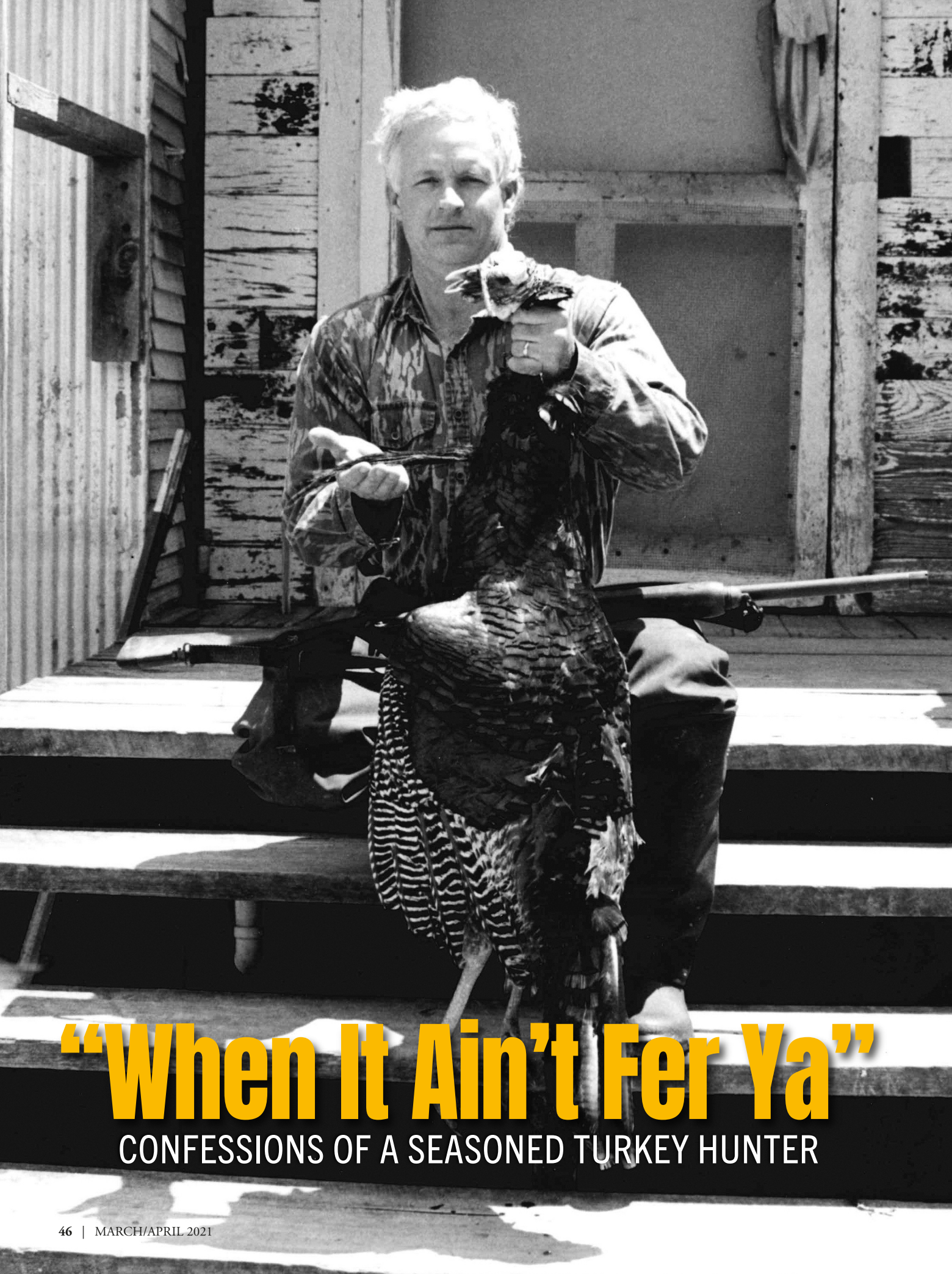




“When It Ain’t Fer Ya”

