

# Jim Casada Outdoors

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## September 2012 Newsletter

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## September Song—2012

### *Special Notice*

At some point in the next few days, probably in close proximity to when you receive this newsletter, you will be getting a daily bit of information from *Sporting Classics* magazine. You can blame that on me, and if you aren't interested in what comes to your computer, just unsubscribe. However, I should note that I've been an integral part of this top-drawer magazine almost from the outset of its existence, and it has been around for over three decades. I serve as the publication's Editor at Large and write a books column in each issue along with contributing the occasional feature article.

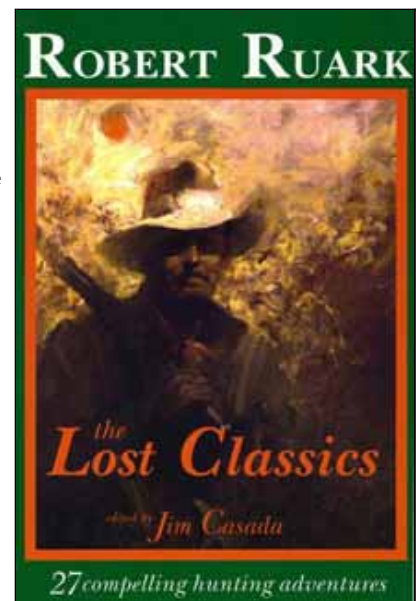
As the title suggests, it's old-time outdoor coverage of the kind once associated with giants of the genre such as O'Connor and Ruark, Ford and Rutledge. I've always believed in the magazine and its mission, and its pages feature some of today's finest literary in the outdoor field. I should

### This Month's Special Offers

America has never produced a finer writer on the outdoors than Robert Ruark. Two of his books, *The Old Man and the Boy* and *The Old Man's Boy Grows Older*, are standard reading fare for me year after year. Yet relatively few people realize that more than a dozen of the "Old Man and the Boy" stories, all of which originally appeared in the pages of *Field & Stream*, never made it into these two books. When my researches revealed that some years ago, it set me to thinking with the end result being a compilation of 27 Ruark stories (including ten "Old Man and the Boy" selections) which had never previously appeared in book form.

The book bears the title *The Lost Classics of Robert Ruark*.

Completion of that anthology led me, in turn and by joyous happenstance, to my being asked to edit a biography of Ruark written by his longtime secretary, Alan Ritchie, shortly after Ruark died in 1965. The manuscript of that book had languished forgotten in Spain (where Ruark lived later in his life) for decades, and Ritchie had long since passed away when it came to light. It took a lot of reworking and reorganization, along with no small measure of rewriting, but the end result was *Ruark Remembered*.



I'm offering either book at a reduced price of \$32.50 plus \$3 shipping or both for \$65 and I'll pay

add, as a matter of full disclosure, that I own a very small portion of the magazine. Uniquely, at least to my knowledge, it is an employee-owned outdoor publication. Take a gander at what you get, and I think you'll get the same kind of quick reading pick-me-up from "Sporting Classics Daily" that I enjoy with Tipper Pressley's Blind Pig and the Acorn blog. I now will have a double shot of pleasure each morning.

the shipping. If you are a Ruark fan and haven't read these, you owe it to yourself to enjoy some tales you've overlooked or to get a much fuller glimpse of this immensely talented but seriously flawed man.

You can [order through my website using PayPal](#), or just send a check to me c/o 1250 Yorkdale Drive, Rock Hill, SC 29730.

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## Happenings

As the newsletter below will suggest, fall is always a busy time in my world. The end of this month will find me in Johnson City, Tenn., attending the annual meeting of the [Southeast Outdoor Press Association](#) (SEOPA), a regional group of communicators some 500+ strong which has long been an important part of my professional life. I've never missed an annual conference since attending my first one more than a quarter of a century ago, and I've had the honor of serving a term as president of the group back in the 1990s. I'm once again in the officer line and will probably serve as conference chairman when SEOPA celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2014. If so, it will be fitting, since the event is scheduled for Fontana Village, N.C., set squarely in the heart of my beloved Smokies. It is also the spot where the organization had its beginnings in a 1964 gathering.

