

2
deep one on her wrist.

I never saw a dog - even Brian - work the first thorns so perfectly. Belton didn't miss a foot of cover but the birds just went in there.

This mild October and present weather should have held them back until this third week of the season, so can't think they're already gone.

Finally, in the fur thorns with cattle all around to complicate any shooting, I saw him hit scent and freeze - low at first, then
rise to full height with head up into the wind.



He held still, what, I say got a couple of pointers and I walked past and covered the area ahead where, by his stance, I was near the bird. It wasn't there among what seemed a rumble clump and instead of walking back into Belton's point, still sound, as I should, I gave him the 2-blast whistle and sent him in. He obeyed but ran into the 'cork' - a hem that flushed

left and seemed to land nearly in a clump of thorns. Belton held well, before following but we failed to relocate it, always chasing with woodscock. But the first part of the season on 'cork' was beautiful and I feel the worst in all our blood.

It was getting on and we pushed into the corner near the poplar, where I saw Belton hit scent at the old grass log. Moments later as he moved on, I say heard & saw a grouse - I neither - and we hurried back to relocate but failed to. Stopped to rest and eat, and then hurried east to the good last-hour hedgerow covert, also full of crows. I say left for the car and I hunted at last as day ended.

3/83

There wasn't a woodcock in the area, even though they should have been at that hour, but I saw one nice large grouse flush wild about 95 yards from me (Belton not near) and sail back to the edge and the main woods. I returned with Belton but did not near it. Day and I have seen grouse flush almost immediately, with no provocation, and think they are doing that on us more and more.

Covered the north and south edge well with no action, but a good exposure of 2 hours hunting for the first time out with no reactions. We've been taking walks to gradually get in shape and it worked well.

I remember, and always will, at the road where I day was waiting for me with the car, the image of Brian in his last year lying on the roadside with the sun and thorns behind him and the happiness he showed. He had courage, and gave a little bit to me today.

Tuesday, November 8

Hartman Place

Belton: worked hard.

gorgeous day, clear, sunny 60°

moved 1 grouse - 1 flush

2:55 - 5:00 / 2 hrs.

Back to a Covert Out of Time. Still limited to 2-hour hunts. Parked the little Subaru, mander trip here, at the old homestead and stumbled across the incredible grass area - furrows and holes - to the upper thorns, starting up the lower path, mostly because that was where we got to. Hunted Belton with the electronic collar for control but he rarely needed it. He knew where we was and hunted beautifully, sitting out & find the woodcock and grouse, as those knew was there.

Too much disappointment, there was not even winterash in the upper area of the bottomland - and no grouse. Hunted back the bottom & all down below where the 'cock was last year - and then

4
climbed to the path and retraced our first steps to the intersection, where
we paused for a breath on a rock on the edge of the old "Lemox" road.

It was beginning to get dry and a little muggy but the old road was damp
and smelled like heaven. The leaves are well down except some half green
red oaks — tan — orange — and, oddly, the dogwood, which has retained its leaves
this year.

Almost to the "lunch rock" Kay blew her whistle and signalled
that a grouse has crossed far out and left-to-right, very high. Belton
wasn't near that we could tell and didn't act as tho he'd been aware. There
was no sound, Kay said — just a high streak patching for the far bottom.

We found grapes up here and it may have flushed from high in a
grapevine. Kay said it looked small, as have all the grouse (the few)
we've seen this fall. She flushed one ahead of the car in our lane this a.m.

We followed the grouse to the lower margin of the big woods and
into good cover and Belton didn't miss a shot. We saw one a week ago
flush and land, then reflush almost immediately (and repeat) and we think
they are doing this, giving no dog work even when rounded down.

That was it. We hunted to the Lemox road and again set on the rock and
this time ate lunch, then down the lonely road into the lowering sun — Belton
covering both sides well — but not a feather.

We did see boot prints — not fresh — and of course know its hunted
by low hunters, but cannot grasp why we didn't move more than the one grouse
and not even a woodcock. But the day and the place — and the company — was lucky.

November 14, Monday

Hartman Place

Belton:
worked so hard.

5/83

cold, sunny, 41°

moved ^{new} 1-1
0

ideal weather, snow nearly gone

2:30/5:30 / 3 hrs.

Returned with hopes of finding grouse, and 'cock, hunting south on the main mud road which looked as if a caravan of pickups had been driving it, with some boot prints, and a half-track bulldozer. We optimistically put it down to deer prospectors, but can't overlook the possibility of road hunting.

Weather, conditions, and cover were ideal and Belton didn't miss a spot, but we found nothing. Still hoping, we reached the crossover road and moved to the far side of the powerlines, checking out the good corners for both grouse and woodcock. Not even a hawk.

There are not as many hawks this year but still an abundance, and we let Belton under the bottom cover and we hunted some excellent hawthorns on the lower slopes to the east.

With such cover everywhere, you can't give up the thought that there will be birds any moment, which of course is the charm of hunting. But when we had covered both edges of the west powerline all the way to the upper end with no action, we began to droop.

This is only my third hunt after my convalescence and we had not planned to stay out much beyond two hours, but we kept going, taking the daisy thorns on the east slope above the "tree stand" to the upper field, then north to the corner and up the edge to find the old woods road on that hillside, pausing for lunch and a ^{George Bird Evans Papers} ~~short rest~~ on the woods edge.

(6)

The sun, hazy now, was getting low when we found the old road, partly blocked by blowdowns and pools of water — the snow still on most of the woods floor in this shade. Hunted to the upper end and crossed the headland swamp to our familiar corner without a trace of a bird, not even a sound.

I was getting uncomfortably tired by this time and so was Kay — she is so game — but we pushed on with the sun now below the treetops. At the upper ^{old} "funny" road, we took a rest and then hunted south. The dampness released gorgeous woods smells and Belton never stopped trying for other scents, a grand dog but getting a bit worse now.

It had checked on a momentary point as we had climbed from the swamp flat, but reconsidered and went on — the only dog moment of the day. Even that had revived us some.

As we walked the rough old road then perfect cover, there was a sudden flash from over our heads and I wheeled to see a grackle — honey treetop mangy from the takeoff. Kay saw the grouse over her head and darting up over the stripmine top above us. It had let me walk under it. Belton didn't even have the chance of knowing about it.

That was it — one grouse, I'll be generous and not count it the same ~~as~~ ^{as} we had missed last time, though it could have been.

The distant mountain, the Brierley, is grand from the southeast, and the entire coast enormous and lovely, but we are almost convinced there ~~are~~ ^{was} no grouse broods here this year. It is a bitter thing to lose something splendid, just when you have discovered it the previous season. Three hours without motivation is just too much at this time.

