

'The Grouse'

by Early Hunter

Mid-October, 1950 and a beautiful fall day near dawning. Frost covered the grass and stars overhead sparkled with a clear brilliance. It was the opening morning of the pheasant, grouse and duck season. In those days, bird hunting was a big thing and the success of the day's proceedings provided wonderful table fare, much relished. There was always great excitement on 'opening day'.

This little saga involved a fellow named Harry and his son, Bobby, who was about 12 years old. They lived in Vancouver and Harry wanted his son to get a pheasant, since the lad was now the owner of an old single-barrel, 12-gauge hammer shotgun.

Knowing that some pals and I did a lot of hunting in the woods of Ocean Park, it was arranged that he and his son would come out to our place on Giblin Road (15th Ave.) before sunrise and have breakfast on the opening morning. After bacon, eggs and coffee, it was time to go hunting. Bobby was so keyed up that he looked like he would burst!

The plan was to drive slowly along the gravel country roads from Ocean Park, down through Elgin and out to the farm fields on the flats of Mud Bay. This was where most of the pheasant hunting was done.

As the sky was turning pink in the east, we started out slowly in Harry's old car. Jammed in with Lassie, our bird dog, we were keeping our eyes peeled in case we might spot a pheasant or grouse on the way down to the flats. This safari headed east on North Bluff Road (16th Avenue), then turned north on Nichol Road (140th Street). At that time there were a few grassy clearings with the odd house, but mostly bush and trees. Shortly after passing Stokes Road (20th Avenue) we came to an old cottage on the west side of the road in a small clearing with willows and vine maples growing close up on either side of it. It was just barely getting light and still tough to see things other than silhouettes of shrubs and trees. As I scanned the outline of the black branches of a vine maple silhouetted against the sky, there they were - two willow grouse perched side-by-side on a branch. I told Harry to keep going and stop a way down the road. From that point we could carefully sneak back to avoid making too much noise in the gravel. The three of us climbed out of the car and carefully loaded the 12-gauges.

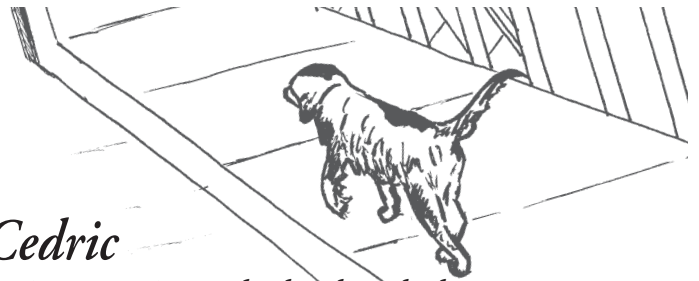
It appeared that everyone was still asleep in the little cottage, as it was in total darkness. The two perched grouse were still on the same branch as we neared. They were quite close to the cottage and undoubtedly the inhabitants would notice the roar of the #6 Imperial shot shell going forth in the dawn stillness!

As we tiptoed into position, I advised Bobby to aim right between the two grouse and in all likelihood he would get the proverbial 'two birds with one stone!' This he did. I held Harry's gun while he quickly waded into the woods and came out as proud as punch, hoisting two prime grouse! Bobby had a smile on his face about three feet wide. That is until I said, "Harry, those are funny looking grouse you have there." Harry, who was out on the road by now, where it was getting fairly light, looked at his two prizes. The prizes turned out to be two bantam chickens. Silhouetted bantam chickens look exactly like grouse

under those conditions. We calculated quite quickly that since all the lights were starting to come on in the cottage, that the two 'grouse' probably belonged to the inhabitants' livestock inventory. The country folk at the time were quite familiar with the sound of gunshots. However, that did not appear to be the case with these particular folk! At the sound of the blast, there seemed to be excessive activity emanating from inside of said 'cottage'. I said, "Harry, I think we had better get the heck out of here!" With that, he put the two 'grouse' in the trunk of the old car and we left, post haste. With gravel churning, we prayed the old car wouldn't quit!

That day provided some nice pheasant in addition to Bobby's two 'game birds'. We sat on the Nicomekl River dyke and ate our lunch. We saw the gorgeous white cumulous clouds in the blue sky and the golden stubble of the oat fields. It was the start of another season as a string of geese headed south.

Shortly after our adventure, Harry and his family shared a 'game bird' dinner with a few guests, who commented on the lovely white meat grouse they had enjoyed. Harry and Bobby winked at each other across the table.



Cedric

A Springer Spaniel who thought he was a Retriever

A Springer Spaniel wandered into Begg Motors in Vancouver where Mr. Ray Allanson was employed. He spent his days retrieving nuts and bolts for the mechanics and scrounging snacks from customers and employees. It wasn't long before this black and white canine wormed his way into Ray's heart and was taken home to Ocean Park.

They named him Cedric. He quickly attached himself to Rob and Peter, Ray's sons who introduced the stray dog to their friends and the game of baseball. Cedric played many a ball game at the Church campgrounds and was happy to retrieve rocks when no balls were available.

Not long after entering the Allanson home the dog disappeared. Days went by without Cedric. The community scoured the neighbourhood to no avail and then one day a call from a lady in Vancouver announced the good news. Cedric had been found on Commercial and First Ave. by one of the Camp Kwomais councillors who just happened to live in the city. Ray picked the dog up and brought him home to the cheers of the community.

Cedric went right back to playing baseball with the boys. After spending an evening chasing balls in the field he decided to try his hand as catcher.

Unfortunately he forgot about the batter and was knocked out colder than a block of ice in the camp's icebox. The game came to a halt as the boys gathered around the dead dog. Happily one of the teammates noticed that the dog was still breathing. Cedric was hurriedly dragged into the basement home of Mrs. Forrester on the corner of 14th and 126th where a bucket of cold water quickly brought him back to life.

He disappeared shortly thereafter and was found tied to a pole outside a motel on Kingsway by Ray on his way to work. Once again the retriever was retrieved.

Cedric joined his pals back at the ball park and accompanied the Allanson boys until once again the pull of the city entered his brain and he disappeared for the last time.

Was Cedric really a stray or just a born retriever looking for a good game of ball? We'll never know, but he left his mark on Ocean Park in more ways than one.

- by Dee Walmsley

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