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OCTOBER 1967 50¢

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ON THE COVER

Big game means deer, either white-tails or muleys, to most hunters. But in spite of the thousands of deer that are harvested each year, a really good trophy is another thing. The wise old bucks that carry bragging-size racks just don't stumble out in front of every hunter. A case in point is the crafty whitetail painted by Don Stivers that appears on the cover. The buck has eluded the hunter who made those tracks but has doubled back to have another look at his pursuer. Knowledge of this stunt can work for you. Try doubling back yourself.

Field & Stream

AMERICA'S NUMBER ONE SPORTSMAN'S MAGAZINE



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Pepe grasped the branches of the tree and leaped up just as

DOWN AN UNKNOWN JUNGLE RIVER

By ZANE GREY

PART II

THE STORY SO FAR: In the first installment of our Great Writers series, Zane Grey, George Allen, another American, and a native boatman Pepe, embark on a hunting trip in central Mexico. Leaving from the town of Tamos, a dot on the map in the early 1900's, the party launches their boat in the Santa Rosa River. After several days of skirting treacherous rapids and camping at night along the muddy, tick-infested banks, the party arrives at an island in the middle of the river and decides to set up a base camp. It is from here that Grey sets out on a jaguar hunt and hours later stumbles back to camp, feeling lucky to be alive. The following morning finds Allen determined to bag a trophy jaguar.

ILLUSTRATED BY JACK HEARNE



the jaguar flopped head and paws over the stern gunwale. Then George began to shoot

NEXT morning George said he did not feel very well, and he looked grouchy. He growled around camp in a way that might have nettled me, but having had ten hours of undisturbed sleep, I could not have found fault with anybody. I had expected to be sick and here I was feeling fine.

"Come out of it, Garrapato George," I said, "cheer up. Why don't you take Pinilius Pepe as gunbearer and go out to shoot something? You haven't used up much ammunition yet—not more than a barrel."

My sarcasm was not lost on George.

"Well, if I do go I'll not come chasing in without some game."

"My boy," I replied genially, "if you should happen to turn a corner and run face to face with a jaguar you'd—

you'd let out one squawk and then never touch even the high places of the jungle. You'd take that crazy .32 rifle for a golf stick."

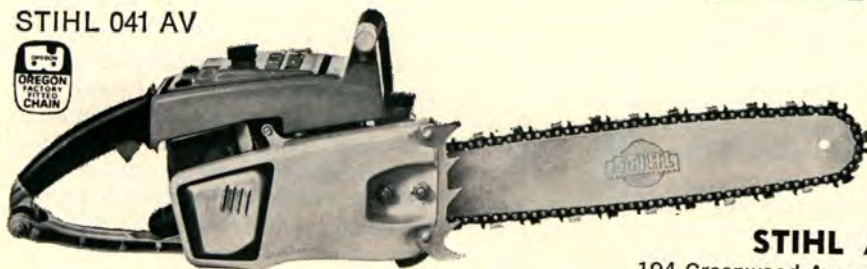
"Would I?" returned George, belligerently. "All right—now you watch me!"

I did watch George a while that morning. He performed a lot of things around camp. For one he bounced bullets off the water in a vain effort to locate the anatomy of a basking alligator. For another he tried his hand at fishing. He could get more bites than any fisherman I ever saw, but he could not catch anything. Bye and bye the heat made me drowsy and I stretched myself on a blanket in the shade, and I bethought myself of a scheme to lose my noisy comrades for a while. (Continued on page 123).

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Down An Unknown Jungle River

(Continued from page 61)

"George, take my hammerless and have Pepe row you along the shady bank of the river," I suggested. "Go sneaking along now and you'll get some shots."

He fell in with this idea, and Pepe, too, looked pleased. They got into the boat and were in the act of starting when George jumped ashore. He reached for his .32 and threw the lever down to see if there was a shell in the chamber. Then he proceeded to fill his pockets with ammunition.

"Be careful, boys," I called, and composed myself for a nap. I promptly fell asleep. How long I slept I had no idea, and when I awoke I lay with languor, not knowing on the moment what had awakened me. Presently I heard a shout, then a rifle shot. Sitting up, I saw the boat some two hundred yards above me drifting along, about the edge of the shade. Pepe was in it alone. He appeared to be excited, for I observed him lay down an oar to pick up a gun, and then reverse his performance. Also he was jabbering to George, who evidently was out on the bank, but invisible to me.

"Now where in the deuce is

George?" I said, rather impatiently.

The hollow crack of George's .32 was a reply to my question. I heard the singing of a bullet. Suddenly, "spou!" it twanged on a branch not twenty feet over my head, and then went whining away. I heard it tick a few leaves or twigs. There was not any languor in the alacrity with which I put the big cypress tree between me and upstream. Then I ventured to peep forth.

