



Ovie Coleman outlines the first day's hunt on Friday night by the light of a gas lantern in one of the camp tents.

Spacemen become Woodsmen

**Four astronauts pursue
the wily Wapiti on the
Millicoma Tree Farm**

Rocks rattled in the clearing below, and everyone's pulse jumped.

Stu Roosa and Ovie Coleman, rifles ready, tip-toed carefully to the edge of the steep bank and searched the brush in a clearing below for what had to be elk on the move.

The sky was overcast, and it was still so dark one would have had trouble reading. Fog drifted back and forth through the valley, further obscuring sight.

Then the fog parted briefly and they could be seen, a herd of eight or 10 elk, their brown sides visible against the surrounding brush.

Stu, one of America's astronauts, whose eyesight is superior to most, put his binoculars to his eyes but even with those, it was impossible to see if any of the animals had antlers. Ovie, logging foreman for Weyerhaeuser at Coos Bay, and a long-time elk hunter, peered intently through the scope of his

rifle, trying to "put horns" on at least one of the animals.

For just because it was legal shooting time on the opening day of elk season that didn't mean there was enough light to see.

Tents on an old landing were home for three days. In the picture on the right, Harry Morgan (left), senior vice president—wood products, and Coos Bay area manager Oscar Weed laugh at one of many camp jokes.

ELK WERE EDGY

The rattle of rocks grew louder as the herd, seeming to sense it was being observed, started moving toward a stand of old-growth timber nearby.





Merlin Freeman (by pickup) slips a clip into his rifle as one part of the group gets ready to head into the woods. Others (left to right) are Charlie Duke, Rex Allison and Gordon Cooper.

Without a word, Stu and Ovie slipped over the side of the steep, wooded hillside into the thick brush in an attempt to get closer for a better look.

Trying to keep quiet in the dim

light of dawn in the Western Oregon brush is not easy, for the ground is covered with twigs and branches. It's also easy to slip and slide noisily or kick loose a rock as the elk were doing.

STALK CONTINUES

Ovie and Stu continued stalking the herd, which was getting more restless with each passing moment.

There's a lot of blind luck in an elk hunt. If the animals zig one way, the man on the left gets the shot; if they move the other way, a hunter on the right gets the good view. As luck would have it, when the elk were only a few steps from the tall timber, they took the turn which put them in front of Ovie and at the same time he saw the spike.

OVIE BAGS ELK

"I knew Stu couldn't get a shot," Ovie said. He fired and down the elk went as the rest of the herd

disappeared into the timber. The season was only minutes old and the hunt was a success.

For with 210,000 acres of the Millicoma Tree Farm being combed thoroughly by something like 5,000 hunters, any hunting party considers the trip a success if only one member brings down an elk.

As they moved through the brush to their prize, Stu remarked, "This is amazing. Shooting an elk before daylight. I just can't get over it."

PARTY SUCCESSFUL

But this hunting party was to be even more of a success—in everything that makes hunting one of the toughest yet most satisfying sports.

The party itself centered around four of America's astronauts, who had been invited to the Coos Bay area by two Coos Bay businessmen. The astronauts, in addition to Stu Roosa, were Charlie Duke, Joe Engle and Gordon Cooper.

Gordon has been out into space





Several of the group examine a herd of elk on a distant hillside looking for a bull. Left to right, Charlie Duke, Merlin Freeman, Rex Allison and Gordon Cooper.

local 3-261 of the International Woodworkers of America; and Rex Allison, forest engineer.

ELK HUNTERS ARE AVID

Elk hunting is a rugged sport. The hunting conditions, the difficulty of outsmarting an elk in its own habitat, plus the value of the prize when the hunter wins, are some of the things that make elk hunters so rabid about their sport.

"This is one thing that made us all so excited about taking some of the astronauts out," said Rex Allison. "Elk hunting is a tremendous challenge. It's the type of thing that men such as the astronauts would take on."

OVIE ORGANIZED HUNT

Ovie was given the job of organizing the hunt.

"Now there's a five-point bull up this draw," Ovie had said Friday night as several of the group gathered around one of the company's hunter maps by the light of the gasoline lantern.

"There's a herd of about a dozen with two spike bulls over here," he said, making a series of circles, lines and dots on the map.

ELK WERE LOCATED

As logging foreman, he travels the roads of the tree farm every day. In anticipation of the hunt, he had made special notes where elk had been seen.

