

The Los Angeles Silhouette Club

Of Old Guns, Old Friends, and Cast Bullets: Verse 2

By: Glen E. Fryxell

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I like hunting with people I know I can trust. Good judgment is a valuable character trait when loaded firearms and killing are involved. I would be hunting with just such men on this trip. It was early March, and we would be hunting feral hogs in central Oregon, on Clover Creek Ranch. Rob Applegate was supposed to join us on this trip, but a late winter storm had closed the passes over in his neck of the woods and he wasn't able to make it. Caz and Bob had beat me to the bunkhouse, which had them worried....not that I was out stuck in a snow bank somewhere, but because I had the fixin's for supper and they were gettin' hungry! Shortly after I got there, the skillet was sizzlin' with andouille sausage, potatoes and onions, simmering in chardonnay with a healthy dash of seasoned pepper. As the cast iron skillet got hot, so did the "hot stove league" and the hunting stories, tall tales and show-and-tell cranked up full swing. Knives and guns were showed off and bragged about, gifts were exchanged and soon the BS was flyin' in fine fashion. Front and center in these discussions were various knives, as each of us had brought along new acquisitions for field testing on this trip -- Bob had a new Bark River hunting knife that he was very excited about, Caz had a Swamp Rat Knife Works blade that he was all lathered up over, and I had a new Beretta Loveless drop point hunter that I wanted to put to work (I have always been a fan of the basic Loveless design). Dinner was served and a grand time was had. I tell you, I could listen to Bob tell stories all night.



Beretta's version of the classic
Loveless drop-point Hunter.

As we were cleaning up after dinner, Caz went outside to throw the garbage away and came back in and matter-of-factly announced "It's snowing boys." Sure enough, there was a white dusting on everything, and it continued to snow lightly for the next hour or so. (The snow was not unexpected, remember that Rob had had to stay home because of a winter storm moving through the area.) We got everything ready for the next morning and hit the sack.

The next morning, the coffee was perking, the sausage was frying, and once again the snow was falling, not hard, but steadily nonetheless. We ate breakfast and headed up the hill to hunt. As we worked our way into the interior parts of the ranch, it started snowing harder. We climbed the hill up to the broken down Cat bulldozer it was snowing even harder, and we found no sign of recent animal activity in the snow. We continued up to the pond and pasture up on top and once again, found no sign of animal activity. The pond was full, frozen solid, and there were no tracks in the snow or any evidence that anything had tried to break through the ice for a drink. By this time the snow was coming down hard enough that visibility was getting limited, so we

decided to head back down the hill to a basin we knew about that was relatively sheltered. There were no critters up on top.

The sheltered basin was a different story however. We found signs of recent activity, we found hogs (including one HUGE old sow), we found Russian boar (very fast Russian boar), and we found fallow deer. All three of us were specifically looking for meat hogs in the 200-300 lb range, so we decided to sweep this one hillside and work our way down towards the pond at the bottom of the basin. Bob and Caz took paths that swung to the outside part of the hillside, and I took more of a direct beeline to the pond. As I got towards the bottom, I saw another couple fallow deer, and then a couple of hogs. They were all behind a wall of juniper trees, so I couldn't get a real good look at them, but the hogs looked to be roughly in the size range that we were looking for. As I slowly worked my way down to the last of the juniper trees, the fallow deer sensed something was amiss and slowly exited stage left. The hogs were more interested in rooting around in the mud. I laid down in the snow (the only way I could snake a shot past the overhanging juniper branches) and got my first good look at the black boar 40 yards in front of me. He was about 250 lbs, just exactly the size I was looking for. However, the shot presentation was not good, so I laid in the snow and waited.

Allow me a brief caveat at this point -- I was hunting with a T/C Contender, chambered for the .338 GEF, a wildcat that I put together back in the early 90s with the help and guidance of J.D. Jones of SSK Industries. My goal on this trip was to test out a couple of cast bullet designs that I had put together specifically for this gun. The first was a Lyman 33889 that I had modified to drop a 246 grain HP, and the second was a custom 235 grain GC-FP made by Mountain Molds (www.mountainmolds.com). I had worked up loads for both of these bullets that were giving me very good accuracy (5 shots into 1" at 50 yards), and wanted to see how they performed on critters. The 33889 HP load was going right at 1600 fps (a very useful velocity for a cast HP), and the Mountain Molds bullet was going almost 1750 fps. Conveniently, both loads shot to the same point.



The .338 GEF, the 235 grain Mountain Molds GC-FP (left) and the Lyman 33889 hollow-point (right).

