

TEXAS SPORTSMAN'S NEWS

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MAY, 2007

The Newsletter of The Texas Sportsman's Association

"Dedicated to educating the public about the need for protection, conservation and improvement of fish, game and other wildlife, grasslands, and forests and to safeguard the freedoms that enable these pursuits."

Deer hunters register bucks, earn prizes

Six counties in the immediate area had an experimental deer antler regulation for three hunting seasons beginning in 2002 through 2004.

They included Austin, Colorado, Fayette, Lavaca, Lee and Washington.

Starting with the 2005 season, these regulations became permanent in these counties, as well as an additional 16 Central Texas counties. The regulation included 61 counties for the 2006 season.

A second buck, which has to have an unbranched antler, is now allowed in the bag limit in these counties. To evaluate the increase in the bag limit, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department continued to have volunteer check stations in the original six counties where hunters could register their bucks.

The antler and age information collected from the deer brought to the stations has assisted TPWD in evaluating the results of the regulation.



DIRECTOR WALT GLASSCOCK (left) "talks TSA" with Founding Directors Otto Loessin and Leslie Heinsohn at the Spring Business Meeting held on March 4 at Mentz Hall.



THAT'S JERRY KOCIAN at the microphone as TSA President Doris Rinn looks on during the March meeting.

Every hunter who brought a deer to a check station had their name entered into a drawing for 14 prizes that was donated by local merchants and organizations.

This year's drawing was held in early February at the Fayette County Wildlife Management Associations meeting at LCRA's Cooper Farm near Waldeck.

The winners, along with their prizes and list of donors, included:

- Jerome Kocian of San Antonio, Lifetime Hunting and Fishing License, donated by the Texas Sportsman's Association;
- Cameron Kaley of Columbus and Clint Kupka of Hallettsville, Remington 700 BDL .270 rifle, donated by the Lee County Wildlife Management Association and M-G Inc. of Weimar;
- Ty Iselt of Giddings and Carl Wendler of Schulenburg, Remington 700 BDL .22-250 rifle, donated by Lavaca County Wildlife Management Association and Drymalla Construction Co. of Columbus;
- Chad Huebner of Columbus, Remington Model 7 .270 WSM rifle, donated by Ron and Estelle Mostyn of Weimar;

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TEXAS SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION

**P.O. Box 26,
Columbus, TX 78934**



STATE OFFICE

PRESIDENT

Doris Rinn

4905 Blezinger Rd., New Ulm, TX 78950
Phone: 979-357-2220

VICE PRESIDENT

Herman Brune

1079 FM 1890, Columbus, TX 78934
Phone: 979-732-5241

SECRETARY

Brandee Froebel

939 Witte Rd., Bellville, TX 77418
Phone: 979-865-8046

TREASURER

Terrell Maertz

1380 Piney Woods Rd., Alleyton, TX 78935
Phone: 979-732-5339

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY

Herman Brune

1079 FM 1890, Columbus, TX 78934
Phone: 979-732-5241

Visit TSA On Line!

The TSA web site is up and running, and members are encouraged to visit:

<http://www.texassportsmansassociation.org>

The website is maintained by TSA Director Leslie Heinsohn.

TSA County Officers

Austin County

President — L.J. Rinn
Vice President — Duane Dudensing
Secretary — Doris Rinn
Treasurer — Charles Abel
Committeemen — Wilfred Eckardt and Duane Dudensing

Colorado County

President — Terrell Maertz
Secretary-Treasurer — Ruth Poncik
Committeeman — Walt Glasscock



AUSTIN COUNTY GAME WARDEN SONNY ALANIZ, center, was presented the Peace Officer of the Year Award at the most recent Wild Game Supper sponsored by the Wallis Knights of Columbus. Presenting the award was event founder Jodie Szymanski, left, and Grand Knight Lupe Luna. — photo courtesy of Wallis News-Review

The Game Warden Report

I'm happy to say that this year was a great year for deer hunting in Austin County.

