

## Take Your Lines from the Good Book

My growling stomach told me it was time to rendezvous for lunch, so I ratcheted myself down the tree. Slinging my rifle over my shoulder, I checked my compass headings and began my return trek.

Back at the truck there was no sign of my hunting partner Joe, but I flipped the tailgate down and started gnawing on my baloney sandwich anyway. He'd understand. We were just teenagers. We didn't waste much time on trivial things like manners in those days. Besides, who knew when Joe would come trudging in? "He'd better hurry," I thought, eyeing his lunch sack.

My morning had been just another in a long line of disappointing trips to these over-crowded government woods. It was hard hunting; and dangerous too. Weekend warriors from the city had tromped under my stand all morning, and only one of them was wearing hunter orange. Two were hunting with military style assault rifles! I'm surprised they didn't have hand grenades hanging from their vest. No wonder the deer had all headed for the hills. It just wasn't safe out here anymore.

Little Joe, as he was known, soon came slipping up the logging road. (We called him 'Little Joe' mostly because he was little, and his name was Joe, and was the spitting image of a young Michael Landon.) Other than that, I'm not sure where we got it. Anyway, thankfully I spotted him just before he caught me sniffing around on his lunch sack.

"You see anything," I asked.

Little Joe angrily un-shouldered his rifle and huffed, "Nah! But I jumped one over some lucky doofus down near the creek." Oddly, he snickered before adding, "He's hauling it in now."

Not long after, a big ole' goofy corn fed looking fellow came around the bend. He was dragging a most unfortunate little deer by the horns. I hopped down and walked over to see. I even offered him a hand hauling it the last few yards. It was a good thing. The big guy looked close to cardiac arrest.

It was nearly a full minute before he was able to get his breath back enough to rehearse the story of his kill, and boy was he excited. He went on and on. It must've been his first deer. He was all smiles. Impressive, considering the fact little Joe must've walked right past him a few hundred yards back down the trail without offering to help.

I was making a mental note to work with little Joe on his manners when he hopped down off the truck, wiped the mustard off his nose, and swaggered over to that big ox like he was just looking for trouble. Eyeballing the little four point deer skeptically, little Joe scrunched up his nose like he smelt a skunk, and looked straight up into the eyes of that big galoot. With a completely contemptuous sneer he ripped, "I wouldn't even kilt that little ole' deer."

For a moment I thought Hoss might just squash little Joe, but I guess he was too tuckered. Instead, he just stood there looking stupid. Little Joe, who, by the way, *had never killed a deer*, finally shook his head smugly and walked back to snatch the rest of his sandwich off my lips. Boy, little Joe was on a roll that day.

But Anyway- This whole Bonanza hunting episode sort of reminds me of how I used to let the devil run some little ole' four point sin past me until I'd finally pull the trigger. Naturally, once I'd committed, that snake wouldn't lift a finger to help me haul in the carcass either. Instead he'd be the first to jump up in my face with a contemptuous sneer after I'd tuckered myself out. Boy was I a big doofus for listening to him!

Well, no longer. Even big doofuses learn to change the channel on the devil's sad old re-runs. I don't listen to that liar anymore! I've given my heart to Jesus now.

*(Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame. 1*

**Corinthians 15:33-34 KJV).**

All this Cartwright talk just sort of registers with me I reckon, being a former son of Adam and all. Clearly, the moral of this episode is to take your lines from the Good Book. Accept the role you're offered as a faithful son or daughter, and stay real close to Pa. Be content with our own sandwiches because one day we might all hitch our horses up together in that big Ponderosa in the sky.

-Guy Sheffield 11-27-07