"Look out where you're slinging lead!" I yelled. I doubted not that George had treed a black squirrel or was pegging away at parrots. Yet Pepe's motions appeared to carry a good deal of feeling, too much, I thought, presently, for small game. So I began to wake up thoroughly. I lost sight of Pepe behind a low branch of a tree that leaned out some fifty yards above the island. Then I caught sight of him again. He was poling with an oar, evidently trying to go up or down—I could not tell which.

Something prompted me to reach for my automatic, snap the clip in tight and push in the safety.

Then, peering out from behind the cypress, I watched the boat drift

downstream. Pepe stopped poling. Again I called to ask him what George was stalking, and this time Pepe said he did not know, but he did know that the animal was big. Hard upon this came George's sharp voice:

"Look out there on the island. Get behind something, for I'll be shooting that way. I've got him between the river and the flat. He's in this strip of shore brush. There! . . ." *Spang! Spang! Spang!*

Bullets hummed and whistled all about the island. I was afraid to peep out with even one eye. I began to fancy that we were playing Indians.

"Fine, Georgie! You're doing great!" I shouted. "You couldn't come any closer to me if you were aiming at me. What is it?"

Then a crashing of brush and a flash of yellow low down along the bank changed the aspect of the situation.

"Panther! or jaguar!" I ejaculated, in amazement. In a second I was tight-muscled, cold and clear-witted. At that instant I discerned George's white shirt about the top of the brush.

"Go back! Get out in the open!" I ordered. "Do you hear me?"

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"Where is he, Pepe?" shouted George, paying not the slightest attention to me.

"Tigre! Tigre! Tigre!" screamed Pepe, waving his arms, then pointing.

George crashed into the brush. I saw the leaves move—then a long yellow shape. With the quickness of thought, and the aim of the wingshot, I fired. From the brush rose a strange wild scream. George aimed at a shaking mass of grass and vines, but before he could fire a long, lean, ugly beast leaped straight out from the bank to drop into the water with a heavy souse. Like a man half scared to death, Pepe waved my double-barreled gun. Then the water split to let out a yellow head. I was almost in line with the boat. I dared not shoot.

"Kill him, Pepe! Kill him!" I yelled.

Pepe did not know how to hold a gun, let alone aim one. He got the stock under his chin, and, pointing the gun, he evidently tried to fire. But the hammerless did not go off. Then Pepe fumbled at the safety catch which he probably remembered seeing me use. The jaguar, swimming with difficulty, perhaps badly wounded, made right for the boat. Pepe was standing on the seat. Awkwardly he aimed. *Bang!* He pulled both triggers. The recoil knocked him backward. The hammerless fell in the boat and Pepe's broad back hit the water, his bare muscular legs clung to the gunwale, and slipped loose.

He had missed the jaguar, for it kept on for the boat. Still I dared not shoot. What on earth was the matter with George? Then I saw him, standing in the brush, fussing over the crazy .32. Of course, at the critical moment something had gone wrong with the old rifle.

Pepe's head bobbed up just on the other side of the boat. The jaguar was scarcely twenty feet distant and in line with both boat and man. At that instant there was a heavy swirl in the water, and I knew the alligator was in that pool somewhere. George was screaming. It was no wonder I felt my hair stiffen. I kept bawling: "Shoot, George! Hurry, Pepe!—the alligator—look out!"

Pepe grasped the gunwale of the boat just as it swung against the branches of the low-leaning tree. He vaulted rather than climbed aboard.

"Grab an oar, Pepe! Keep the jaguar in the water! Don't let him in the boat!"

But Pepe did not hear me. Nimble he ran and grasped the branches of the tree and leaped up just as the jaguar flopped head and paws over the stern gunwale.

I had only a fleeting instant to get

a bead on that yellow body, and before I could be sure of an aim the branch weighted with Pepe sagged down to hide boat and jaguar.

Then George began to yell and shoot.

Spang! Spang! Spang! Spang!

"You idiot!" I roared. "You'll sink the boat!"

But a little thing like that did not matter to George. He stood up on the bank and worked the lever of his .32 with wild haste. The spat of bullets could be plainly heard, and the sound was that of contact of lead and wood.

Meanwhile Pepe had worked up from the lower end of the branch, and as soon as he straddled it and hunched himself nearer shore the leaves rose out of the water, exposing the boat. George saw the jaguar, for he kept shooting, but I could not see it. Then the boat swung loose from the branch and, drifting with the current, gradually approached the shore.

"Keep cool, George," I called, "we got him now!"

"He's mine! He's mine! Don't you dare shoot! I got him," howled George, in frantic excitement.

