

Journal of the Elk Hunting Expedition of ~02

by Scott_Staats

Most of today's outdoor writing somehow doesn't seem as colorful and descriptive as those of decades or even centuries past. Typical hunting stories of the modern 21st century read something like this: "Me and Joe goes huntin' and we gits our deers."

I can't help but wonder what it would be like if one of my past hunts could be written up in prose such as that used by the early 19th century Lewis and Clark Expedition. I imagine my hunting journal would read something like this:

Our main hunting party consisted of three men: The Kernel (whose nickname was henceforth attained from being a team leader before his retirement, and something having to do with photographic occurrences during a recent colonoscopy), Yukon (whose nickname emanated from his constant craving to partake in the imbibing of his favorite liquid victual) and myself (howsoever despite The Kernel's respectful title), who became the self-appointed expedition leader since having camped and hunted in the area previously.

Nov. 11, 2002 - "Went scouting for elk with Yukon, one of the members of our small party. Over short lunch break while eating some duck jerky, Yukon endeavored to wedge a BB pellet quite snugly into a deeply crevassed tooth upon which he became gravely concerned whence it could not be persuaded to become extracted, even with much force being applied. He immediately suffered some substantial pain and discomfort. Upon grabbing his metal multi-tool and handing said piece of equipment to me, he exclaimed, "It must be removed." After having worked feverishly for several minutes, fearing the pellet would remain permanently intact, it did however dislodge itself wholeheartedly.

Very little game or sign spotted.

Nov. 15, 2002 - "After recently having procured a sizable canvas wall tent for the expedition, I set to traveling to the chosen site to commence making camp. Shortly after having set up the tent, the rest of our small party arrived.

We passed the evening in the spirit of mirth and festivity on that joyful occasion. We danced very merrily around the fire, though I must confess that the state of my mind did not well accord with the daunting situation facing us and I did not want to induce the men into false hopes of the hunt on the following morn and hence prosecuting the entire expedition to a loss.

Nov. 16, 2002 - "How horrible was the night. I fear I did not sleep a wink and thus start the first day of the

hunt in terrible restlessness and discomfort. I was unaware of the men's sleeping habits before this time, which turned out to be a critical miscalculation on my part. Unbeknownst to me, both the men partook to snoring sufficiently enough to rouse a hibernating grizzly. The Kernel and I bunked in the wall tent while Yukon chose to set up his own small tent a few yards away (not far enough away, as I thus determined in an awakened state through the night).

When asked why he chose to sleep separate of us, Yukon replied, "I have slept with The Kernel in the past. I took it to mean The Kernel's snoring made sleep impossible for him, but whatever my men have done in the past while not under my leadership was their own business. I then berated Yukon for not providing me with such crucial information before hitting the sack. (Note to self " Before any future extended and prolonged expeditions, check on sleeping habits of men.)

We ventured into the unknown wilds of the surrounding wilderness on the perilous expedition in search of the wary elk. I climbed a slight rise of land from whence I had a quite pleasing view of our quaint camp, the surrounding forest undulating in the delightful tracts of earth's majesty. Most of the country was possessed by vast assemblages of cattle, which have left great steaming piles of sign in their passing.

At the day's end, we all realized this was a treacherous journey we hence embarked upon. The difficulties have unleashed a great toll on our entire group including the cold, the rain, the sleet and snow, the snoring, and apparent lack of game. The men were getting fitful and exhibited some unrest with the obvious lack of meat brought to camp.

That night we gathered around the frosty flames of our campfire and exchanged stories of past expeditions. If said stories were accurate, it is truly amazing any of us are yet alive. After having endured the previous night of pure unrest due to The Kernel's excessive snoring habits, I did consider ordering him out of the tent but reconsidered, not wanting him to freeze exposed to the elements.

The men and I were exhausted from the general roughness of the land, the chill of the air and the want of good hunting. I suffered sufficiently from toilsome days and sleepless nights. I grew sleepy and retired early to my tent, leaving the men to amuse themselves around the fire with drink and stories. I was too much fatigued to allow myself to be awakened by their jeers and laughter as having been deprived of a proper night's repose previously.

My companions are endlessly cheerful, yet I believe I am on the verge of complete and total sleep depravity. I fear I can go on no longer without proper rest. I am also beginning to give up hope of securing the winter's meat supply. The men endure intense suffering for days without complaint. If we shall perish here, let it be known that we gave it our best.

Nov. 17, 2002 - " After taking to the blankets early last evening, in great hopes of acquiring much needed

sleep, I feared the worst -- that I again would be awakened by loud, constant snoring. The noise, I feared, would keep owls and coyotes awake for many days and nights.

Around midnight there came a great thrashing in the tent whence I thought mayhap a grand grizzly entered through the flaps. After shining light on the scene, it was revealed that The Kernel was jumping up and down and moaning loudly due to a great aching cramp in his leg from trudging miles during the previous day. He momentarily relieved the cramp and proceeded to return to colossal snoring while I lay wide-eyed, staring at the flickering light of the woodstove dancing on the ceiling of the tent.

I regret to say that the situation has gone from bad to worse. The weather is fair for the moment but we fear the winds are bringing a storm.

How horrible is the day. Nothing worthy of note today.

Nov. 18, 2002 -â€“ The menâ€™s snoring continues to infest me in such a manner that I can scarcely exist. Our party hunted a few miles southwest of camp today, seeing only a few deer and a wild turkey, both being out of season.

Where the forest once abounded with extensive herds of deer and elk, we now see only an occasional doe and nary any elk sign. The game has dropped down into the lower lands now occupied by private ranches. We are seeing more road-hunters each day, which leaves us with grave concern since there are 100 miles of road per square mile of acreage.

We thus saw great numbers of 4-wheelers on our journey today. It gives us great pain. We notice that most of the other hunters are quite rotund and seldom, if ever, leave the mobility and comfort of their pickup trucks or 4-wheelers.

The men were much fatigued and feet blistering but yet they insisted upon pursuing our quarry, wherever upon it may be.

Nov. 19, 2002 -â€“ With hardly a few winks of sleep, I set out and found some fresh elk sign not far from camp. This new knowledge relieved me very much and I relayed it to the men later in the day. This notable information lifted the spirits of the men. Matters being thus far arranged, I directed myself to go home in order to procure more supplies as well as attain some well-needed sleep. I figured the men could survive on their own, providing they wouldnâ€™t snore themselves to death. However, I fear the men are beginning to lose confidence in my leadership capabilities.

Nov. 20-21, 2002 -â€“ Hunted from my home base for two days. Game still scarce but getting much needed respite. I hope the men have survived.

Nov. 22, 2002 -â€“ After procuring more supplies from local stores, I set out to hunt an area on the way to camp. With much labor and incalculable risk, progress was made as I came across fresh sign. The groupâ€™s arduous service to our cause paid off in the end: I got my elk. The men, however, suffered from undue disappointment, not having procured their own meat.

Epilogue -- I noted through my research that the early explorers always used the word â€œfearâ€• in their diaries -â€“ They would write something like: â€œI fear we may not survive.â€• Writings of todayâ€™s hunting expeditions often express a different kind of fear: â€œI fear we are running dangerously low on beer, and I fear the satellite TV in the RV has unexpectedly lost OLN, TBN, FOX News and the Playboy Channel.â€•