Tinsley (Editor), and the many Professional and Regular Members of the Club who work tirelessly to produce our journal, *Fair Chase*.

The Boone and Crockett Club and *Fair Chase* have served this Kansas farm boy well for the past twenty-plus years as my source for rational opinions and worthwhile solutions to conundrums facing the hunter/conservationist. Be it hunter ethics, wildlife and habitat management, or political issues, Boone and Crockett brings science and common-sense influence to the table to help move North America forward. With the North American Big Game Records serving as the window to the Club's soul, we represent the best of the best.

In this spirit, and the spirit of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners (a consortium of many of our wildlife/conservation groups initiated and nurtured into power by B&C), we begin this series of articles. These reprints of "gold standard" articles are intended to educate, stimulate, and clarify important aspects of our hunter/conservationist world.

I cordially invite your submission/recommendation of previously published articles meeting these lofty "gold standard" criteria. Contact me at msteffen5@cox.net or mail your ideas to the Club headquarters at 250 Station Drive, Missoula, MT 59801.



Outgoing B&C President, Bob Model, Theodore Roosevelt IV, and new Club President, Bob Palmer at the 2005 Annual Meeting of the Boone and Crockett Club.

We lead off by sharing with you Theodore Roosevelt IV's December 2005 speech that he delivered at our 119th Annual Regular Members' Meeting in New York City in Akeley's Hall of African Mammals at the American Museum of Natural History. Mr. Roosevelt mesmerized the membership with his speaking skills and sincerity, effectively driving home the continued need for "in-the-field" etiquette to maintain relationships with landowners and non-hunters. This need for "in-the-field" etiquette remains unmet in so many instances and magnifies a poor image toward the whole.

Mr. Roosevelt then delineated the opportunity for the Club to bridge the gap between conservative constituencies and environmentalists. Anti-environmentalist sentiment (different than anti-environment) permeates our rural communities and must be overcome to ensure wise, sustainable use of our natural resources.

Boone and Crockett, with our impeccable history and our renewed political presence, can and will maintain a "constructive and moderating dialogue" with changing Administrations.

Sincerely,
Mark B. Steffen

We few, we happy few

Cheers and welcome to this splendid museum. It looks to me as though this is a room full of people in fine fettle this evening! Which is as it should be.

Though I think I see a few faces out there under sixty who look a little confused. You youngsters in your forties or thereabouts may be wondering: what on earth is a fettle? Sounds like the body part of a horse, or an odd subspecies of fennel.

It is an antique expression that seems apt for this evening as we are gathered to celebrate and foster forward this unique Club with its long history of members of fine fettle indeed. And that, my younger friends, is a sound condition of physical, mental, and spiritual fitness.

Of course, fine fettle doesn't preclude it being accompanied by some fine food and drink. And judging from some of the pictures of the first generation of B&C sportsmen, shrubberies and tofu were not on their menus!

The Boone and Crockett Club Annual Dinner, in fact, has a rich history. Opinions were shaped at these events, hunting ethics clarified, national conservation objectives formulated and put into motion. At the Boone and Crockett, the good company of the like-minded was enjoyed, but was never sufficient — these were companions in arms, companions who sought to ensure the future of a sport and a way of life that depended on the health and vigor of the nation's wildlife, lands, and water, as well as on the gentlemanly and ethical conduct of the sport's participants. This was the first generation of hunters who intuitively understood the writer, George Reiger's, admonition: "If hunters

By Theodore Roosevelt IV
B&C Regular Member



The Club's Annual Dinner was held at the American Museum of Natural History, shown above in 1902, for decades. The Club reconvened at the museum in 2005, where Theodore Roosevelt IV, addressed the members.

someday lose their self-proclaimed right to hunt, it will come about as a direct result of being too demanding of rights and too indifferent to responsibilities.”

I want to return to this shortly: rights and responsibilities. But first, I would be remiss not to note how extraordinarily responsible and well occupied our membership and staff has been in the past few years. I have been unfortunately absent from many, though not all of your meetings, ad hoc conversations and thoughtful email correspondence. Some of you, however, have truly and valiantly struggled to come to terms with what it will mean for B&C to keep institutional faith with the past while moving forward to meet the challenges of the present and the future.