November 18, Friday

Huckle Place

Belton:

7/83

Snow partly gone

sunny to cloudy 45°

moved 4-5 flocks

2:20-5:20/3 hrs. Back to the wonder court of last year. Parked at young Mac's and made the long walk in with Belton working beautifully, but no birds or even tracks, except old foot tracks in first section but not up on the good flat.

Hunted the usual tracks to the old orchard corner with no action. Finally at the upper clearing, Belton found scent on the left edge under a small hemlock but the grouse flushed without sight, before he hit it. At the same time, they heard another grouse flush in the cove on the right (where 7 had flushed last year).

Review of action:

We hunted the top flats much as we had done before and came finally to the opening in the fur and with no grouse. Clouds had moved in and it was getting after four o'clock by the time we ate, sitting on the snag and stumps we had used in our last year's hunt.

We had to move out toward the back trip, taking the west road back, jumping a big buck. At the faint path that cuts up the hillside, I worked them thick slashings, hoping to locate the #2 grouse, with no success, but came out at the high clearing where both had flushed.

Trying the trail to the left of Belton's find, we came to a clump of Laurel I started to investigate, just as Belton came onto a bird that flushed, not quite giving him a chance to see flash point. Moments later, another grouse flushed,

in the same general direction, east — no chance to shoot. (8)

We followed and on the trail we were headed for to return, Belton worked to my left and I heard a flush and saw one of our birds quarter right across my path but too far for a shot, which would have been a good chance if I'd been twenty yards further along.

I count these two as new birds, although it is possible they could have been our first brace but not here to make our birds count as much as possible! That was it.

The long trek back got us out at dark, tired, but I am pleased I am getting back into shape for a 3 hour hunt. Somewhat disappointing, after the grouse we found here last year.

November 19, Saturday Little Sandy, North Belton: 1 prot.
Beautiful day, sunny, damp, snow gone, 50° (after rain), snow 2-2
0

3:20 - 5:35 / 1st hr Remained in a.m. but after two o'clock I started clearing and broke into a lovely sunny day. Drove back to Luke Seese's — much mud, and started below old "Fricky" house where Luke "always" breaks some up. We should have taken Luke; today even Belton couldn't find them. tho he hunted gorgeously.

We hunted down the valley on the rough hillside below the crest; very rocky, grapevines and grapes everywhere on the ground. Saw turkey chophins and many other birds but not hunted

9/83
We were near the old Day Casteel place did not get action.
Belton, hunting with the false collar, was reaching a bit wide,
and pointed out ahead and above. Ray heard the grouse go out
thirty yards ahead of him. They are terribly wild. We hunted
to the edge of the big woods at the Sister line with no
relocation and no other birds.

As usual, on Saturday before deer season, there was much
shooting all around - sighting - in. We hunted down the path,
now used by Raymond Seese in 3-wheeler all-terrain car,
Ray had seen him come out as I talked to Luke Seese, and he
may have flushed a bird or two.

I was hoping to reach the big powerline but time ran out
and we ~~forgot~~ ^{lost} our way up the steep, thick hillside toward the
~~crest~~ ^{crest} to hunt back up the valley. The old trail cut back downhill and
we were forced to push through incredible tangles. Just below the
top a grouse flushed left and above and I saw it top out over the flat
too far to shoot. Belton had not pushed it, but hit next and held
rigidly, convinced a bird was still there, but there was none. We made it
top, pretty tired, and ate lunch, sitting on a rocky outcrop as the
sun dropped below the trees.

I followed the birds' flight hoping to find it on top, which
Ray walked to the field on the east and met us after I had hit the

(10)

powerline on top when Belton saw me hops with a rabbit coming into the sky corner - but it was a rabbit.

We had a long walk back but a lovely one - the sunset glowing at our backs and the full Hemlock's Throat (#2) rising in the eastern sky ~~and~~ on our right all the way to the car. It was nearly dark when we got there tired.

There are too few birds for this cover and as too many people - Raymond with his damned motorized toy to disturb them.

Monday, November 21
partly cloudy, 50's
3 hrs.

Henecke Place
moved ^{not over} 2-5 flocks
0

Belton: 1 prod.

We parked at the north end near big powerline at our usual place and found a house under construction on the spot where we took the two photos of Brian & Belton on double point in 1977. Progress.

Hunted the gopher's hill and over to the big clearing. Heard Belton bark at a treed grouse that flushed without our seeing. We hunted south to the far end and covered the "orchard corner" with no results.

Worked west down the main road to the steep trail on the right and up to the top, stopping to eat. It seems odd that no birds are in here - excellent cover.

On top, I found the old trail but missed (or lost it) before it reached the pass, and we had to crawl over rocks and broken cover to the upper flat woods where I found the trail again and went to the

183

big clearing. Saw our old maple log with memories of Bush.
Not a bit of action except the #1 tree bird.

We had reached the mud road and started north when a grouse
flushed near Kay from a tree after I'd passed - too near the same
spot to be #1 but we did not follow back.

At the big powerline - no birds along the mud road - we
found cranberries in the boggy ^{moss} ~~flat~~. Turned back into the flat
woods, we worked toward the hill and again Kay heard and saw
a grouse flush toward the hill, not near me. We think it
may have been from a tree.

Following, we flushed another on the way - this behind me
and without my hearing or seeing it (I am almost deaf
to flashes even with the hearing aid). Both of them we count
reflashes of the only 2 we had moved.

Well ahead - he was working too wide - I saw Belton but
scent and work in, point, then move in a few steps and freeze on
the hillside above the "basin road." I tried to reach him but the
grouse wouldn't hold and flashed up the hill. It was a ground
point and made the day. Too late to push up to the top and
follow, and we worked out to the car (our little Subaru) and
ended a day, sparse but with one point.

We ~~stopped~~ sat in the car and ate, began bread and tea (milk,
hot water, in honor of my ulcer ~~experiences~~) and ~~drank~~ ^{drank} some in a

glorious November sunset sky, a fire with red-gold.

(12)

Tuesday, November 22

Furnace Road

Belton: hard walking.

mild, cloudy, in mid-50's

0

late start 1 1/4 hr.

This is the place of the old hunting shack of Father and Mr. Larkin and Mr. Arley. I've wanted to try it, since it was heavily slashed about 3 or 4 years ago. It is Penna. State Forest land I think and I had no idea of the vastness of the cutting — all the way to the top of the ridge, which was much greater than I realized. It is in a state of dense regrowth after clear cutting, but probably not long enough.

We walked the rough mud logging road — jeep tracks as far as they could go. Belton probed almost impenetrable briars and whipsnags over. We then took a much rougher log road even the jeeps couldn't travel and pushed further up and doubled back south, passing to eat near an edge of crabapple thickets that looked good.

