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A Boy, A Squirrel, A Gun

The Rifle Magazine

'Only Accurate Rifles Are Interesting'
- Col. Townsend Whelen

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Cover

A boy, a squirrel and a gun is the theme for this fall cover, and the subject of a John Madson masterpiece on the inside. Only Madson, we felt, could adequately describe the many joys of squirrel hunting. The red-headed "future deer hunter" in the cover photo is the publisher's son, Tom Wolfe. The gun is Browning's BL-22 lever action, reviewed in this issue. Transparency by Neal Knox.

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The Staff

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The RIFLE Magazine

Dear Editor

Red-Faced Goof

I subscribe to both *Handloader* and *Rifle* magazines. I enjoy them both very much, but I am distressed at the goofs your writers make. In *Rifle* No. 11 titled "Magnums, 6mm to .28," Bob Hagel says about the .264 Win. Magnum: "It requires big doses of the very slowest burning powders like Hodgdon H - 110, H - 870, while 4831 is on the fast side." Now, H - 110 is just about as fast as you can get, outside of Bullseye pistol powder. A big dose of this, or even a half dose, would open up a .264 Magnum like a morning glory. Looks like you need some experienced proof readers.

Another thing I note and would like to straighten you and your writers out on: The introduction of the .25-06 cartridge. I read in the two magazines that it came into being all the way from 1915 to some time after the first World War. Now, I have in my possession a dummy, fired .25-06 case in a small wooden container from Adolph Niedner and addressed to a man in Seattle, Washington, the postmark on it is May 12, 1912 - and, heavenly days, bearing a two cent stamp.

D. P. Gurley
Riverside, Calif.

Goofs are inexcusable, but seemingly unavoidable, for no matter how hard we try one occasionally gets in—and do we hear about it! Some occur at the printer's, after it's too late for us to spot them; some at the typesetter's, and we miss them; but ones like this really hurt, for we manufactured the error and let it go into type.

To see what happened, I checked Bob's original copy. It said "H-110." He meant to write H-5010, which is indeed a slow-burning powder - and which H-110 definitely is not. Bob's error was a slip of the tongue, but on the typewriter - something that's amazingly easy to do. I have no such excuse, for it's my job to catch such slips, and I failed to, but not because of ignorance. I assure you I know better.

Your comments on the .25-06 are interesting. Most authorities date the cartridge around 1917 to 1920, which apparently is the time the cartridge was first made available to the public. While an experimental rifle may

have been made as early as 1912, or even before, it is also possible that your 1912-marked box may not have originally contained that fired, necked-down '06 case.

Neal Knox

Cutting Brass Cases

In reading the article "Basics of Case Design Part 1" by John Wootters (*Rifle* Number 10), which I enjoyed very much, I note that Wootters points out the difficulties one encounters when sawing brass with a 32-tooth per inch hacksaw.

I found many years ago that a hacksaw blade that had been used on steel, or iron for that matter, did a very poor job of cutting brass. On the other hand the blade that has been used on brass will cut steel very well. I keep a special hacksaw, a Milford Midget, for sawing, and a jewelers saw for splitting cases.

I felt that some of the younger generation of handloaders may not know of this.

I read the *Handloader* and *Rifle* magazines, and have all copies to date. I have been a handloader for more years than I like to think of. But I have enjoyed the hobby, and since the slow burning powders have become available, I get a lot more out of it.

I think that your magazines are tops.

J.M. Boone
Toronto, Ont.



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Photo by Karl Maslowski

Deer Hunter In The Making

A Boy,

A Squirrel,

A Rifle

By JOHN MADSON

NOT ALL HUNTING is hunting.

Most grouse and pheasant gunning is really a walkathon, and most waterfowling isn't hunting in the sense that you search for ducks. You present a tempting setup and hope that the ducks find *you*. Seduction is what it is.

And there is this difference between shotgunning for birds and rifle hunting for animals:

At some point, you must grab a bird's attention to either attract it or flush it. But the rifleman must know how to intercept game, and how to stalk it. Either way, it is best that the animal never knows he is there. Rifle hunting is hunting distilled to its essence. And to many of us, its triple-distilled essence is squirrel hunting.

This is partly because squirrel hunting is so available and accessible, and as sporty as you care to make it. Then, too, what you learn from squirrels can be applied to big game. It's a scaled-down version of deer hunting, and a boy who is learning his basics in the squirrel woods is a deer hunter in the making. It isn't just a matter of learning the tricks; it goes deeper than that. Real squirrel hunting will grind stuff into a boy's fiber that he will never lose.

There is this thing that squirrel hunting can do to a boy or man. When a hunter today goes afield, he's usually hunting on about one cylinder and most of his thoughts are back in town. But now and then—especially when you're hunting in woods or forest—certain old instincts will ignite, heightening and quickening your perceptions. You'll always know when this happens, when you're really hunting and honing it fine. You go out of yourself, and beyond, and something is bared that is usually sealed under a varnish of noise and suburbs.

Oh, it doesn't happen often. But it seems to come when you are after deer or turkey or squirrels because you are usually hunting alone then, and it may happen most in the woods because they hold more secrets and stir the dark corners of the imagination more than airy, light-filled places like marshes or upland fields.

This is the real payoff of hunting—not the meat or the shooting—but a man being lifted out of himself and melded with the environment in which he hunts. A wild place embraces such a hunter, for it knows him as a participant and not just an onlooker or interloper.

I learned that as a kid, in the squirrel woods.

I'd go there at first light, before the crow and after the owl. There was an old oak-hickory grove above the river that was good, and when I walked in among the trees it was like dropping a stone in a quiet pool. There was the splash of my presence in the woods, and long after I stopped moving and making noise, the impressions of my presence still widened in rings through the timber, spreading the alert.

But after a while the circles would stop and the pool of forest silence would be tranquil again, and I was either forgotten or accepted, I was never sure which. My presence had been swallowed up in the woods; I had become part of things, and this is when the hunting always really began.

I could tell when the circles had stopped widening; I could feel it on the back of my neck and in my gut, and in the awareness of other presences. Squirrels would materialize. They didn't come from somewhere else; they simply appeared where they had been all along. A red fox has trotted up so close that I was afraid he might be rabid and not a responsible fox, but when I moved my hand he almost ran back out through himself. A doe and her big fawn

have stood thirty feet away and looked through me, knowing something was there but unable to put a label on it.

There were those times when I was a kid, hunting and trapping and sometimes spending the night in the woods alone, when I would have a flash of intuition that was lost as swiftly as it came—the vaguest hint of how aboriginal hunters must feel, and what real hunting, *real hunting*, is all about. One strong flash of this to a boy—one swift, heady taste of this utter wild freedom—is enough to keep him hunting all his days. Not for just meat, and not just to kill, but hunting for that flash of insight again. I've done a good deal of birdshooting of most kinds, but I've never had this feeling with a shotgun in my hands. It comes when I am rifle hunting for deer, or elk, or squirrels.

I don't know where else a boy today can really get this

(Continued on Page 49)

Photo by Charles Schwartz