The results of the antler restrictions have really been noticed. The bucks harvested have been ranging anywhere from 13 inch spreads to 17 inch spreads. The largest buck's gross score was 187 with 21 points and an inside spread of 17 5/8. Abnormal points for this buck totaled 48 inches.

The second largest buck harvested in Austin County, so far this year, grossed 171 4/8 and it had 21 points with an inside spread of 17 inches. Abnormal points for this buck totaled 62 inches. Patience and honoring the law has certainly paid off.

Many hunters had mentioned that the big buck they harvested this year was more likely the one they had seen the year before, at that time it was smaller but still legal. The deer population has also improved.

There is a larger amount of deer being seen around the county this year as compared to the last couple of years. They are making a comeback and this is good to see. Many other counties are asking for the restrictions because of its success.

Although the restrictions play a major part on the success of the current deer population in Austin County, I attribute a lot of the success to the people in Austin County.

I'd like to thank everyone for keeping me informed on what is going on throughout the County and for following the laws and regulations.

— *Sonny Alaniz, Game Warden*

(Reprinted from the January 2007 Oak Prairie Wildlife Management Assn. Newsletter)

Remember this: red and yellow, kill a fellow

By **JIM DILLARD**
Wildlife Biologist, Texas Parks &
Wildlife Dept.-Mineral Wells

Thank goodness, here in Cross Timbers Country we don't have to deal with cobras, black mambas, tiger snakes, death adders and all those other deadly serpents that old boy from Australia we see on TV is always grabbing by the tail and just begging to be bitten by. On the other hand, all those species are related to one snake that is found around here that you wouldn't want to latch onto you finger, the Texas coral snake.

The closest I ever came to grabbing hold of one was down in South Texas on a field trip with my herpetology class from Texas A&M. It was night and I had gotten out of the truck to open a pasture gate.

As I reached for the chain, wrapped around it was a Texas coral snake and on the ground at the bottom of the gate was another one, slithering around between my feet. It didn't take me long to get back in the truck. I slept with one eye open that night in my sleeping bag on the ground.

Texas coral snakes are found throughout the Pineywoods and deciduous woodlands of east and southeast Texas to the Rio Grande out around Del Rio. They're also

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Spring Meeting

Pictured above, Herman Brune (left) stands by the registration table at the TSA's spring meeting March 4 in Mentz. Working the table are Marcella Maertz, Ruth Poncik and Robin Maertz. At right, Oliver Weishuhn (left), Leon and Verna Nell Dittmar and Marjorie Brune pay attention during the program.



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Texas Sportsman's Association

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Looking Down from the Saddle By HERMAN W. BRUNE

Staying away from politics is a simple desire. But staying away from controversy is impossible. The problem of being uninformed, or ignoring what has become the world around us, was exemplified by *Outdoor Life* writer and outdoor television personality Jim Zumbo. The outdoor advocate voiced his negative opinion on black guns, AKA. Assault rifles, and flushed a lifelong career down the tubes.

Some of the outdoor writing community blasted Zumbo while his closer



friends tried to show him the error of his ways. In the end, he apologized and challenged those federal politicians that would twist his words against the people he's entertained for more than 30 years. Zumbo's blunder illustrates how far wrong people may be

with their presumptions.

Several years ago, the national outdoor writing community suffered a major separation. The argument was over protocol at conventions, but the battlelines were drawn between the NRA vs. the Sierra Club. The outcome was an overwhelming exodus of the NRA-supporting membership, corporate supporting members, and the formation of a new organization the Professional Outdoor Media Association. The POMA met at the SHOT show that year in Las Vegas, and guess who they elected as their first president — Jim Zumbo.

Obviously, he had the respect of the NRA-based supporters that voted for him. Now, just as obvious is the fact that he meant no harm in giving his opinion, and likewise he's come to understand the impact of his words. Zumbo's credibility met a demise that many politicians may deserve but manage to avoid.