"During the year, the elk get so used to the logging trucks they don't even look up when one goes by," Ovie said.

So all hands paid close attention to the battle plans, for the entire tree farm is open each year to the public; and come shooting hours in the morning, they knew competition would be intense.

ASTRONAUTS HAD COMPETITION

Nor did the astronauts and their four partner-guides have too big a jump on many of the 5,000 other

twice, piloting MA-9 spacecraft on a 22-orbit mission in 1963 and was command pilot for Gemini V in 1965.

Stu, Joe and Charlie were among the 19 astronauts selected by NASA in April, 1966.

CURRENT MISSION - ELK

To them, just about the greatest thing in the world will be the day when they blast off on one of this country's missions into space. But for three days on the company's Millicoma Tree Farm, the big subject was elk and how to get a shot at one.

The Coos Bay businessmen who set up the trip were Bob Perkins and Phil Waters. Bob owns the Timber Inn Restaurant and Phil owns radio station KYNG. The two have several things in common, including a great curiosity about the world and a tremendous zest for living.

Several years ago when a number of the astronauts were going through simulated moon scape walking on some rugged lava beds in Central Oregon, Bob and Phil decided to go over and see what was happening.

SIMILAR PERSONALITIES

This same curiosity, a zest for living and the desire and willingness to take on the toughest of jobs are part of the basic makeup of the type who become astronauts. So it wasn't a bit surprising that before long Bob and Phil had made the

acquaintance of several of these younger men who were so much like them in their outlook on life.

This was followed by the Coos Bay businessmen taking the astronauts on waterfowl hunts in the Klamath Falls, Ore., area, a hunt in Eastern Oregon, and finally the expedition after elk on the Millicoma Tree Farm.

SPECIAL CAPE GUEST

Just prior to the hunt, Bob had returned from Cape Kennedy, where he had been a guest at this country's latest space shot. The letter inviting him to the Cape was signed by Wally Schirra, Walter Cunningham and Don Eisele.

Since Weyerhaeuser's Millicoma Tree Farm has one of the largest herds of Roosevelt elk on the Pacific Coast, it was natural for the two businessmen to contact the company.

GUIDES SECURED

Area manager Oscar Weed working with area woods manager Jack Wolff handled the job of getting four "guides" or partners to go along.

Each partner-guide was an experienced elk hunter and even more important, knew the Millicoma about as well as his own back yard.

In addition to Ovie Coleman, they were John Eggers, woods safety engineer; Merlin Freeman, a shovel loader and also president of

hunters who would be out on the tree farm come opening morning. For a hundred or more were Weyerhaeuser woods employes on the Millicoma who also knew where many of the elk were.

The group left camp at six a.m. in pitch black darkness and drove carefully to the area where the hunt was to begin. The last half-mile was without lights over the rutted, muddy logging roads.

All four pairs of hunters were to start within several miles of each other, surrounding an area where two of these big old loner bulls had been seen.

ANOTHER HUNTER ARRIVES

All were in position, with it still too dark to see, when another car came quietly along and stopped in the middle of the area which was bracketed by the astronauts and their guides.

As luck would have it, the man in that car nailed the five-point bull up the draw not far from John Eggers and Joe Engle on one side and Merlin Freeman and Charlie Duke on the other. But that's part of the sport.

GROUP WAS CONGENIAL

The hunt was an outstanding success in another way. As Gordon Cooper said two days later, "I don't know when I've been in a better hunting camp. Everyone got along so well together." He added that often when a large group gets together for a hunt, there's apt to be someone who doesn't fit in.

The first night in camp developed into a story-telling spree; and probably every elk for several miles around wondered what all the noise was, as the laughter boomed out of the cook and chow tent.

MANY STORIES TOLD

The astronauts proved themselves accomplished story tellers and also completely capable of taking the kind of ribbing that men in a hunting camp can hand out.

Harry Morgan, vice president of Timberlands for the company took a ribbing from the Coos Bay businessmen about stepping on Douglas fir seedlings, and the astronauts followed suit.

LOTS OF LAUGHS

Harry responded with his own share of stories and friendly insults as laughter boomed out across the hills from the old logging landing where camp was set up. Charlie Bingham, manager of areas, took his share of abuse and countered in kind.

Others on hand were Don Dils, area public relations manager for the company, Jerry Baron, news editor of the *Coos Bay World*, Jack Wolff, area woods manager for Weyerhaeuser and Herb Williams, editor of *Weyerhaeuser Magazine*. Ed Troyer of KCBY-TV was on hand Saturday to shoot some film.

