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Don't Overlook Page 66!

LEARN FROM YOUR HITS

(Continued from page 23)

I have related this in some detail, not just to pass on a specific bit of information but to illustrate a side of shooting seldom considered by hunters. When one makes a good clean kill, that's that, and usually no further thought is given it. But you *should* think a lot about it. Why was that particular shot so successful? Find out why, and the information thus gained can be used over and over.

Some months ago, I wrote in GUNS about "Learning from Your Misses." It is also important to *learn from your hits*. A good clean hit, which means an almost instant kill, is what we all strive for and like best to brag about. But it would be better if we bragged less and studied more to find out why was *this* shot so instantly fatal whereas others, nearly identical, were less effective. You can find this out only by meticulous re-enactment of the scene, and by careful research on the effect of the bullet on the animal.

This does not apply only to the "braggin' shots." Hunting whitetail deer in dense thornbrush and cactus down near the Mexican border presents certain problems. Several techniques are used: One is to get into the bottom of one of the dry washes and follow it. Many a buck will be in such places, but these wash bottoms are also exasperatingly thick, and the chances are that, when you do find a buck, it will be running. It will burst out of a thicket, bound over the cactus, and crash through the thornbrush at full speed.

This means you will seldom see a whole deer, and that you will have to take snap shots. Some brush-country hunters get very good at it. But even the really accomplished "jump shooters" in this terrain admit that they have wounded and lost a lot of deer.

Nevertheless, I tried it. And I got my shot. Two big bucks burst out of the brush within a few yards of me. I made my snap shot, and I heard the solid hit. The reason it was so solid—I was to find out later—was that the bullet hit the big hip bone on the right side. Damage was awesome. But the deer went over the ridge as if not even touched. There was a great deal of blood, and I followed immediately. Presently, I jumped the deer again.

In the brush country, unless you have a good dog to trail wounded deer, if one quits bleeding, the deer is lost. Knowing this, I tried desperately to get this one into my scope and put it down for keeps. My target was straight at the rear end, but I felt I had to take the opportunity regardless. At around 75 yards, I touched off just as the deer broke into a dense thicket. Again I heard the slam of the bullet. I heard the deer go down. But by now its adrenalin was up and it would go until it was stone dead.

This it did. I found it a quarter mile farther on, and I do not care to describe the disgraceful damage I had done. One friend tried to console me by saying that it could happen to anybody, and often did. But the fallacy here was that there is no need for it to happen at all. The impossibility of proper bullet placement under these brush-country conditions when one uses this method makes the chance of repeating just what I had done very high, and I have sworn never to jump-

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