

THIRTEEN

TEX READS HIS PERMIT

Tex has only scorn for the new class of local functionary with a university education, such as the Park Warden, and is scathing in his dismissal of the sorts of things they would learn in university programs devoted to “Silviculture, Sikology, Practical Prospectin’, an’ Needlepoint Embroidery” (“Tex Reads his Permit”). The book-learned Warden he encounters does not disappoint: he is an incompetent woodsman, all officiousness, and condescending to boot; in the story, Tex mixes it up with him on account of disrespectful comments. Interestingly, it’s not book-learning per se that Tex abominates—after all, he clearly had a fair amount of it himself. Rather, the new disciplines being taught at university attract his ridicule, as much for their own sake as for their utter uselessness for a Park Warden, at least in those days—silviculture might come in handy today, though psychology will not be any better now than it was then.

This story is the only one to directly discuss Tex’s long association with the Walcotts, and he mentions them only because the “poaching” within Park boundaries is for them and the Smithsonian. He guards himself very carefully against name-dropping, remarkable for a man who had worked on Hollywood films, both in Banff and in California, as an animal handler (for instance, on *Call of the Wild*, 1935), and had a bevy of illustrious clients.

—AG

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A Pipestone Letter—
By N. Vernon-Wood

*From the Bar WB Outfit, Pipestone Creek, Alberta; to Mr. John Lincoln,
Wall Street, New York:*

DEAR FRIEND:

It's a long time that I don't take my pen in hand and give you the dope on the happenings up an' down the Pipestone. Well, life goes on, as the feller says, and most of us are makin' out to eat three–four times a day, though I got it figgered that when the new game warden sort of gets onto the ropes some of the boys will have to cut down on out-of-season venison.

This new warden is one of those sikological experiments, or whatever you call 'em. Seems like the Game Commission took an hour or so off from the multitudinfarious duties such as speakin' at Fishin' Society dinners, Skeet Club suppers, and etc., tellin' all an' sundry what they were gettin ready to consider startin' mebbe to make Alberta the Sportsman's Paradise. Regrettin' meantime that owein' to the current financial flacidity the price of fishin' licenses would be boosted a buck, game ditto two bucks, with a reduction on the bag an' a two-inch increase in the legal length of trout.

The game laws are gettin' some complicated an' I'm waiverin' between retainin' council or just interpretin' them my own way. However, to get back to the trail, the commission opined that the old-fashioned ex-lumberjack, ex-cowhand, ex-trapper, was out as warden material. Anyway they figger them natural products of the soil are too sympathetik in their idees with

the hoi polloi they are suppose to check up on. Also an' moreover, we got a perfectly good University that teaches Silviculture, Sikology, Practical Prospectin', an' Needlepoint Embroidery, so, let's appoint a flock of scientific wardens, who ain't got any entanglin' alliances with them poachin' so-an-so's in the mountains.

This also has the advantage of findin' jobs for several of the sons of our local legislature, who have been educated all to hell but haven't yet been able to get absorbed into the professions.

Motion carried, the Hon. Ike Ruttle only dissentin'. His family bein' all gals.

The first of these erudite birds is appointed to the Pipestone district last summer. I don't run into him when he makes his first patrol, so don't meet him social or official until fall.

I got me a job with a museum outfit to help collect a few fauna while a couple of professors specialize on flora an' fossils. We got a permit from the Govt. to take two males an' one female of any species whatsoever, anywhere, anytime. In fact we got the whole country on a platter.

Four days after leavin' the home place we was camped at the foot of Badger Pass. While my Pilgrims are runnin' down Trilobites an' Saxifrages, I take me a scout up on the summit. The country is crummy with Bighorn, an' for years I've wanted a chance to take a poke at a couple of 'em. Bein' a game reserve, them rams got plumb highty-tighty. They'd stand on a ledge an' not even pay you the compliment of lookin' scared, an' I shure did pine to teach 'em respect. Here's my one chance, an' I'm takin' my time an' makin' it last.

As I was checkin' over the terra firma, I seen a couple of cayuses 'way down on the other side of the pass, an' the glasses showed one hombre an' a pack pony makin' a pretty poor stab at findin' the trail over. I wasn't particularly interested, an' confined my attention to a flock of *Ovis canadenses* that was just figuratively fingerin' their noses at me. One of 'em looked like he'd show up noble in a glass case so I bust him, an' proceeded to take the 47 different measurements the museum opined they needed. Every so often, I'd fill the pipe an' take a look down the pass to see if the bird with the pack horse was comin' or goin'.

'Bout the time I've got my specimen all ready to lug into camp he is showin' up, an' I think, if he's any kind of a man, he'll pack my plunder on his pony into camp for me. I was settin' by the trail feelin' at peace with all mankind when he rides up.

“Wherein hell is the trail over this pass?” is his greetin’. “I’ve been two days trying to find it.”

Then he sort of noticed my layout.

“АААА!” he says, “Poachin,’ what? Gimme that rifle. Don’t you know it’s illegal to carry arms in the game reserve?”

“Yeah, I knowed it when you was still wearin’ didies,” I tell him.

“So. Deliberate infraction of the regulations made an’ provided. Where are you camped, what’s your name, are you alone?” An’ a whole lot more.

“I’m camped a couple miles down the valley,” I tell him, “but don’t go off half-cocked. I’m Tex Wood, an’ I’m with the Museum outfit, an’ I got a special dispensation from Geo. Rex to collect.”

“How do I know you’re Wood?” he says, “have you your permit with you? You will come along with me. Leave that ram there until I come back and take photographs for evidence agen you.”

“How do I know you’re a warden? You talk like a preacher to me, an’ you might have gotten that tin badge out of a popcorn packet,” I tell him, gettin’ some het up.

He fished out a flock of papers an’ showed me his commission, an’ 27 other credentials.

“All right,” I say, “I’ll go along peaceable, but I’ll pack my rifle, I think a heap of that old tool an’ don’t trust it with no strangers or children.”

“All right, you keep ahead of me, and no funny work, my man.”

So we start to backtrack. They was a mud slide over the trail just at the foot of the shale, an’ I start over, bein’ careful to step where I’d have fairly good footin’. I am only about twenty feet along when my herder bogs down good an’ proper. His pack pony is up to the cinch buckles, an’ his saddle horse damn near out of sight. I put in quite a pleasant half hour watchin’ a demonstration of how not to extricate a couple of knotheads from a mud hole. I reckon that ain’t a required course up at dear old Whoosis, an’ the game laws don’t say anythin’ about a poacher havin’ to assist a warden. Anyhow, I’m plum legal an’ legitimate, an’ takin’ all the good I can out of it.

When we finally get into camp, my two companions in the pursuit of knowledge are in, checkin’ over their day’s takin’s. The Warden sort of recognizes them as kindred spirits, an’ enters into a long an’ mighty authoritative dissertation on the wherefores of Brachipods. When I get a chance to put a spoke in edgeways, I suggest, plum respectful, that he look over my permit.

“Oh, don’t bother,” he says, “I expect you are bono fidee, although you don’t look it.”

He was a pretty husky young feller, an’ he never did read the permit. By the time I’d got him where he was willin’ to listen to reason, I was settin’ on his head, an’ the document was kind of wore out, so I just read it to him between rounds.

WELL, THE GEESE will be comin’ north mighty soon. Why don’t you follow a good example, an’ come up too?

—Yours truly,

TEX.

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