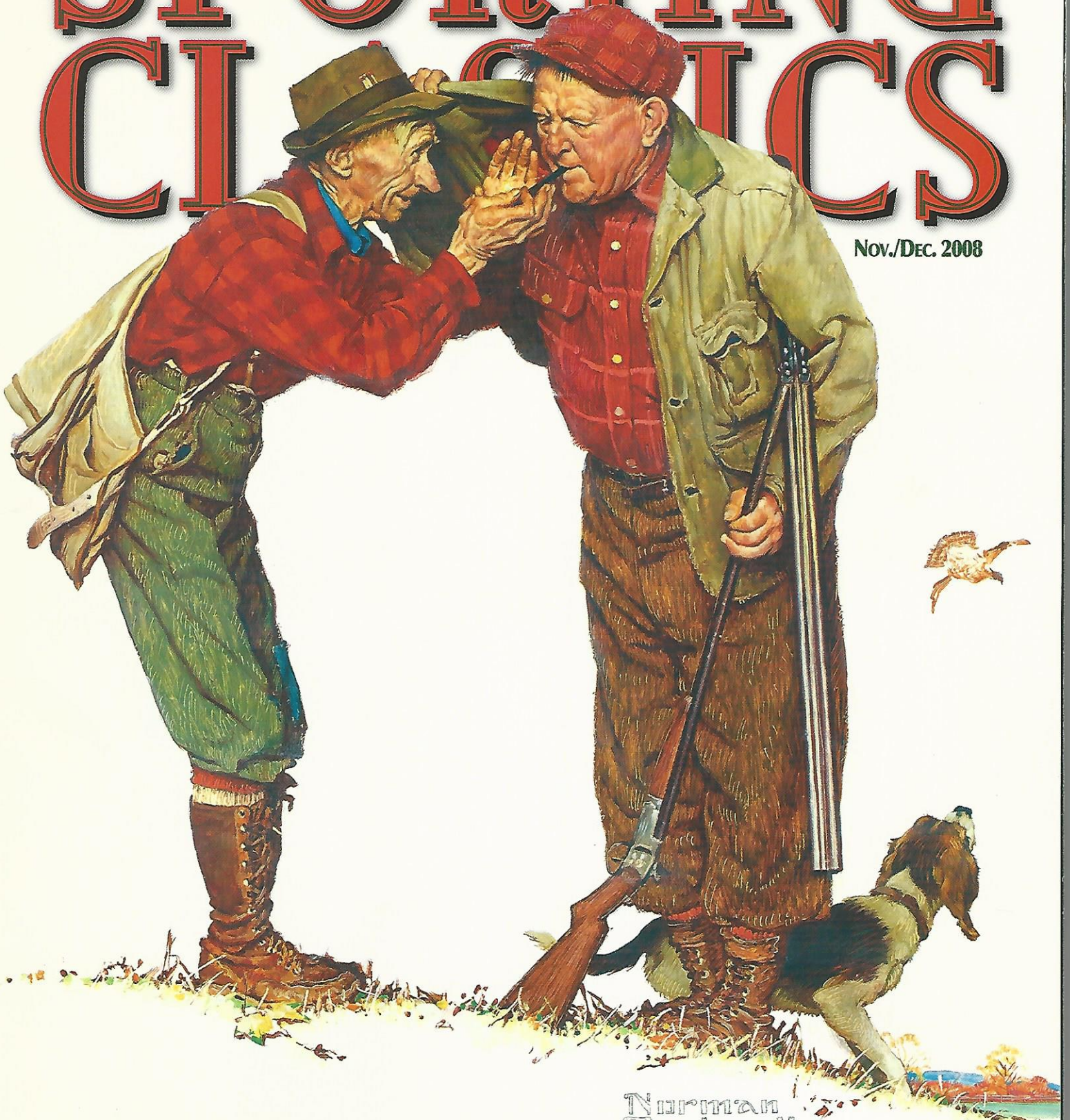


SPORTING CLIPARTS

NOV./DEC. 2008



Norman
Rockwell

T

Travel

By John Ross

Like a big old brown, I lurk in the depths of the stream I know best and feed on the morsels that the current washes my way. My home waters are Virginia's trout streams, cascading from the heights of Shenandoah National Park and the Washington and Jefferson National Forests. In addition, I prowl Mossy Creek, the Commonwealth's premier spring run; our prime tailwaters, the Jackson and the Smith; and occasionally, the Shenandoah for smallmouth.

When it comes to fishing, I've been a freshwater guy. The only things I like salty are French fries and stories told on the back porch by friends whose tongues have been loosened by libations. That was until I met Mike Standing.

Mike captains *Waterman*, a 56-foot custom Carolina sportfisherman, berthed at Rudee Inlet on Virginia Beach. His is the fourth generation of Standings to wrestle a living from this sandy cusp that juts out into the Atlantic just north of the line that separates Virginia

From off-shore marlin and dolphin to big rockfish in the surf, Virginia Beach is a year-round mecca for saltwater anglers.



catch their livings from the bays and bluewater below the mouth of the James River.

