

Lansing Area Chapter's 2016 Safari Wish Hunts

By Jim Leonard



The Foundation for Hope arranged for five young health challenged boys (Janet says to call them young men) to hunt whitetails at Valhalla Ranch located Northeast of Grayling on the long weekend of September 28 thru October 2nd. Our Lansing Area Chapter sponsored two of these young hunters. They both are 11 years old.

Janet and I left Lansing to meet them at Valhalla early Thursday morning in a pouring rain that was forecast to last for several days. To our delight we had beautiful sunshine by the time we got to Grayling and the weather stayed great for the whole hunt. The boys and their parents or guardian all arrived before noon and got settled into their lodging and then had lunch. After lunch they were presented with several nice hunting related goodies and an I-pad that before they went home was loaded with hundreds of professional photos from the weekend. They then went one at a time with their assigned guide to the rifle range to get familiar with the rifle they would use and to determine what other shooting aids might be needed. Once that all got sorted out, and after a light snack, they were ready to head for their blinds around 5:00 PM.

Now with them in the blinds, the rest of us had to set back in camp and wait and wait and wait. Was that a rifle shot? Hope so and hope someone got something. What really happened

would only become evident when a pick-up would show up at the bonfire with a buck in the back and a beaming young hunter with a story to tell riding in front. Thursday night two boys, Jared and Jacob, were lucky. Our Chapter's two, Devin and Zane, came back empty handed. Shannon, the fifth boy also got nothing. Friday morning the three were out before daylight but came back with nothing. Tensions continued to grow as the three went out Friday night. As we sat by the fire, we heard three shots before it got too dark. The speculation that all three boys had connected was dashed when Shannon showed up with a nice buck but it had taken two shots to dispatch it. Again our Chapter's two boys came back empty. Devin was especially disheartened because he had taken that third shot we heard but it got dark before they could find anything. There was even some doubt if the deer had even been hit.

Late Saturday morning the guides went looking for Devin's deer. They came back to camp and took Devin out to where they had found his deer. It had circled back and died where no one would have suspected. Devin and all of us were obviously thrilled.



I began to wonder if there really were any buffalo on this farm. We did see a few way off in the distance from the road. Not finding the animals Richard was looking for we headed for the safari hunting area. Once there we drove around and saw nothing. Ron, Johan and Boisman set off for a blind by a water hole and Richard and I went back to the ranch house.

Over coffee Richard showed me some auction books which included many of his Cape buffalo that he had sold. They all were magnificent beasts. Then he took me for a mini tour of the farm. We headed back to the breeding area because they were being fed and I could get a better look at the herd. He said it costs over \$1000 a day for cattle food.

As we went through the gate my jaw dropped. Where we saw nothing two hours ago, as far as I could see were Cape buffalo. Big ones, little ones, and babies as far as I could see. Then it was off to the safari area to see if Ron had any luck.

The boys had been out almost three hours. As we drove around I began to see quite a few Cape buffalo and other plains game animals. It was a little after 11 am when we got the call from Johan. Ron had shot a Cape buffalo. We quickly drove over to the location where we had left them. There it was – a beautiful Cape buffalo down.

Since time was of the essence it was great that this herd came in when it did. If it would have been thirty minutes later

we would have been gone to pack for our ride back to the airport. After pictures were taken I wondered what was the disposition of the buffalo. I asked Johan and he said we were taking it back to his place. No way was that beast fitting in the back of his Range Rover – or so I thought. With the help of the winch on the vehicle they squeezed it onto the back of the Range Rover.

Johan's taxidermist met us back at his place and transferred Ron's Cape buffalo into his trailer. He would take it to his business to skin and prepare it for transfer to Swift Dip and then on to the states.

We had a small lunch, completed paperwork, and packed for the airport. We said our goodbyes to Boisman and were off on the road to Johannesburg. The ride to the airport went off without a hitch. We checked in at the Delta desk and said our goodbyes to Johan. I did a little shopping at the airport gift shops and relaxed waiting for our flight home.

We had an uneventful flight home (thank God). We arrived in Atlanta, breezed through customs, rifle check, and were off to our connecting gate for our flight to Grand Rapids.

In Grand Rapids we gathered our luggage and set off for home. Yeah!! Surely nothing else could happen – wrong again. How about stop and go traffic on I96 due to construction. What usually was a 45 minute drive turned into a 3 hour crawl.

All I can say to end this saga is – "WHEW". ■

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So with four down and just Saturday night left to hunt, the pressure was really on for Zane to get his deer. When he went out, those left sitting around the bonfire were tense with anticipation. It kept getting darker and darker and we had heard nothing. Just as it was looking hopeless we heard a rifle shot. We still had no idea if it was successful or not until a text came in saying HE HAD GOTTEN HIS BUCK. Jake, the head guide, loaded Zane's mother, Janet, and I in a truck and we drove to where Zane was hunting. We found

him standing with his crutches, beside his nice buck, with the proudest, beaming smile imaginable. What a perfect moment. I am still convinced there is some divine help involved here.

