

Chapter 27

Bows on the Little Delta...

FAIR CHASE

The accepted definition of Fair Chase by those who care is: *not taking unfair advantage of animals while hunting them in their native haunts*. Boone and Crockett Club and Pope and Young Club have Fair Chase Rules for entry of trophy animals into their records.

Fair Chase is a many-faceted concept — means different things to different people. Most hunters have their own agenda — "fair chase" is whatever they feel comfortable with. Perhaps that is as it should be — to each his own. Those who hunt with concern for our image will be discreet in their hunt and in their stories that follow. The *stuff-it-down-their-throats* advocates will hunt with an entirely opposite look, and write the story phrased in blood and guts.

Recently I read in one of the national bowhunting magazines, an interpretation which I thought had quite an odd twist: "That hunting animals on the ground was not 'fair chase' — the animals could smell you." How about that!

DANGEROUS GAME

This is an issue that you don't hear much about. It never occurred to us in the early days that bowhunters would be hunting dangerous animals the likes of grizzly, brown, and polar bears. Apparently, we were not prone to look that far ahead. We had enough problems convincing the public and DNR that we should be allowed to hunt a

game with the bow and arrow and, later, proving the bow as a viable hunting weapon even on non-dangerous game,

In my opinion, the bow and arrow has its limitations. It should only be stretched beyond the norm into the area of dangerous game, if the bowhunter is willing and able to do it without the backup rifle. I am aware that backup is the accepted way — the bowman wants to live to tell about it — there isn't time to do it the hard way and everybody does it, why shouldn't I? *All arguments are well taken, but do not justify claim to the world of hunting that the bow is a viable hunting weapon in the taking of dangerous game.*

In most other countries where hunting is allowed, a guide with rifle at ready is the law of the land even while hunting non-dangerous animals. Guides are to carry rifles to keep

dangerous animals away from you while hunting non-dangerous animals. Most bowhunters prefer to have these guides give them plenty of room to stalk on their own without interference. There is a profound difference when you decide to take on a dangerous animal, an animal that can easily do you in during the attempt. *The guide now becomes your bosom pal — none of this give-me-room-stance — you want the comfort of knowing that the guide with rifle is right there for you if needed. You have literally negated the challenge, the danger and, perhaps, terror. Thus, a kill will mean nothing more than that you shot it. Furthermore, you have exposed the fact that you and the bow are lacking — not a viable hunting combination in killing that dangerous animal.*

When Fred Bear hunted grizzlies and brown bear with guide Ed Bilderback in Alaska, he was not comfortable with the presence of the backup rifle — the look of inadequacy. Art Young and Saxton Pope were not comfortable with the look that came with backup rifles during the hunts in Africa. They killed six lions without rifles entering into the actual kill. However, the rifles were there at ready if needed. Other lions were killed by rifles after a hit by an arrow. They admit that without the rifles, they would not have lived to tell about it. *They were "called on the carpet" for the need of backup by one of the more notable African guides. They came home with advice to the rest of us that the dangerous animals of Africa were not really within the viable limits of the bow and arrow.*

Dangerous animals have been taken by bowhunters without the presence of a rifle nearby. You read about it from time to time. Art Young killed a grizzly in Alaska with no backup. My hat's off to these fellows. I have been asked many times if I have ever killed a grizzly. My answer is no. I don't hunt grizzlies with or without backup — I know my limitations.

Keith Clemmans, Dick Holding, and I spent a month in Alaska in 1957 without any firearms. Guides were not required. We saw many grizzlies. We weren't hunting grizzlies. We avoided them and they seemed to respect that. Only once did a grizzly wander into our camp. He peeled out of there when he heard the "whirr" of the movie camera. Like I have said before, my dog seems to know when I'm going to give him a bath even when he is not in the same room. Do you suppose these bears sensed that they were not being hunted?

The point of this is: in *today's world, anything we do that appears unsportsmanlike negatively affects our image; an image that is coming more and more under scrutiny.*