Got up and returned to the highway and crossed into the good bottomland, hoping for a sharp woodcock. Not even that. A disgusting mess of rubbish dumps — lovely hummers. The stream, Cheney, was larger here than I would have thought.

Finally got up and returned to the car. Not one bit of game — not even a deer or a rabbit.

...
We tried to enjoy the huge wild area for the porcupines ^{13/83}
of the corner, but our hearts were not in hunting today because of
Toasts' suddenly declining condition.

We buried her the next day. I knew I loved her but I had
no idea how much she meant to me. At 3 months past 15 years
I should not have expected much more but somehow I couldn't
believe it. I wonder if we will make enough over them
while we have them? This has not been a good autumn.

November 26 Saturday Humble Place Belton

Sunny, climbing up 50° snow 1 (not new) - 2
very breezy
2:30 - 5:15 / 2 3/4 hrs

Snow gone. Parked at young Mac's and walked the long way to the
back country. Wind made it seem colder and clouds moved over. We
moved our one and only grouse from a box sitting along the narrow
path south of the upper clearing, no doubt one of the birds we moved
our first day in ~~here~~ ^{here}. It let us pass under it and bowed back over
Ray, who ducked down but there was no more than a glimpse of it
disappearing.

We continued the way we were going and took the Transversal trail
to the first opening where we begin hunting the top flat. There we
stopped to eat. I was feeling out of steam from medication and
was on, and the day was something of an effort after lunch

- the stump Kay sat on collapsed as she put her weight on it! — we ⁽¹⁴⁾ hunted south on a good trail new to us, with Belton determined to make birds what there were none.

On a long couch then good cover, we ended up back at the top clearing, and heard the grouse we'd flushed go out from where Belton was working on the north side. Can't say if he had a point but somehow doubt it.

We made the long way down to the next openings where we'd eaten lunch in the past — the only grapes in the area are here — found nothing, and took the return way to the thickest "trails" and up to the top clearing again, with no contact with our only grouse where we'd expected it.

Once more it was the same old empty pull back to the road that leads to the car, with the big pools of water in the big puddles, Belton trying his best all the way, and no birds. How can so many grouse disappear from one season to the next? I was well bushed when we ended. Guess my little May dance with the ulcer took more out of me than I knew, but some motivation with birds would have done much to overcome it.

At the trailer, young Mac, very cordial, came out asking to see my gun. Opened and closed the breach, snapping the breach lever shut with pleasure — about six or eight times — with: "That's what I like to hear." I died a slow death. But what can you say?

December 5,
~~November 28~~, Monday

Little Sandy, North
march 1-1
0

Belton:
hard working

15/83

cool, cloudy 2 3/4 hrs.
snow gone.

Another disappointing day in a year of disappointment.

Parked at bridge and found Sandy in roaring white-water flood - a stunning area of hummocks and rocks, with hummocks growing larger with time. A grouse flushed from a hummock on the right of the path and bored across Sandy to the far side. No shot but would have been a foot or so away if possible with the rushing water to carry off a dropped bird. Several of the few grouse we've marked this year have flushed from trees, with no chance for Belton.

We found the path packed with tracks of Raymond Sees's bushy tuggy, saw a trail up, or down, the big ponderosa with 3 new yellow 20-ga. shells half-way up the steep grade. Learned later that he and Don are running a trap line. The Seeses have been a source of annoyance to us ever since they've been here; no different from Charlie's boys.

There was nothing in the way of action - just lovely cover strewn with grapes and magnificent scenery with wild ridges and valleys. all I got from it, covering the steep climb up the ponderosa, the flat on top, and coming back by Sisters and Shaper's field and down, about 60° northward to the bottom and the gorgeous rhododendron path where I found them in the old days with Blue & Buff, was a bad back and side symptoms about 2 days later that lasted the week, losing enthusiasm for barren country. Ray is more game than I am.

December 14, ~~Thursday~~ ^{Wednesday}

Lawson (Mt. Dale)

Beltin: 3 prod. (16)

Weather perfect damp,
mild, sunny 52°
2:15: 3 hrs.

runed 5-7 flocks
1 shot - 0

This was an ideal day after much rain for days. Beltin was as kept-up as Ray & I. We drove to the "Wagoner" road at the top of Lawson loop and hunted out the flat, feeling it ideal terrain for not aggravating any back condition that had bothered me since we hunted on Little Sandy's steep hillside on the 5th.

At the clearing edge where we saw two grouse on our early spring walk, we heard one go out and pitch down the slope below the road, flushed from the same tangle of cane. Beltin had no scent of it but got himself plastered with birdshot and it took an endless time getting him de-burred. All I could do was sit and try to dig them out. Ray worked on him while I fretted at the delay.

Finally we got going, following the flush down the excellent cover, with an old log road. Beltin was moving too wide and required touching with the shock collar, but he came in and set scent at the left of the old trace. Unfortunately, he reestablished and the bird flushed, having lain well in some old logs. I saw it set up, close enough for a shot but had no look at it as it cleared.

We followed the flight to a corner with a big field and into grand grapevine edges below where Beltin but not scent, but I think the grouse had shifted ahead of us, as at one

than do these things.

The cover is good in here, and we followed old log traces out the ridge, below and parallel with the Wagner road itself. Belton, still working too wide, had a point they called. I didn't hear the bird but they saw it and saw Belton staunch but breaking at wing and touched him with the stick. The grouse had pitched down the hill ~~and~~ impossible to follow - and I tried to get back to the road above. But there was an impassable sheer cliff and we had to keep out along the base hoping to find a break in the rocks.

We finally found what seemed a deer path leading up, but it dwindled to a crevice in the enormous rocks that no deer could have made. For a while I thought the small stream was the one that drains the small valley I remembered on the Wagner road but this evidently was simply out of the cliff itself. Feeling adventurous, we tried working our way up the break in the rocks, with nothing but trunks cross-cross to give us a hold, and to hold us back. I would reach an impasse, hand my gun to Ray and then maneuver a few feet ahead. Ray followed after handing me the Perovskiy. We continued this routine to a bulldozed flat tract on top, ending on our knees ^{in mud} with mud on our gloves. At the top, Ray took a picture looking back down what we had come up.

It turned out to be only yards below the road, which we walked around as found a rock to sit on and get back down.

1 day saw ² chestnut trees on the road, and we looked up (18)
to see ~~if~~ double chestnut saplings about 6" in diameter.