REVEILLE WAS EARLY

Bob Perkins was in charge of the reveille detail but had a hard time

living down his timing after Saturday morning when he roused everyone out at 3:30 a.m., since no one left camp until 6.

The shock of the early reveille was eased as soon as anyone stepped into the cook tent. There was a choice of several kinds of juice or fruit, blueberry hotcakes, link sausage, eggs cooked to order, hash brown potatoes, doughnuts, maple rolls, toast, milk and a monstrous camp-style pot of steaming coffee.

Steep hills, huge blow-downs and thick brush make the going tough at times (upper). The hunter is Rex Allison. The rugged terrain is reflected in the sweat on the faces of astronauts Gordon Cooper (left) and Charlie Duke.





Rex Allison is dwarfed by the huge Douglas fir trees in this old-growth forest, seen here as it was before the coming of the white man.

Serving up this feast—which was stowed away in amazing quantities—was head cook Dean Sheldon, owner of Jensen Music Co. in Coos Bay. Dean also took top honors as story teller before the weekend was over.

Helping him was Harry Fenneman, owner of the Timber Inn Motel. Bob Perkins and Phil Waters also pitched in with the cooking.

HAD LAST LAUGH

All agreed that Bob should have his clock taken away from him, but on Sunday morning no one else remembered to set an alarm and the sky was light in the east when all hands rolled out of their sleeping bags. Bob had the last laugh because he bagged the second elk in one of those situations which make such good telling in later years around a campfire.

It happened shortly before noon on Saturday, when everyone had come back to camp, ready for chow.

ELK STROLLED INTO VIEW

The camp was on a big landing with a precipitous hillside on one side dropping off several hundred feet to a clear-cut flat. John Eggers and Dean Sheldon were standing near the edge of this cliff when a big, spike bull strolled out of the woods into the clear cut.

It was like a scramble for an air raid alert as they grabbed their rifles. A downhill shot at 200-300 yards is one of the hardest of all, and the two hunters missed with a barrage of more than a dozen shots. The elk kept strolling through the flat, obviously confused by all the noise but unable to tell where the echoing shots were coming from.

PERKINS DROPS ELK

Both men had emptied their guns, and it looked as if the elk was going to stroll on into some dense timber, when Bob Perkins came running out of the cook tent with his rifle and dropped the elk with three shots.

That episode was good for at least a half hour of charge, counter charge and banter that evening over the chow table. As Dean Sheldon said, "It was such an easy target walking along slowly, I thought

if I would put a few rounds near him, he would start running and make a decent, sporting target."

PERKINS WAS CASUAL

Bob Perkins countered with a long statement about how he finally came out to see what was going on and with a great deal of aplomb casually shot the elk.

The elk were often found in the open on the first day of the hunt. But they wised up in a hurry and moved into the dense, old-growth timber. This changed the style of hunting on the second day.

VISIBILITY IS LOW

In the deep woods, the senses of hearing and smell become highly important for sometimes visibility is cut to 25 or 50 feet by deep brush or trees.

It was in some of this deep timber on Sunday that Gordon Cooper came upon that rank, pungent smell which said elk had passed that way only recently.

To a person like Gordo (as his fellow astronauts call him) who has hunted elk in other parts of the United States, no urging was needed.

GORDO STARTS PURSUIT

He moved as quietly as possible after the herd. He was some distance from his partner-guide and Rex didn't realize at the time that Gordo had veered off in a different direction.

Several hours later as darkness began to settle in the deep woods, all hands were at the agreed-on meeting spot except Gordo. In the vast, unlogged sections, hunters in the past have become confused late at night and not found their way out until morning.

In most hunting parties, the absence of a hunter at dusk would cause alarm. But not this group. The other three astronauts were joking about Gordo having to stay in the woods that night.

A NIGHT OUT POSSIBLE

That was a definite possibility, for had he downed a big elk at dusk, he would have dressed and possibly skinned it out. This can

take a lone man several hours and once it's dark it's usually safer to build a fire and stay in the woods than try to come out at night. But all astronauts go through some of the world's most intense survival training, and a night in the woods would have been no problem.

There's always the chance that a man could have turned an ankle or broken a leg, so the joking had overtones of concern.

