

# LETTERS & PHOTOS

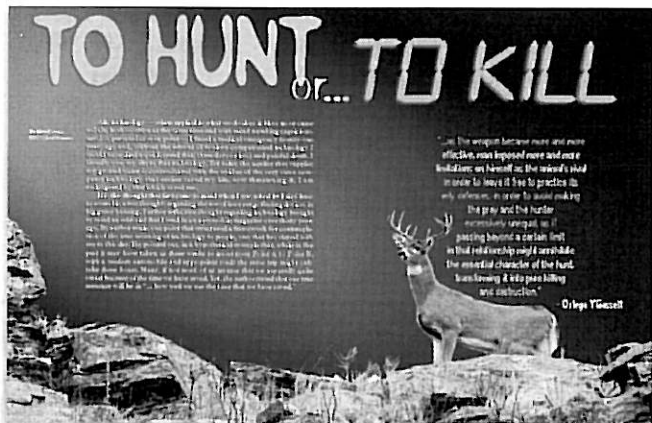
## Responses from...To Hunt or To Kill

Please send your letters to us at Boone and Crockett Club, 250 Station Drive, Missoula, MT 59801. You can also send your letters via e-mail to [bcclub@montana.com](mailto:bcclub@montana.com). We welcome a lively exchange of ideas and suggestions. Associates are encouraged to send their hunting and trophy room stories along with photographs. We try to publish as many letters as possible. Letters are published as written but may be edited for brevity.

Our office received several letters in regards to the article, "To Hunt or To Kill" printed in the Spring 1997 issue. Below you will find a few key points from some of the letters.

### OTHER VARIABLES

Mike Cupell's article, "To Hunt or... To Kill" is a compelling argument for the Boone and Crockett Club to maintain its current position of denying entry into its record book any animal that has been killed with the aid of an electronic device. The appearance in the market place of electronic (laser) range finders is yet another of Aldo Leopold's gadgets which gives further advantage to the hunter and erodes the natural defenses of the animals we pursue.



Mr. M. James Morey (of Swarovski Optik) tells us that, "the most important role of a good range finder is to tell us when not to take a shot because the range is beyond our capability." However, what we read in the current "trophy hunting" literature is quite different.

Long range shots (500-600 yards) are being taken at trophy animals (ostensibly because one cannot get closer) and the laser range finder is not being used to determine if the distance is too long, but rather to measure the exact distance (to allow for proper elevation) when attempting a shot that has already been determined will be taken.

While the laser range finder can absolutely provide accurate information on range, all variables at these

distances are greatly magnified, including windage and such simple things as trigger control. Any slight movement in the sight picture at 600 yards (lack of trigger control) or even a slight breeze (invariably present) will lead to a miss or, even worse, a non-mortally wounded animal.

The Boone and Crockett Club has always advocated the ethical hunting of game animals and has been the strongest supporter of the concept of "fair chase." The purpose of the records book is to honor the animal and not the hunter. The continued expansion and employment of high technology in the hunting of game animals does little to honor the animal. Laser range finders are one step further down the path of defeating the animal's natural defenses and I would hope that the Boone and Crockett Club chooses not to follow that path.

Roy G. Jones MD, FACS

### GADGETS

In the article, [Mr. Cupell] insinuates that laser range finders are "gadgets" that are unethical under fair chase. They do not attract, or aid you in finding animals. They only give you an accurate measurement of the distance that animal is from you, so that you can make an educated and ethical decision on whether you can take it.

Where does it all end? Are binoculars and scopes not "gadgets" that aid in the ethical harvesting of animals? Mr. Cupell obviously feels they are, he uses them. Under the photo of the nice mule deer that he took on the Navajo Indian Reservation, he states that he spotted the buck at over a mile away with the aid of high quality optical equipment. How can this be judged as ethical and knowing the distance the buck is from you, when you are ready to harvest him, as unethical? It seems to me that we owe it to the animal, to know as much about the facts as possible, pertaining to its harvest.

In truth, the aid of a laser range finder is no different than binoculars,

scopes, bi-pods, boat-tailed bullets or any other item used in aiding a hunter with making a responsible shot. A laser takes the guess work away. If the distance is beyond your abilities you will know for sure. Many hunters shoot at distances well beyond their own capabilities, due to not having the right information. Those capabilities are different from one hunter to another. What one can do the other may not.

Sneaking around the country side dressed like "Rambo" in order to get within rock throwing distance of an animal, does not make an ethical hunter. An ethical hunter is one who will use all means and items at his disposal to harvest his quarry as humanely as possible, and lasers are one such item.

If Boone and Crockett rules that lasers are not fair chase then what's next? Do we then rule that any animal shot at a distance of over 400 yards not be accepted?

Fair chase is just that, fair chase. I do not condone using any method of unfairly chasing or attracting an animal. Yet once you have successfully hunted that animal and now it is time to harvest it, you owe it to know all the facts, and knowing where your bullet will hit at that distance is the most important.