One was dead, the other had a chestnut bud at its tip like an angel on a Xmas tree, but the bark of the tree was splitting from the blight, that never goes, even the these trees show remarkable persistence from ancient roots.

at about 4:00^{or later} we decided to head back to the old clearing rather than try to push all the way to the small valley and take the big creek. ~~the~~ The cover above the old clearing is excellent, and we hurried across toward it. Clouds had moved in and I changed clip-on glasses to the clear ones, and sent Belton into the edge at the base of the small ridge, working out away from the road.

In a beautiful tangle of grapevines (1 day saw lots of grapes on the ground), Belton pointed just under the woods and I pushed to him, moving quickly a few feet in front and waited, trying to cover all possible openings for the flash. Belton held in a lordly manner, chiding me from somewhere ahead. I would have been well advised to keep moving in but I wasn't sure the bird might not be behind me. 1 day got to us and took a couple of minutes. At last,

the grouse lifted somewhat to my left - only round with no 19/83
chance to see it. Moments later #2 flushed about 25 yds.

straight ahead but was impossible to try for, tho it seemed to
go up over the rise. Belton moved in, tightly beated and as I
started to go, he ran into #3 that followed #1, with neither
day nor I seeing it.



AT END OF DAY

We chose to follow #1 & #3, and with Belton back and ahead of
me and day outside in the field below, I worked along the line
just inside the woods. Unfortunately Belton wasn't working when I
would have had him, and I walked into what I'm sure was one
of our birds. It gave me a brief glimpse, straightaway in the
thick cover and I mounted and fired at it ^{moments} after it
disappeared. With no way of knowing if I'd hit, I called Belton
in, then heard day say the grouse had come out of the woods and
rumbled all the way across the clearing to the far corner, going in

somehow to the left of a low hemlock tree on the edge of the distant woods.

We crossed to the area and hunted it well, with no short check by Belton when the bird may have reappeared. It was getting late and we gave up and returned to the knob and tried to follow ^{the flight of} #2, with no results. We came back down the hill ^{on} the north and came out on the big clearing not far from the corner and the mass of hardwood, keeping Belton at heel.

We reached the car at 5:00 - three hours that did not seem tiring what with the grand action.

It was my first shell found all seam, and the day was a fine one - our first good contact with birds. Truly, Belton's last point (3 birds) was a grand one and solid as the mountains.

Friday 13 January

Willkinson Place

Belton: 1 prod.

Snow on ground, cloudy, 34°

Moved 4-4 flocks

2:35-4:50 / 2 1/4 hr.

0

Yesterdays sunshine, although too cold, moved us to need to get out today, and with a light covering of snow on the glaciers that has been on the ground for a month, we disregarded

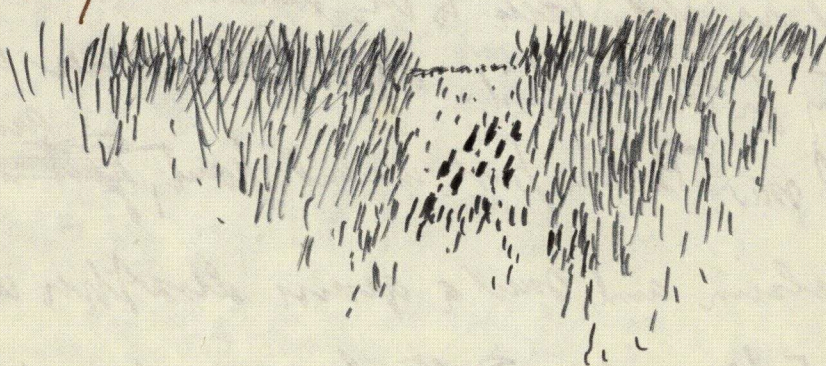
cloudy skies and forecast of light snow and drizzle to the
Wellenison sawmill hollow.

21/83

There were lots of car tracks at our parking place above Sandy -
too much ice for fishing - and loads of dog tracks as we started in -
shade of Art Thomas - but no foot prints. It was good to be out
again and Kay & I and Belton revelled in the good air.

Partway up the log road, about where I shot our last grouse last
season, we came on fresh turkey tracks that got Belton worked up.
It had begun to sift shavings of snow and by the time we reached the
big powerline we was in a good snow shower, and while we ^{suffered} ~~enjoyed~~ it,
we changed plans to hunt the upper end thickets and climbed the
powerline hill to the upper log road.

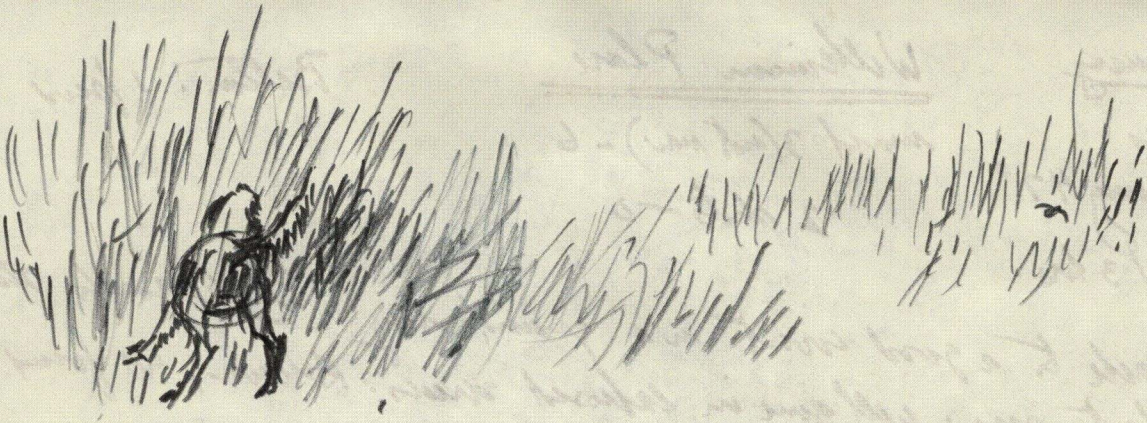
The snow had let up and we were in that grand cotton-wood
but there were still no grouse tracks, with the birds, if any, covered up
in brush. Looking across the valley to the small powerline right-of-way,
a full third of a mile away, I saw a group of leaning black shapes that
took the form of the turkeys - about 8 of them - running for the woods on
the right edge. How they saw or heard us - Belton's bell? - at that distance
is amazing. Kay could see them still running in the thin woods.



Belton worked the sides of the top log road as we moved south, covering the area beautifully and within good range most of the time, responding well to the whistle on the times he had to be called in. I had a half-second glimpse of what had to be a grouse, black spot against the sky, flushing for a turn right-to-left a hundred yards ahead of us, and with Belton not near it. Not long after, we heard #2, a separate bird, flush from thicket below the road. Belton had no scent of it, and the bird flushed from us, more sound, thirty yards below, pitching over the hill. Very spooky.