I have said this in the past but it is so true. None of this could be possible without your generous participation in our Lansing Area Chapter Fundraiser each year. Thank you so much. I just wish you could be there and experience first hand the joy you bring to these kids and their families. ■

President's message

2016 certainly was a year of the unbelievable and one full of surprises - The Cubs won the World Series in a nail biting 7 games, the incredible feats of Michael Phelps and others at the Olympic games, the United Kingdom pulled out of the European Union, the water crisis in Flint is declared, there was a National debate on who can use what bathroom, we lost a First Lady, a Prince, The King, The Greatest, America's TV Mom, Mr. Hockey, Willie Wonka, The Green Hornet, the first American to orbit the earth, others who were close, those admired from afar, and we witnessed an unbelievable presidential election season.

With the year of 2016 being full of surprises, why would we expect there to be no surprises in SCI? Our surprise reared its head the day before Thanksgiving when the Michigan Court of Appeals overturned the affirmed constitutionality determination by the Circuit Court of the Scientific Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (SFWCA) that was passed in 2014. With little time to act and the hunting, fishing, and management of wildlife and fisheries teetering on being determined by the DNR or by the ballot box, the leadership of the Michigan SCI Chapters, along with other conservation, hunting and fishing organizations, sprang into action. After many hours and days of phone calls, emails, meetings, and letter writing, a slightly revised bill that addressed the constitutionality issue, passed the Senate and later the House and was signed into law by the Governor (again). Many thanks to those in SCI and others who spearheaded the efforts to thwart the anti-hunters attack on our hunting rights.

Although this matter was a surprise, one thing we can be sure of is that anti-hunting groups like the Humane Society of the United States will continue to find ways to challenge the tradition and part played by hunting in the process of wildlife management. It should continue to be no surprise to have our hunting rights challenged again and again. We need to get the word out to the hunting community that SCI is on the front line defending their right to hunt.

Defending all hunters' right to hunt is SCI's primary mission. SCI is leading the way in the arena of hunter advocacy and its greatest source of influence is its membership. Now, more than ever, the importance of your renewed membership and the membership of your hunting buddies will allow SCI to bring the many voices to legislators in our effort to defend the right to hunt. Just as virtually all gun owners are NRA members, we need to spread the word to all hunters to become SCI members.

Like 2016, the remainder of 2017 will have surprises, great feats, unbelievable events, and loss of loved ones. One thing that is sure is that our hunting rights will continue to be threatened in Michigan, in America, and abroad. Let your voice be heard. Join or renew your membership today so that the thrill of the hunt is enjoyed by all for many years to come.

Shoot straight,

Mike Hoskins

Lansing Area Chapter SCI Officers

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Thankful to get to share another Bucky Night

Thanksgiving weekend is always a great time of year, not only to reflect on our good fortune and of the advantages that we have been given, but to get a final weekend of deer hunting in before December arrives. For the last several years I've been lucky enough to hunt with Paul Maliskey in Montana and stay with him at Trail Creek Lodge. The lodge is comfortable but not overly ornate, maybe it could be described as business like, but with all of the comforts of home. The food is great and Paul hunts on several large cattle ranches at the base of the Crazy Mountain range.

This year Paul and I, on one of our stalks, this one in the creek bottom, came upon a very nice whitetail buck with several does. Paul is very calm and is usually pretty cool and understated, so when he said "That's a really nice buck. Do you like him?" I didn't need to be asked twice.

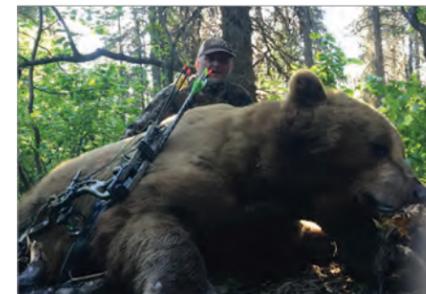


We were able to get to a fallen log with a 286 yard shot, but the buck took his time and made us wait nearly 30 minutes to get clear. Having taken a long range shooting class and having my model 70 recently back from Pierce Engineering, the short shot was like a chip shot. The trigger broke cleanly and the buck crumpled where he had stood.

It was a Bucky Night!! ■



Bear Paw, By Kent Ballard



I booked a trip with Mark Cooley from Tal Star Lodge in Alaska this past fall to hunt for 10 days beginning June 13th of 2016. My good friend Joe Thomas had hunted with Mark on several occasions and had shared with me that he had good brown bear numbers and ran a good camp.

I flew into Anchorage on the 13th of June and took the approximately one hour float plane ride into camp. This was a baited brown grizzly bear and black bear hunt. The tags are nuisance tags so as a hunter you can hunt the same day you fly into camp. On the third evening at 12:30 a.m. I had been on stand for a couple

of hours when I heard what I thought was an animal crossing a river. About ten minutes later my large Brown Bear came into view from behind my bait. The adrenaline of this hunt was over the top on several occasions, this was one of those occasions as I clipped into my string with my release. I was able to get the bear broadside and drove an arrow through both lungs at about 15 yards. I was shooting a steel force broad head with a heavy Easton Full Metal Jacket arrow. The set up did the job I blew right through the bear. Candidly it was quite hard to find my anchor point on the large side of the bear, as the brown bear crossed by me once it truly dawned on me that I had to pick a spot on that large side to hit the lungs, it was like anchoring my pin on the side of a truck. I watched the bear run off into the thick stuff and within five seconds I heard the bear crash and take its last breath. It was inspiring when I walked upon this bear on the ground. I had shot my Pope and Young Brown Bear, it was a high that would be hard to match again on a hunt (rest assured I

will continue to search for an emotional hunting high that will compare). A couple of evenings later I shot this black bear. It was not my largest black bear but it sure was a lot of fun to hunt him and send an arrow through him! The skull is not dry for official scoring yet on my brown bear but it looks as though it will be very close to 23 inches (plus or minus a quarter inch). The brown bear squared just short of 9 feet (8 ft. 11 and change), I figured I could call the bear 9 foot squared and not be exaggerating to badly!