Move closer to home. House Bill 2328 was authored by Representative Beverly Woolley, (R-Houston), and according to outdoor editors is a replica of a bill brought during the 79th session by the U.S. Humane Society. The U.S. Humane Society is an anti-hunting and political

Soap Operas and Soap Boxes

campaign money-raising machine. Texas Wildlife Association Vice President and Texas Outdoor Partners Chairman Kirby Brown approached Woolley with numerous amendments and asked her to change the parts of the bill that were conceived to be anti-hunting and anti-agriculture. Her response was that she had no ill intent towards agriculture, hunting, fishing, trapping, or scientific experimentation — but refused to change the language in the bill.

Understand the government structure. Woolley is the Chairman of the Calendars Committee and works hand-in-hand with Speaker of the House Craddick. It is her job to make sure that bills deemed significant by the state's leadership get heard on the house floor. In the same instance, most house members will work with Woolley in an effort to get their own bills through the lawmaking process. In the matter of HB 2328, Woolley flexed the muscles of her appointed clout and pushed her bill through.

Sportsmen from all over Texas called their legislators asking them to oppose HB 2328. It had implications that effected veterinarians, hog hunting, trapping, fishing, raised penalties on misdemeanors, and turned ordinary practices into defenses against prosecution. It also raised questions concerning landowners' responsibilities during drought, high fences, and existing laws dealing with exotic wildlife. Nevertheless, it went through committee without amendments and

made it to the house floor. There it faced debate by Chairman of the Sportsmen's Caucus Representative Carl Isett, Lubbock. Trying to fix the bill was Representative Sid Miller, Chairman of the Agriculture and Livestock Committee, and Representative Harvey Hildebran, Chairman of the Culture, Recreation, and Tourism Committee. The long awaited amendments were offered and accepted.

From an observer's viewpoint, the bill seemed too convoluted and confusing for consideration. But, on the first reading the bill passed 136-2 with one abstaining vote. TWA's Kirby Brown, as well as, concerned watchers in the gallery initially doubted whether the bill with attached amendments could pass muster with constituents. The next day the bill passed 142-0 by the time of the third reading.

Now, the bill goes to the Senate where Senator Whitmire, (D) Houston, has authored its companion, SB 1100. Upon further review, Brown says that we're in better shape than when we started. He says also that attorneys with the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance are still looking over the bill.

Nevertheless, many sportsmen are uneasy. It would have suited them better to defeat and eliminate the anti-hunting crowd's efforts without playing political games. Across the United States anti-hunting organizations have raised more than \$200 million to further their causes through political campaigns and propaganda. The Texas Sportsmen's Association joined the loose-knit coalition of statewide conservation organizations, known as the Texas Outdoor Partners, in an effort to stay informed and combat anti-hunting efforts as rural Texas becomes more fragmented, populated, and subject to urban rule.

Meanwhile in Austin, the political maneuvering continues and it's business as usual.

Texas Sportsman's Association
FALL FUNDRAISER
Sunday, Sept. 23 — Mentz Hall

Don't let your bucks fall behind

By SHAWN CAMPBELL

Deer season has ended, but don't forget about your bucks' need for supplementation for next year's antler growth. This time of the year bucks are struggling to gain back the body condition they lost through the rut and are in dire need of some nutritional supplementation.

Hopefully hunters have realized the importance of keeping some source of protein supplementation out year round. Without this supplementation, bucks are playing catch-up during the spring green-up, when they should be putting maximum nutrition into horn development instead of refilling body stores.

As a hunter and nutritionist, I hear and see all the advertisements on the name brand deer protein pellets. I just say don't get too caught up in paying for that pretty bag with a picture on it, when you can get an equal or similar product that is produced by a local feed mill for usually a lower price. I do feed a 24 percent protein pellet in my free choice feeders, but this year I am going to try a small feed trial in a few feeders to compare a couple of feeds and see which one I am getting the most out of in terms of consumption and born growth.