As an adjunct to the SEOPA conference, I'll likely see my good buddy and fellow son of the southern Appalachians, Larry Proffitt, and maybe sample and savor some of the wonderful victuals served up at his Ridgewood BBQ establishment. If you are ever in upper east Tennessee, put Ridgewood on your dining agenda. I'll flat-out guarantee two things—you won't go away hungry and you'll dine on some of the finest hog meat, with accompanying fixin's, imaginable. I also have plans for a full day of research in a collection of recordings of old mountain folks made back in the late 1930s and early 1940s. These were done by a visionary named Joe Hall, and he interviewed old-time mountain people and let them tell the tales of their lives. The two people I'm particularly anxious to hear are the so-called Squire of Hazel Creek, Granville Calhoun, and the regionally famous mountain fisherman, Mark Cathey. Both were fascinating men, with Granville living well beyond the century mark while Cathey was a peerless hunter and fisherman.

After almost a week of eating too much, mingling with my professional colleagues on both the communications and the corporate side, and generally enjoying myself, Ann and I will be home for only three or four days before we head out to another conference. This one will be the gathering of our little state group of communicators here in South Carolina, the [S.C. Outdoor Press Association](#). We'll be meeting at Myrtle Beach. While I'm anything but a beach person, I do love seafood and there will be a chance to do a bit of fly rodding for redfish. I'm also scheduled to give a seminar on the many and varied aspects of writing and publishing books.

No sooner will we get back home than it's off again, this time to the Smokies to join my brother and a cousin, and possibly a nephew or two or other friends as well, for a backcountry camping trip in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. We'll be calling Forney Creek, long a favorite of mine and one of the most beautiful streams in the Smokies, our base of operations. My brother will hike and explore while my cousin and I fish. The thought of fresh-caught trout has me ready to eat even now, and if there is anything which tastes much better than three or four seven- to eight-inch trout fried gold brown and so crisp you can eat the tails, I've yet to discover it. That's especially true if the fish are flanked by fried taters and onions. Not particularly healthy, mind you, but a day of walking and wading can burn up a bunch of calories.

Once that spate of peregrinations is at an end, it will be time to turn once more into a homebody hammering away at books and articles and slipping away for a few hours on a deer stand most days. Speaking of books, I'm almost through with "Remembering the Greats: Profiles of Turkey Hunting's Old Masters." It should go to press in early autumn and be ready in plenty of time for Christmas. At any rate, that's my plan. If you want to know when it appears, just [drop me an e-mail](#) and I'll put you on the "to be notified" list. A goodly number of you have already done so.

Yesterday (September 1) was spent pretty much the same way I have celebrated the first Saturday in September for the last quarter of a century—dove hunting with the Turner family in an adjacent county. Their dove shoot is a family tradition stretching over four generations of the family and dating back to the 1940s. That kind of sporting continuity, love of the land, and commitment to wildlife management is impressive, and quite possibly because of a "gap" in the joys of my youth that may be more true for me than many others. I had a wonderful boyhood growing up in the Great Smokies of North Carolina, and as regular readers of this newsletter realize all too well, outdoor activities of all sorts loomed large in those halcyon days.

Small game hunting was an integral part of my life and has continued to be for the ensuing five-plus decades, but the nature of the mountains didn't really lend itself to a good old-fashioned popcorn popper of a dove shoot. That is one sporting joy, with a serious addiction to turkey hunting being another, that I came to well after reaching adulthood. Mind you, once I had the opportunity to experience a properly managed and carefully planned dove shoot, complete with the sort of pre-hunt meal that is best experienced in the eating, not the telling, I did my level best to make up for lost ground. Certainly I understood and appreciated why my good friend Roy Turner, of the third generation of the family, describes the experience as "Christmas in September." One can only hope one of his two sons will want to carry on the locally acclaimed "Turner Dove Shoot."