I flew home with my bears and cannot wait to get them back to show to my friends and family. I managed to self-film my hunt (very amateur) if you would like to view my video including the kills of both my brown bear and my black bear you can use this link on YouTube to view: <https://youtu.be/3qQLWkiAk3A>.

God Bless America, Alaska and Brown Bears!



SCI Michigan Involvement Committee awards Six Scholarships to Post Graduate Students from Three Michigan Universities

On September 8th 2016, the selection committee for the Joseph G Schotthoefer Memorial Student Award awarded six scholarships to Post Graduate students from three Michigan Universities. The awardees were students from Michigan State University, Central Michigan University, and Grand Valley State University.

Three are pursuing their Doctorates, Megan Cross MSU, Christopher Henderson, MSU, and Cybil Cavalieri MSU. Jennifer Smith MSU, Angela Kujawa GVSU, and Lucas Price CMU are enrolled in MS programs.

Research projects ranged from working with MDNR to affect partnerships between the DNR and Sportsmen's organizations, Hunter recruitment and retention, DNA and skull

size sampling to determine growth patterns and development in carnivores, improvement of hair snares and other devices to increase rate of collection of DNA samples, habitat location and connectivity of American Martin, and population dynamics of Grey wolves in Michigan and Wisconsin.

Chapter program directors take note; one of the requirements of receiving the award is the students give a presentation about their research to any chapter that sends them an invitation to attend a chapter meeting. Contact your chapter MIC representative for the students contact information.

Paul Royce
Chairman,
Schotthoefer Memorial Award selection committee

Veterans' Pheasant Hunt

It was a fun day at Crooked Foot Hunt Club for nearly 40 soldiers who participated our annual tower hunt, followed by lunch and a walk up hunt. The soldiers were mainly active duty and recently discharged enlisted men, having served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The schedule was as follows:
9:00 a.m. Arrive to a continental breakfast
9:30 a.m. Safety Instructions
10:00 a.m. European Tower Hunt
12:00 p.m. Lunch
1:00 p.m. clean up hunt

The lodge facility at Crooked Foot is a very impressive and comfortable place, with a tasty lunch and great camaraderie.

One nice opportunity was the chance to hunt behind some really great dogs. Apparently, they have an impressive list of dog trainers that they call on to help with the hunts. It was great fun for many of the hunters who had never pheasant hunted before, with the chance to walk up behind a dog on point and take a leisurely one shot, unhurried bird.

After the hunt, many of the soldiers were very grateful and thanked us for sponsoring the event. ■



Excitement at Chapter Meeting not Suppressed

Suppressors, what are they? Do they work? Is it true you can hunt with them in Michigan now? How do you get one? With all these questions bouncing around, Your Lansing Area Board decided it would be good to have a suppressor demo and question and answer session for one of our chapter meetings.

Three things came together to make this meeting possible. Member Bill Parks owns Michigan Police Equipment, a great gun and gun accessories store. He sells suppressors and graciously agreed to provide the demo and info about them for our meeting. Members Jim and Sally Ellis agreed to put together a great picnic meal for all the attendees. Capital Area Sportsmen's League agreed to rent us inside space for our meal and meeting and allowed us to use the rifle range for the suppressor demo.

On a nice late afternoon in August, Wade Cunningham, Bill's suppressor guru and his wife Jennifer, also a Michigan Police Equipment employee, joined the gathered members to demo the suppressors. First he shot a .308 with and without the suppressor installed. Mike Leonard brought his .243 and did the same thing. Wade then fired a .223 with and without. What a difference. All three guns were quit enough with suppressor installed that hearing protection was not needed. Wade then demoed a .22 long rifle. There was still a little noise with the suppressor. Then we tried subsonic ammo and about all we heard was the bullet hitting the target downrange. All agreed they worked and the noise reduction was a blessing.

After our great meal thanks to the Ellis's we sat around for the Q & A. session. Wade was very informative. Too much was covered to include here but briefly they are available, legal to own and hunt with, and require specific, involved paperwork. ■



Save the Day

**18th Annual
Fundraiser &
Banquet**

March 16th & 17th, 2018

Building the .45 Raptor

By Bruce Caltrider

My search for accuracy for southern Michigan deer hunting began with my first season in 1974. I carried a 12ga Remington 870 with a 28" vent rib barrel and a modified choke. I was grateful to be able to hit a paper plate at 25 yards with the Foster style slugs that were the only option in those days. I wished for the accuracy that comes with a centerfire rifle, but knew that was not in the cards.

