

Competitive duck hunting

New form offers challenge

The problem with hunting, as a sport, is that it's not competitive. A guy with a shotgun squats in a swamp; an unarmed duck with an IQ of maybe four flies overhead; the guy blasts the duck into individual duck molecules. Where is the challenge here? Where is the CONTEST?

Fortunately, I have a solution. It came to me as I was reading the fall 1994 issue of Global Gas Turbine News, which was sent in by alert reader Joe Born. On the off-chance that you don't subscribe, I should explain that Global Gas Turbine News is a publication written by, and for, Martians. At least that's the impression you get from reading it. Here's an actual quote from a letter to the editor:

"Research to determine optimum blade loading, including optimum backward curvature of blades at outlet, effectiveness of separate inducers, placement of splitter vanes, and diffuser design should now be considered."

Sounds good to me! I say we show our support for this cause by holding a mass rally and chanting catchy slogans ("WHAT DO WE WANT??" "RESEARCH TO DETERMINE OPTIMUM BLADE LOADING, INCLUDING ...").



Anyway, the big article in the fall issue is headlined, "Bird Ingestion Into Aero-Engines." The article concerns efforts by engineers to deal with the problem of birds getting sucked into jet airplane engines during takeoff and flight; this can damage the engine, and even make the plane crash. Also it is no picnic for the bird.

So according to the article, engineers are always trying to develop more-bird-resistant jet engines. To test these engines, they have developed - here's the good part - A GUN THAT SHOOTS DUCKS. When I say "a gun that shoots ducks," I don't mean "a gun that shoot AT ducks." I mean "a gun that you load an actual duck into and shoot it out the end, like a big feathered bullet." Engineers use the gun to shoot ducks at test aircraft engines so they (the engineers) can see what happens.

(NOTE TO ANIMAL LOVERS: The article states that, before being shot, these ducks are "humanely killed." The article does not state whether this procedure involves feeding them airline cuisine.)

No doubt you've already figured out where I'm going with this. I'm thinking: Let's take some of these duck-shooting guns, and let's camouflage them, and let's hide them in areas known to be infested by duck-hunters, and let's install some kind of sonar-guided, computerized aiming

system on them, so that when a sensor detects a shotgun blast, it immediately fires a high-velocity duck at the source. Think how much more EXCITING the sport of duck-hunting would be if the hunter knew that, every time he fired his gun, he would immediately have to dive headfirst into the swamp muck, or else run the risk of getting hit by a deceased mallard traveling at upward of 170 miles per hour.

At this point, you probably have a couple of questions, namely:

Q. Would such a program be safe?

A. Naturally, before we started shooting ducks at actual human beings, we would conduct safety tests in which we would fire a wide variety of waterfowl at humanely selected scientists from the Tobacco Institute.

Q. Would this program pose a National Security threat to the president of the United States, who sometimes demonstrates his personal masculinity by shooting birds?

A. This would not be a problem, because the president is protected by Secret Service agents chosen specifically on the basis of their willingness to, in the line of duty, step in front of a duck.

Q. What about deer hunters? Can we use the same technology to make their sport more exciting?

A. Tragically, at this time we do not have a gun capable of accurately firing an animal the size of a deer, although I would strongly support a project to develop one, using, as test ammunition, humanely sedated Tobacco Institute scientists.

But until we perfect a deer gun, we can go with an interim solution suggested by a Jan. 12 article in the central Pennsylvania Centre Daily Times, written by Jerilynn Schumacher and sent in by alert reader Paul Dietzel. This article concerns efforts by the Pennsylvania Army National Guard to help a group of endangered animals called "fishers," which are described as "house-cat-sized members of the weasel family" (I am not making any of this up). The article states that, to feed some fishers in a remote area, "Guardsmen dropped 17 frozen, road-killed deer and 100 pounds of dead, smelly fish from a Chinook helicopter as it flew 50 to 150 feet above the ground."

I can think of few events that would add more "zing" to a hunting expedition than the possibility of being squashed like a plump gun-toting grape by the frozen carcass of a mature, fish-encrusted deer (or, if there are any left over, a Tobacco Institute scientist).