My observations of free choice protein feeders has been that in free range deer in a low fence setting only consume about two pounds of protein per day per deer. While any supplementation is good, the effect of two pounds of protein depending on the crude protein percentage is still falling short to getting the buck to the maintenance level of 16 percent, especially during drought times we are hopefully coming out of this

winter.

I believe this low consumption rate is probably the cause of a couple of things. One being that whitetail just don't stand out in open areas for extended periods of time due to predation concerns, whether it be from a hunter, coyote or mountain lion. The second thing would be competition at feeders.

This year I am trying to improve my consumption of protein per day by using roasted soybeans in some of my free choice feeders and a traditional 24 percent protein pellet in others. Roasted soybeans, which can have up to a 45 percent crude protein level essentially nearly doubles my protein intake if the consumption stays at two pounds per day.

Some of the hunters I have talked with that have used the roasted soybean and corn mixtures in their feeders tell me that the deer are cleaning up the corn, but leaving the soybeans. It has been my experience that it takes any animal, maybe besides a goat, to have an adjustment period to a new feed.

So give it a little time and use the soybeans in the free choice feeder instead of the spin feeder, because while that time passes for deer to adjust to a new feed stuff and all of that soybean is laying on the ground getting rained on and fermenting, you are attracting the hogs. Feral hogs love fermented roasted soybeans. We use it in hog traps, because coons and deer won't bother your trap after its fermented.

Remember when starting a roasted soybean feeding program, start with a 25 percent roasted soybean and 75 percent corn mix and gradually

bump it down to 100 percent roasted soybean. This will get deer eating the soybeans faster.

Also, another tip is if you're putting in a new protein program on a ranch, utilize spin feeders to draw in the deer to your protein feeding stations. This speeds up the process of deer finding the feeding station and getting your deer on the protein program.

Comparing cost of roasted soybeans to a name brand 20 percent protein pellet is a "no-brainer." The average 20 percent crude protein deer pellet is going to cost you \$9-\$15 per 50-pound bag, depending on the brand. The 38-45 percent crude protein roasted soybeans are \$10-\$14 per 50-pound bag, depending on availability in your area.

So don't pay for the pretty bag, pay for the protein in the bag, that is the important stuff, and like I said earlier, goats are about the only animal I know that would get any use out of that pretty bag, because they will eat just about anything.

I will be giving periodic updates on my feeding project and letting you know how it is working. I also haven't forgotten I promised to compare different feed costs, as well as food plot seed and labor costs. If you have any questions or need help with your deer management program give me a call.

(This article is reprinted from Agriscope. Shawn Campbell has a doctorate degree in animal nutrition from Texas Tech University. He works as a wildlife consultant from north of Abilene, west to Val Verde County, through the Hill Country down to Victoria County and into deep South Texas.)

Red & yellow

Continued From Page 3

found in the Cross Timbers and Hill Country. A game warden brought one into my office a couple of years back he had found up north of Palo Pinto and put in a five-gallon bucket. Despite being egged-on to pet it, I declined since "red touched yellow" and I'm not a "stupid fellow."

The Texas coral snake, *Micrurus fiavivus*, is one of the most colorful of all snakes found in Texas. Average length is about two feet, but a 47-inch one has been reported. Males have 10-14 black body bands, females 15.

Always, the red and yellow bands are in contact with each other, thus the old saying "red touch black, venom lack; red touch yellow, kill a fellow." Yellow bands are usually just two scales wide and all bands completely circle the body. Several harmless species of scarlet, king and milk snakes are often mistaken for coral snakes, but in their case, red bands always touch black bands. When in doubt, get back in the truck!

Their body is long and slender, making it hard to tell which end is the "business end." When harassed, they use this to their advantage by hiding their head under body coils and wave the flattened black and yellow banded tail as if it were the head. They're pretty temperamental and often jerk their body back and forth when provoked. Their bright colors are usually enough to discourage predators, particularly those that have had a close encounter of the first kind with a coral snake in the past. Left alone, they'll usually just crawl off.