"All right. But steady up, can't you? Hit him once, anyway."

Apparently without aim George fired, then, spasmodically working the lever, he fired again. The boat drifted into overhanging vines. Once more I saw a yellow and black object, then a trembling trail of leaves.

George disappeared. I saw no sign of the jaguar and heard no shot or shout from George. Pepe dropped from his branch down to the bank and caught the boat. I called him to come after me, and as soon as I had slipped on some clothes fit to hunt in, I had him row me to the bank. I found the trail of the jaguar, followed it up to the edge of the brush and lost it in the flat. George was standing near. He looked white and shaky and wild with disappointment.

"Oh, I had a dandy shot as he came out, but the blamed gun jammed again. Come on, we'll get him. He's all shot up. I bet I hit him ten times. He won't get away."

But an hour's useless stalking and searching served to lessen his hope and augment his vexation, I finally got him back to camp. The boat was half full of water making it necessary to pull it out on the bank and turn it over. There were ten bullet holes in it.

So while I began to whittle pegs to pound into the bullet holes, George wiped his flushed sweaty face and talked.

"We were up there a piece, round the bend. I saw a black squirrel and went ashore to get him. But I couldn't

find him and, in kicking round in the brush, I came into a kind of trail or runway. Then I ran plumb into that darned jaguar. I was so scared I couldn't remember my gun. But the cat turned and ran. It was lucky he didn't make at me. When I saw him run I got back my courage. I called for Pepe to row downstream and keep a lookout. Then I got out into the flat. I must have come down a good ways before I saw him. I shot and he dodged back into the brush again. I fired into the moving bushes where he was. And pretty soon I ventured to get in on the bank, where I had a better chance. I guess it was about that time that I heard you yell. . . . Then it all happened. You hit him! Didn't you hear him scream? What a jump he made! If it hadn't been so terrible when your hammerless kicked Pepe overboard, I would have died laughing. Then I was paralyzed when the jaguar swam for the boat. He was hurt for the water was bloody. Things came off quick, I tell you. Like a monkey Pepe scrambled into the tree. When I got my gun loaded the jaguar was crouched down in the bottom of the boat watching Pepe. Then I began to shoot. . . . I can't realize he got away from us. What was the reason you didn't knock him?"

"Well, you see, George, there were two fairly good reasons," I replied. "The first was that at that time I was busy dodging bullets from your rifle. And the second was that you threatened my life if I killed your jaguar."

"Did I get as nutty as that? But it was pretty warm there for a little. . . . Say, was he a big one? My eyes were so hazy I didn't see him clear."

"He wasn't big, not half as big as the one I lost yesterday. Yours was a long, wiry cuss like a panther and mean looking."

Pepe sat on the bank, and while he nursed his bruises he smoked. Once he made a speech that was untranslatable, but I gave it an interpretation which was probably near correct.

"That's right, Pepe. We're pretty punk tigre hunters—muchacha punk!"

By 4 o'clock, when we sat down to our supper, I was so thirsty that my mouth puckered as dry as if I had been eating green persimmons. This matter of thirst had begun to be serious for me. Twice a day I had boiled a small pot of water, into which I mixed cocoa, sugar, and condensed milk, and that was all I drank. In spite of my repeated warnings Pepe and George continued to drink the water unboiled. We opened cans of vegetables and fruit on the occasion, and fared sumptuously. As usual the meal was interrupted. A string of

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Muskovy ducks sailed up the river. George had a good shot at the tail end of the flock and missed. Then a line of cranes and herons passed along and over our island. When a small bunch of teal flew by, to be followed by several canvasbacks, I got out my hammerless. It was a fine gun, built for trap shooting, and much too valuable for such a trip. My reason for bringing it was because it was a hard-shooting gun. My former hunting for wild fowl in Mexico had been a failure, owing to a light field gun. On this occasion I had a variety of shells and chose first to try those loaded with 7½ chilled shot and 26 grains of powder—a trap load.

While Pepe leisurely finished the supper, George and I sat upon the bank watching for ducks. Just before the sun went down a hard wind blew for a quarter of an hour, making difficult shooting, but after it died away we had capital sport. Every few moments ducks would whirr by. George's gun misfired several times and he missed most of the ducks, and those he hit dropped a few feathers and went on.

I had decided to lay aside my gun for that time when Pepe pointed down the river.

"Pato Real," he whispered.

I looked eagerly and saw three of the big black ducks flying as high as the treetops and coming fast. Snapping a couple of shells in the gun I stood ready. At the end of the island two of the ducks wheeled to the left, but the big leader came on like a thunderbolt. It seemed to me he made a canvasback look slow. I caught him over the sights of my gun, followed him up till he was even with me and beyond, then sweeping a little ahead of him I pulled both triggers. He swooped up and almost stopped in his flight while a cloud of black feathers puffed away on the wind. He sagged a little, recovered himself, and flew on as strong as ever. The number 7½ chilled shot were not heavy enough to stop him.