Saving that bird to try later, we took a left log road back to try for the #1 grouse that must have gone toward the upper edge, ~~the~~ the big field and the woods! but altho we went all the way there was no action, and we sat on our ^{rock} ~~logs~~ on our plastic "seats" and had lunch with Belton at our knees begging for the chicken scraps Kay had brought him. While we were there, Kay took some shots of Belton tenderly holding the Purdy to show the newly finished gunstock.

We retraced our steps back to the intersection and started down the road to try for the #2 bird. At a thick corner where another log road crossed, I saw Belton perk in and point, ~~just~~ ^{and} a moment later heard Kay exclaim and saw a grouse disappear in the woods well below — a fast flush low. Belton had moved, and Kay called, indicating a second grouse as he pointed with both hands pointing in two directions!



We made our side zig hoping to follow the last flock but gave it up as hopeless without seeing the bird. We had come on fresh foot prints - no dog - coming from down the ridge. They had come onto the log road we followed downhill but had cut in from the thicket on the left. There was no car at the bottom so think it was someone working the hillside from Rexroad's house direction.

Before taking the long descent we made an effort to move the #3 and #2 grouse but without pitching down over the snowy steep, think even then was no way to follow, so gave up.

It was a pleasant afternoon, no chance to see any bird enough for a shot, and Belton had the briefest of prints. These grouse are hysterically wild. You think no one is hunting the forest but foot prints say otherwise, and constant presence of people has its effect. But it was good to be out, grand exercise, and neither of us felt tired - rather good, after such a long absence from the woods. The forest is a good one, with acres of staked woods.

Thursday 26 January

snow still in places
beautiful, clear, sunny 47°

2:15 - 5:10 / 3 hrs.

Wilkinson Place

mowed 3 (not mow) - 6

2 shots - 0

Belted: 1 prout

(24)

Back to a good event on a grand day. Back roads still too icy to try, but snow well gone in exposed areas. However, we found plenty with slushy walking - mean or frozen ground.

We hunted the valley to the thorns at the head, with not even turkey tracks this time. Aukward walking on soft snow. At the top, we started back the top bog road, pausing to take a joint photo of the 3 of us sitting on the same fallen tree log and using the delayed camera mechanism.

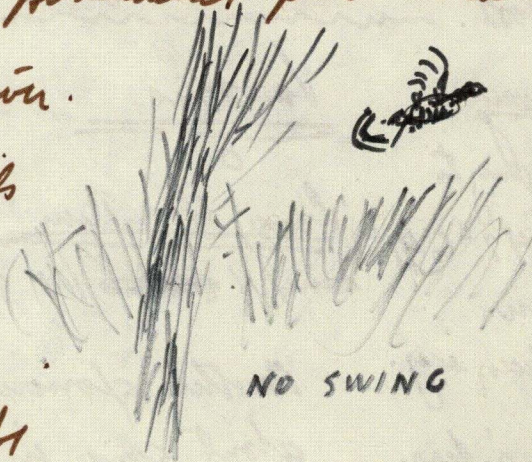
There was no evidence of the grouse along the bog road or at the intersection, but just below the "triangle" I saw Belted but a point suddenly, almost squatted. He straightened as I approached on the road at his left and held, pointing into thick brack and tangles of sparkling. The grouse finally flushed and got out before I could see it other than as a straightaway - left disappearing and I fired right on at about 35 yards, and got nothing but a fluttering plastic shot-sleeve well out. As I mounted, I was shocked to discover my "bad" left shoulder stiff, and not a smooth mount - with the rammed stick, I had expected beautiful results. Belted was excited and worked the area when I felt the bird would have fallen if hit (had not seen it after my shot) but found nothing. As he finally moved on out we heard a flush, but I felt it too close to be the same grouse and we counted it #2.

There was no doubt the 2 we had moved here the last time on ^{25/83} the 13th.

We stopped to eat lunch on an aspen log at the edge of the path. When we resumed, we hunted back up to cover the intersection more thoroughly. Even tho' I hoped to find other birds, I was unprepared when a grouse, #3, flushed out of the left thicket, probably from Belton, and crossed low and fast from left to right and I was helpless to swing as it show reflexes? I'm usually too fast.

We marked the bird as going low up the road above the intersection, and followed. Belton was working the cover well inside on the left and was not near when the grouse - looking larger this time and within 10 yards - flashed from the left edge and crossing the path rose above the cover on the right. I seemed again handicapped by my sore left shoulder and after it came into view still only 20 or 25 yards away, fired from stationary barrels instead of with a smooth swing thru. My left arm was powerless to lift the gun well in the mount and I was aware that I did not have the stock to my face - a poor performance. I hope I'm not going to be in a permanent problem with that shoulder I injured back in '77 on Stony River.

When you're not into a swing the birds seem incredibly fast and give you a sense of inadequacy and frustration. I think, if I can think, that I'll be able to mount, using the method I



followed in the balance of the '77 season after my fall, grasping the barrels with the left hand, pulling in toward me, and lifting the arm with the right hand and the barrels themselves.

We followed this #3 bird/#4 flock and worked in the cover on the right and heard it left ahead of Belton. Feel he is getting some points we can't see on these ~~distinct~~ flocks in dense cover.

We cooked to the side of our lunch, then worked down where we heard #2 left after my first shot, and had the sixth flock with a fleeting glimpse of what must have been #1. Kay saw it better than I — with only a "feel" of a low departure. I hunted the hillside on mushy snow — snow in too many places here today — and rejoined Kay on the steep log road (path) down to the car.

A good day with action but a disturbing realization of our main handicap — vision, hearing, and now a stiff shoulder that really had not been that much of a problem up to now. Belton would have I didn't get to shoot. ~~~~~

Friday 27 January
clear, sunny changing to
cold and cloudy 47° to 41°
Snow gone in lower
areas, frozen in places, icy.
2:20 to 3:20 } 2 hrs.
4:00 to 5:00 }

Lawsons
○
Lower Hog Run
mixed 1. ~~1~~ / 1 flock

Belton: 1 bird

Another glorious day, sunny, clear, snow about gone in home area. Drove to "Wagon" road and the bird went almost blind as I took into the car when we stopped out.

We tried it anyway, and found snow in most places on 27/83
top, icy footing and crunchy ground. No sign of birds at the
knot field and marginal cover. After a try with, during which
Belton moved out too wide, we came back via the woods below
the road and drove to the base of the ridge, parking with a
magnificent view west of north and ate lunch.

