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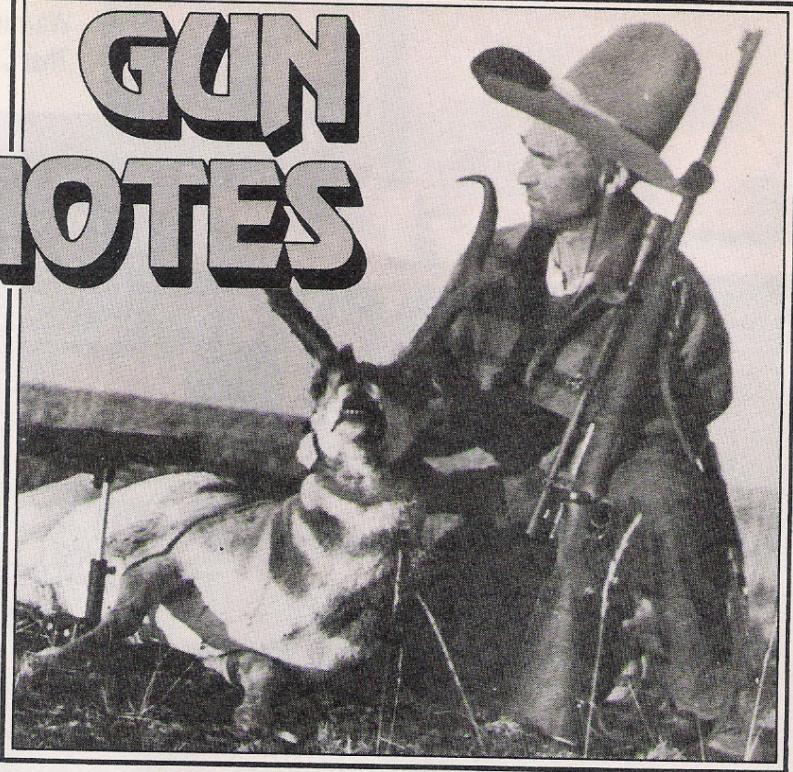
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GUN NOTES



By Elmer Keith, Executive Editor

PRONGHORNS

continued from last month

Last month's "Gunnotes" column ended with Elmer having crawled to a small knoll about 200 yards from where the antelope he and his hunting partners were stalking had bedded down. Elmer had removed his hat, and was preparing for a prone shot at the animal.

Just then young Martiny came over the other side of the mesa behind the big buck at a swinging lope. He did not know we were there at all. The old buck was on his feet instantly and running quartering toward us, even though Martiny was a half mile away. He was hunting horses and would never have ruined our stalk if he had known we were in the vicinity. I rose to a sitting position, turned the safety, picked up the running antelope at about 30 yards from me as he passed and started to squeeze the trigger, with the crosshairs on the front part of the shoulders. Jess yelled "Don't shoot." I asked why, and he answered, "He don't look so good." Then I said, "He is plenty good enough for me," and again started to bust him. By then the huge buck was 100 yards away and going fast. Then Jess yelled, "I'll match you to see who gets him." At this crack I saw red, and turning the safety on the big rifle told him to take him. The buck stopped on the rim of the next ridge, at 200 yards broadside on, and Jess shot, missing him completely. Then he proceeded to miss him

running with the remaining five cartridges in his .270 magazine. After which he simply fell off the mountain, grabbed his horse



Elmer's wife, Lorraine, shot this pronghorn in 1977 with a .338-74 Keith Farquharson single-shot rifle and a 250-grain Nosler bullet.

from Delmer and rode back up on the mesa. He spent the rest of the day chasing and shooting at that big antelope with no success.

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cess at all. Delmer and I were thoroughly disgusted with him and his rotten show, so we headed back for the ranch some 10 miles away and arrived long after dark. When Jess arrived he informed all and sundry that that huge buck with the crooked left horn was his meat and no one was to shoot at him. Though all the rest of us were thoroughly disgusted with him, we decided to hunt one more day from that ranch before moving, in case I did not connect with a good one.

Next day we drove a pickup high up an old wood road and climbed the back of the escarpment on foot to the same high mesa. On poking my nose over, I spotted another big record head bedded a half mile distant. Examination through the glasses proved him a fine buck, but with more symmetrical horns than the huge old boy I had so successfully stalked the day before. Jess took one look and immediately informed us it was the same buck. I remonstrated, and told him I was positive this was a different buck, but told him if he was so greedy to come with me and we would drop back out of sight, make a half-mile circle under the rim of the escarpment to our right, and come up again with a big dead and fallen log between us and the bedded antelope. Then from that position we could have another look with the scope and if I was right I would take the stalk, and if Jess was right he could have my rifle for the job. He looked again and decided I was right, so declined to go with me. So we left Delmer sitting in plain sight of the buck, while I dropped back out of sight and made the long circle through the jumble of cliffs and rock.

Finally, I made it around to a position with that fallen log between me and the buck, then inched over the rim and started wiggling forward like a snake to that fallen tree. It lay with its extended roots toward the bedded buck and the top toward me. The rest of the mesa was as bare as a dance floor, so I knew I would have to keep out of sight. Finally I made the distance to the tree trunk and stopped for a rest. No brush or small limbs were in evidence to screen me. However, one huge tree root had a six-inch hole near the bole of the tree, so I rose to a stooped standing position and sidled along the trunk of the tree out of sight, to this hole in the roots. Peeking through, I saw the old boy up on his feet, barking and stamping a forefoot, but looking in first one direction, then another, clearly showing he sensed danger, but did not know where it was. I had a strained uncomfortable offhand position, with rifle poked through the hole, but settled the crosswires of the 8-power Lyman scope in the white patch just behind his shoulder and squeezed the trigger. The rifle was sighted at 4,000 feet elevation and for 300 yards. Granted a four- or five-inch rise at 200

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yards, it still struck far too high, merely scraping the top of his back with the 150-grain W.T.C. Company bullet. It put him down and I saw hair fly, but he was up on his forefeet instantly, as I walked forward, so I shot him again in the lungs, this time holding lower and at closer range. The first shot was at 202 yards.

That first slug had merely blown all skin and muscles clear of the vertebrae, just behind the shoulders, but had not touched the spine. Its extreme high velocity had put him down from shock alone. The second slug blew up in the lungs at close range and stayed in the antelope. By this time Jess had gone on over the top of the mesa and after the big buck, which he again saw but



Through the years, Keith has bagged many antelope. This 16-incher was taken in 1935 with a .285 O.K.H. rifle from 500 yards.

did not land. My buck proved a beauty, both horns going 16½ inches and well up in the records. He was a very large antelope and Delmer and I estimated his dressed weight at around 135 pounds. We removed head and cape, then tied the feet for back packing and took off down that steep slope for the pickup, leaving Jess to chase the huge old buck with the crooked left horn. While stopping for a rest, I kicked at a bone lying in the trail and was amazed to dig up a perfectly good and huge old bull buffalo skull, clearly showing buffalo had grazed that 10,000-foot mesa in the distant past.

Later that fall, when I was in town, I was informed Jess had left word that he finally killed the big antelope, some five miles from the mesa. I have never seen any man demonstrate a more total lack of sportsmanship in my life.

Continued Next Month

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