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By John Ross

Of the nation's grand dame resorts – and by that I mean those which have weathered the vicissitudes of more than a century – none offers men and women of sporting inclination more than the Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.

I know this is a sweeping statement, but I would not make it just because

Alan Williamson, major domo of the Greenbrier Sporting Club, put me up the night before the club's opening dove shoot last

fall. The roots of my testimony stretch back fifty years to my maternal granddad, an amateur golfer of some note.

Granddad and Gram traveled by train to play magnificent courses in the East. Spring would find them

in Callaway Gardens, Waynesville, or at Pine Hurst. When maples turned chrome and vermillion and golfers with early tee-times were apt to face frost on the fairways, they'd head for the Equinox, the Homestead, or the Greenbrier.

Peerless resorts of impeccable lineage, the latter trio still pamper guests in a manner once bestowed on presidents, royalty and magnates of rail and oil.

You're welcomed by a bellman who hands you a chit for your car, loads your bags, and introduces you to the clerk at registration.

At Greenbrier Sporting Club, you can enjoy whatever type of fishing or shooting you desire, all amid beautiful scenery and elegant accommodations.

She greets you as if you were a favorite uncle or aunt. She asks when you'd prefer dinner, suggests making reservations if you're in the mood for full-dress gourmet fare, or offers up the grill where neckties for gentlemen are not *de rigueur*



After casting to rainbows and browns on Howard's Creek, you can head to one of the four beautiful golf courses that embrace the stream.

SPORTING CLASSICS



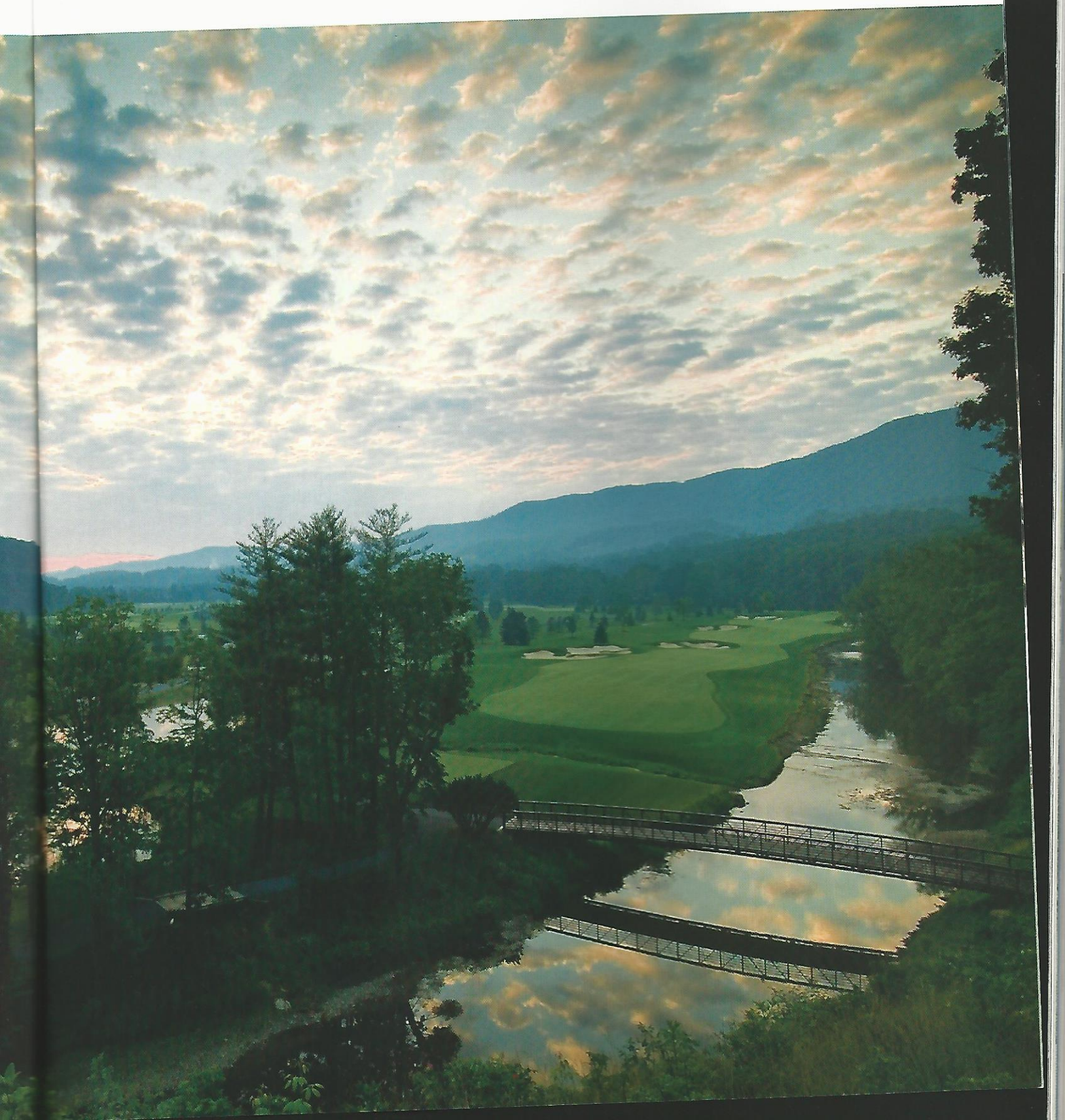
but sport jackets are. Ladies may wear slacks if they must. You get the picture.