Drove down to Hazelton and to Hog Run (lower) where
we found snow mostly gone. But this is not an attractive
event. There were no grouse in the usual places and Belton
was reaching, altho' he hunted hard. Finally at the
base of the ridge (Punchbowl) and in a deep ravine well
ahead and below us, we saw him flash point and then
flush, indicating a flush. The neither of us heard it. It
is a stretch of imagination to call it a point, but I'll
give him one. They are so hard come by these days.

Belton is a ground dog but he sets different to keep
up with. I'd love to have a dog again with Dixie's range.

Came back to the road and the car via the lower edge,
working thru [swamp frozen] and clambering up the rocky
road fill. Not a nice day.

Saturday 4 February

Wilkinson

Belton: 1 prod

(28)

mild to cool 47° & 40°
sunny to clouds

marked 4 (not new) - 4

0

2:30 - 5:00 / 2½ hrs

Another disappointing day. Soft snow - slippery footing. Parked at the big powerline and climbed the right of way to the test-drill road (a new feature in these mountains in the last 10 years). Good cover on the north margin of powerline. Found ourselves, after a mean climb, in the area where we found the birds last time, but no sign - scent, tracks, or sight.

Belton hunted well at first, but the lack of birds wears him out and, without the shake collar, we had trouble keeping him near us. This is a frustrating situation, but a logical result of poor game levels.

"Saw" - a more flash - our first grouse 80 yards ahead as it crossed to upper side of the main top road. Don't think Belton was near it, but grouse are so wild they left at the sound of his bell. This is excellent shooting cover but too thick to penetrate to follow a long flash to the top, and so we hunted all the way out the upper road to the other big powerline, where we doubled back along the upper margin and on the most upper dog road back to the intersection. There we heard (key heard) a wild flash, again not near Belton and I heard another as well -

#2 and #3. all these are the same grouse we've marked before.

We paused to eat lunch and I put on my corduroy shirt that I had shed earlier when the sun was out. Now heavy clouds were moving over from the west - glorious blue mountains - and temperature was dropping.

During the afternoon, we had heard shooting across Big Sandy on the old Sliger place near Denney.

George Bird Evans Papers

West Virginia and Regional History Center

29/83

double - bangs - almost incredible for these days, and we considered the chances they were into the turkeys. Now there was a couple of shots - one single and later a double - around the bend on our side toward Redroads. This is part of Saturday hunting.

It was 4:30 and we started back, hunting the road we had come in. Just beyond the "triangle corner" Belton stopped suddenly just ahead in the dog road and went on point toward the lower side, held, then reestablished and froze - a solid point and certain. I hurried to him on the slippery moss but nothing happened. I can get a photo of the point from behind, and then we heard the flush 30 yards or more below. Spooky, and with no view, going, if sound was correct, down over the ridges too rough to follow.

Belton covered the area well, had another point that produced nothing we saw or heard and that was it. Hunted the drill road to the first mound and to the woods on the north edge - too open but better footing and closer to the car. Another difficult day with no shots. This is the poorest year in my memory.



SURELY NOW!

Thursday 9 February

Mild but wind, sunny clear 42°
deep snow still on.

2:35 - 3:40 }
4:10 - 5:15 } 2 1/4 hrs.

Graveyard Glade
mowed 1 - 1
0
Lake Noël
0

Beltan: 1/2 pm

Lovely weather overhead / too much snow underfoot in typical winter weather cycle. Clear, sunny and hope that the last snow (4 inches) would be melted - it won't. We could not have gone to a worse place than the Graveyard Glade - snow deep with underpack that broke under most every step, especially in the thick bottom of the swamp. Not a trace of a track other than one or two rabbits'.

Had the shock collar on Beltan today and it was necessary. He is not coming into a comfortable range on his own - even at 7 1/2 years. Too few birds, and he had the grand urge to go till he finds them. Does come in, usually, at the whistle but gets so he squares that after so long. [As to page 30a, misplaced between pages 36 & 37]

Wednesday 15 February Mathews Place
Mostly sunny, breezy 46° moved 4-6 flocks
snow gone. 1 shot - 0

Belton: 4 perched. 31/83

2:30 - 5:40 / 3 brot

at last the snow (and most underlying ice) has gone; a beautiful day and a return to one of the great events. The little Subaru handled the old road well, tho it was in as good condition as we have seen it. Home at the Mathews place but no horses.

A muddy walk over the frozen part of road to the old fields and the "shaded flats" still looking excellent cover.

I was watching Belton working on my right as we moved out the first big road (trace) but missed a point I say now, and missed a flash I say heard. Deaf and blind? The ground had pitched back down to the north and we didn't follow. Covered the entire flat carefully with Belton moving well.

No more action all the way to the east end of the big court, and up toward the base of the low ridge. In passing, we remembered the gun - and - shot - and - rarra - ras - tree on a good last day four years ago.

Near the base of the hill and along the Jones boundary, I saw Belton go alert and then move forward - a fair sign he had seen or heard a bird but even I say hadn't heard it.

Finally what used to be a path (now gone to quadrant low)) we climbed the slope to the top (another memory on this hillside of the rounded ground that ~~was~~ ran uphill and I say photo after Belton's first return). On top, the old trail was still but we followed it

east. They squalled ~~at~~ a flush and, moments later, a
second one - neither of which I heard or saw but did see Belton stand
about as they at wing both times. Then to the edge of the larger cover,
and I saw Belton frozen, pointing back into the thick brush and tangle.
I pushed thru the last barrier, ~~the~~ leaving my cap hanging on a
greenbrier, and stood, waiting the flush. They saw the situation and
moved in to put the bird toward me, but it felt otherwise and floundered
one way, then, then banked away to the north. I fired at a
disappearing view of it - 3 of my 4 shots this year have been only that
and lost sight of it. It was fairly well out but my hopes built when
they said she had watched the bird seem to slope down. We saw
Belton the chances and he hunted hard but I hadn't hit.

We followed east into the stand of fairly separated red pines -
now grown tall - for the first two but did not relocate. It
was a nice rise in activity and we released it for what it was, and
sat on a bare log (no bark) and ate lunch, with the wind striking
us and temperatures going down as the sun dropped into clouds.

Soon after starting out again, Belton struck again - hot -
where the bird could have fallen or run and I hoped we'd find it down.
Instead, after reconsidering, he moved down the north slope and soon
pointed. This time I saw the grouse was out how well ahead of him. It
was, perhaps, a short flight, but I think it had been my bird, landed.

We walked our way down the rocky slope toward the bottom, and finally across the fenced Mathews/Humbern corn toward the rhododendron draw where ^{Kay} called that Belter was pointing. He was almost with his head in the ~~thicket~~ ^{advent} rhododendron, his tail caught redness, and whist. There was no place for me to go ~~but~~ but into a slight break in the thick green leaves, and then I heard and saw for a moment the green-red-looking - flush across to the far side and disappear - no shot.