I'd been lured from my lie in northern Virginia by promise of hooking blue and white marlin that cruise 60 miles off shore along the edge of the continental shelf. Having just finished one book (*Rivers of Restoration*, now available from Tony Lyons' Skyhorse Publishing) and about to birth another, I was eager to lay aside my laptop and fly rods for something outside my ken.

My colleague was Stephanie Pancratz, managing editor of *Sport Fishing*, but as new to angling for marlin as I. We boarded the *Waterman* at 5 a.m., climbed up through the hatch to the cockpit, and watched Mike fire up the 1000-horse diesel. Judiciously, Mike fingered the thrusters that pivoted the big white bow out of its narrow slip and into Rudee channel leading to open ocean.

Before leaving the hotel, I'd logged into noaa.gov, checking on the location of an occluded

from North Carolina. Among his progenitors number several watermen, that sturdy breed who

front stalled 40 miles to the north. Along the front blew winds gusting to 30 knots, not my kind of fun in a small boat on blue water. Mike set an east-southeasterly heading, and we pushed steadily toward the dawn at 22 knots. The Waterman rose and fell rhythmically with the two-foot swells. We prayed the winds would stay well to the northwest.

In the half-light before sunrise, mates Mikey and Gary tied the baits. We would troll eight set-ups. Outside to port Gary rigged an Hawaiian Eye, a heavy blue-and-silver streamer, followed by a horse ballyhoo. Then came a teaser: a set of four day-glow red plastic fish shapes that preceded another bait, this one a smaller ballyhoo. Just to the inside, Mikey launched a four-foot-long Marlin-X decoy.

Two other small ballyhoo were set to run in the wake 20 feet astern of the transom. To starboard ran a dredge that looked like a mobile of red and yellow and green plastic fish that parents might hang over their baby's crib. Then came a baited teaser with another ballyhoo running far to starboard.

We settled down, dragging the baits and telling fish tales as the *Waterman* rolled gently, making little more than five knots. Off to starboard, Mike spied a patch of greenish yellow sargassum, or gulfweed. Dolphin, the fish not the mammal, feed on baitfish found near these floating patches of grasses.

Mike adjusted our course, and dolphin, with backs as blue as a clear Canadian sky split the surface, racing to intercept our baits. Stout rods bowed with three hookups, and then a fourth bent nearly to the gunwale under the force of a mighty strike.

Gary wrested it from its holder and handed it to Stephanie. Her back arched as she tried to point the tip skyward while reeling frantically to keep up pressure on whatever had taken the bait – the Hawaiian Eye with the horse ballyhoo.

"Blue marlin," hollered Mike from the cockpit. Mike and I saw the line curve from dead astern,

**HEAR TODAY.
GONE TOMORROW?**



esp
ELECTRONIC SHOOTERS PROTECTION
The most comfortable, most effective, most sophisticated hearing protection a shooter or hunter can wear.

800.767.7791

15290 Gadsden Ct
Brighton • CO 80603
espamerica.com

NEW DIGITAL MODELS

New ESP Series 3 Digital

Our top-of-the-line model. The most advanced digital technology on the market produces the ultimate in smooth, natural CD-quality ambient sound. Multi-memory programming allows you to instantly select different modes for specific sound environments.

NEW COLORS

Black
Field Green
Safety Orange

We guarantee the fit and function of all ESP products for one full year from date of purchase. Plus, we will refund your entire purchase price within the first 30 days if for any reason you are not completely satisfied. You'll find our service to be friendly, personal, and utterly professional at all times.

—Jack Homa, President

Do you really need a gun this good?

K1 Single Shot Rifles

The elegant lines and balance of a best quality, single shot rifle have captivated passionate firearms aficionados for over a century. The unique Franz Jager breech system at the heart of Merkel's single shot rifle allows maximum strength with the lightest possible weight.

Ultimate Handling

- Lightweight—5.5 pounds—with 24 inch barrel
- Compact, tilt-block action, overall length under 40 inches
- Slim, balanced, "alive in your hands" pointability

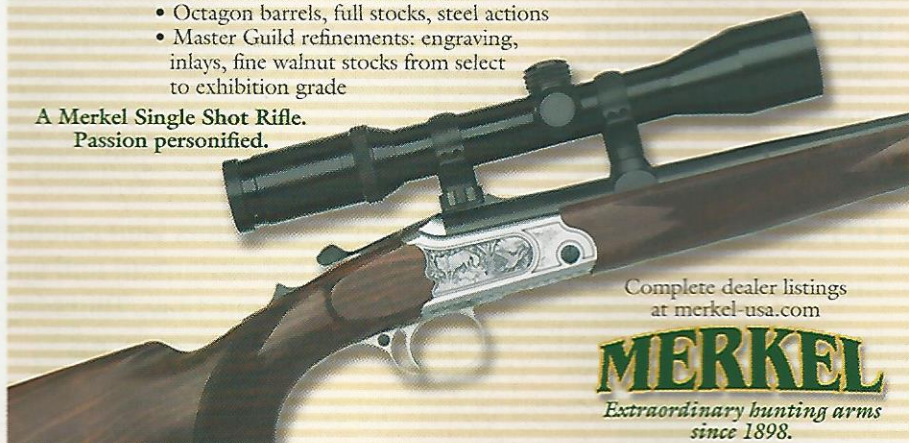
Remarkable Accuracy

- Cold hammer-forged barrels, made by Merkel
- Finely-tuned, quick adjustable trigger
- Steel-on-steel, cammed block lockup

Exquisite Choices

- A wide variety of calibers, magnums included
- Additional fitted barrels available
- Octagon barrels, full stocks, steel actions
- Master Guild refinements: engraving, inlays, fine walnut stocks from select to exhibition grade

A Merkel Single Shot Rifle.
Passion personified.