If you're as excited as I am about using the National Guard for this purpose next deer season, I urge you to write a letter to this nation's supreme military commander, "Newt" Gingrich. If, however, you are in any way offended by any of the proposals I have made in this column, please let me know, because I CARE WHAT YOU THINK. So send your letters of complaint directly to me, Patrick Buchanan, c/o Editor, Global Gas Turbine News, 2038 George Jetson Way, Mars. Or, for a faster response, just lean out your window and shoot. Then duck.

by Dave Barry
Syndicated Columnist

Spring break smashing experience

I realize that you were expecting some cute anecdote from one of the columnists this week, but bear with me. This is my time to vent all my frustrations out, especially after the spring break I had.

How do insurance companies do what they do? Why do insurance companies do what they do? I've been asking myself that since March 6. The reason I want to know is that I feel like I have done something terribly wrong and am being punished for it.

OK, I understand you have no clue what I'm talking about, so allow me to explain.

Coming back from a day at the beach with my two cousins and their friend at 2:45 p.m. on Monday the 6, I was in a car accident. Not just any car accident - a car accident in Merritt Island, Florida (1100 miles from home). A truck came across two lanes of traffic and nailed my car on the driver's side front panel (the part next to the engine for any car illiterates out there).

My first concern was that the kids were OK, then I looked at my car. Taking in the damage, I could not believe this had happened. I didn't even think of the possibility of the car being totalled at this point.

The accident took place in front of a used car lot. I'm shocked that they did not try to sell me a car - though they were nice enough to call the police.

I found out, after taking in all the damage and estimating to myself what the cost of the repair would be, that the driver of the truck that hit me threw an open beer out of the passenger window while he was leaving the scene. Open containers and drinking while driving are both very illegal in Florida.

Immediately, I called my Aunt Debbie, who I was staying with, to tell her about the accident. Then I tried to call home and inform my mother. While I was waiting for the police to arrive, the driver and his truck came back to the scene.

At that moment I wanted to grab hold of him and knock the living crap out of him for doing this to me.

However, being the good role model I am, I didn't - I had two 13-year-olds and a nine-year-old with me. (Remain calm, Lori Anna, is what kept going through my mind.)

Well my aunt called my uncle, who worked just across the Indian River in Cocoa, and he came over to the accident site right away. Once he got there, I made the call to the insurance company. I explained to them that I was in an accident, my car was undriveable, and that I was 1100 miles from home. They kindly took my information, and said they would see what they could do.

Finally the police officer arrived at 3:30 p.m. (45 minutes after the accident) and took the driver of the truck's statement. He never asked me anything except for my information. After he accessed the

scene, he took us both over to his car and wrote up the accident report. He made it clear that he believed the driver of the GMC truck was at fault and issued him a traffic citation, after giving him a sobriety test.

My car was towed away (by a pink tow truck with "Happy Hooker" on the hook), and was later informed by the insurance company that they had totalled it.

My question to them: How are you planning on getting me home by Sunday night?

Their answer: They did not have one. I found out that my car did not have rental insurance.

So, there I was, in Florida, with only \$300, no car, and I need to get home.

I called my insurance agent at home, and he said he had never heard of anything like this.

Then I started to think. I could fly home and have everything in my car shipped home. A plane ticket from Orlando to Erie on March 8 was priced at \$395. Great - \$95 more than I had, plus what it would have cost me to ship everything I couldn't take on the plane with me.

Or I could have my mother come get me at her own expense. My aunt had already offered to drive me home.

The next possibility was to rent a car and deal with the bill myself. Well, National Car Rental got me a deal for \$74 per day, unlimited mileage, to Erie.

So, then I had to call Visa to get an emergency credit raise. I only wanted enough to cover the cost of the car rental. I got "I'm sorry your request has been denied. We have sent a letter in the mail explaining why." Then they hung up.

I called back and asked to talk to someone in charge. I told them what had just happened and the situation I was in. He said: "Miss, I cannot in good conscience give you a credit raise under any circumstance."

Since then I have cut up my Citibank Visa card and sent it back with a nice letter telling them what I think they can do with their policies.

The insurance company is taking care of my car; I should get the value of the car, before the accident, to cover my car loan.

My question is "What the hell do I do with a \$200 car rental bill and an \$85 towing bill." I did not plan on this kind of expense.

The accident was not my fault, and in the end I feel like I have done something wrong.

So remember, if you are ever 1100 miles from home, take an extra car in case some beer-drinking, accident-scene leaving (then returning), butthead from Georgia decides to turn your car into a scrap pile. Also don't count on Citibank Visa for any help either.

by Lori Anna Dyer
Entertainment Editor