They're most active during the day, probing and searching just underground in the organic plant

(Continued on Page 8)

Moderation, taught the old-fashioned way

By HERMAN W. BRUNE

“Okay, everybody find a place to sit and we’re ready to get started,” said Mr. Rueben Maertz. He looked up from his chore with the slide projector to see if anyone was listening.

“We’re ready,” said my Dad. “You can start anytime.” Mom and Dad sat beside each other on the couch. Each of them had a small plate filled with homemade cookies and candy. Mom also had my little sister in her lap and the little squealer was trying to stuff her mouth full of everything she could find. She’d be asleep two minutes after the lights went out. Dad still wore his suit-and-tie from working at the federal loan office, and Mom had on a full calf-length skirt with a yellow, red, and blue flower print. She accented her springtime getup with a brown leather belt and matching shoes. Mama smiled while she chatted and fretted over my sister.

“Wait a minute, wait a minute,” said Mrs. Hilda Lee. “I’ve got to sit down before you turn off the lights.” The short squat woman was busy filling a plate. Then she glanced around the small contemporary-styled living room and spotted a cushioned-chair. Hurrying, she exposed a slight limp as she tramped to her position. Then she plopped down, nestled into her seat, and took a bite of a cookie. “Okay, I’m ready,” she said.

Mr. Walter and Mrs. Martha Henneke were already relaxing in armchairs. Mr. Walter used his good hand to lay his bad arm across his lap. He seemed frail but his voice rang clear. “You’re not waiting on us,” said Mr. Walter.

“Yes, we’re ready!” echoed Mrs. Martha. Her hard tone likened to a drill sergeant’s.

Mrs. Ruby Belle Maertz, Mr. Reuben’s wife, sat on a folding chair beside the buffet table. “I’m going to sit here in case anybody needs anything,” said Mrs. Ruby Belle. One man and one young boy remained standing – Mr. Harvey Lee and me.

“Harvey are you going to sit down?” asked Mr. Rueben. “Herman Willie, you’re going to have to find a spot or sit on the couch. There aren’t enough chairs.”

There was no way I was going to sit next to mama or my soggy-bottomed baby sister. So I watched and absorbed the moment’s nuances without conscious realization.

All the men sported slacks and pressed shirts while the ladies wore dresses. Every man there knew how to work with his hands, but also understood business and politics. Mr. Walter was a county commissioner and Mr. Harvey was an ex-sheriff. My Dad was an accounting officer at the Loan Company and Mr. Rueben was a farmer. Another common thread of the assemblage was their love to travel. They anticipated an enjoyable evening of watching slide pictures from Mr. Reuben’s and Mrs. Ruby Belle’s last trip to Colorado, as well as, the ensuing tales of the journey.

This night’s activity was a social function.

The folks who grew up prior to and during WWII were cognizant of simple entertainment and the value of friendship. The Great Depression kept many people within horse and buggy distance of home. During the 1940’s, the U.S. population was strapped for tires and materials needed in the war effort. The 50’s brought an industrial revolution, but the current generation’s habits hadn’t yet begun to center around the boob tube. People still relied on visiting neighbors as a source for disseminating news; sharing views, and appreciating needed human contact. To that extent, when told about the evening’s plan, I queried whether Mr. Harvey would attend.

The ex-sheriff epitomized the entire scope of what I wanted to be. He stood slim, straight and tall; broad shouldered thick muscled, hands twice the size of most men’s, and his black hair combed straight back. His face was more angular than those found around the German Czech community, hinting at possible Indian ancestry. His legs were bowed and his reflexes were faster than a rattler’s. His jargon reflected days in the saddle, good horses, bad cows, and two-fisted law and order. I believed that Mr. Harvey wasn’t scared of the devil. And, if old Beelzebub stuck his head out of a hole, Mr. Harvey would rope him, brand him, de-horn him, cut him, and put him out on

grass. More than once, Mrs. Hilda warned him to be careful about his storytelling.