LIKE A CATTLE HERD

It was approaching darkness when Gordo finally came out. "It looked like a herd of cattle had gone through at times in front of me," he said. "I could hear the whistling of the bull several times, but I never got close enough to see them."

Such a chase through this precipitous country with its dense brush and blown-down trees would leave many men exhausted. But Gordo like the other astronauts, is in magnificent physical condition.

AGE NOT PHYSICAL

In commenting on physical condition and age, he said he believed age was more mental and psychological than it was an actual number of years a person has lived. His condition certainly bore this out, for at age 43 he could scramble through those woods with agility that would put many men in their early twenties to shame.

The astronauts saw more than elk hunting, for they were able to see first hand how modern industrial tree farming works.

TREE FARMING VIEWED

It's one thing to explain to a man how timber can go to waste in an industrial forest if it is allowed to die or blow down and rot upon the ground. But when a man is scrambling over a blown-down tree which is five feet in diameter, the facts are back-breakingly obvious.

Also, it is possible to explain how elk can damage reforested areas;



Ovie Coleman, chief guide (left), and astronaut Stu Roosa examine the elk Ovie downed on the opening morning of the hunt.

but its much easier when one can look at Douglas fir trees which are five or six years old but are still less than a foot high because they have been browsed continually by elk.

LOGGING FASCINATED JOE

Joe Engle said, "This logging fascinates me. I'd like to come back when things are operating and see how it happens."

He was taken up on the spot by his guide John Eggers who said, "Just let me know when you can come out here again, and I'll see that you get a complete tour."

It was impossible to see a logging show during the hunt, for the company's woods crews took one of their weeks of vacation during the elk season. Thus the tree farm could remain open for nine straight days for the public to hunt.

ELK HERDS GROW

Elk are a product of the forest just as trees are. A healthy herd such as that roaming the Millicoma, can increase 10 per cent a year if nothing is done to crop off the excess.

If this should happen—as it has happened in areas where hunting is not allowed—the elk multiply beyond the ability of the land to furnish food and soon are going hungry. Then they start succumbing to malnutrition and disease.

CAN DAMAGE RANGE

In the process, they overgraze their range, damaging it so that it can't grow as much food as before. Soon there are less elk than before, and what was once good range can suffer from erosion.

This damage is also the biggest problem the Company faces on the Millicoma in reforesting logged areas. For when elk overgraze an area, fir seedlings are a main victim. By grazing off the tender tops of young trees, elk can delay reforestation for many years and in the process cost the Company thousands of dollars.

So hunting, as regulated by the Oregon Game Commission on the Millicoma, is good for the elk herd, helping keep it healthy, and also helping in reforestation. The elk herd also offers stimulating outdoor recreation for some 5,000 hunters.



The company plane flew the astronauts from Portland to the Coos Bay-North Bend airport. From left to right, Charlie Duke, Gordon Cooper, Stu Roosa, chief pilot Bill Gilbert, pilot Don Booth and Joe Engle.

GOOD SIDE EFFECT

The hunt had another big side effect, as Rex Allison pointed out. "This hunt brought many types of people together with a common goal. I sit across the bargaining table from Merlin (Merlin Freeman is President of the IWA local for Weyerhaeuser's Coos Bay operation), and we have some real arguments. But we were drawn together by the same thing on this hunt."

Oscar Weed, area manager for Weyerhaeuser at Coos Bay had similar thoughts.

He pointed out that he and Harry Morgan, for instance, normally meet each other only in the pressure-laden atmosphere of a highly competitive business. Out in the hunting camp they traded jokes, banter and hilarious insults with the freedom of a college dormitory.

ALL HAD SAME GOAL

These and the other people in the hunting party were all brought together with one goal in mind—to provide a first rate hunting trip for U. S. astronauts, men who are looked up to and almost idolized

by a large segment of the American public.

In some of the bull sessions around the campfire and in the chow tent, the conversation strayed from hunting or the inevitable talk about the things astronauts do in their training or the experiences they have when aloft, to what's happening in America today.

UNIFYING FORCE

The astronauts are deeply concerned about the United States; and one stated that the country's space program, rising as it does above partisan politics or philosophic differences, could be a great, unifying force.

He's probably right, for as four astronauts were the focal point for an elk hunt, bringing people with different backgrounds together with one purpose, so the space program could have the same effect on a national scale.

This by-product of America's space program as seen in miniature in this hunting party could possibly be as important as many of the scientific facts which are being discovered every time another man blasts off into space.