After several minutes of watching the black boar's backside, he turned and faced me. If I had had the deeply penetrating Mountain Molds 235 grain FP in the chamber, I would have simply placed the crosshairs on his forehead and dropped the hammer. But with a hog's hard, sloping head, and a soft cast HP, I wasn't sure if the bullet would simply flatten and ricochet (probably not, but I wasn't sure), or kill him cleanly, so I held off. A few minutes later, he turned broadside to me, giving me the presentation I was looking for, so I put the crosshairs on his ribs and fired. There was no reaction to the shot, he simply turned away from me and trotted briskly away for about 15 feet, then he stopped, staggered, fell over and rolled back downhill towards me. As he came to rest, there was a large, pink frothy geyser erupting out of his right (i.e. exit) side, so even before I got up out of the snow I knew that he was lung shot, that the cast HP had expanded well and that it had exited.

As I got up to go over and inspect my hog, I got my first good look at the hillside farther up the drainage -- there were several other hogs in this same size range rooting through the mud and melting snow. Not wanting to spoil the chances for my hunting partners, I snuck back into the junipers quickly and quietly, and started heading back up the hill towards where I had last seen them. I ran up the hill and met them halfway and (huffing and puffing) told them that I had my hog down and that were a number of other hogs down there for them to look over. Bob took his Krag and slowly snuck down to more or less the same spot that I had shot from. He had a nice brown and black spotted hog (with some amazing red-orange highlights) wander out onto the flats and Bob put the bead front sight on his forehead and let the .30-40 Krag speak. The pig simply went rigid, and fell over, and quivered slightly. It never squealed, grunted or kicked. It just lay there stiff-legged. Head shots work.



A .30-40 Krag and head shots, a fine recipe for making pork!

Bob came back to us and told us that there was another bigger spotted sow a little farther up that Caz should be able to get a shot at. Caz snuck his way up to where Bob and I had shot from and sure enough, there was a nice brown and black spotted sow that walked out onto the flats broadside, and Caz took his 5.5" USFA



Cast hollow-point at 1600 fps killed this hog quickly.

Shootists .44 Special (loaded with Skeeter's load, the Lyman 429421 over 7.5 grains of Unique), lined up on her and fired. His first shot crushed her spine and she went down hard, squealing, well, like a stuck pig. He walked up close and finished her off. The three of us stood there with our three hogs on the ground, all shot from basically the same spot, within about 15 minutes, and all three had died within about 20 yards of each other. It had been a good morning!

Time for the field dressing. Long story short, all three knives made a good showing for themselves, each making short work of "their" hog. My Beretta Loveless Hunter is made from AUS-8 steel, which has gotten to be popular as a knife steel in recent years. This knife takes an edge nicely, but some have criticized AUS-8 for not being able to hold its edge with continued use. Well, let me just state for the record

that after dressing this hog, it will still shave with ease. I paid \$40 (new) for this knife and in my opinion it is one of the best values in the hunting/skinning knife market, period. Bob and Caz were also quite pleased with their new Bark River and Swamp Rat knives (respectively).

Inspection of my hog's carcass and innards revealed that the entrance wound was a .338 caliber hole and only had a small circle of bloodshot meat around it (about the size of a nickel). Both lungs had a hole through them about the size of a quarter, with about 6" of severely bloodshot



The .44 Special single-action is a very classy way to hunt for hogs.

lung tissue surrounding the hole. The far side of the ribcage had an irregularly shaped hole through it, roughly the size of a half dollar, and the exit hole through that tough pigskin was about the size of a quarter. While there was some bloodshot meat in the far side ribcage (the expanded bullet hit two ribs on the way out), there was notably less than I'm used to seeing with higher velocity jacketed bullet loads. The Lyman 33889 HP at 1600 fps had done everything that could possibly be asked of it. I guess that's why I like cast HP's so much.

After I got the hog's skinned/split carcass home, I boned out the pork for the freezer. The long upswept blade of the Chicago Cutlery meat cutter's knife that Bob gave me performed these chores superbly. I cut the back straps into 2-lb roasts, boned out the shoulders and ribs to make sausage with, and cut the hams (bone in) off the pelvis. I marinate the pork loin roasts in chardonnay with a splash of Worcestershire sauce, and then roll them in chopped herbs and garlic and bake them (covered) for several hours at moderately low temperature, and they come out delicious! I got 20+ lbs of breakfast sausage off of this guy (had some this morning in fact) and it's so lean that no grease collects in the pan when you fry it. Whooeee! I like wild pork! Lean and tasty.

This was a really good couple of days -- good friends, interesting guns, and some very useful cast bullets. And at the end of the day, there was good food, fine wine and excellent story-telling. But there were some new friends too -- each of us had brought a new hunting knife to try out, Caz brought his new USFA .44 Special, etc. Each was new, but clearly destined to become an old friend. In short, those two days were filled with good men and good tools, and I thoroughly enjoyed spending time with both. That's the kind of stuff that make hunting special for me. Old friends, and making old friends, is something special indeed.



Chicago Cutlery meat cutter's knife did an excellent job boning out the pork.

- Glen E. Fryxell

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