“Baby!” said Mrs. Hilda. “Don’t tell that boy all that stuff.”

My Dad would laugh and console her.

“Don’t worry Hilda, he’ll hear it anyway. That boy has big ears.”

However, not even my Dad could understand my immersion into the western lifestyle. Riding, roping, hunting, sleeping under the stars, winking at girls, and looking over the next mountain seemed enough to fill a lifetime. But, tonight I was going to hear about one more aspect of cowboy-ology.

“Come on Herman, let’s sit over here,” said Mr. Harvey. We moved to a chair in the corner beside a lamp. “Rueben, you say when and I’ll turn this off.” Mr. Harvey reclined into the soft easy chair and I sat on the floor at his feet. The slide presentation began.

The pictures of cars and people along various points on the highway seemed like a waste of film. I was oblivious to the idea that everyone in the room wasn’t going to live forever. Then the trip started taking us into the mountains of Colorado and Mr. Rueben’s narrative caught my interest. The images appeared to change seasons as we traveled from the short burnt grass of Texas to the green pines in Raton Pass. Then there were pictures of a snowy hunting camp, a 6x6 Army truck, and finally the hunters with their mule deer trophies. When the lights snapped on I was sitting wide-eyed and slack-jawed. My soul had drifted off into one of the mountain scenes and it took it awhile to come back.

The adults were drinking coffee and snacking when I re-entered my body. Mr. Harvey snickered while glancing at me. “Herman, do you do any squirrel or coon hunting?” he asked.

“No sir, there ain’t many squirrels in my woods. But I trap a few coons when the hides are good. There ain’t no sense in killin’ ’em in hot weather unless they’re getting into something. Right now, I think there’s a skunk living under the horse barn. It got one of Grandma’s chickens and I need to kill that no-good rascal.”

“How do you know it was a skunk killed

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ERNEST PRIHODA, a TSA member from Colorado County, steel trapped five bobcats in January 2006, and another five in January 2007 for a total of 10 on his farm in the Brushy Community northwest of Columbus.



ED MAHER took this 21-point buck on Nov. 6 about a mile and a half from the Austin County courthouse in Bellville.



TSA MEMBERS socialize during the Spring Business Meeting held on March 4 at Mentz Hall.

TSA welcomes new members

The Texas Sportsman's Association welcomes new memberships. Dues are only \$5 per year, and memberships run from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 of each year except for lifetime memberships. All TSA memberships expire on Dec. 31 each year.

Simply cut out the application form on page 3, enclose the fee, address an envelope to TSA, P.O. Box 26, Columbus, TX 78934, stamp it and put it in the mail! You may also sign up online at <http://www.texassportsmansassociation.org>.

**TSA
Austin County Unit
Meeting
Tuesday, May 8
Cat Spring Ag. Hall
Social at 7, meeting at 8**

Editorials published in the TSA newsletter may contain opinions of the author and are not to be taken as a position of the Texas Sportsman's Association. Members of TSA may submit stories, a photo or editorials for possible inclusion in future newsletters.

Bucks

Continued From Page 1

- Richard Grobe of Columbus, 20-gauge 870 Express Magnum shotgun, donated by The First State Bank of Columbus;

- Joshua Mika of Hallettsville and Logan Ramirez of Weimar, Marlin 17 MHR bolt-action rifle, donated by the Colorado County Wildlife Management Association and Market Realty Inc. of Brenham;

- Mike Booker of Columbus and Charles New of Santa Fe, Ruger 10/22, donated by Hoffer's Drive In Grocery of Hallettsville and Bill Johnson and Associates Real Estate of Bellville;

- Mike Westbrook of Dime Box, custom-made hunting knife, donated by Knives by Charlie of Sheridan;

- Clay Reed of Dripping Springs, corn feeder, donated by LAMCO Inc. of El Campo; and

- Gary Love of Houston, All Seasons broadcast feeder, donated by Capital Farm Credit of La Grange.

