

# Jim Casada Outdoors

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## September 2013 Newsletter

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### Quotation of the Month

**“Deep in the guts of most men is buried the involuntary response to the hunter’s horn, a prickle of the nape hairs, an acceleration of the pulse, an atavistic memory of his fathers, who killed first with stone, and then with club, and then with spear, and then with bow, and then with gun, and finally with formulae.”**

Robert Ruark, *Horn of the Hunter*.

I am a great admirer of Ruark (as a writer, not a person; he was a miserable human being in many ways) and as some of you will know have done considerable writing and research on his life. The above quotation cuts to the heart of man’s hunting instinct, although I strongly disagree on the closing statement “and finally with formulae.” I have ongoing reservations about our over-reliance on technology at the expense of good old-fashioned feet in the woods, hours in the field, and sound woodsmanship. But then I’m old, old-fashioned, hard-headed, and as Grandpa Joe would have said, “sot in my ways.” I don’t own a cell phone, have never used a trail camera, care little for gimmicks, and am generally, as a hunter, what might be described as a minimalist. I like to keep things simple.

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### Sweet September

One of my favorite writers as a boy growing up in the Smokies, and this continued to be the case well into manhood, was a columnist for the *Asheville Citizen-Times* by the name of John Parris. His column, “Roaming the Mountains,” appeared two or three times a week and was an absolute gold mine of mountain lore, character sketches, traditions, and the like. Parris also was the author of a number of books, and most of them comprise selections of his newspaper columns. They include *Roaming the Mountains; My Mountains, My People; Mountain Cooking; Mountain Bred; and These Storied Mountains*. All make delightful reading, at least for anyone interested in the southern Appalachians, and the volume devoted to cooking contains scores of scrumptious recipes.

A favorite literary device for Parris involved taking a season of the year and then, in a long series of nicely phrased snippets, capturing

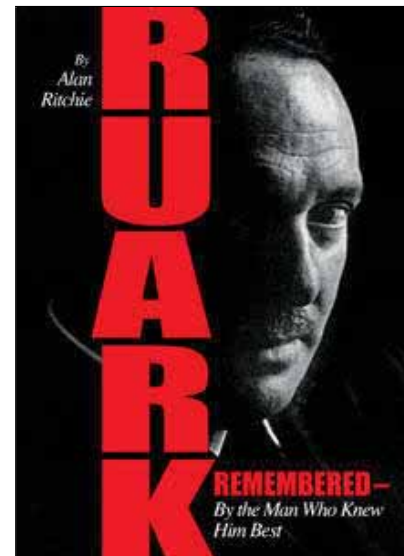
#### This Month's Special

Since the quotation comes from Ruark, I'm offering *Ruark Remembered* as this month's special. **It is \$30 postpaid.**

its flavor and flair. All would begin with phrases such as "September is," "It is," or "Early fall is." While I make no pretense of even approaching his way with words, I thought it might be interesting to adopt his style for this month's newsletter. With that in mind, here's an attempt to capture some of the essence of September as I have known it, with much of what follows tracing back to a Smoky Mountain boyhood.

- September sings a mighty sweet song, with katydids leading the chorus.
- September is dust devils dancing across just plowed fields awaiting plantings of winter wheat or oats.
- It's doves winging their way across harvested fields of corn as hunters celebrate the return of a timeless ritual with shots and cries of "mark right," "coming behind you," or "low bird."
- It's Joe Pye weed blooming at field edges and along branch banks.
- It's persimmons showing hints of gold and providing visual promise of tasty puddings in a few weeks.
- September is the first hint of colors coming to the woodlands as sumac and dogwoods show red while gold creeps into the leaves of maples, poplars and hickories.
- It's a squirrel barking high on a ridge and reminder hunters that bushytail season will soon arrive.

- It's hazelnut husks opening to reveal tasty treats.
- It's huckleberries and blueberries ripening on high balds and in areas of old fire scalds.
- It's the occasional chestnut tree grown big enough to bear mast while reminding us of a woodland world we have lost.
- September is cardinal flowers and wild asters, puddling tiger swallowtails and migrating monarch butterflies.
- It's a time to begin fattening hogs in anticipation of frost and killing time.
- It's harvesting honey from lovingly tended hives and looking at a crop of cane knowing that molasses makin' time isn't far off.



