Memories of the Parker-Hale

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I take my time and slip the Parker-Hale .308 off the hook. Lord, the hunts I have had with that gun. I position the Steady-Rest against my hip and nestle the stock into my shoulder. I remember to slip the damn glasses off my nose and settle the crosshairs just behind her shoulder.

I take a deep breath and let half of it out. She is just 40-yards. The safety slips off, the crosshairs steady and the gun goes off. Deer number eight and it is just opening day of rifle season.

I sit quietly, not even bothering to work the bolt and chamber a fresh round. The deer is not going anywhere. I slip the sling back over the hook and sit quietly, just looking around. Not many shots for opening morning. I'm surprised.

Less than five minutes have gone by and I see motion. I think it might be the coyote I saw earlier. I start to reach for the rifle but see it is an old friend. He has five points and has the potential to be a good deer next year. Naturally, my little camera is suffering from a dead battery.

As the buck moves off, scarcely looking at the doe, a tiny buck with out of character antlers comes by. I am almost thinking he is this year's fawn but the antlers are too big for his body. Dang I wish the camera was working. I settle back and glance at the gun hanging by my right shoulder.

My mind goes back through the years and hunts I have had with the scarred rifle. Roger Hale made it for me back in '81. He did it as a favor for an article I wrote about his company and their record for excellence.

The first deer I killed with it was a nice, Dickson County 10-point. I remember it so well because I rattled him out of thick cedars by clicking the buckle of my safety belt against the stock. It was an 80-yard shot and he ran about 50-feet and stopped. I thought I had missed. Then, he fell over. It wasd a perfect heart shot.

The Wyoming sun was hot on my neck and the wind was from the mountains. The vast sagebrush flat stretched out for miles in front of me. The fine antelope walked slowly left to right at 345-yards. Jerry said it was too far. I did not agree. I rested the forearm on my pack, steadied and held the crosshairs just above his neck, 10-inches in front of his shoulder. He dropped in his tracks.

That rifle can shoot.

I shoot Winchester, 150-grain silver tip bullets. That is all I have ever shot. No matter what game I am hunting, from elk on down, that is what I shoot. Of course, I only hunt whitetails these days.

The Alabama sun is sinking. There is a roseate hue to the pines and hardwoods edging the green field. It is as if the edge of the field is painted by a spotlight with a rose filter. Bryan lowers the laser range finder. He grins at me, "She is exactly 266-yards." We are sitting in a shooting house on the big field. We did not really come to hunt. We were waiting for dark and time to pick up the other hunters. I just happened to take the rifle with me.

I rest the forearm on the windowsill of the house. Bryan raises his binoculars. I shrug my shoulders and take a real deep breath. I let half of it out. The Nikon scope is set on 8X and the crosshairs rest just under her backbone, four inches behind the shoulder.

The concussion of the rifle shakes the tin shooting house. Through the scope, I could not tell for sure if I hit her. Bryan shrugs, "Could be a hit. She jumped and dove into the pines. Let's go look."

I can see the white of her belly from quite a distance. She did not go 50-yards. We turn her

over. The bullet hit exactly where you want a bullet to hit.

Bryan grins, "Well, that is your doe for today."

The smell of sage and pine is so strong it almost hurts to breathe it. He bugles again and the sound echoes across and into the canyon. Mike and I are on one side, he is on the other. Mikes shakes his head. "Too far for that gun." He says.

I position the sticks and lean my shoulder against the pine. At 300-yards, the bullet will drop about 8-inches. But he is downhill and across a canyon. That will affect drop. I hold five inches above his heart and squeeze the trigger. Quickly I work the bolt. The bull has turned completely around and I hold the same and take the same shot.

"I told you it was too far." Mike said. Then he said a string of words I can't include here as the bull's front legs buckled and he fell. It was 307 yards and the bullets hit his heart about an inch apart. Not a big bull but a fun hunt anyway.

That gun shoots. Today, to make up for my lack of arm strength, I have a Steady-Rest to help and I don't shoot all that far. I don't have to. I am patient now.

So that is how my opening day went, memories and fine, fat doe. Reports are coming in of some big deer and many deer killed. We are on track to set a new record for deer killed. I will probably kill another deer or two, who knows?

It is time to climb down and field dress a deer. The empty cartridge is still in the rifle. I think I may keep it as a souvenir of another opening morning. I hope I can get a few more in before Tam Apo sends me on.

Sportsmen beware -- please take note and take action. This is a tremendously important matter. The Corps of Engineers is about to implement the closing of all waters below

hydroelectric dams to boating and fishing. That is a huge blow to all those who enjoy tail water fishing of any form. But it has more far reaching implications.

It is being done under the guise that fishing below these dams is dangerous. If you don't pay attention, yes it can be dangerous. But what if the COE then decides hunting on their land is also dangerous? Think of the precedent this might set.

This is being done with no public meetings, no notice at all and it is about to be a done deal. Please contact your state representatives immediately.

This can turn into a bad deal for all of us who enjoy land and water controlled by the COE.

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