Roy's phrase is perfect, for it captures the keen sense of anticipation, the excitement of the event, the festive nature of the occasion, and the spirit of good will which are part and parcel of the hunt in ideal fashion. Shamefaced though I am to admit it, I shot atrociously at this year's hunt. I have no real explanation other than what I've known for a long time, once you miss a few birds and start trying to analyze things in something approaching a logical fashion, things are in all likelihood going to get worse. I didn't even kill a limit, never mind the fact that there were plenty of birds and an ample opportunity to do so. What I did accomplish is the expenditure of enough shotshells to put a smile on the face of executives of companies in the ammunition business.

That inept shooting really didn't matter though. It was pure pleasure. I ate enough to qualify for star status as a trencherman, brought home three whopping bags of leftover chicken bog cooked just the way I like it with plenty of black pepper "bite," and had a big piece of one of my all-time favorite desserts, hull pie. If you are wondering what in the world a "hull pie" could be, it is actually precisely what the name says—a pie made with the hulls (with plenty of sweet pulp still attached) from muscadines.

With opening day of another dove season now history, I feel that the first verse of what Robert Ruark called "September Song" in his timeless tales of the Old Man and the Boy has now been sung. From this point forward late summer, the cusp of autumn, and fall in its full splendor lie ahead. 'Tis a time of glory. Over the next month I'll be fine-tuning things in anticipation of the coming deer season by setting stands, clearing shooting lanes, putting finishing touches on a couple of food plots, making sure paths to stands are clear, and the like. Then it is time to leave my property (and the deer) alone until opening day. Or, more accurately, until one of three opening days. Here in South Carolina we have an archery-only season of two weeks, a 10-day blackpowder season, and then modern gun season. The latter runs all the way to New Year's Day.

In other words, for three months plus the allure of the woods is always there. I have outgrown any desire to sit in a stand with sweat dripping off my brow and sloshing in my boots, or with mosquitoes hovering around an invisible aura provided by a Thermacell unit in a fashion reminiscent of an insect version of the hordes of Attila the Hun. But give me a chilly October morning, with hickories wearing cloaks of gold and white oak trees dropping acorns so rapidly it sounds like a hail storm—now that's a morning to be in the woods at first light. When those glad days arrive, I'll make my way to a stand just before night gives way to light, probably encountering half a dozen cobwebs left by writing spiders along the way, and settle in for a few hours of pure

bliss.

Chances are I'll see deer, and mayhap shoot a fat doe should one amble by. There's always hope for a fine buck as well, although there the odds are pretty slim until the rut arrives. It is other sights and sounds, however, which make the morning so glorious. Cardinals greeting the day with their cheery calls of "pretty, pretty." Crows fussing and raising a ruckus that would outdo the most crotchety or tetchy old woman suffering from what Grandpa Joe called "the miseries." Turkeys gossiping softly from a distant roost as they prepare for another day in their endless life of foraging. Distant coyotes howling at the new day. Squirrels chattering as they awaken and begin to feast on nut mast. Fog peeling away in one imperceptible layer after another as the sun struggles to put its stamp on another bluebird day.

Those are but some of the myriad of sensations offered in the season of harvest, and even though the cool air lifts one's spirits there's also a hint of sadness as nature's endless cycle once more edges towards the grim, grey days of winter. Somehow I like to think that the splendor of fall, with its leafy coat of many colors, provides such brightness as a means of sustaining us through the lean, mean days of cold and desolate weather. At any rate, I find sustenance for the soul and succor for the senses in autumn. In that regard September is ever so sweet, not only because the month has its own appeal but because you know October lies hard ahead.

Let's finish with a few little tidbits about September and what it means to me, along with the usual sprinkling of recipes.