CONFESSIONS OF A SEASONED TURKEY HUNTER

BY BILL LESTER

THE YEAR WAS 1994, the month was April, the season was turkey. Homer Luckett, a long-time friend and turkey hunting companion, had invited me down to Valley Park to the hunting camp his grandfather had started with a group of other men in 1947 named **Po Luck**. It was part of a large block of woods called Delta Wildlife and Forestry, Inc. The other camps that were part of the block were Parker Gary, Thornton, and Greasy Bayou. The call came mid-afternoon. "We can get there before they go to roost if we hurry." I was hurried. I gathered up my stuff and looked at my Remington auto Model 1100. It could stand a cleaning, so I quickly took it apart for a quick wipe-down. That model has two stainless steel rings and a rubber washer that make the gas-operated bolt open and close if they are in the right



The Winchester that shot one foot to the RIGHT and the trumpet Lester used that fateful day.

This is the "ain't fer ya" turkey.

W. C. Lester almost killed it on the afternoon of April 9, 1994. The above made this drawing so Homer, Jim, Steve, and Boyd could see what he looked like and would not waste time trying to kill him; because as Johnny Spinoso says,

"when it ain't fer ya, it ain't fer ya!"

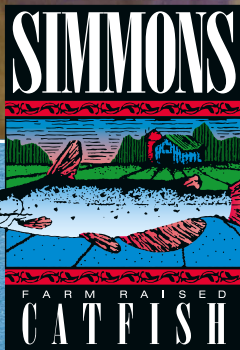
W C Lester April 1994



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order. I had come to the time in life where glasses were necessary but had not *accepted* that time had come, so I did not reassemble the rings and washer in the right order. The bolt would close, but the shotgun would not fire. My awareness of this would come later.

The afternoon light was beginning to give way to the fall of night. Then I saw them. A pair together, stepping on each step without leaving a sound. They came along an old slough that Roosevelt could have hunted bears by and stopped. I raised the Model 1100 slowly, pressed the safety, and thought, "I'm about to take one of Homer's turkeys. I'll be ahead of him now." I squeezed the trigger—nothing. My breath hung in my throat. I tried to

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"When it ain't fer ya, it ain't fer ya!"

— from Lester's drawing of the elusive turkey

swallow it but could not. With no breath, I eased my pointing finger over the bolt latch and pulled back as slow as possible. The turkeys watched and were unafraid. The shell that I thought had misfired hung out of the receiver. With my second finger, I tried to wiggle the shell loose while still holding the bolt-latch open. The shell fell to the ground. I released the bolt and the shell went home. The turkeys jumped but did not run off, as if they were aware of my predicament. I squeezed the trigger again—nothing. Still no breath. Darkness came as I sat motionless. The turkeys went to roost in the slough over my head. I crawled out slowly in the dark.

Back at camp, I told the story. My gun was inspected by all and pronounced broken. At the back of the camp house was a large floor trunk that held Mr. Luckett's old Model 12 Winchester with a 32-inch barrel. Mr. Luckett, they said,

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was coon hunting one night and riding a small mule that stumbled on a cypress knee and fell. The shotgun was in the scabbard as the mule and Mr. Luckett met the ground. Mr. Luckett was okay, but the shotgun barrel was bent, and they said it shot one foot to the right.

A full hour before daylight, I was on my knees crawling back to the roasted turkey with the old shotgun as long as I was. As I waited, I was sure the turkeys above me could hear the thumping of my heart. Day came. The turkeys flew down. The old shotgun had been on my knee the whole hour at the ready. I was consumed by my thumping heart. As I pulled the trigger, I could not remember in the moment if they said it shot one foot to the *right* or one foot to the *left*. I fired and pumped. I fired and pumped. I fired and pumped. The turkeys left in a great hurry taking all their feathers with them.

Back at camp, I told the story with animated detail. And when I showed them how the shell fell to the ground, the sound of the shell hitting the camp's wooden floor brought uncontrollable laughter and some tears that went on for some minutes. The Lucketts' long-time friend, Johnny Spinoso, was at the camp table reading the newspaper and listening. He put the newspaper down and folded his arms and said, "Sonny boy, when it ain't fer you, it ain't fer ya." Much tears and laughter began again.

And as the years have passed, some of the hunters are gone, but the ones still here break into laughter whenever they see me. **DU**



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