I am going to begin in one of the places that two of B&C's founding members, George Bird Grinnell and Theodore Roosevelt, began: on the ranch. As Grinnell himself stated, besides hunting, he and TR also shared a strong interest in cow ranching — TR in Dakota and Grinnell in Wyoming. In fact, it is their shared interests in ranching, as much as hunting, that brought them together and us here.

Well, that and TR's pique over the bad review that Grinnell gave his book *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*. Incredibly enough, TR sought out Grinnell personally to complain about that review, making an unannounced visit to Grinnell's office.

I say: Thank God for email! — the recourse that most of my irate critics choose.

Internet invective is, in my view, far preferable to finding a burly, incensed hunter on your doorstep. But, Grinnell — as we might expect — was entirely undeterred and actually convinced TR that his, Grinnell's, criticisms were merited. Hard to imagine convincing many of today's environmentalists, animal-rights activists, or some of our more intransigent hunters that criticism could ever be merited!

As I sometimes think that we need a visceral and less abstract view of what is happening on the ground, I phoned one of the best hunters and ranchers of my acquaintance, located in Grinnell's favorite state, Wyoming. Richard is an unparalleled

leader in his community and an excellent range steward, but over the past few years, he has come into almost as much conflict with hunters as with environmentalists. And that's saying a lot.

He now considers most hunters a necessary evil, though that's a step up from environmentalists, whom he considers an... unnecessary evil. Unfortunately, my conversation with Richard is not excep-

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tional, but representative of the feelings and experiences of many working people and landowners in rural America.

As Jim Posewitz likes to point out, hunting and fishing used to be free-range activities in the West. No one worried much about whether they were on public or private lands; generally, a hunter asked for permission to hunt on private lands and got it. In those days, of course, the hunters were also more likely to be part of the immediate or immediately adjacent communities. Now, as all of our family ag producers find themselves up against a wall economically, they are charging fees or leasing their private lands to outfitters. Richard is among these.

So, I asked Richard to tell me some of his problems — problems that have developed over maybe the last 10 to 15 years, even before he closed his land to free range hunters.

I prefaced our conversation by telling him that I would be addressing a room full of concerned and ethical hunters in New York. He replied: “Ted, I don't mean to insult you and your friends, and maybe there are good hunters in New York, but all I meet are those that preach it pretty good. In fact, they do a darn good job of preaching, but I'm not seeing much in the way of respect and courtesy on the ground.”

His first story, he allowed, was an exceptional case of abuse. In late August, on private ranch grounds, 18 of his calves were gut shot — a deliberately cruel act — by bowhunters in the mountains. By that time, the calves were 450 pounds and very valuable, but Richard — who is not a sentimental man about animals — was nonetheless most incensed that those hunters would deliberately inflict unnecessary pain on the calves, that they would be wantonly cruel.

He said, “I gotta tell you that was some scene to come upon, there in a clearing in the woods. And we never did find an arrow so we could trace it back to the hunter. But that's an egregious example. What is more common is to come across a calf that was accidentally shot, or shot out of just plain frustration. Lots of times, these guys think the calf ate the elk's forage and if it wasn't for that particular calf, there'd be an elk lying there.”

He went on: “The biggest problem for us is trespass and the common hunter mentality that all of the game is on the other side of the fence — generally the other side of my fence.” He explained that if a hunter is caught killing an animal out of season or without the proper license they are charged fines in the thousands of dollars; if they are caught trespassing on his land, they are charged a fine of a couple hundred dollars. Many would rather risk that fine than pay the larger fee to an outfitter — a fee that helps to keep those ranchlands intact for the very game animals we seek, because the fee helps keep Richard in business and from developing his private tracts. There is a lot of pressure in his neck of the woods to sell out and clean up, but he is passionately attached to his way of life, one that hasn't changed all

that much since his ancestors first saw their valley more than 100 years ago.

Unbelievably, the final straw for Richard is something that should be a simple act of courtesy on the part of hunters. And, I suspect that it was this — as much as economics — that drove him to hire an outfitter for hunting on his lands, as that outfitter ensures that someone is always on the lookout to remedy this simple problem: leaving the gates open.

