



JOHN DEMAREE
Laramie Wildlife Investigator and Damage Control Warden

TENNIS SHOES

It was late summer in 1978. I was spending a few days working with Saratoga game warden Gary Brown. We were working the Sierra Madre Mountains, checking fisherman and finding out where some of the old jeep trails went. These two tracks are somewhat narrow for driving full sized pickups on. Each year, the numerous rocks, stumps and ruts in these roads appear to grow larger. Anyone could tell that Gary patrolled his area extensively. Besides a severe case of tree rash, there were squeaks and creaks that seemed to continue from the truck after it was parked. Gary called it broke in, our supervisor called it something else. Since Gary's truck was already modified, we used his truck that day.

This particular day we were working the Beaver Creek area. As we were driving up the creek, two fishermen appeared. They were down in the willows fishing the beaver dams. They had heard the truck coming, but hadn't realized who we were until it was too late. One fisherman waved hello, but his buddy dropped out of sight in the willows. A clue to fishing without a license. Gary and I jumped out of the truck and moved as quickly as we could to where the guys were fishing. The friendly one was still there, showed us his license, but wouldn't tell us where his buddy, Roger went. As I followed Roger's tennis shoe foot prints along the creek, Gary went back to the truck and called for Roger on his PA. Roger ignored his request to come back to the truck. The tennis shoe prints left the creek and crossed the road about 100 yards behind the truck and headed up through the timber, where I lost his tracks.

Meeting Gary back at the truck, we settled on a plan. We would see how smart Roger was. I stepped back into the timber and Gary got into the truck, slammed the doors and drove slowly up the road, calling Roger on the PA. As the variety of sounds from Gary's truck grew fainter, I waited. Three minutes passed. Only the annoying buzz of a deer fly was noticeable. Then I heard it. Clump...Clump...Clump...Clump. The unmistakable sound of a tennis shoed fisherman running through the woods. Roger was not very smart. He was unknowingly running right toward me. I waited until he was about 5 yards away and stepped out from behind the tree.

"Where you going, Roger?" I asked.

Roger looked like he had a bowel movement in his pants. He stumbled to a stop and sat down on a stump. He had that total surrender look. While waiting for Gary to come back, I quizzed him on what he had done with his fishing tackle.

"It's someplace behind one of those trees." Roger said and pointed up into the timber. "I was scared and now I can't remember exactly where it is. Anyway, I wasn't fishing." Wrong answer. Gary and I had seen Roger, pole in hand at the creek with the line out.

While Gary wrote the citation (my citation book was absently left in my truck that morning), I tried to retrace Roger's run through the woods. Finding his tackle wasn't required, but a little PR now and then didn't hurt. About a 100 yards into the timber from where Roger crossed the road, lay a fallen tree with two large rocks setting on it. It didn't look natural and upon closer inspection, I found a Zebco reel and a K-Mart tackle box with Roger's name on it, stuffed under the tree.

Talk about gratitude, Roger thanked me for finding his fishing tackle, but failed to show up on the court date. When the Sheriff went to arrest him on the bench warrant for failure to appear, Roger had one more opportunity to try out his tennis shoes.