- September is planting fall crops—lettuce, kale, beets, turnips, mustard, collards, broccoli, cabbage, radish, spinach, and Swiss chard.
- It's pumpkins showing golden among dying vines.
- It's persimmons changing color but still bitter enough to pucker the mouth of a citified sort who doesn't know better than to bite into one.
- It's keen competition between critters (and man) for ripening pawpaws.
- It's October beans drying on corn stalks and the last pickings of green beans and crowder peas.
- September is hogs fattening on corn on a country farm, blissfully unaware of what lies ahead once there have been a few hard frosts.
- It's squirrels starting to cut on nuts.
- It's wild turkeys flocking up as poultts approach full growth and two or three hens bring their bands together.
- It's old men sharpening knives and telling tales and listening to katydid as they predict the weather for the coming winter. They do so by time-tested ways such as checking the thickness of corn shucks, counting fogs, evaluating the color patterns on caterpillars, and similar principles of prognostication.
- It's young boys enjoying the final days of barefoot joy on weekends when they aren't in school.
- It's deer hunters sighting in rifles, adjusting scopes, trying out a new cartridge, or browsing a local store for some new gear.
- It's those same deer hunters cleaning out the freezer of the last venison remaining from the previous season as they prepare for the endlessly satisfying action of once again "putting meat on the table."
- It's fish feeding actively as they somehow sense that the time has arrived to get ready for leaner times ahead.
- September, in short, is a month to savor, because it holds so much joy and is the harbinger of so many

good things to come.

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## A Sampling of Summer's End Venison Recipes

It's empty out the freezer time, and with that in mind here are some suggestions for those packages, probably mostly burger or cubed steak rather than those tenderloins and backstraps which seem to disappear magically, likely to be left. All come from *The Complete Venison Cookbook*, which is [available from me](#) in printed form for \$14.95 or you can buy a Kindle or e-Book version (hope I got that right; I'm clueless on such things but know it is available) by checking [Amazon](#) or other on-line sources.

### VENISON SCALOPPINE

1 tablespoon all-purpose flour  
 1/2 teaspoon salt  
 Dash pepper  
 4 venison cubed steaks (about a pound)  
 3 tablespoons canola oil  
 1/2 medium onion, thinly sliced  
 1 can (16 ounces) tomatoes, cut up  
 1/3 cup red wine  
 1 can (3 ounce) mushrooms, sliced (2/3 cup)  
 1 tablespoon snipped parsley  
 1/4 teaspoon garlic salt  
 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano, crushed  
 Hot buttered noodles

Combine flour, salt, and pepper; coat venison steaks lightly with flour mixture. In medium skillet, brown venison slowly in hot oil; remove from skillet. Add onion to skillet; cook until tender. Add cooked venison, tomatoes, wine, mushrooms, snipped parsley, garlic salt and oregano. Cover and simmer 20 to 30 minutes or until venison is tender, stirring occasionally.

Arrange venison and sauce on hot buttered noodles.

### COUNTRY-STYLE VENISON STEAK

1 pound venison cubed steak  
 2 tablespoons olive oil  
 1/3 cup flour  
 Salt and pepper to taste  
 1 medium onion  
 1 jar (4 ounces) whole mushrooms

Mix flour, salt and pepper. Dredge steak in flour and brown quickly in oil. Place in 8 x 11 casserole dish. Slice onion and cook until tender. Place on top of steak along with drained mushrooms. Add two tablespoons remaining flour to pan drippings. Stir until brown, add one to one and a half cups water and cook until thick. Pour over steaks. Bake covered in a 350-degree oven for an hour or until tender.

### VENISON CROQUETTES

1 pound ground venison, uncooked  
 1/2 cup onion, finely chopped

1 garlic clove, minced  
Salt and pepper to taste  
2 cups cook, mashed potatoes (no butter or milk added)  
1/4 cup milk  
1 egg, beaten  
Cracker meal (make by placing crackers in blender or processor)

Lightly mix venison, onion, garlic, potatoes, and salt and pepper. Make out into patties. Beat egg and milk in shallow dish. Dip patties in milk and egg mixture. Roll in cracker meal.

Brown patties in a non-stick skillet with just enough oil to keep from sticking (two or three tablespoons). Cook over medium heat until done. Serve immediately.

### OVEN MEAT BALLS

2 pounds ground venison  
1 cup quick or regular oats (not instant)  
1 cup soft bread crumbs  
1/2 cup milk  
1 teaspoon salt

Mix above ingredients and roll into two-inch balls. Roll meatballs in flour and place in a casserole dish. Pour one envelope dry onion soup mix and one and a half cups water over meatballs. Bake at 350 degrees for an hour.

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