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COVER

An abandoned dredge at Featherville marks the site of early mining operations on the South Fork of the Boise River. Area in background lies in the Soldier Mt. Game Preserve. Featherville was originally called "Junction Bar." Deer concentrate on this range each winter.

A Real Sportsman . . .

The early beginnings of spring assailed my senses as the sounds of singing birds, and the odors of a new growing season were carried on the shoulders of a warm spring breeze. I felt good—about nature at least—when I turned into the path leading to the Old Timer's cabin. Ole Pup ran out to greet me with an unusual display of energy, the Old Timer shouted a cheery, booming greeting from within the cabin, and I knew that our weekly visit was off to a perfect start.

All was not right with the world, however, as the Old Timer started to snort and mutter to himself even before I had attained a comfortable position in my favorite chair. I didn't know what was bothering the old boy—but I knew it would soon be a matter of public record (his volume is such that the sound will reach as far as the general store on a good clear night!) so I tried to relax and soak up some of his philosophy and observations.

"Sportsmanship!" he snorted. "The idea is fine. The purpose is wonderful. But what has happened to the action? What in the world is the matter with people nowadays when they go afield to fish or hunt? I tell you, my boy, we have lost sight of the main purpose of fishing and hunting—and that's the fun, enjoyment and recreation we get from a day along a stream or a day in the duck blind."

I could see from his agitation that the Old Timer was really concerned about this problem and sought to pacify him with an offhand, "Oh, I don't think it's so bad. We seem to get along fairly well here in Idaho, at least—" That was as far as I got. He let out a "Humph!" that rattled the dipper in the water bucket and sent Ole Pup over behind the woodbox where he flattened out like a throw rug, closed both eyes, and held his breath.

"I tell you I have hunted and fished this country for over fifty years, and I think that courtesy and consideration of others is becoming a thing of the past," he said. "Time was when you were fishing a nice pool and another angler came along, he would walk out around you and leave you undisturbed. Now it gets to be a contest to see who can elbow the other feller out of the way. I could mention a few choice spots on the Salmon River when the salmon run is on, if you want to see for yourself." He growled a few times as if to eliminate the unpleasant taste such goings-on gave him, and continued.

"You know it's bad when landowners complain of damage, when campgrounds are defaced, signs destroyed, refuse dumped into streams, and people fight over a place on some rock to try to fish. I don't know the answer to the problem, but I think that each and every person will have to take a good look at his own attitude before he condemns the other feller. I think that a father should make it a point to teach his children that fishing and hunting can be enjoyable and not merely a means to fill a creel or locker, or to beat the other person to the next fishing hole downstream."

The Old Timer was more peaceful now, with regular smoke puffs coming out alongside his pipestem. He meditated a few moments then added. "I haven't lost hope, or faith in human nature, but it sure strains my patience at times when I see these things. I just wish that everyone would make an effort to be a better sportsman this year, and improve on the results every year thereafter. This would be a better place to live and our wildlife would get an even break once in a while, too."

There was nothing that I could add to that observation except a silent "Amen."