As technology and rules changed, my search for accuracy led me over the years to a smoothbore "deer slayer" barrel for the 870, a Dan Wesson .357 Magnum revolver, a fully rifled Mossberg bolt-action slug gun firing sabot slugs, and finally to Ken Johnston's Ultimate Muzzleloader. Ken's muzzleloader delivered the accuracy I had sought for so long and I enjoy hunting with it a great deal.

In 2014 the state of Michigan changed the rules again. The state authorized a two year trial period of allowing straight wall pistol cartridges fired from rifles to be used in Michigan's traditional shotgun/muzzleloader zone 3. The rule specifically allows straight wall cartridges with cases not exceeding 1.80" in length and utilizing a bullet of at least .35 caliber. This instantly made legal rifles chambered for such well known cartridges as .357 Magnum, 44-40, 44 Magnum, and 45 Long Colt. Also legal would be lesser known pistol names like 454 Casull, .460 S&W, and 500 S&W. Since Michigan's rule specifies dimensions rather than names, the .450 Bushmaster rifle cartridge qualifies for use as well.

This rule change caused me to start pondering the idea of building a rifle specifically for southern Michigan. Many of us willingly spend money on rifles we can't hunt with where we live. Doesn't it make sense to put the most care into the one we can use the most?

Now before we go any further, I should mention that I'm a Rifle Looney of the first order. I shoot a lot. I am a dedicated handloader. I haven't purchased more than two boxes of centerfire ammunition in the last 30 years. None of what I'm about to describe is remotely necessary to hunt deer!

My first decision would be picking the cartridge. A perusal of a couple loading manuals quickly led me to the .460 S&W: 1.8" straight wall case, firing .452" bullets while utilizing a maximum operating pressure of 65,000 psi. Another option would be the .450 Bushmaster: a rimless case of about the same size as the .460 S&W, but with a maximum average operating pressure of 39,000 psi, designed for AR-15 type rifles.

I liked the higher operating pressure of the .460, but it is a rimmed case and therefore would be very difficult to make feed well in a bolt-action repeater. At this point I started considering designing my own wildcat cartridge to accomplish



my goal. Then one day while surfing the net I stumbled upon the .45 Raptor.

The Raptor is essentially a rimless .460 S&W designed by Arne Brennan to be used in the AR-10 platform. More precisely, the .45 Raptor is a straight wall .308 Winchester case shortened to 1.8". Arne previously designed the 6.5 Grendel for the AR-15; a cartridge with a near cult like following. The Raptor was reported to push a 250 gr. Hornady FTX 2450-2600 fps. That is near .338 Win magnum territory. Yes, I'm interested.

To make matters better, .45 Raptor brass, made by Starline, is available for purchase from Raptor Shooting Systems and the Raptor utilizes .460 S&W loading data and dies. This should be easy!

I started to formulate a plan. How accurate of a long range hunting (not target) rifle could I build following the southern Michigan rules? I want the rifle to be a repeating bolt-action and as light and handy as possible, yet still be extremely accurate. What if I selected the best components used by F class competitors and have it put together by a competition proven rifle builder? Would it work?

My first call was to Jim Nordhof at Pierce Engineering in Lansing. Pierce has built and worked on several rifles for me and is currently enjoying a great deal of success building winning rifles for F Class competitors. John Pierce is a member of the United States FTR team that will represent our nation at the 2017 World Championships.

Jim was sure they could build the rifle but he had some concerns. The first was the issue of head space. Head space is the distance from the bolt face to the point on the cartridge that stops it from sliding any further into the chamber. On a rimmed case like the .460 S&W, the rim stops the case from moving further; on a bottle neck case like the 30-06, the shoulder between the body and the neck establishes the distance; but on a straight wall rimless case (.45 ACP, 30 Carbine, or 45

Raptor) it is the case mouth that holds the case in place. Very few rifles and virtually no bolt-actions head space on the mouth. Jim was willing to try it. I needed to finish developing my specifications.

I knew I wanted to use a Pierce action. This action is the same base design as a Remington 700 but with much tighter tolerances, better finish, and a faster firing system. The most accurate rifle I have ever fired is my Pierce chambered for the .260 Remington.

The trigger would be a Timney. I own other Timneys and they work well when set in the 2-3lb range, unlike some pure target triggers that really only work well at sub 1lb settings.

I next needed to decide on a barrel. The first part of that decision is which bullet to use. After digging through all the offerings by the major manufacturers, I came up with the .452" 250 gr. Hornady FTX as supplying the best ability to withstand the high velocity of the Raptor and have the best ballistic coefficient (ability to retain velocity in flight) while being light enough to achieve high velocity.

With the bullet decided, I entered the attributes of the bullet into a twist calculator to determine what rate of rifling twist to specify for the barrel. Two different calculators indicated that a 1 turn in 36" twist would stabilize the bullet, but that is a very slow twist. I learned that .450 Bushmaster factory rifles and ammo use the same bullet in a 1-24 twist and also that Ken Johnston was having a great deal of success with a 1-24 in his Game Breaker. I decided on a 1-24.

I started looking for a .451" groove diameter 1-24 twist stainless steel barrel. I quickly discovered that most makers of competition grade barrels don't make this size. Shilen Barrels makes a .451" groove but only in a 1-16 twist, and that was not what I was after. When I called Krieger Barrels, they told me they will make whatever a customer wants, as long as you can wait the 5-6 months it takes to make it. I have the time.