So it is with the Greenbrier today. Elegance, charm and grace radiate from the massive, white-columned hotel sited at the spring with sulphurous and supposedly curative

properties, which has attracted visitors since before Cornwallis surrendered his sword to Washington. Gentility spreads up gentle hills of pine and hardwood that hide scores of cottages and down three and a half-miles of Howard's Creek through a quartet of

golf courses, beginning with the Old White links, which opened in 1913.

These days, Howard's Creek is stocked with rainbows and browns of one to two pounds plus. It flows from riffle to pool to cut bank to run, enhanced here and there with small overflow weirs that oxygenate



the stream and provide deep shady holes where trout hang out in late August and September. Caddis and mayflies hatch, but fans of dry flies will have their greatest success with ants, crickets and hoppers when June warms into July. Fishing is best early and late in the day.

For anglers interested in pursuing wild trout, there's no better water than the Jackson River, forty miles to the east in Virginia. An upper reach in Bath County is governed by catch

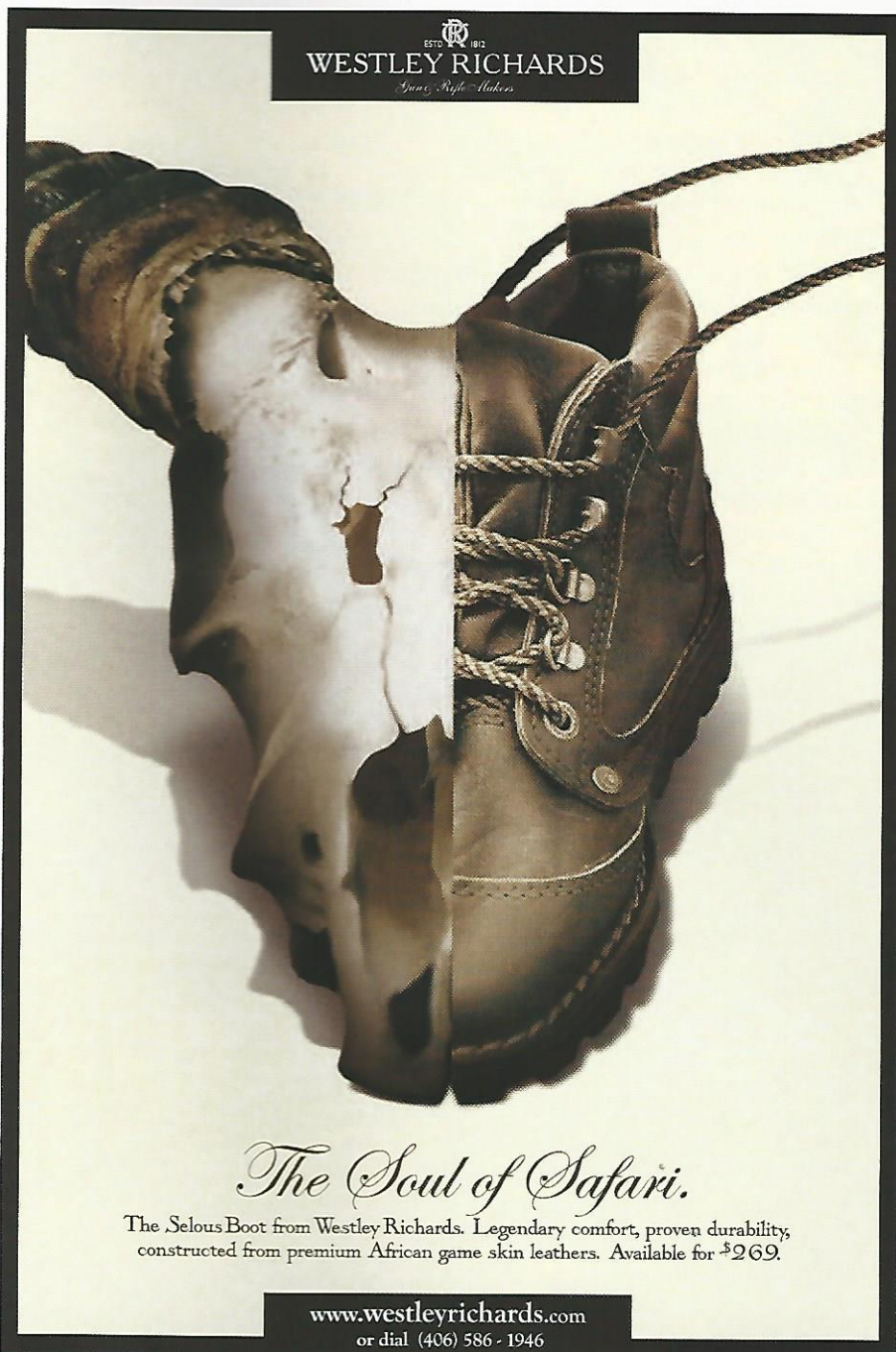
and release regs. You'll find browns and bows most of the year. Below Garthwright Dam, the Jackson tailwater carries healthy stocks of wild browns, rainbows and cuttbows, the origin of which nobody seems to know. If smallmouth whet your fancy as much as they do mine, you might head for the James River about an hour east of the resort, or to the Greenbrier River a few miles to the west. Guides and fishing instruction are available.

