

RANGE

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RANGE is an award-winning quarterly devoted to the issues that threaten the West, its people, lifestyles, lands and wildlife. No stranger to controversy, RANGE is a leading forum for opposing viewpoints in the search for solutions that will halt the depletion of a national resource—the American cowboy.

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Up Front

Playing in the hollers.

By *C.J. Hadley*



I was worn out. Too many 80-hour weeks. Too many emails—close to 3,000 waiting for action on the day I left town in late September. (If I don't answer your notes, I hope you understand why.) RANGE's serious staff, Ann and Joyce, are way too busy to help me with my load because they are carrying big ones, too. They are so good at what they do, they just won the Silver Star award from the Nevada Press Association for outstanding work.

Up against every news outfit in the Silver State—all the newspapers, electronic media and magazines—they took out the competition and became "the best staff in the state." All two of them. Of course, I already knew that and am delighted they have cared enough about you and RANGE to stick around for so long.

But then it was my turn, so I turned off my big, bad computer for a week and flew East. It took a lot of travel time—six planes there and back via Arizona, North Carolina and Tennessee, to finally get to the western tip of Virginia. I was looking for something new, fresh and different, and took up an invitation from a subscriber to go fly-fishing and to shoot big guns with hillbillies in Appalachia.

Huh? I know rodeo and snowmobile racing and can roof a barn and change a tire, but I know nothing about fly-fishing. The only fishing I've done used a stick, string, bent pin and a small ball of dough to catch eels on the River Rother in the south of England in the 1950s. That used to be breakfast which, even cut in small pieces, still wriggled in a hot frying pan. Fly-fishing sounded apolitical and slow—something that could diminish stress and, if I got lucky, get supper.

I know westerners are good, but those folks hiding in the hollers in the Blue Ridge Mountains are equally generous with their time and talents. I didn't end up a fisherman, but I did wear those weird drawers that allow you to stand in a cold, fast-running river and cast a fly. And I did catch two wild trout for dinner.

I didn't end up a sniper for the U.S. military, but I did center some golf balls with a .22 at 100 yards and smash a few tomato soup cans dead center. I also exploded dry cow pies with a semi-automatic AK-47 and nailed (cold bore) a small metal target at 400 yards with a modified Rem 700P 300 WSM. That shocked the D.C. cop whose property I was on. "How long has she been shooting?" he asked. "Four times," answered my guide.

I returned home with vigor and a strange "Ramboes" reputation thanks to those good hillbillies, especially RANGE subscriber Alan Hart. Hart joined our cause after hearing me on shortwave last year. ("Common Sense Coalition Talk Radio" reaching 17 states out of central Missouri.) This mountain man thinks we do good things for ranchers and wanted to prepare this old editor for the next onslaught! ■



Ann Galli, left, and Joyce Smith took the big prize.



CJ took a big fighting fish (a 3.5-pound trout on Melvin's private property)...



...and shot some big guns, almost always hitting the target. "She's a natural," said a former moonshiner. "I was thinking about Washington," said CJ. BELOW: CJ's hillbilly name is Ramboes and she's using a semiautomatic AK-47 to blast some dry cow pies into dust and North Carolina.