Written by Alan Ritchie, who was Ruark's secretary for the final decade-plus of his life, the manuscript languished in forgotten obscurity for well over a quarter of a century after Ruark's death. It is revealing, intensely interesting, although I would warn that the man who emerges was not someone who was necessarily likable.

I edited the book, did a lot of "get it into shape for publication" work, and added various material to improve Ritchie's effort.

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### Recent and Upcoming Doin's

This monthly newsletter was recently mentioned as a good example of a way to keep up with mountain days and ways of yesteryear in Rob Neufeld's [The Read on Western North Carolina](#).

I'll have a piece on a forgotten wingshooting author from yesteryear, Horatio Bigelow, in the next issue of a dandy magazine, *Covey Rise*.

My profile of noted grouse writer George Bird Evans will appear in an anthology offering selections from the writings of great figures in the literature of the sport, together with profiles

- September is the first hint of coolness in the air, with the bluebird days and crisp nights of Indian Summer putting pep in the step of old-timers.
- It's shelling crowder peas and pickling okra; making soup mix and canning apples; drying Indian peaches and putting up soup mix.
- It's ground cherries lying golden yellow in a field of Hickory King corn and a boy yelping in pain from an encounter with a packsaddle in that corn field.
- It's gritted bread and a pot of green beans cooked with streaked meat; trout in the frying pan and recent plantings of turnip greens popping up after a good shower.
- September is an old man enjoying the cool which comes with the gloaming while sharing tales of younger days with his grandchildren.
- It's back to school and a fond farewell to summer's barefoot days.
- It's the wonderful aroma of newly turned soil as sweet potatoes are dug for curing and storing.
- It's pumpkins turning gold amongst cornstalks adorned by finished ears; candy roasters waiting to be stored and hulls of October beans turning from green to brown.
- It's a fishing crazy youngster braving those brethren of Beelzebub, yellow jackets, to get bait for a final summer's angling adventure.
- It's savoring a late-season watermelon in the afternoon shade after working in the field.
- September is looking with pride at row upon row of quart Ball jars containing the goodness of summer.
- It's strings of fiery red peppers, strung and drying in a barn loft beneath a roof of tin.
- It's strung green beans spread atop muslin or screen wire atop that same barn roof drying to make leather britches.
- It's dried peaches and apples bearing aromatic promise of fried pies and stack cakes in the cold days of coming winter.
- It's corn in the crib and apples in the cellar; cider fresh from the press and the making of hominy the old-fashioned way.
- September is a noble whitetail buck feeling the first urges of procreation as a cold front brings a nip to the air and a bit more zest for life to the deer.
- It's the last of the year's homecomings and a final round of decorating and cleaning family cemeteries.
- It's getting in the cool weather crops—turnips and mustard, cabbage and kale, collards and lettuce—even as the last of the warm weather ones are harvested.
- It's fox grapes ripening on vines along a cool spring branch, with their fragrance filling the air with a heady reminder of just what a chunk of home-churned butter and a spoonful of jelly from the grapes can do to turn a cathead biscuit from ordinary to exquisite.

of them, scheduled out in October. I'll let you know more when the book appears.

October will find Ann and I headed to Lake Charles, LA for the annual conference of the [Southeastern Outdoor Press Association](#). We are driving, which more than anything else is a testament to how much I detest flying and the despicable attention of the collection of buffoons who seem to form most of the work force of the TSA. We'll make a leisurely progress going and coming, and it's always a pure joy to see lots of old and cherished friends, get some inspiration, hear some great pickin' and singin' (the organization has an incredible number of talented musicians), and in the case of this year, sample and savor Cajun hospitality at its finest.

- It's a mountain boy roaming in the gloaming, thinking about the joys of fishing in the waning summer even as he dreams of those associated with hunting in the months to come. If perchance his steps lead him by a graveyard in the gathering dusk, whistling a cheery tune will surely keep the haints away or at least at bay.



Doves in droves on power lines is a tell-tale sign of a good place for a shoot come opening day.

September is sweet in so many ways, for it marks the end of another cycle of the seasons, another crop year come to an end. Most of all though, when September arrives you know October, when the harvest moon glows and the hunter's horn blows, lies just around the corner.