I also knew I wanted to use a McMillan stock. McMillan is famous for making high quality, rigid, relatively light weight stocks and I really like their Remington Hunter pattern with the high cheek piece and flat forend. I decided to do something outside the box and order one of their swirl patterns with molded in color. I decided I would tell Jim to order one that was 60% black, 25% white, and 15% light gray; with a 13.75" length of pull including a 1" thick Pachmayr Decelerator recoil pad. To match the stock, the barrel and action will have a jet black Cerakote finish.

I met with Jim to discuss the details. We both felt that a #5 contour barrel finished to 22" would be heavy enough to be safe but Jim was calling Krieger to make sure.

The .45 Raptor is not a proprietary cartridge, you don't have pay a fee or be licensed to make it. Chamber reamers (to cut the chamber in the barrel) are made by Pacific Tool and Gauge (PTG). The catch is that PTG will only sell them to a

Federal Firearms License holder who is also ITAR certified. This greatly limits who can purchase the reamer, fortunately, Pierce Engineering has both designations.

At the close of my meeting with Jim, it was agreed that Pierce Engineering would order the components we discussed and build my rifle. Now, I only had to wait 5-6 months for the stock, reamer, and barrel to arrive.

While waiting for the necessary parts to arrive, I purchased .45 Raptor brass, Redding .460 S&W dies, and Hornady 250 gr. FTX bullets. After 4 1/2 months, I received the call I had been waiting for...the parts were in.

The team at Pierce went to work building the rifle. I stopped in to drop off a few dummy rounds I put together to test the feeding and got to check out the rifle. Jim Ayers had cut the chamber and fitted the barrel to the action. I slid a dummy round in the chamber and closed the bolt, all fit well.

A couple of days later I called Jim to see how the project was coming and he told me they hit a road block...the rifle would not feed from out of the magazine. As the cartridge slid upward from the magazine, the case mouth was catching on the breach face of the barrel. When I had hand fed the chamber, I pushed the cartridge straight in, but when it attempted to enter the chamber with the upward angle from the magazine it would not go.

It was now I discovered I had made a significant oversight. All straight wall rifle cases (30 Carbine, .444 Marlin, 45/70, .450 Bushmaster, ect.) have at least .020" taper from the back of the case to the mouth. This taper aids in both extraction and feeding. The .45 Raptor has no taper, .478" casehead to mouth. A call to Arne Brennan yielded the suggestion to make the breech face of the barrel cone shaped and then polish it. At this late date, I asked Arne if he knew anyone who had successfully made the Raptor feed in a bolt action, and he said "actually no"; since all of his work was with the AR-10. (I'm not criticizing Arne!). The team at Pierce cut the cone shaped breech face, re-cut the chamber, and cut the bolt face to match the cone in the barrel. They then tried a number of different followers until they hit the right one. It now feeds!

I picked up the rifle, mounted a scope and proceeded to measure bullet seating depth to start handloading. The likely powders for this rifle are: H-110, Lil'Gun, IMR-4227, Ramshot Enforcer, and Accurate 5744. Here is a new set of potential problems. At least one firearm manufacture has recommended against large, high pressure charges of Lil'Gun because it burns out the throats of their barrels. Well, I'm not going to chance burning out the throat on a Krieger! Next, both H-110 and IMR 4227, according to their manufacturer, are pretty sensitive to losing velocity in cold weather. I have a better chance of seeing a unicorn than finding Ramshot Enforcer. That leaves Accurate 5744, which Arne Brennan suggested could be the best powder for the 45 Raptor. 5744 has a reputation for being temperature stable in cold weather.



As long range rifle cartridges go, the low velocities of the 45 Raptor and low ballistic coefficient of .452” bullets make it susceptible to the effects of variations in velocity. A change of 100 fps can change POI at 300 yards by several inches. If you have a load that has 50-100 fps extreme spread, and you couple it with a powder that can lose 100fps due to cold weather, then add in the effects of increased air density in cold weather, you can end up with a significant miss at longer ranges. For these reasons, I am willing to give up the maximum velocity potential of the Raptor for consistent accuracy.

My load development is not yet done. I suspect at the end of the day I will end up with a safe, accurate load producing velocities in the 2270-2400 fps range. I have no doubt others have produced velocities pushing towards 2600fps, but I question the safety, accuracy and consistency of such loads.

I approached this build with the attitude that it was an experiment and if it did not work out I could use most of the parts to build something else. I am happy with my rifle and look forward to hunting with it. My feeling is that a Raptor build is best suited to an experienced rifleman with some patience and advanced handloading skills. If you have an interest in building a custom rifle for southern Michigan but aren't a handloader, the .450 Bushmaster (with factory ammo) will accomplish nearly the same results.

My thanks to Arne Brennan for his time and advice and special thanks to the team at Pierce Engineering for their patience, perseverance, and superb quality of work. ■

I headed to the range (50* F day) with ammo loaded with H-110, IMR 4227 and Accurate 5744 all loaded with Hornady 250 gr FTX bullets, .030” off the rifling. I shot the H-110 loads over the chronograph while sighting in and obtained velocities in the mid 2500 fps range but with more than 60 fps extreme spread. I did not shoot this for groups. These loads also exhibited some signs of excessive pressure.