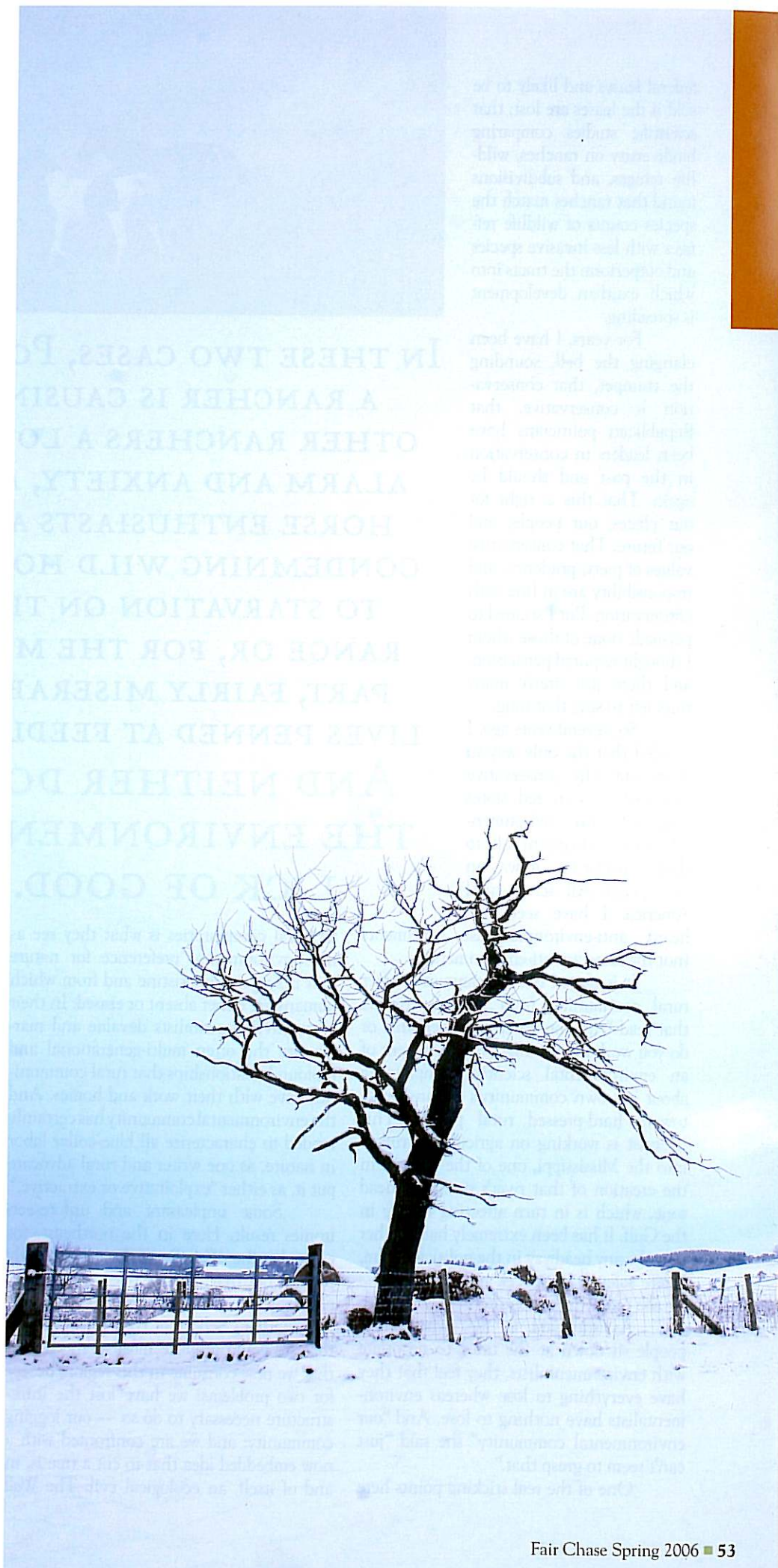
As Richard said to me: "These hunters don't seem to understand the magnitude of this country, or the problems they are then causing me, putting me in conflict with the National Forest Service, costing me days on horseback to find and bring back strays, because they couldn't turn around and close a gate. How hard is that to do?"

I have told you these stories in as close to Richard's own words as possible because I think that we sometimes lack a gut sense of what it might be like for someone on the other side of the fence. In New York parlance, we talk the talk easily enough, but fail to understand that it is equally incumbent on us to walk the talk. Hunters, of course, are not alone in facing the rising importance and declining practice of ethical standards.

