

## Hobart's Deer—June 2007

It was late in the hunting season and I was determined to get another deer. I'd earlier scouted a friend's property; it looked promising! Leaving the CBM office before 4 o'clock would give me just enough time to get set up, shoot a deer, dress it, drag it, hang it and be home in time for *The O'Riley Factor*. While it wasn't a trip to the Rockies, it was a good plan, and I was confident and pleased at the potential of this *hunting trip*.

So I drove the 2 ½ miles from the office, parked the car, took off my tie, traded my western boots for some more appropriate hunting footwear, put insulated clothes over my office ones, got my chair, gloves, and stocking cap, and loaded my rifle. I was just walking away from the car when the owner of the property showed up. He welcomed me but told me that a couple of renegade hounds just ran through his property chasing deer. "Hunt if you want" he said, "but it's only 40 acres and the dogs have likely spooked everything."

Being reminded of a T-shirt that said, "***There's a fine line between huntin'—and sitting in the woods lookin' stupid,***" and since it wasn't my heart's desire to knowingly fulfill the saying by sitting under a tree in a cold, "deer-less" woods, I decided to give it up.

My friend (for the sake of reputation, I'll call him "Hobart") and I visited for a few minutes. Then I unloaded my 7mm mag and—snap, snap, snap, snap—put it back in the case. Before I could close the trunk, "Hobart" pointed and *whisper/yelled*, "Look—a deer!" As I turned I saw a nice deer heading toward the tree that I'd planned to sit under! She stopped (no shame in a doe—I'm hunting for meat), turned broadside 50 yards away, and then casually loped off!

As the deer headed out of sight and we laughed like a couple of 5th graders, *Hobart* said, "If I hadn't been out here telling you that you couldn't get a deer—you'd have got that deer!" I told him that I saw a spiritual lesson in our blunder. He sternly warned, "Leave my name out of it," and so I have.

A few weeks later, Terri and I were passing through a city and met one of our church planting couples for lunch. While talking about their work, he said some of their women had unsaved husbands. I was enthused at the potential and asked about his efforts to reach the men for the Lord: Tried to start a Bible study? Been to see them? Invited them to go fishing? To each question he answered something along the lines of: "Naw, their wives said they wouldn't want that—they wouldn't be open—no, that wouldn't work—they wouldn't be interested." (I wouldn't tell this without his permission; he even said I could use his name, but I'll resist that.)

Dramatically, *I changed the subject* and animatedly recounted the story of "Hobart's deer." (I never do any non-animated recounting!) We all laughed heartedly at my sad tale of woe and the missed opportunity. The laughter ended, and we sat quietly for 15 or 20 seconds—no one said a word—while I prayed that the real purpose of my story would sink in. Finally my friend got pretty sober and said, "That's what I'm doing, isn't it?" Then *he* did the talking!

He admitted that negative information, discouraging influences, bad paradigms—call it what you will—were interfering with his potential to reach others.

You see, dear ones, there is an encouraging lesson in Eph 2:10—"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, *which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*" If—because of bad information, a negative view, or incorrect assumptions—I miss what appears to be a God-ordained opportunity to get a deer, that's one thing. While disappointing, it is a bit humorous and makes for good story telling.

Yet, if through a bad outlook or an erroneous perspective, I miss a divine appointment to witness and bring another to Christ; that is tragic—and far more serious. Let's ask the Lord to help us see opportunities and guard our mind against what might be a flawed point of view in reaching a lost and dying world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

*Bill*