Next I shot several loads with IMR 4227, producing velocities in the mid 2400 fps range. Extreme spread was 50 fps. Three shot groups were running in the .3” to .5” range. Next I tired the 5744. After several loads I ended up with a load with an average velocity of 2272 fps and an extreme spread of 12 fps. Groups were in the .3”-.5” range. Final shots were a three shot group at 300 yards measuring 1.503” center to center.

Zimbabwe

By Mary Browning



I wasn't going to document our trip to Zimbabwe but as I'm looking back on it, it was a trip that must be put into words. I'm not sure, even today, how to categorize this trip, a tragedy, a comedy or a satire. It is for those who read this to make their own judgment.

On my bucket list of “must hunts” was a leopard. Having made up my mind in the spring of 2013 I gave Johan Pieterse

my deposit. OK, it's a go (or so I thought). First Ron got sick and was hospitalized for back surgery, then I got a debilitating disease/ condition in my ribs called costochondritis (an inflammation of the cartilage of the rib cage). Then when I thought everything was OK, South Africa quit issuing leopard permits in their country. It appeared my dream hunt was fading away. So instead of a leopard hunt Ron, Johan and I decided to hunt in South Africa for a Cape buffalo, plains game and a trip to Kruger National Park. Then the clouds seemed to part and the sun peaked through. Johan had found a leopard hunt for me in Zimbabwe with “Hunters Africa”. Ron planned to hunt Cape buffalo while I was leopard hunting leopard. We planned the trip, signed the contract, and our hunt was a go.

Our next step was to wire the deposit. We went to our local bank and wired our money to the account in Botswana we were given. Whew – that's done (or so we thought). WRONG!!! This was done on March 4, 2016. One month later Johan emailed us to say “Hunters Africa” never received the wire transfer. On March 29, 2016 we learned that the money was returned

because it was formatted incorrectly. The only problem was that we did not have the money in our bank account. Oops, said the bank, we better find it. The next day they called and said they had deposited the money back to our account minus \$600.00. Now that did not fly with me. Their excuse was that the difference was due to the exchange rate. I did some research and found that there was no fluctuation in the exchange rates that would add up to \$600.00. We went around and around and they finally agreed to return the \$600.00 into our account. Later when we were transferring another deposit for the trip, the money discrepancy was brought up and the branch manager made a snide remark about how the money was returned to us as a favor. He also kept making unfair innuendos about hunters. I digress from my story, so back to the saga. Johan sent us a new account number in Texas so we rewired our first deposit to “Hunters Africa” on April 7, 2016. It went through without a problem – WHEW.

Our next step was to send our applications to “Hunters Permit Africa” to temporary import our rifles into South Africa. Pretty easy – you would think so. We completed all our paperwork and FedEx'd it to “Hunters Permit Africa”. A week later we get notification that the address was incorrect and that the package can't be delivered. Several calls to Adele Janse Van Rensburg at “Hunters Permit Africa” and the mess was cleared up. Adele went to the FedEx station and picked up our package. The paperwork was approved and ready for us when we arrived in South Africa.

One thing that went without a hitch was our airline tickets. WOW – no problem – maybe the rest of this adventure would run smoothly.

On July 7, 2016 we sent our final payment to “Hunters Africa” without a hitch. Ron and Dan Catlin took Ron's 375 Ruger to the range to sight in. His rifle packs quite a punch but all went well. I took my Savage 308 out later that week and all went well – the rifle was spot on.

We left for our safari on July 30, 2016. We flew out of Grand Rapids to Atlanta and from there to Johannesburg, South Africa. Everything went smoothly at check in and TSA was a breeze. Our flight to Atlanta was smooth and on time. We had plenty of time to find the gate for our next leg of the trip and have dinner at a TGIF. Our plane left on time and I even slept on the flight.

We were met at the gate in Johannesburg by a representative from “Hunters Permit Africa”. He sped us through customs with no long waiting in line. Then we were off to the police office to register our rifles. There we met Johan and Adele. Our registration process was no problem. We packed our gear into Johan's truck and we were off to Nkanga Lodge for dinner and a room for the night. Adele met us there for dinner and drinks. We had an enjoyable evening catching up.

The next morning we took Johan's truck to Adele's house and she took us to the airport for our flight to Harare, Zimbabwe. Johan had to register his rifle with the police because he was taking it out of the country. Then it was off to “South African Air” check in to get our boarding passes and check our

luggage. While in line somehow the topic of ammo came up. Both Johan and us had it locked in our luggage. When Adele became aware she told us that the ammo had to be taken out of the luggage. Luckily we had the ammo in its own locked case. Our flight to Harare was uneventful, everything went smoothly. When we arrived at Harare our first stop in the terminal was to apply for our temporary visa. Zimbabwe is on the American Standard for currency so they only accepted American cash. After receiving our visas we then proceeded through customs. We claimed our luggage and the next step was to register our rifles. It was a simple process but what struck me the most was they still used old style carbon paper. Once outside we were met by our pilot, George who was to fly us to our camp at Chenje. On the way out of the terminal George and I struck up a conversation about the United States. He asked where we lived and he said that his son was a junior at a college in Kansas. Walking into the domestic terminal was like going into a ghost town. The only people there were two security guards. They checked our rifles against the paperwork making sure the serial numbers matched. Then it was out to the runway to board our plane. It was a small four seat Cessna. This was taking us to our final destination, the Cheware Safari Area located in the Zambezi Parks and Wildlife lands. Our flight was a one hour and forty minute ride and a little bumpy. We landed on the only permanent air strip in the area (it was built during the war). From there it was a hour drive to Chenje camp.