And these stories are certainly a reminder to me that we can never underestimate the value and the ongoing task of inculcating fair chase standards, respect and civility among our fellow hunters — an essential part of B&C's mission. Should we ask ourselves: Can we do more?

Richard's story — the story of many in rural America — also reflects on a number of key conservation issues for hunters and the rest of us, illuminating what I suspect is a niche that B&C is well suited for and already moving into: bridging the gap between conservative constituencies and environmentalists.

One of the concerns that the Club has rightfully identified is the future of large, open tracts of private lands and the key role they play in conservation and the future of hunting. Ben & Jerry's, for instance, is now running an advocacy ad about the future of family farms; they tell us we are losing 330 family farms a week. As most of you undoubtedly know, 60 percent of threatened species habitat is found on private lands — our working farms, ranches, and timberlands. However, you may not know the following about America's rangelands: That 100 million acres of prime private home range lands, key to fisheries health and biodiversity abundance, are tied to



federal leases and likely to be sold if the leases are lost; that scientific studies comparing biodiversity on ranches, wildlife refuges, and subdivisions found that ranches match the species counts of wildlife refuges with less invasive species and outperform the tracts into which exurban development is spreading.

For years, I have been clanging the bell, sounding the trumpet, that conservation is conservative, that Republican politicians have been leaders in conservation in the past and should be again. That this is right for our places, our people, and our future. That conservative values of piety, prudence, and responsibility are in line with conservation. But I seemed to persuade none of those whom I thought required persuasion, and there just aren't many ways left to sing that song.

So, several years ago, I decided that the only way to figure out why conservative representatives in red states disagreed with environmentalists was to begin to talk to their constituents. It was an eye opener. All across rural America, I have seen and heard anti-environmentalist sentiments (not the same as anti-environment).

It is played out in community after rural community: from bumper stickers that read "Are you an environmentalist or do you work for a living?" to the lament of an environmental scientist complaining about her own community's intransigence toward hard-pressed rural people. This scientist is working on agricultural runoff into the Mississippi, one of the culprits in the creation of that river's notorious dead zone, which is in turn affecting fishing in the Gulf. It has been extremely hard for her to make any headway in the political realm, where science must seek necessary redress for the problems it identifies.

As she said to me, when rural people sit down at the table to negotiate with environmentalists, they feel that they have everything to lose whereas environmentalists have nothing to lose. And "our environmental community" she said "just can't seem to grasp that."

One of the real sticking points here



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for rural communities is what they see as the environmental preference for nature that is supposedly pristine and from which humans are either absent or erased. In their view, environmentalists devalue and marginalize the often multi-generational and profound relationships that rural communities have with their work and homes. And the environmental community has certainly tended to characterize all blue-collar labor in nature, as one writer and rural advocate put it, as either "exploitative or extractive."

Some unpleasant and unforeseen ironies result. Here in the northeast, for example, the *Wall Street Journal* recently pointed out that we have one of the largest naturally reforested regions on the planet. The Harvard School of Forestry speculates that we could produce most of the timber that we now consume in this region, except for two problems: we have lost the infrastructure necessary to do so — our logging community; and we are confronted with a now embedded idea that to cut a tree is, in and of itself, an ecological evil. The *Wall*

Street Journal quotes an environmental historian, Brian Donohue, who says: "Most exurbanites are two or more generations removed from hands on rural life. Many grew up hearing logging is bad for redwoods, spotted owls, and the climate. They don't have a clue where their wood comes from but consume it in record amounts." The Harvard School of Forestry points out that for every 20 hectares of previously harvested forest protected in North America and Europe, approximately one hectare of virgin forest is harvested in a developing country.

They write: "A major consequence of this illusion of natural resource protection is greater global environmental degradation than would arise if consumption were reduced and a larger portion of production shared by affluent countries."

The *Wall St. Journal* article went on to discuss a project to do some timbering on a wildlife refuge in Connecticut. The forest on the refuge was mature, mature beyond fruitfulness.

It had actually turned into a fairly bad habitat for some plants and wildlife, which were dwindling and disappearing. The proposal called for cutting down some mature trees on 157 acres in order to create clearings for younger ones and using the timber sale to pay for the project. This worthwhile and groundbreaking project soon became bogged down in protests and court costs.