Across Howard's Creek, on a nose of Kate's Mountain, sits Greenbrier's Gun Club. Three immaculate combination trap and skeet ranges stretch across a low bench as carefully groomed as the resort's golf courses. Beyond, in a hardwood draw, is the ten-station sporting clays layout. Each station is served by three to five traps. Instructors will tailor a fifty-round course designed to overcome whatever shotgunning flaws yours may be. Williamson, a certified clays instructor and one heck of a nice guy to boot, or one of a half-dozen other teachers will coach you through your foibles with finesse as gentle as the waiter who serves your prime rib.

Ruffed grouse populations are good to excellent, but the coverts are, in a word, challenging here in the tortured mountains of West Virginia. Thickets of bittersweet sprout amongst angular boulders plucked from sharp ridges by frost. Vines of fox grape weep over locust and beech felled by the ice storms of early spring. The Greenbrier offers guides whose bird dogs will hold a point for those hardy enough to negotiate the terrain.

Of more gentle sport are chukar, dove, duck and pheasant hunts available on nearby Stony Brook Plantation. Rolling over more than 1,000 acres less than an hour south of the Greenbrier, one can arrange the type of shoot one desires. Pheasants, released from the crest of a pine-fringed hill, sail over butts below. Ducks rocket past reedy blinds into still-water ponds. You can walk up chukar and pheasant behind a pointer, setter or lab as is your choice. Here too, guides are available.

Among the best sport is the annual Labor Day dove shoot and barbeque. Opening with a round of released pheasants before lunch, gunners then head to blinds in cut cornfields where, come 3 o'clock, doves begin to swarm. Zipping