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## RECIPES

As a boy, September was a time for enjoying pretty much the last of the summer's vegetables—nubbins of late roastin' ears, tommytoes which always seemed to last longer than their larger cousins, crowder peas, okra (which seemed to do best in the heat of dog days) and of course various types of melons. We didn't have a freezer so the progress of the season was marked by the number of Mason and Ball quart jars lining the shelves Daddy had built in the cool basement, much of which the two of us dug by hand, the apples harvested and carefully culled and stored at month's end, and making sure all of the previous year's canning had been used.

Things have changed immeasurably since then, but early autumn is still a "cleaning out" time when it comes to food, especially venison and other wild game. If there's any left it's time for meat pies, gifts to the food pantry, or other measures designed to free up shelf space. With that in mind, and given the fact that recently a friend asked the missus for suggestions for venison pies, this month's offerings suggest ways of using ground deer meat to good and tasty advantage.

### SHEPHERD'S PIE

2 cans green beans, drained  
 1 pound ground venison  
 1 onion, finely chopped  
 1 cup chopped mushrooms (optional)  
 1 large can tomato sauce

1 pound cooked mashed potatoes (THE REAL THING—a plague on the paltry powdered substitutes), and leftovers work just fine  
 1 cup grated cheddar cheese  
 Salt and pepper to taste

Brown ground venison with onions and mushrooms. Drain if necessary. Add tomato sauce and seasonings to ground venison.

In a deep baking dish layer green beans, ground venison and tomato sauce mixture; top with mashed potatoes and sprinkle grated cheese on top. Bake at 350 degrees for about 30 minutes or until heated through.

### DEEP DISH POTATO AND VENISON PIE

Pastry for double-crust pie  
 1 cup grated, peeled potatoes  
 ¼ cup chopped celery  
 ½ cup grated carrots  
 ¼ cup chopped leeks  
 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce  
 1 teaspoon A-1 Steak Sauce  
 1 teaspoon dried Italian seasoning  
 ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
 Salt to taste  
 1 pound uncooked ground venison

Place bottom crust in 9-inch deep-dish pie plate. Mix all other ingredients and place in pie crust. Place top crust on pie and seal edges. Cut vents in top pastry. Bake at 375 degrees for 15 minutes. Reduce heat to 350 degrees and bake for another 55 minutes to an hour. This pie is hearty; however, it is dry and needs to be served with a sauce. Here's a mushroom sauce which we like.

### MUSHROOM SAUCE

2 tablespoons margarine or butter  
 ¼ cup sliced leeks  
 2 cups sliced fresh mushrooms  
 2 tablespoons flour  
 1 cup half-and-half  
 Salt and pepper to taste

Melt margarine and sauté leeks and mushrooms until tender. Sprinkle with flour and cook about a minute. Add half-and-half and seasonings. Continue cooking until sauce thickens. Stir constantly. Serve over pie slices.

### CHEESEBURGER PIE

1 pound ground venison  
 ½ cup evaporated milk  
 ½ cup ketchup  
 1/3 cup fine dry bread crumbs  
 ¼ cup chopped onion  
 ½ teaspoon dried oregano  
 1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded  
 1 teaspoon Worcestershire Sauce  
 1 8-inch prepared pie shell

Combine ground venison, milk, ketchup, bread crumbs, onion, and oregano. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Prepare pastry to line one 8-inch pie plate or use a prepared shell. Fill with venison mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes. Toss cheese with Worcestershire Sauce and sprinkle on top of pie. Bake 10 more minutes and let stand 10 minutes before serving.

This is one of my favorite venison dishes, and I like extra sharp cheddar.

### TAMALE PIE

1 ½ pounds ground venison  
1 package taco seasoning  
1 small can (8 ounces) tomato sauce  
1 or 2 cans sliced black olives  
1 package (8 ounces) grated cheddar cheese  
1 package (8 ounces) Monterey Jack or mozzarella cheese  
1 package small flour tortillas  
Green chillies or slices of fresh jalapeno pepper if you like it hot

Brown venison in skillet; once browned add taco seasoning and tomato sauce.

Place tortilla in bottom of round baking dish. Sprinkle with meat, cheese, and olives. Repeat this process until you have three or four layers of tortillas, being sure to end with cheese.

Bake in pre-heated 350 degree oven for 30 minutes or until hot and cheese is slightly brown.

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