Kirk Kelso

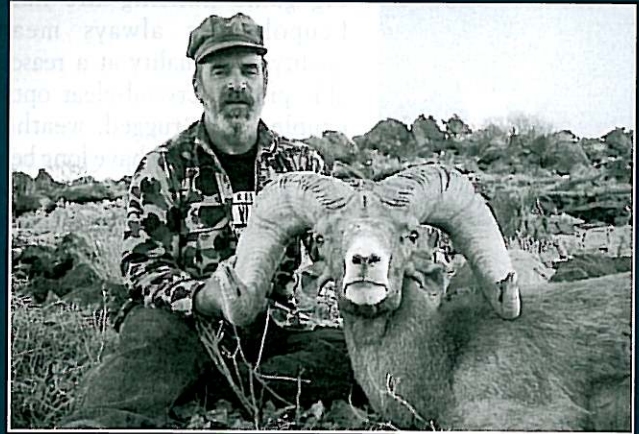
### ACCURACY & FAIR CHASE

Our club is a trophy hunting organization. Hunting involves the taking of life. When life is taken it is the ethical obligation of the hunter to do so cleanly, quickly, and without causing undue suffering to the animal pursued. A laser range finder is an aid in accomplishing this task.

The "fair chase" is over by the time one is ready to pull the trigger. It is then time to kill, and to do so with full confidence that the killing shot will be accurately and effectively placed.

Is the use of a .30-30 fair chase, and .300 Weatherby, not? Is the use of open sights fair chase, and a scope, not? Is a four power scope fair chase,

# ASSOCIATES IN THE FIELD



Dear B&C,

Enclosed is a photo of the desert bighorn sheep I harvested in the Castle Dome Mountains of southwestern Arizona on December 7, 1996. I was guided by Larry Heathington of Sheep Ltd.

This sheep completes my Grand Slam of North American wild sheep. I seriously started the task in November of 1984 and was fortunate enough to hunt with some of the best guides in the world, in some of the most beautiful and game rich areas on earth.

Good Huntin'  
Pete Studwell

## ATTENTION ASSOCIATES

Send in your field photos and accomplishments to:

Boone and Crockett Club, Associate Field Photos  
250 Station Dr., Missoula, MT 59801

## SPECIAL THANKS

Thank you so much for the drawing of the library books for Freddy Price, Jr., my son. He was especially pleased to have the *21st Big Game Awards*. It brightened his day to be able to complete his set. Also he was happy to have the other three.

Surgery for acoustic neuromas has left him very disabled but he still enjoys reading for a while each day. He is 43 years old.

Thanks to all, again.  
Dolly Price

and a 6.5 x 20, not? Is shooting off hand more fair chase, than using a rest or a bi-pod? Is shooting an animal at 200 yards fair chase, and at 400 yards, not?

The quality of Cupell's hunting experience may supercede his necessity to kill, but the end product of the hunt is the taking of an animal.

The bottom line is that "fair chase" should be defined as that which is deemed legal in the pursuit of a game animal by the jurisdiction in which it is hunted. Anything else is rubbish and impossible to police and effectively monitor.

I conclude this letter with my starting opinion. The chase is over when it comes time to make the shot. The ethical duty of the hunter at the time is to make that shot cleanly. Remember, a clean kill is separated from a wounded animal by mere inches.

William L. Berlat

## MANDATORY EQUIPMENT

I am writing this letter because I am becoming concerned with the tone of the debate that showed up in the Spring '97 issue of *Fair Chase* as it relates to laser range finders. In Mr. Cupell's article, he takes an idealistic, but faulted and unrealistic position in his argument against these range finders. He positions his argument around two examples. The first being that "A properly sighted in, scoped big game rifle in the hands of any reasonably competent shooter will perform effectively with a dead on hold out to that range (300 yards)." Second, he tells of a good friend of his that is building an \$8,000 long range shooting system.

My experience would not support either of Mr. Cupell's arguments. As it relates to his first example, I base my position on the teaching of rifle sighting, aiming, and shooting to approximately 400 individuals during Hunter Education classes each year. I also base it upon my experience and discussion with several big game guides-outfitters that I hunt with or have hunted with in the western United States, Canada, and Africa over the last ten years. And finally I

cite my experience from having operated a custom big game ammunition manufacturing and testing business since 1988.

The reality of the situation that most big game hunters are faced with when they enter the hunting field is that a) they are less than competent when it comes to knowing and using their rifles, and b) they/we are not competent at judging distances beyond 150 to 200 yards in unfamiliar terrain. Every big game guide-outfitter that I have hunted with over the past ten years has lamented about the inability of the vast majority of hunters to shoot accurately. And everyone of them has expressed a strong desire to own and use a range finder while guiding their clients. It is not that they see the range finder as an unfair technological advantage, but rather a tool that will allow them to educate their hunters as to how far away the animal is, how to hold in order to deliver a humane killing shot, and when the animal is too far away to attempt a shot.

In regards to the \$8,000 shooting system, Mr. Cupell needs to realize that over 99.9% of the hunting community cannot afford or would not choose to spend their hunting dollars on such a system.

From the perspective that I see having listened to the realities of today's hunting camp and the individuals who come to them with dreams that are larger than their abilities, a laser range finder should be mandatory equipment. If it did nothing more than get the average hunter to stop and fully evaluate how far he is going to shoot in relationship to his ability to hit what he aims at, we as a hunting community would be viewed far better than we are today by anti-hunters and the non-hunting public. It's not whether an individual uses or shuns technology or a gadget that makes him a sportsman. It's a sportsman's own internal code of ethics and standards, that no external body of rules can supplant, that should be our role model for fair chase.

Jim Riley