

A REVELATION ON GOOSE HILL

All my life, from my early teens through adulthood I had always been an avid hunter. Elk, deer, upland game birds, and most of all ducks, and geese just happened to be my favorite hunting pastime, (when in season of course).

The event I'm about to relate to you, had at the time, and has for the rest of my life, a profound, emotional, overwhelming, life changing experience to me, and for many of whom I shared this story.

Born and raised in Montana, myself and all my friends grew up with the reality that hunting was a sport, and as long as you killed for the meat and not the trophy it was justified. That's the harsh yet bittersweet truth at the time. We killed and shared the spoils with those far less fortunate than ourselves, thereby securing in our minds, life was good.

There is so much more I can say about those early years and the hardship of growing up under harsh conditions but it is of no importance, and meaningless in the scope of things to come, and the true profound changes and effect on the remainder of my life. Now I fast forward, (so as not to bore you with insignificant conversation).

In the late 70s through the 80s my wife and I lived in northern Montana on the shores of Flathead lake. Being on the fringe of the Pacific flyway, and also having a large population of ducks and geese (year around) hunting was at a premium every year. With two federal game preserves close by, it afforded those of us who hunted waterfowl an excellent hunting season each year.

On one of these preserves close to our home, were several a prime areas to hunt, one of which we (for obvious reasons) named Goose Hill. It was situated on the northern side of the preserve, yet several thousand yards from the actual border. Between the reserve and the hill lay a long stretch of pasture like land, ending at a fence line, a power line, and a county road. Across the road was another long stretch of pasture land leading up to the base of Goose Hill. The hill rose above the the pasture land a couple hundred feet, affording us an excellent view of the land below clear to and including the entire preserve. A couple miles on the other side of the hill were acre after acre of winter wheat, giving the entire population of ducks and geese an excellent supply of food so that they were able to fight off the bitter cold. Unfortunately their only way to this much needed food supply was directly over the top of Goose Hill. They (being the geese) would remain inside the preserve until the bitter cold forced them to leave to get the much needed protein afforded by the wheat to sustain them until they were forced to leave once again. Unfortunately, and to their demise, those of us who so blatantly called ourselves sportsman were at the top of Goose Hill waiting in hiding (behind large out cropings of rock and bushes) waiting for the oncoming geese (as though we were leading them to slaughter). Even now after twenty five years, and I write this as a request of a dear friend, I find myself (not very successfully I must added) fighting back tears.

Now to the heartbeat of my story (if one must call it that) yet to me it's more of a confession, or even a outcry for forgiveness. On the morning I speak of my close friend and I were lying in wait for the unsuspecting geese to start their tragic journey for the much needed supply of wheat waiting for them. We would intentionally let the first two or three smaller groups fly past and listen to their lonely mournful cry for their life long friends to follow. For you see the male and female goose mate for life, so just as in the so called human race who take those precious vows of till death do us part heartily, "THE BEAUTIFUL GEESE (a wonderful gift of nature) TRUELY TAKE IT TO HEART". So having watched the first two flights disappear over the top and out of sight, we focused our attention on the preserve, and the much larger flight to follow. Within a few short moments the silent cold morning air came alive with the call of the lead goose and in turn the remainder of the flight answering his lonely call. The combined sound of the entire flock was deafening, and stirred an excitement throughout my entire body to the point where I found my self trembling with the excitement of what I knew lie just ahead. Then the sky erupted with the most beautiful sight imaginable, as goose after goose took to the sky, each taking their place behind the other as they have done thought eternity. There are only two words to describe the visual experience "BREATH TAKING".

Now we lay in wait, the anticipation mounting as they slowly approached the county road so as to catch the updraft to carry them over the hill and their long awaited nourishment. Closer and closer they came, across the pasture, over the power line and across the road, only moments away from the end for those unfortunate few who came into our sights. We were actually looking down

at the flight as they crossed the road approaching the hill, then catching the updraft they could soar directly over head. Our shell chambered now and our guns off safety, We peered over the outcropping as they came directly towards us. As I watched in amazement a goose thirty yards away was flying directly into my path slightly lower than eye level. To close to shoot I had intended to let him pass, and fire at several as he did. Then within moments my life took a turn, and I was gifted (by that lonely unknown goose that I will never in my life time see again) the most life changing experience and gift I have ever had or will ever have as long as I live. The experience? Love and Respect for life whatever the case may be. The gift Compassion for all others I meet throughout my life.

Now as he approached at eye level, our eyes met and I was able to detect the fear in his heart knowing it was the end. It seemed as though we looked directly into each others soul so to speak and found a connection. I know as he drew within a few feet of me the true connection was made and a smile broke out on my face as I watched him fly directly overhead just feet away. I could feel the breeze from his wings on my face and see his feet tucked tightly into his body so as not to cause any drag on his body while in flight. I cradled my weapon and turned to watch him as he passed over safely on his way to meet his friends and the much needed nourishment. About ten or fifteen yards away he turned and looked back as to say thank you brother and God Bless you. I watched as he disappeared into the mist, emptied my shotgun and we left Goose Hill never to return, and without giving my friend an answer to his repeated question Why didn't you shoot? When I arrived home I put my shotgun in my gun cabinet where it has remained for the past twenty five years never ever to be shot at any of Gods wonderful creatures again. As I stand out on my deck in the early morning hrs. each day, I see a flock of geese over head, and listen intently to their mournful haunting call. And in my mind I remember my friend, and wonder if he realizes how deeply and beautifully he has effected my life. If only the world could be so blessed. " I AM THE BROTHER TO THE OLD WILD GOOSE"

Clayton Toppari.

For a Dear friend who has given me this opportunity to somewhat release the long over due pain and misery from my heart,
Thank You,
Michael

Below is what Clayton walked away from! For now his spirit soars with the ones that fly! This mini-movie hopefully will cause many to question now, the concept of straight out murder of super intelligent life-forms (birds) and calling it a sport!
Michael Cox
[Http://www.thebirdwhisperer.org](http://www.thebirdwhisperer.org)

