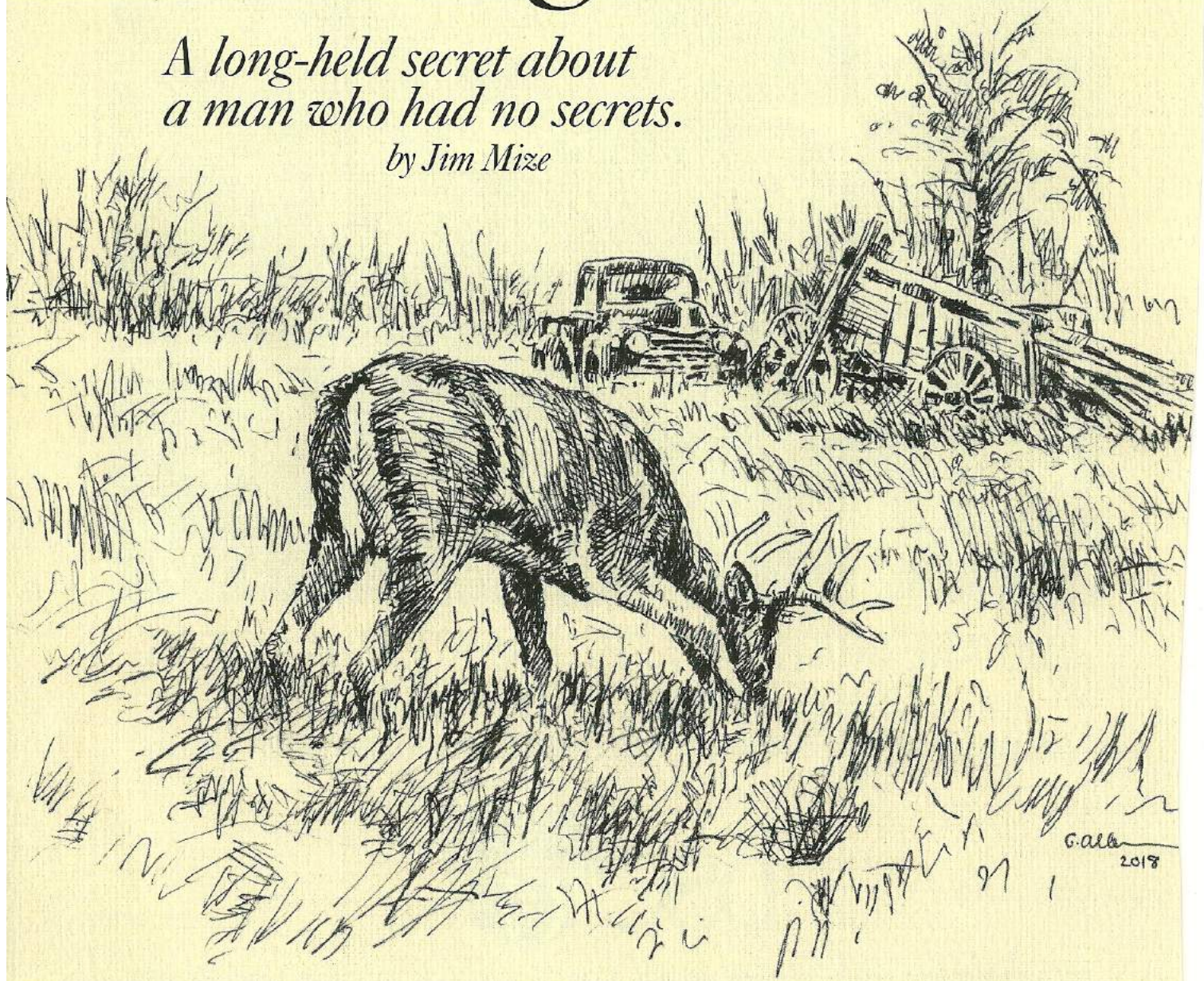


# HUNTING WITH KP

*A long-held secret about  
a man who had no secrets.*

*by Jim Mize*



WHITETAIL, BY GORDON ALLEN

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Henny Youngman is credited with the lines, "You have the Midas touch. Everything you touch turns into a muffler."

He could have been talking about KP.

KP was a different sort. Unlike most people, when KP bungled a task, which happened often, he told on himself and laughed along. So when the guys in the maintenance shop wanted an entertaining tale, they turned to KP. The first story I heard from him after we met involved target practice with a .22 rifle.

"I put a paper target on my woodshed wall to try out my new rifle," he began. "I braced myself on the arms of a chair on my front porch. On my first shot, I hit the target and heard a ping. That didn't make sense, so I did it again. Another ping."

KP continued to shoot and continued to hear pings. He would listen and try to figure out why a wooden shed would make such a sound when you shot it.

His story went on like this until he had emptied the rifle's magazine and walked out to check his target. Satisfied with his pattern, he then walked into the shed to discover the source of the pinging noise.