This is precisely the kind of environmental inanity that most provokes rural people, especially when it has an impact on whether or not they will be able to hand down their family farm or ranch to the next generation. They see environmental groups assuming a take-no-prisoners stance toward their communities and often massaging the message at the expense of the harder complexities of the truth. Those close to the ground know just how complex the truth is when they work it out every day with sore muscles and slim margins in the market place; when they work it out at roundups and barn raisings with their neighbors; they know how complex the truth is before it is

distilled for wide spread public consumption and uproar.

So, where are we in all of this? Right where we should be. Certainly, right where TR would like to find us: In the middle.

Though hunting has in modern times been viewed as recreation, for a far longer stretch of human memory it was labor. Hunting done well involves the sportsman in a way of life that is familiar and congenial to that of rural people: similar physical exertions, hard acquired skills, practiced observation, and respectful attentiveness to place. And hunters, like rural people, understand that a way of life that they love depends on the health of the resource. And, like them, by and large we are also a pragmatic, hard-minded group, more interested in solutions than political positioning and stalemate.

The right and the left are making some critical and ideologically based mistakes where our rural communities and landscapes are concerned. On the right, we have Richard Pombo — also a rancher — reacting; he has yet to really make the distinction between the environmental groups that he doesn't like and the environmental cause. He's been coming up with all kinds of new ideas for undermining the public trust, which he views apparently as a landscape wholly usurped by the left. His recent ploy is to re-install the Hard Rock Mining Law and grant patents at, yes, a higher price than the original law but with no requirement that the stake be proved to hold mineral content. Even hard line ranchers are alarmed at this. One said, "Christ I'm going to have to go out now and patent all of my leased lands or risk losing them — that's one hell of an expense."

On the left, we have moves like a bill to prevent the sale of culled wild horses for slaughter, which effectively prevents the BLM from doing much of anything with them.

Most of these horses are not adoptable for the simple reason that there are many good and broke horses for whom we can't find homes; there are more horses in our country now than before the industrial revolution and much less work for them. This bill hurts the horses that will suffer lingering deaths from starvation, it hurts the biodiversity on the range that is trodden under foot by what is effectively an invasive species (one that doubles its numbers every five years and would — without predators — outstrip even the vast range of the Siberian Steppes), and, finally, the bill hurts and incenses local communities that also depend on the range for forage, communities that have been there as long as the

horses. To my knowledge, no environmental group has come out against this bill as that would require them to educate and moderate animal rights activists on wildlife issues. And both sides in these issues — the right and the left — are actually hurting the constituents and the causes they imagine they are serving. In these two cases, Pombo, a rancher is causing other ranchers a lot of alarm and anxiety, and horse enthusiasts are condemning wild horses to starvation on the range or, for the most part, fairly miserable lives penned at feedlots. And neither does the environment a lick of good.

There has been much and appropriate conversation about the potential role for B&C in a highly fragmented conservation arena, where other organizations are better funded, fully staffed, and presumably better positioned in Washington. B&C, however, is one of the few organizations which is maintaining a constructive and moderating dialogue with the Bush Administration. A few other sportsmen organizations are also managing it, as well as those in the community forestry movement — all of these groups, for the most part, are characterized by their small size and pragmatic, non-ideological approaches.

Invigorating and giving voice to the center is the task at hand. We are a fair-

minded, community-oriented people, and hunters can and should be, in my view, the standard bearers here. We are well positioned to moderate the right and provide a home for the sane pursuit of environmental policies that would support rural people. In this, as in all of our pursuits, we must remember that our members are our greatest asset and continue to elect people who care deeply for our mission.

Respect for differences in culture and points of view is almost as obsolete as the expression *fine fettle*, and it's leaving us all in a fine fix. If we continue to indulge ourselves in the notion that all opponents must be dimwitted, greedy, or evil, we will find ourselves tearing away at the foundation of democracy and certainly the core of community. It is an attitude that we must reject: it obscures the goal and entrenches needless conflict. The only way that rural communities will feel that they can be on the side of environmentalists is for us to begin to stand firmly on theirs. Dan Kemmis calls this a democratic "practice": acting from and speaking with the knowledge that, as he writes, "we have a mutual stake in the shape of one another's lives." And, sometimes, all that is required to express solidarity with our neighbors is... closing a gate. ■

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