Complete dealer listings
at merkel-usa.com

MERKEL
Extraordinary hunting arms
since 1898.

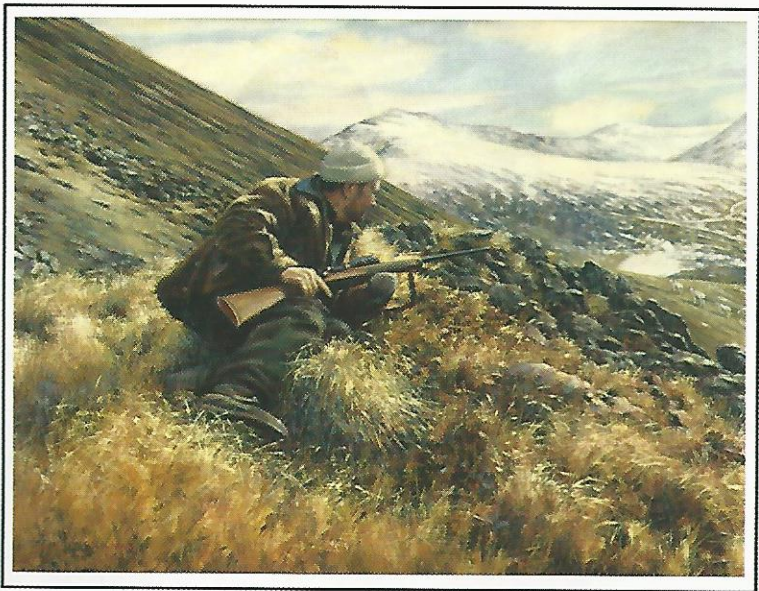
quartering to port, and quartering again back toward the boat. He reached for the throttle to slam the boat forward into the sea, but too late. The slack in the line was all the marlin needed to free itself.

For three more hours we trolled but couldn't buy a bite from either blue or white marlin. Sidling up to a NOAA weather buoy, we cast chunks of bait for dolphin and soon filled the fish box. I longed for an 8-weight fly rod and a bushy white Clouser. Mike and Gary served up the dolphin a' la peppercorn that night at Mike's restaurant, The Waterman's Surfside Grille.

Next morning saw us on *ReelTime*, a 23-foot Parker outboard run by Fletcher Dunton out of Taylor's Landing. Our plan was to fly-cast for schooly rockfish near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel or chase Spanish mackerel or spadefish, a broad-sided silver and white striped species known to wreck havoc on tackle light as ours. Alas, the front had moved south. Its winds set small craft warnings flying and imprisoned us in Little Creek where we contented ourselves with flounder on the fly rod.

Virginia Beach is a year-round Mecca for saltwater anglers. January is known for heavy rockfish, found inshore. Check out the Mid Atlantic Rockfish Shootout, a tourney to be held January 8 - 10 in 2009. You'll find rocks here in March and blues from April into July. In mid-May bluefin tuna show up, and marlin begin hitting in July. They continue into October, when folks have to make do with dolphin until the calendar turns a year older.

Mike offers two- to three-day charter packages featuring a couple of days offshore and a half-day inshore with meals and lodging for about \$1,500 per person for parties of four. See his site: watermansportfishing.com for more info. Two-day packages from Fletcher are about \$800 per person. Visit Fletcher's web at TeamReelTime.com.



The waiting game

Oil on Board 16 x 20

JAMES WIENS

Sporting Art

Jamesewiens@shaw.ca

SportsmanOriginals.com

Do you really need a gun this good?

KR1 Big Game Rifles

An accurate, dependable hunting rifle becomes a trusted companion, delivering confidence for that tough shot. The KR1 is an all-around hunting rifle, combining proven bolt-action reliability, innovative features and Merkel craftsmanship.

Extreme Versatility

- Interchangeable calibers, standard or magnum
- Compact take-down portability
- Left- or right-hand actions

Outstanding Accuracy

- Cold-hammer forged barrels, made by Merkel
- Combination, single set trigger
- Integral scope to barrel mounting

Rugged Dependability

- Direct six-lug, bolt-to-barrel lockup
- Fully enclosed action, "field conditions" proof
- Three-position safety

**A Merkel Big Game Rifle.
Hunting confidence personified.**



Complete dealer listings
at merkel-usa.com

MERKEL
Extraordinary hunting arms
since 1898.