

Waiting for the shooting light ...

Let's begin at the beginning. My name is John Wootters and I'll be the author of this outdoors column for as long as it suits Publisher Clint Schroeder. I'm a native Texan, now living on Johnson Creek outside Ingram. Some of you may have heard of me.

I've been a full-time outdoors writer since 1968, having contributed to virtually every magazine that publishes hunting, fishing, shooting, or technical firearms material. I've pounded out six books, of which the best-known is "Hunting Trophy Deer," the all-time best seller on that subject.

For the last 20 or so years of my active career, I was Executive Editor of Petersen's "Hunting" magazine and the author of the monthly column "Buck Sense," the perennial best-read feature in that magazine.

I'm now semi-retired, writing occasional articles for a few magazines edited by old friends. I've made my living as a writer all my life and I still love it. That's why I volunteered to contribute this column for the West Kerr Current.

It's a little humbling to take over this space from its founding columnist, Ron Mahon. I haven't met Ron, but I'd like to. I admired the columns of his that were printed before he had to resign. He had a lot to say, all of it worthwhile, and he got it said in straightforward English. I will be pleased if my successor can say the same about me when I finally hang up my guns.

Egotism is not why this first column is all about me. My job here is to entertain and inform you, and to that end I will welcome your comments and opinions. It's just as important that you know where I'm coming from on the topics of interest to Texas hunters and anglers. Knowing a little about my background will make it easier for you to evaluate my statements, especially on controversial subjects. I promise to make an honest effort to keep my opinions and the facts clearly labeled.

There will be controversies. I'm too old to start shying from hot topics or from stating things as I see them. We may talk a little politics from time to time. My viewpoint will always be in favor of the responsible sportsman, the best friend Texas' game has ever had.

I'll never back away from the animals-rights folks, or from the wicked people who are determined to take away your right to own and lawfully use personal firearms. I'm a veteran of six years on the Board of Directors of the National Rifle Association, and long before that I was fighting the anti-gun nuts on radio, television and in face-to-face debates in my native Houston. I may be older now but I haven't gotten any softer on gun control.

I believe to the core of my soul that the Founding Fathers meant exactly what they wrote in the Bill of Rights, word for word, not only in the sacred Second Amendment, but in all amendments, One through Ten. I'm not exactly a single-issue voter, but I do check a political candidate's position on "gun control" first. If he's OK there, I'll consider his other issues.

I am a former president of the Houston Safari Club International chapter, as well as a national director, so I've



After hunting most of the glamour game of the world, Wootters still finds the Texas whitetail deer the most fascinating of all game animals.

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got a bunch of time-in-grade in the anti-hunting wars, too.

On more pleasant topics, I've hunted all of North America's big game with modern rifles, most of it with traditional black powder rifles, and some of it with handguns. I am not a bowhunter.

I have been an avid handloader for 40 years, have published two books on reloading, and have contributed handloading columns to "Shooting Times," "Rifle," "Handloader," "Guns & Ammo" and Peterson's "Hunting." I may be able to help out — by mail — with readers' reloading problems.

But it won't be all guns and hunting. You fishermen will own part of this column, too — fresh and salt water, from yellow catfish through largemouths and rainbow

trout on dry flies, to blue marlin.

The column will be more than "killin' and ketchin," though. One of my books is on wildlife photography, and I've cranked out scores of articles on birding, reptiles and amphibians, nature study, predator calling, scuba diving, camping, archaeology and almost any other aspect of the outdoors you can name. Except mountain climbing; I've always figured hard-core mountaineers are running about a quart low.

My real specialty is guns and shooting ... big game (including Africa), small game, upland birds, waterfowl, varmints, muzzleloaders, cowboy action, benchrest shooting and a whole lot of just plain old-fashioned plinking with rifles, pistols and shotguns. The smell of burning gunpowder beats any rose I ever sniffed and I've been accused of using Hoppe's No. 9 for aftershave.

And this I know: there's nothing more exciting than sitting out in the pasture on a cold, still Hill Country morning, waiting for shooting light. C'mon along and share the fun, every week in CURRENTLY OUTDOORS.