"We'll need a big shot for those ducks and for the wild turkeys, too," said George.

"I've all sizes up to buckshot," I replied. "George, let's take a little stroll over where you saw the turkeys."

Pepe shook his head and said if we wanted to see game at this hour the thing to do was to sit still in camp and watch the game come down to the river to drink, and pointed downstream to a herd of small deer walking quietly out on a bar.

"After all the noise we made!" I exclaimed. "Well, this beats me. George, we'll stay right here and not

shoot again tonight. I've an idea we'll see something worth while."

It was Pepe's idea, but I instantly saw its possibilities. There were no tributaries to the river or springs in that dry jungle, and as manifestly the whole country abounded in game it must troop down to the river in the cool of the evening to allay the hot day's thirst. We were perfectly situated for watching the dark bank.

The vanguard of thirsty deer had prepared me for something remarkable and I was in no wise disappointed. The trooping of deer down to the water's edge and the flight of wild fowl upstream increased in proportion to the gathering shadows of twilight. The deer must have scented us, for they raised their long ears and stood still as statues, gazing across toward the upper end of the island. But they showed no fear. It was only when they had drunk their fill and wheeled about to go up the narrow trails over the bank that they showed uneasiness and haste. This made me wonder if they were fearful of being ambushed by jaguars.

A low exclamation from Pepe brought my attention to interesting developments closer at hand.

"Javelin!" he whispered.

On the channel side of the island was impenetrable pitchy blackness. I tried to pierce it with straining eyes, but I could not even make out the shoreline that I knew was only ten yards distant. Still I could hear, and that was thrilling enough. Everywhere on this side, along the edge of the water and up the steep bank, were faint tickings of twigs and soft rustlings of leaves. Then there was a continuous sound, so low as to be almost inaudible, that resembled nothing I could think of so much as a long line of softly dripping water. It swelled in volume to a tympany roll, and ended in a sharp clicking on rocks and a gentle splashing in the water. A drove of javelin had come down to drink. Occasionally the glint of green eyes made the darkness all the weirder. Suddenly a long piercing wail, a keen cry almost human, quivered into the silence.

"Panther!" I whispered instantly to the boys. It was a different cry from that of the lion of the Rockies, but there was a strange wild note that betrayed the species. A stillness fell, dead as that of a subterranean cavern. Strain my ears as I might I could not detect the faintest sound. It was as if no javelin or any other animals had come down to drink. That listening palpitating moment seemed endless. What mystery of wild life it meant, that silence following the cry of the panther! Then the

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jungle sounds recommenced—the swishing of water, the brushing in the thicket, stealthy padded footsteps, the faint snapping of twigs. Some kind of cat let out an unearthly squall. Close upon this the clattering of deer up the bank on the other side drew our sharp attention. The deer were running, and the striking of little hoofs ceased in short order. We listened intently. From far over the bank came a sound not unlike a cough, deep, hoarse, inexpressibly wild and menacing.

"Tigre!" cried Pepe, gripping me hard with both hands. I could feel him trembling, and had specific proof of how the native of the jungle-belt feared the jaguar.

Again the cough rasped out, nearer and louder this time. It was not a courage-provoking sound.

A third time the jaguar voiced his advent upon the night scene. I made up my mind to listen with clearer ears; however, the cough or roar was not repeated.

Moreover a silence set in so unbroken that it seemed haunted by the echoes of those wild jungle cries. Perhaps I had the haunting echoes in my mind. I knew what had sent the deer away, and stilled the splashing and creepings—it was the hoarse voice of the lord of the jungle.

The black mantle of night seemed to lift from under the trees, leaving a gloom that slowly paled. Through the dark branches, low down over the bank, appeared the white tropical moon. Shimmering gleams chased the shadows across the ripples, and slowly the river brightened to a silver sheen.

It only made the island more beautiful, lonely and wild. The thought of leaving it gave me a pang. But I was chained to the haunts of men. The old wild order of life could come to me only in dreams and in fleeting stolen moments such as this, when daring and endurance earned the semblance of a primitive day. It was only a hunting trip, this jaunt of mine to work and fight and kill, yet unquestionably, while it saddened me somehow, it strengthened my hold on better things.

And among them was the feeling of the wild places that I could never see, where the sun shone, the wind blew, the rain fell; where the colors and beauty changed with each passing hour; where myriads of living things strove and died, and wild creatures evolved beings in the image of man; where year after year, century after century night never fell but upon tragedy and inevitable nature never changed her eternal plan.

(To be concluded)

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