"I guess I should have checked the inside of the shed first," said KP. "I had a nice set of wire hubcaps hanging on the inside wall but found one of them shot all to hell and back."

The guys in the shop laughed, and several of them said, "I don't think I would have told that." Probably few people would have. KP not only wrote the book on himself but also let everyone read it. There is an exception, though. And up to this point, only he and I know the story. This is it.

Some years ago, he and I took up bowhunting at the same time and tried to figure out the sport with equipment cobbled together from the local hardware store. In preparation for hunting whitetails, we lost a few arrows and mangled straw bales with broadheads until the bales fell apart. But we im-

proved, and in late summer heat, we scouted some local woods, found trails, built blinds, and got ready for deer season.

Opening day, however, came at the end of a torrential rain. Creeks ran out of their banks and into the woods. Roads into hunting areas rutted to impassability.

Since we hunted public land, we had placed our blinds far back in the woods. As a result, we faced a long opening-day hike down a washed-out logging road. We left KP's truck at the pavement and hoofed it in.

The first obstacle was the creek. Usually, we could cross on stones, but it flowed freely across the forest floor. The ford looked like someone had kicked open a flash dam to float out timber.

KP and I studied the situation.

"You want to hunt this side of the creek? You go upstream and I'll go downstream? I don't think we'll get to our blinds today."

He nodded and ambled off in search of a hunting spot.

I eased along downstream. This was new ground to me, as we had scouted only the other side of the creek. All tracks and deer sign had been swept clean in the downpour, but I found a few trails and tunnels where deer had parted thick vegetation.

I had gone downstream just a couple hundred yards when I saw a posted sign marking private property and the end of public land where I could hunt. I decided to reconvene with KP and hunt upstream of him.

Walking back to the roadbed where we split up, I stopped and listened momentarily. I could hear

nothing over the sound of raging water, the usual gurgle now a soft roar.

Suddenly, I caught a glimpse of movement. Contrasting images of bright white and camo green flashed before me in a headlong calamity headed directly toward the spot where I stood. KP ran and jumped, all the while looking over his shoulder. He carried his bow in one hand and, with his other hand, alternated between waving behind him and reaching to pull his pants up to his knees so he could run or at least shuffle at high speed.

Seeing him running in stark terror directly toward me created an impulse to draw my bow or break into a mad dash to make sure I remained in front of him. But I watched to see what might come next. I expected to see the hillbillies from *Deliverance* chasing KP, brandishing long knives as they drooled through toothless grins. Or perhaps a lumbering bear, growling and in a lather, with cubs trailing.

The commotion kept coming and I held my ground, frozen. In the end, it was only KP.

He continued shuffling, bumbling, fanning, and jumping until he reached the roadbed—where I stood in awe of a scene so out of the norm, I had no words. His face reflected surprise when he saw me, then regret when he realized I had seen him.

The camo I had seen were his shirt and bunched-up pants, while the flashes of white were from a fanny that rarely saw daylight. His posterior could have been flashing neon on and off and been no more visible.

He handed me his bow while he modestly pulled his pants back up. I didn't even know where to start. So I asked the question that originally brought me here.

"The land downstream is posted. Anywhere up here to hunt?"

"I don't know," said KP. "I didn't get that far."

So then I got to the point.

"What was that all about?"

KP looked at his boots and made footprints in the mud. He bought as much time as his distraction could purchase and then answered.

"After we split up, I had to answer nature's call."

"Not the hunting kind?"

"No, the other kind," said KP. "I thought I'd go near the roadbed to keep my scent out here. So I dropped my pants and squatted only to discover I was over a yellow jacket's nest."

"Guess they didn't like that," I offered in consolation.

"Not a bit. They attacked."

KP was clearly in discomfort, physically and mentally, still stung with embarrassment and perhaps yellow jackets, so I asked, "Any stings?"

"At least four."

"Hmmm." I had no medicinal solutions or home remedies to offer. Back then, the common treatment was wet tobacco or baking soda. I had neither.

"You want to go?" I asked. The weather had blown all our scouting, and KP looked as though he had enjoyed all he could stand.

"I think so."

The walk back to his truck, slick and mostly up-

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hill and back and forth across ruts that weaved into the ditches, took a while. The mud caked on our boots also made each step a chore.

Then KP suddenly stopped. He glanced at me with a curious but sincere look that lasted a few seconds. Finally, the question came out: "You're not going to tell the guys at the shop about this, are you?"

I grinned. He grinned back. We started walking.

Should any of the guys from the shop read this, they will not doubt a word of it. And KP, you should know that I kept your secret for more than 40 years. In the end, that's the best I could do. ■

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*Jim Mize has two award-winning collections of humorous short stories for outdoorsmen. For more information on his books, go to [www.acreektricklesthroughit.com](http://www.acreektricklesthroughit.com).*