The TPWD would like to thank the organizations and businesses that donated these excellent prizes, as well as all of the hunters who took the time to bring their deer to the check stations.

the chicken?"

"On account of the way its neck was bit and the blood was sucked out. That's the way skunks do it."

Then the ex-sheriff went into one of the stories that Mrs. Hilda rather he'd forget, or at least not tell me.

"We'd all meet out in the woods, when we were boys, and hunt whatever we could find," began Mr. Harvey. "We all knew there was this one old man that made wine, but we weren't sure where he kept it. Then one of the other boys did some work for him and found the wine — in a barrel — in the barn. We started out one night in the bright moonlight. Somebody brought a brace-and-bit and we crawled under that barn. Then we drilled up through the floor and filled our jugs. After that, we had a fine coon hunt."

I blinked. Something about this recollection stunk.

"Did y'all get any coons?" I asked.

"I don't remember, probably not, but we built a big fire and sat around it and whooped at the moon!" said Mr. Harvey.

"How'd you plug that hole in the floor and keep all the wine from running out?"

"With a cork."

Then Mr. Harvey shook his head and left me to talk about serious matters with Mr. Rueben and Mr. Walter.

The problem of the space between the floorboards and the bottom of a wooden keg perplexed me. There was no way to plug that gap, but obviously, I wasn't getting anymore answers. Then it was just as obvious that drinking from a jug, sitting around a campfire, and howling at the moon must be typical cowboy

Moderation

Continued From Page 6

behavior. There was only one thing to do!

Now, forty-something years later, the humor behind goading a kid to build himself a hang-over ranks with slipping a bucking horse under a greenhorn, or putting soap in the scrambled eggs. The seasoned pranksters playing these age-old tricks know how to practice moderation. They're the same guardians who teach that God, family, and country always come first, that anything done for deception is a lie, and to never tolerate rudeness — from anybody.

Harvey Lee Jr. came by the house with a 1920-something circa Weimar Mercury. The article he'd circled said that the Colorado County Sheriff's Department was investigating the theft of a barrel of whiskey from a local farmer's barn. So far, there are no clues.

*The ching-ching-ching
Of society's money machine
Plays no music to my ears.*

*And the chuckling churn
Of a babbling brook
Doesn't always squelch my fears.*

*The applause and laughter
From family and friends
Relates acceptance and happiness from peers.*

*While the nods and smiles
From readers turned pals
Help to satisfy the years.*

*But it's the glug-glug-glug of a happy jug
Going dry that's peculiar and weird
It's the inanimate beast*

*That must be eaten and not eat
That brings a smirk, a shout, a wave of the hat
And tons of fun and good cheer.*

Red and yellow, kill a fellow

Continued From Page 5

litter for the scent or movement of their prey. During the spring or following heavy rainfall, they may feed above ground. Males searching for mates are more likely to be out and about during the early spring or late fall. Otherwise, they're where you find 'um.

They may mate at any time of the year, but normally their 2-12 white eggs are laid during May or June in composting or-

ganic materials such as loose soil or rotting logs. Eggs hatch in a couple of months with young measuring 6-1/2 to 8 inches long.

Their neurotoxic venom makes them one of the most deadly snakes found in North America. The venom is about 11 times more lethal than a copperhead's, five times as toxic as a cottonmouth's, and nearly four times as virulent as

a western diamondback rattlesnake's.

Since their fangs are only about 1/8 inches long, victims are bitten and sorta chewed on to help work the venom in which takes effect in short order. Victims are then swallowed head first. Coral snakes themselves may be eaten by other predators like hawks, opossums, and other snakes (what goes around, comes

around).

Few people are ever bitten by a Texas coral snake due to their small size and tendency to skeedaddle when approached. I think most people just find it hard to watch a brightly colored snake latch on to their skin and start chewing.

Many of the reported coral snake bites have been attributed to people carelessly handling or misidentifying them.