We followed to the Humbern slashings beyond the rhododendron and Belter hunted hard but with no contact.

Walked down the wide graded test-drill road to the border road on the Mathews side and down the old trace to the place we had come in the road from the house. Kay had remarked that the #1 grouse could have dropped into that area, and I pushed after Belter down the bottom log road downstream. Kay had waited at the forks of the roads and I waited till I found Belter, again on point into rhododendron. He was whist, and so was the rhododendron, but I forced them a break to the far edge of it, and found Belter, relocated, in the open, pointing toward me. I thought it would be there, but altho he was hot, there was no bird. It probably had lifted.

I signalled to Kay (long distance by voice), to go to the car, and I crossed the flooded little run (head of Mill Run) by a narrow log and grasping barked wire, to the far side and with a particular note & finally hurray - and joined Kay and to the house and car. It had been a good day.

Thursday 16 February
partly cloudy

Hartman Place
saw 2 (1 new) - 3
0

Beltin: 1 prod

2 $\frac{3}{4}$ hrs. 50°

Back to this wonderful forest hoping to regain something of what we found last year. Parked at top at entrance to stripmine and walked to old Linn road. We hunted out that lovely road, patches of sunrises, but saw nothing all the way to "the boulder" and back down the woods below to the "woodcock" flat. Nothing there, so we walked back up to the lower road and up to the head where Kay went from thicket to the upper road to parallel me on the lower.

about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way down she flushed a grouse from the upper end at base of Sprildanks, that flushed straight down the road away from her. This is a pattern, we walk a road together, nothing; they walks it alone, and a grouse gives her a grand shot I never get!

I joined Kay at her signals and we hunted ^{toward} to the end, to where she had marked it. Beltin had been handling gorgeously today, with the duck collar, as yesterday, but we raised the fulcrum bell and he did that much better without it — better communication without the bell

trinketing under his ears. He was at the open end of the road and I blew a turn-in signal but the grouse flushed well below and not near him. I saw it top the trees and bore high for the big field with the pond. However, it did not cross the open view and I guess it is swimming left for the

35/83

thorns on the far side of the run. We wanted that but did not attempt, and guess it must have lifted as we ^{known} seen so many ^{to} do after landing.

We crossed the swollen run and climbed the steep far bank and sat on a log on the big right-of-way and ate. But first, I took two shots of Kay and Belton on the log. Earlier, as we started out, Belton had been lumpsing with a 2-inch thorn stuck in his left foot, and before I removed it (about $\frac{1}{2}$ " deep) Kay took two photos of the paw and thorn.

Clouds moved in as we sat eating and we started down the left side of the run in dropping gloomy temperatures. Belton began going fragrant and I tried to reach him thru the almost impenetrable cover of crab thicket. Later I saw him a point — a grand high one — on point east to our left in the bottom. Again I fought toward him — he holding beautifully all the while — but the grass lifted about 25 yds on point of him — more sound — but a grand point. Belton held at wing, then moved on fast.



That was it. We hunted, crossing to the west side, to the big crossing, Belton covering both sides of the powerline, and back up the muddy road—
padded with footprints and truck and motorcycle tracks, all the way to
the old chimney where we found most car tracks when hunters had parked
and left their trashy marks — and an empty Federal 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ -1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -6
shell box. No one ever hunts my country? Sweet dreams. But it was
a good afternoon in spite of lack of birds. Belton's rock, superb.

[This page follows page 30]
I took a photo at edge of bottom thicket with 30a 1/83
white pines in background, like a Ripley painting - only there
was no grass in it. Decided to circle back to car and go another
place with all this snow too much to stay here. On the hillside
probably woods angling toward the graveyard, I saw Belton standing
and heard a grouse - I miss all these things being deaf - and
with points so scarce, I have to call it a production. Not even tracks
in here.

We sat and ate lunch ⁱⁿ the car, then drove to the
Donald Meyer Thomas, finding the east end started since our visit
2 years ago - excellent cover above the enormous stupas on the
east slope. Brush piles and regrowth blackberries have set a perfect
situation, and Belton hunted it well but no birds. Mark Murphy
said he'd missed 10 here before deer season and took 3. He is working it
too hard.

In the thickety cover on top I say and I both came on 3 sets of
grouse tracks moving west, and Belton worked them excitedly, tending
to ground trail but moving on at my command. We lost the tracks
- we had begun to run, so it seems they heard us and lifted.

We spent just a bit over the last hour here, musing thru the
difficult footing with no more action, the lovely main road
beautiful as Belton worked both sides with no reward. I don't like
winter hunting.

Wednesday 22 February

Matthews Place

Belton

hot, clear, sunny 55°-60°

missed 2 (1 new) - 2

2:40 - 5:30 / 2 3/4 hrs +

0

A beautiful day, warm to hot in sunshine. Returned to the ^{grand} ~~good~~ court, again driving in the old road, now well stoned, and parked by the apple tree about the house, among the accumulation of farm junk.

My only shot of the day was missed - the long 55 yd. try at a barred owl perched in exactly the same spot in the cherry tree across from the house where I shot one last spring. Then I was concerned about Toast, now no longer with us. This year I am uneasy about the ^{big} mice ~~gnawing~~ using the barberry berries near the garage. Why I missed this time, resting on the edge of the N. porch screen door and hit last year, I don't know.

at Matthews's, we gave the good flat shadings a once-over - no longer good - not even the single rows we flushed last week. Crossed the big field to the base of the low ridge, where we found loads of greenbrier berries along the old trace. Is it a good sign? a a had one, that there are berries here (if many rows, would they be left?)

There is now cutting in here - aspen ~~the~~ maples - and we walked them that and out the upper margin of the north slopes then rough footing and greenbrier vines. Paused to eat in a shady area.

Very hot in sunshine today,

Belton had been working well - we have to use the shock collar almost constantly to keep him in range ^{number of the time - too}

few grouse to keep him from moving and reaching out for them. ^{38/83}
at the far end, as we approached the good tangles where we
found 3 last week, I saw a grouse cut from where Belton was.
out of contact with us — a fast oblique flight well out, then
seemed headed for the swampy clump on the far edge and toward
Escentront's big field. Belton could have been pointing but why did
the bird flush? ~~Many of them~~ Few of them he will announce.
One of the disadvantages of his working wild is that we don't get to see
what he does. We are working him now without a bell — grouse too spooky.

We moved toward the Escentront corner to follow, but were
found the bird. So often they left again before we can reach them.

