



CHUCK WARD
(Retired Casper & Wheatland Game Warden)

WORM WETTING

This particular day I was working in plain clothes, running the unmarked patrol boat on Boysen Reservoir. There were quite a few fishermen and boaters out on the lake. One troller caught my eye, he appeared to be using two fishing poles. A closer inspection confirmed he was doing this dirty deed. I approached his boat and identified myself as the game warden and told him to meet me on shore. He was given a citation for fishing with more than one pole. At the court appearance, the fisherman told the judge he was only using the extra pole and line to keep his fishworm wet. The judge believed his story and dismissed the case.

NIGHT VISION

It was deer season and I was set up at a temporary road block on one of the main county roads in Natrona County, stopping hunters as they returned to Casper. The sun had been down for over an hour when a vehicle approached my location. When I turned on the red lights, the vehicle came to a screeching halt and the interior light came on. I ran up to the vehicle just in time to prevent the driver from tagging up. He had failed to properly tag the deer with his license. The deer and the license were seized as evidence and the hunter was issued a citation for failing to properly sign, date and detach the carcass coupon immediately at the site of the kill.

In his court appearance, the defendant pointed out to the judge that he could not properly sign or date the carcass coupon because it was dark by the time he had dressed out and loaded the deer in his truck. The judge handed the defendant a piece of paper and a pencil, had him close his eyes and told him to write his name. The defendant complied with the judge's request and gave the paper back to the judge. The judge said, "See, any fool can sign his name in the dark! Guilty as charged!"

I CAN DO THIS, CAN'T I?

A concerned citizen reported the possible killing of a deer out of season. Subsequent investigations resulted in the arrest of an individual for the illegal killing of a big game animal and the wanton waste of edible portions. Wanton waste was considered a serious crime (and still is), so the lay Justice of the Peace requested the local county attorney to be present during the court proceedings. The defendant plead guilty to all charges and was being interviewed by the JP before sentencing. At this time the defendant remarked about moving to Texas. The JP levied the maximum fine and advised the defendant he had his choice of going to Texas or to jail. After this remark, the JP turned to the county attorney and asked, "I can do this, can't I?"

BLOOD STAINS GET THEM EVERY TIME

At daylight on opening day of elk season, I was watching over a herd of about 200 elk when something spooked them and they headed into the timber. Not long afterwards, I heard some shots in the distance and headed in that direction. Bopping over a small rise, I met another truck. The individuals stopped and I checked the elk licenses of both men. Neither one of them had a proper license for the area and they told me they weren't hunting. Looking at them, I noticed reddish brown spots on their clothes and hands. I asked them to go back down the trail with me. They complied and after traveling a short distance, two freshly gutted bull elk were found along the trail. Both hunters denied knowing anything about these animals. I told them I didn't believe them and would need to confiscate their shirts and pants as evidence. I would send the clothes to the lab to confirm the stains on their clothes were elk blood. They changed their story and admitted to killing the elk.

THE DISAPPEARING EVIDENCE

An old beaver trapper related this story to me. It happened back in the time when game wardens were political appointees, a long time ago.

A trapper in the Laramie Peak area had applied for a license to trap beaver through the local game warden. The warden stopped by his cabin and said the license was being issued and told him to start trapping. The old trapper went about catching beaver and the next week the warden came back and arrested him for trapping without a license. The trapper was found guilty and paid the fine.

The trapper decided to get even with the game warden and continued trapping beaver without a license. He traveled on foot and had food caches in many different places, making it extremely difficult for the warden to apprehend him. One day the trapper became careless and was arrested by two game wardens. He had a number of beaver pelts in his possession at the time. The game wardens had to transport him to Laramie for court, so he was put in the back of their vehicle along with his pelts and they left for Laramie. The wardens made one mistake by not taking the trapper's pocket knife away from him. During the long trip to Laramie, the trapper cut the beaver pelts into small pieces and shoved them out a hole in the bottom of the vehicle. Upon arrival in Laramie, the wardens found there was no evidence to take the trapper to court.

I DIDN'T THINK THEY WERE POACHERS

Another game warden and I had just finished up with an evening trial at the local Justice of the Peace. While the other warden had to take the convicted game violator back to his camp to get additional money to pay the fine, I visited with the JP waiting for my partner to get back. The JP suggested we go take a drive and check some poachers. It was after dark when we left the judge's office.

As we traveled down the back roads, the JP had me stop every vehicle and check for possible hunting or fishing violations. During these stops, the judge remained in my truck, remarking, "It wouldn't look very good if I had to try them in court after checking them." When I returned to the truck after one particular vehicle stop, the judge said, "I didn't think they were poaching because that was my wife and her brother."