

Them ole speed goats

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By JOHN L. SLOAN

I got plum hot the other day and that made me think of this. We were on the Tres Sombreros Ranch in the southeast corner of New Mexico and it was around the first of September. I reckon it was about 110 for an average midday temperature. We were shooting a hunting video and it was hot enough to drive me and the one of the camera girls crazy. We got so crazy we jumped into a windmill fed water tank not realizing it was 12 feet deep.

Good thing we could swim. See, we were living in teepees. Not air-conditioned wikiups, teepees. They were comfortable but at night, when it cooled off to about 95, they did tend to still be hot. I think that may be the first time I ever saw a cholla just get up and leave. See, plants, they aint supposed to walk. But thisun just walked away looking for some shade, I reckon.

There were about 15 of us all staying in these tepees and hunting antelope with muzzleloaders and sweating and jumping in cattle water tanks and generally going crazy. But as my friend, Larry would say, we got-er done.

Now if you think a cholla can walk, you should see an antelope run. The Hat Ranch, as the Tres Sombreros is called, is slap full of speed goats. They are everywhere. That does not mean you can get close to them. The average shot for us was probably 150 yards. That's reaching out there with a muzzleloader.

I knew a little about that part of the country and knew it was not likely to cool off much before Dec 19 and maybe not then. I decided to kill my goat early the first day so I could go jump in a cattle tank and drink cold beer.

It was 7:15, just coming sunup when I set up my shooting sticks and rested my Knight muzzleloader in the forks. I took a distance reading and got 210 yards on three straight readings so I assumed it was 210 yards from me to the antelope standing out on the plain. The wind was

from my left right peart, I gave him 4-inches high, and six-inches left windage and touched it off.

The recoil pushed me into the cholla. There is a lot of cholla out there and it all has thorns. I said some things even my vaquero guide could understand. I looked at him and said, "Benito, ¿es muerte?"

Cause I couldn't see what happened what with the smoke and the recoil and thorns. Benito, that was his name, said "Si, es possible Jefe." I told him my name was Jefe cause I always wanted to be called that.

So I picked out some of the thorns and reloaded and went slipping up on my dead goat. One of the mountains was in the background and I asked Benito, "¿Por favor, un tincturo?" And he said, "Sure, I'll take your picture." So we got some pictures and I went and jumped into the cattle tank with one of the video camera girls. She was the same one who failed to change the battery in the camera and thus did not get the footage of my great shot. I don't know what she does for a living now. I know she told Benito her names was Muy Bonita. Cracked Benito up and he mumbled something that sounded like metira.

Lots of goats on that ranch and some big ones. We all killed a more than respectable antelope and drank quite a bit of beer and ate some great food that Gill, the camp cook fixed over an open fire. He had to haul the wood in because there is only one tree in that entire county. Mexican kids growing up there, don't even learn the word for tree cause they never get to use it.

But it was a pretty good four days. I spent most of it in the cow tank. That is a big concrete vat about 50 yards across and 12 feet deep and it is filled with ice-cold water from a very deep well. The water goes from the tank down a pipe into a long trough and the cattle and horses and every living thing in the country come to drink from it. Whoever invented the word barren had that place in mind,

If I could remember it all, I'd tell you about the rattlesnake Benito found and put in the necessary house that was a ways from the tents. I guess it is a good thing it was dead. Took most of the morning to rebuild the house.

But that's another story. Anyway, we killed some good antelope.

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