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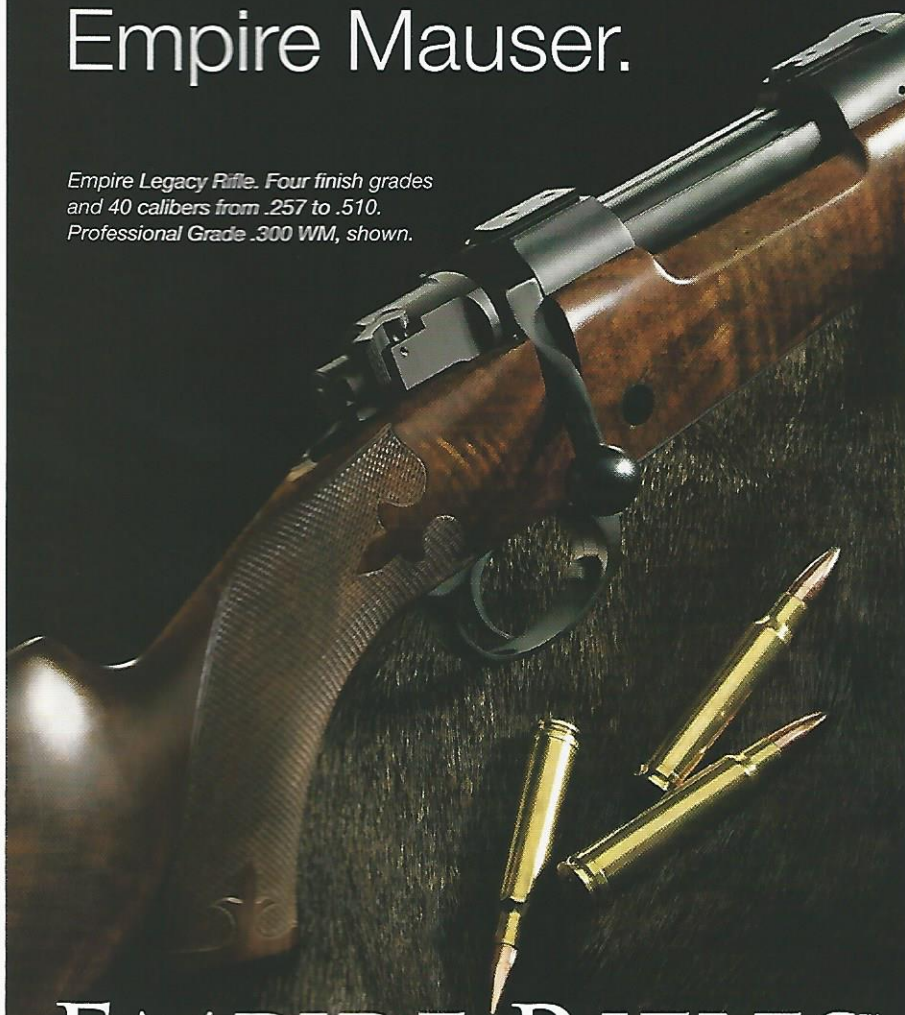
Sporting clays clubhouses designed in either the rustic or traditional style that serve dual roles as a retail facility and a gathering place for the shooters and guests.

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along, they jink and dive, and only those shooters who've mastered the intricacies of extended lead and instant correction leave the field with their limits of twelve birds. I could count my bag with the number of fingers needed to hold a cigar.

Had I not taken the vow of poverty that comes with early adoption of the outdoor writing life, I might have been a banker or doctor or entrepreneur and amassed the seven figures of extra capital required to buy one of the Sporting Club's 500 lots and erect a second home. I'd debate whether to build along the new Sam Snead Course, bounded by Howard's Creek, or on a forested ridge overlooking the valley below.

At my new country manse, I'd host cocktails on the patio. Limos would carry my guests, my wife and me to the Greenbrier for dinner. Our reservations are at 8:45. Dancing would follow. We'd repair to the terrace with our cigars and snifters. And later, when the last strains of "String of Pearls" drift into the night and the band folds its tent, my bride would rest her head on my shoulder as the driver carries us back up the hill to our house. In the morning, I'd take my four-weight cane rod and tickle a few trout 'til the sun rose high enough to dry the tennis courts. 

IF YOU WANT TO GO

The Greenbrier Sporting Club is a gated residential community adjacent to the hotel grounds. In addition to sites for custom estates, mountain cabins of log and fieldstone, and houses in country-style clapboard, facilities include a spa, indoor and outdoor pools, tennis, an equestrian center and myriad nature-oriented recreational programs for children as well as adults.

For more information, contact The Greenbrier Sporting Club, 304-536-7792; e-mail: info@grsc.com or visit www.thegreenbriersportingclub.com.