After settling in we went to the range to sight in our rifles. This is where things started to unravel. First Ron shot – it was off, but after a lot of rounds his rifle was sighted in. Now it was my turn. Now remember, before we left for Africa, I went to the range and checked out my rifle and it was spot on. My first two shots were low, so Johan made some adjustments. My next two shots were center about one inch apart. When Johan took some shots with my rifle it again was way off. Looking over the rifle he discovered the scope was loose. So to make a long story short it took two times at the range and twenty some bullets before it was again sighted in. I was a wreck by the time it was all over.

Our guide (PH) Peter Ballard, arrived in camp that evening. After a wonderful meal we chatted around the campfire. Peter's family lost their farm to the government. They were one of the





Felt worse in the morning. Ron and I stayed back. Peter radioed back to camp that a female leopard was on our first bait and that he will check the remaining baits before lunch. Johan and Peter came in for lunch and reported another female on a bait but no males. I did go out that afternoon and shot one impala for bait.

The next morning Johan and I stayed in while Ron and Peter went out. Ron came close to another herd of Cape buffalo but all were too small. Ron, Johan and I are all still sick – we must have contracted the flu on the flight from South Africa to Zimbabwe.

Ron and I didn't go out till the afternoon of the next day. We set up our ninth bait. The next day was a repeat of the day before. Drive around, check baits, and look for leopard tracks. The only tracks found were females. There were a few exceptions. Peter locked his keys in the truck with the spare locked in the tool box in back. And guess what, the key to the tool box was locked in the truck. So it was a test of strength, who will win - the lock or Peter. Peter won. The lock was broken and the truck keys retrieved. Then out of nowhere the tsetse fly appeared. They are one nasty biting bug. I found if I sprayed my hat with DEET they would stay somewhat away. Also it helped to wear long sleeved shirts and pants.

Finally on the tenth day tracks were found on two baits that appeared to be from male cats. One was average size and the other really large. We built our blind where the large cat was eating, left and came back that evening. Nothing. Next morning before sunrise a mile out from the bait we walked in. About a half a mile from the bait we took off our shoes so we would be real quiet approaching the blind. We sat for about four hours with no luck. The rest of the day was spent checking baits and replenishing our meat supply for the baits that were being hit in hopes a male would join the females. The next day we checked the bait where we had the blind and the cat was gone.

The following day we set up a blind at another site. There were some nice tracks looking to be a male leopard. This was about noon. It was extremely hot and the tsetse flies were vicious. We went back to camp for lunch and took a small nap before going back to the blind. It was quiet that evening but the next day the leopard came in. I had my crosshairs on this boy and was ready, but it was very young so we left it to grow up. I was devastated and we pulled down that blind to hopefully move somewhere else.

Nothing happened until two days before our departure. The big leopard was back at the bait that we had sat on at first. This time he had a female with him. Peter had taken down that blind so again we built it and sat the rest of the day until dark. You could hear both of them vocalizing right at the bait site but neither got in the tree to eat. The next morning we parked a distance away and snuck in barefoot to our blind. As the sun started to rise in the morning sky you could hear both of them at the site. They were there but just wouldn't take the bait. As we were leaving the blind that morning I told

lucky ones who were given several months to vacate. He is married, has two small children and lives in Harare. He said he would like to farm someday like his parents so he could be home more but doesn't know if that would ever be possible. He loves Zimbabwe, his country, and doesn't want to leave.

We slept in the next morning until 8am, then we were out to the bush to look for leopard tracks, shoot impala for bait and start setting baits up. We also were on the lookout for Cape buffalo. The only problem was that there were few plains game animals to shoot for bait. Between poaching and an over abundance of lionesses, it was a challenge. We were out all day and only shot a couple of impala. We had lunch in the bush. In late afternoon we did see a small herd of Cape buffalo. Ron, Johan, Peter, his trackers and the park ranger started out on foot tracking the buffalo but the wind shifted and the buffaloes took off. That evening at dinner the other guides at camp told us it was good we gave up because there were familiar with this herd and all were too small to harvest.

One of the things I forgot to mention was the park ranger. We had to have one with us at all times because we were hunting on Zimbabwe Park and Wildlife land. Our ranger's name was Mafukibse. He was a wonderful chap and didn't hesitate to help out whenever he could. He told us he had five children (four boys and one girl) but he was somewhat depressed because the park rangers had not been paid in four months.

Next morning I'm up at 6am with a sore throat. After coffee we took the dead impalas and some Cape buffalo quarters out to set up more baits (our final count was eleven baits). During the day we shot more impala for bait. We found more leopard tracks and set up four more baits.

Woke up the next morning with my sore throat getting worse. Besides me, Ron and Johan were also sick. I still went out to check on the baits but no luck. When we returned home in the evening we all took flu medication and went off to bed early.

