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### **THERE REALLY ARE STOP SIGNS IN MEDICINE BOW, WYOMING**

Three men decided to go "rabbit" hunting the day after Thanksgiving in 1987. Now, as most every wildlife enforcement officer knows, especially in the West, people are always coyote or jackrabbit hunting when they are confronted. These three men may have been coyote or jackrabbit hunting, but a buck mule deer with a nice set of antlers stepped out in the open while they were hunting. Needless to say, the deer came out on the losing end.

These men started for Medicine Bow, and were probably going on to Elk Mountain, as one of the men lived there. They were north of Medicine Bow and coming in on the highway after dark. Maybe, they knew that Medicine Bow game warden, Joe Gilbert and Elk Mountain game warden, Bill Long were out of town, helping work waterfowl hunting seasons in Goshen County. Quite possibly, they could have been talking on how easy they would get away with this one.

Coming into Medicine Bow from the north, one must stop at the junction with Highway 30. Well, the driver did not stop, maybe thinking no police officer would be around. However, Officer Steve Rakness was in the vicinity and observed the traffic violation. Upon stopping the vehicle and confronting the driver, Officer Rakness noticed dried blood on the driver's hands, along with blood on the tailgate of the pickup. Naturally the driver said they had been rabbit hunting, but gave permission to the officer to look in the back. Officer Rakness found the deer under a tarp and took the three men to the Medicine Bow Police Department with help from Highway Patrolman Mike Lowry.

I had just arrived back in Laramie from spending Thanksgiving at my mother's home in Cheyenne. I planned taking the rest of the day off, but that was not to be. I was the next game warden called after the Medicine Bow Police Department failed to contact wardens Gilbert and Long. So, I put on my red shirt, got in the green pickup and headed for Medicine Bow.

Upon my arrival in Medicine Bow, I talked with the three suspects, giving them their Miranda rights and all the legal stuff a law enforcement officer has to go through. I climbed into the bed of the pickup and uncovered the deer. Lying by the deer was a dead badger. I went in and asked the men if anyone had a trapping license for killing the badger. Luck was not on their side, none of them had a trapping license. The deer and badger were confiscated and put into my truck.

Under interrogation, the driver admitted to killing the deer and badger and citations were written to him for these violations. The other two men were given citations as accessories to the taking of the deer. One of the men had his seven year old brother along with them; I wonder what he learned out of all this. I returned to Laramie around one o'clock in the morning. On my trip back to Laramie, I wondered how much hell the

driver caught from his friends. He probably was lectured heavily about stopping at stop signs or obeying all laws, especially when you have illegal wildlife in your possession.

Carbon County Judge, Margie Meacham heard this case in Hanna on December 17, 1987. All pled guilty; the driver was fined \$440 for taking the deer and \$140 for taking the badger plus losing his 1987 and 1988 hunting privileges. The other two men were each fined \$220 for being accessories. That was an expensive deer and badger. I am sure they were relieved there was no jail time, which was possible.