It was just o'clock and we started back, going down to
the rhododendron ravine on the Humboldt edge, crossed and started
down the drill-test road parallel with the ravine. Belton had to be
touched repeatedly with the shock but he hunted beautifully.
In the dense thicket left of the road we touched him with
the shock and heard him yelp, on point and still solid. I say
pressed in to flush which I wanted, ready, on the road but there
was no bird, but we're convinced we had been there not long before.

In the heavy rhododendron not far below we ~~flushed~~ ^{heard a grouse} flush from
Belton's area (again, was he pointing?) and I saw it climb steeply
to the top of the tall trees and bore down the valley. We worked to the
~~Starker~~ "boundary road" and hunted down the path hoping to find it.
Belton covered the area thoroughly but ~~he had no contact~~ — again,
probably a reflex before we got there. ~~He was looking to~~ ^{He was looking to} not

offer much to either dog or gun.

That was it. A good day in terms of weather, ground cover, and expectations but a tiring afternoon from frustration and heat.

We are counting the #2 grouse as new, but that is being generous.

Friday 24 February

Wellenium Place

Belton (beautiful walk)

Sunny to cloudy, warm 55° moved 2 (new) - 2
3:10 to 5:40 / 2 1/2 hrs

Today we hunted this great forest in a new manner - not exactly efficiently but interestingly. We drove to the Wellenium hilltop (Jim Rearroads), parking just below the top on the unpaved road Jim has improved. We started in the old corner that gave us so much sport years ago and found it almost looking the same.

While Ray was moving the Subaru to a better spot, Belton started in the cover and almost immediately went on point. By the time I reached him he reconsidered and began working but went but I could hear no flush; Ray might have, had she been nearer.

We worked the upper edge - good grapevines and big boulders - to the small powerline - all good cover but beyond the right-of-way the woods was too large. Rather than take the wide contour line thru the woods, we cut across the big field, encountering a group of cows and one bull, a nice looking Hereford but with all that space we decided to return to the woods.

Soon after some rocky footing among the trees, we came to the big powerline that crosses the Clifton road, and we entered the thick slashings about the area where we had found birds.

40~~00~~/83
With no roads and faint deer trails, it was tough going among whipsnigs, cane and blackberry canes. If sharpshins attract grouse they would have been here but weren't.

At last we came to a dim log road trace that grew clearer and wound around to the upper log road (as I expected) that leads to Topgate. Hunting this road back to the intersections, I expected to find one or two of the four grouse we had located here. But in spite of excellent coverage by Belton (wearing the hot-collared but not requiring any shock), we missed nothing. Today was a good day to hunt, warm but not hot and we could have heard shots for a mile but there were none.

We marked the intersections well and examined ourselves as we were missing nothing. Finally, we hunted out the main ridge road to the log powerhouse at the upper end and ate lunch on our favorite fallen log tree. It had clouded over and at five o'clock (we had a delayed start today by my phone call from Dr. Seager re Belton), we began to close our log circle of the hunt without much hope of finding birds.

In the good thorny corner on the far side of the powerhouse, it seemed impossible there would be none, but again, there wasn't. Following the fence down to the bottom of the old back road and begrudging losing all that elevation, we started the long climb up the abandoned road that at one time had connected Brandonville with Clifton by way of the Wallisnum and Harrader places.

(41)

Friday
The library

never would have a grand day.

Thursday 26 April '84

Hunting Hells

Belton: 5 prod

Weather hot, sunny, 75°

scored 6 chucklews

4 kills

5 shots - 4 hits

4 retrievers

3:30-4:30

5:00-5:30

} 2 hrs.

(Used AA 3-1½-7½)

Cold wet weather postponed earlier date and we made it the last week. After the empty grouse / cock season, we needed this for Belton and ourselves.

Belton was anxious and moved too wild, all afternoon in spite of the heat, but I can't blame him. He handled the chucklews well, except for one bump, due to dry hot conditions, and on that he was steady to flush.

He made an empty check but didn't delay. Soon after, he found and pointed as we walked out the straightaway flat. The bird flushed well when I walked it up and dropped at my shot - a straightaway - but not centered well. Belton broke at shot and caught the bird, delivering it dead in a nice retriever in spite of terrific heat.

I was pleased with the hit, after my problem with gun fit and my left shoulder stiffness. Ray took 35mm photos of the retriever.

Belton soon had another point (the disadvantage of pressure shooting is that it is all at once or not at all), and I again walked in and saw the chucklew and flushed - a low straightaway shot that I missed to my amazement, forgetting to fire the left barrel, a fault of mine. I suddenly shot too quickly. The chucklew was

all the way across the deep valley to a few hillsides.

The next bird was the one Belton ran into without getting scent, and it flew forever back toward the old field that formerly was in corn.

The next point was a good one but then became uncertain, flapping as he tried for more positive location. The chubbin flushed and I decided to shoot anyway, at \$9 a bird! and dropped it in a ^{wide} high left-quarting flush rather far out. Again, there was no puff of feathers as when centered but, altho it flattened when Belton grabbed it, it didn't run. He was breaking all shot on all birds but we felt we owed him the freedom after the last winter.

This time the heat prevented a perfect delivery — understandably.

Oddly, the next shot and retrieval escapes my memory but it was much like the first — point, shot, retrieval (with difficulty).

The last bird was a surprise since we had asked that 5 be released. We had gone out to the far end (not quite) and had turned back. Belton pointed tentatively, then moved on and we saw the chubbin on the ground, standing upright. The wint was wrong for Belton and when he crouched, the bird squatted and held, and I tried to get Belton into the wint but had no success. At last he crouched and came in from the side and pointed and I walked in to flush. The chubbin refused to flush but ran

and finally stopped, erect, between them a few small bushes when it would have seen out the fur side, no matter how I approached. Ray got some pictures and I asked him to come in and flush. The bird still wasn't having it, and ran out with both Ray and I after it - a poor way to set a good shot and bad for the dog. It finally lifted in a much left quarrying shot that I dropped well out. This one did run after falling and Bulter caught it with some trouble. He delivered well but I had to dispatch this one - the largest bird of the four.

I managed to mount all right in spite of the shoulder but think it may have affected my shooting as to centring. However 80% is good enough for me and I think the Pandey felt all right after ^{stake} my ^{crack} last summer. It still might require a lot more of the ~~width~~ of the left butt edge. We'll see.

I'm now dry mounting with the 7 3/4 lb Fox in an effort to strengthen my shoulder muscles.

The day at Hunting Hills was pleasant. We rested half an hour at 4:30 hoping to have a cooler last turn but it was still hot and we moved nothing in the near field. But we felt it did Bulter good. The few reared birds do not provide stylish mounts but that's hard to -

Day took 18 specimens.

George Bird Evans Papers
West Virginia and Regional History Center