Peter the hunt was over. I was totally discouraged. After lunch Peter said the hunt wasn't over and promised me there would be a cat on bait that evening. Tonight was the night. So off we went. Well Peter was correct, both cats were there. Finally after a lot of conversations and whatever male and female cats do on a date one finally climbed the tree to eat. My time has come or so I thought. But to my dismay it was the female. I couldn't believe this was happening. Only I would get a male leopard that was a gentleman and let the lady eat first. Whatever happened to male chauvinism. So we sat till dark watching her eat – thanks to my pocketbook.

That evening we enjoyed another great meal. Sitting around the fire we reminisced about the past few weeks. I know Pete was upset about not getting a leopard – “if we only had a few more days” - he kept repeating. Because we spent so much time checking baits and looking for leopard tracks Ron did not have much time for his Cape buffalo, so he also was also leaving without a trophy. With all the mishaps this was one strange hunting adventure. With us leaving in the morning you would think nothing else could go amiss – WRONG!

Next morning we were up and packed. Our plane was arriving at 10am to take us back to Harare. From there we were catching a 1pm flight to Johannesburg. Going to the airstrip we passed the last blind I sat in. I wondered if that big male leopard was up in the tree laughing at us as we drove by enjoying the impala left for him.

We sat and waited at the airstrip about 15 minutes before the plane landed. George said it was real windy so be prepared for a rough ride back to Harare. As George was loading our gear in the plane I looked up to see the door fall off the opposite side of the plane. I couldn't believe what I just saw. I got George's attention and told him what I just saw. He ran around to the other side and sure enough the door had snapped off of the plane. At this point panic set in. Gareth (one of the other PH's in camp) radioed Bernie (the camp manager) to contact the air service to get help. They said they would get another plane sent out from Harare but could not guarantee a time. This was going to be a problem if we missed our connecting flight. Thirty minutes later the airline company radioed and reported that there was a plane leaving Mana Pool – east of us over the mountain range. They would be here in 45 minutes to pick us up. It was a twin engine plane so it would help us make up for lost time. The flight was smoother than I thought considering the high winds.

We arrived in Harare at the domestic terminal, unloaded our luggage and proceeded to the international terminal. There they checked rifle serial numbers against our documents. They also recorded the number of bullets we had left. We checked in to “South African Air”, obtained our boarding passes and stowed our luggage. Only one more hurdle (security) and we are on our way back to South Africa.

Johan and I had no problems but Ron was another story. They asked to check his coat and backpack. Well, with nothing to hide Ron gave them his OK. The guard pulled our cash out of the backpack and fanned it out so all could see. She asked

how much money was there and why he had it. It was about \$2000.00 left of what we had brought into Zimbabwe. I went back to where Ron was standing and asked the guard if there was a problem. She continued to keep flashing our cash so all could see and I wasn't very happy. We told her it was our money left over from what we brought into the country. At that point she tossed the cash back into the backpack and let us go.

We boarded our plane back to South Africa. We were leaving the next day to the United States. While flying I looked back at our trip. All I could think of what a comedy of errors this has been. Sadly, neither Ron or I got our trophies. But all was not lost. Little did we know Johan had a surprise for us back in South Africa.

Ron and I had a day and a half before our flight back to the states. While we were in Zimbabwe Johan and I talked about going to his new place located on Klapperrandje Farm and how much I would like to see it. I had shot my kudu on this farm and remembered the cottage that was now his new home and lodge. I told him it was a great idea but ask Ron if it would be ok with him. The night before we left camp we made our plans to go to his place before flying home.

After collecting our luggage and clearing our weapons at the airport in Johannesburg we were off to Johan's new home. On the way out of town we stopped at his friend's business to pick up Johan's rifle. Johan had his friend put a new scope and silencer on his 375.

We arrived at Klapperrandje Farm late that evening. He had done a lot of work to the buildings and it was really nice. It really looked “African” with the thatched roofs and stucco walls. There are three buildings – the main lodge, the kitchen and Johan's living quarters, and the guest cottage. Ron and I stayed in the guest cottage and all I can say is “cute, cute, cute”.

The farm owner popped in later and we had a great time reminiscing about my kudu hunt and previous times spent on his farm. It was nice seeing and talking with him again. We all sat around the fire and enjoyed each other's company. It felt like we were all at home. I almost forgot, Boisman (Johan's friend and tracker) was there. It truly felt like a homecoming for Ron and I. The only person missing was Human (Johan's son). He was in Zulu working so couldn't be here.

As we were heading off to bed, Johan said he was waking us up early for a little adventure. This was a surprise because as far as I knew there was nothing planned for the next day.

Early the next day, Johan knocked. After a quick cup of coffee the next thing we did was to sight in Johan's rifle. After Johan was finished he asked Ron to take a shot. Satisfied we then all loaded into the Range Rover.

Next came the surprise. We were off to Worcester Farm to shoot a Cape buffalo. This was awesome. Worcester Farm is owned by Richard Hertold. We picked Richard up at his home and headed off to hunt a Cape buffalo. Before going to the hunting area Richard wanted to drive through the breeding range. There were a couple of old bulls he wanted culled from the herd. We drove around and around and we saw nothing.