

# WOODS 'N WATER™

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45TH YEAR 6TH ISSUE

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**Hail the  
Handler**


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**THE KOHLER CHRONICLES:**

Advice & Anecdotes from a Third-Generation Land Broker

by Jon Kohler, JD  
Broker / Partner

**JON KOHLER & ASSOCIATES**

# All Hail the Handler

*"They often say a man at the BBQ grill is the closest thing to a king... in my world, handling a bird dog is the closest thing to being a king. We hope you enjoy this short story written by our friend, Durrell Smith, a great dogman of the south." — Jon Kohler*

by Durrell Smith

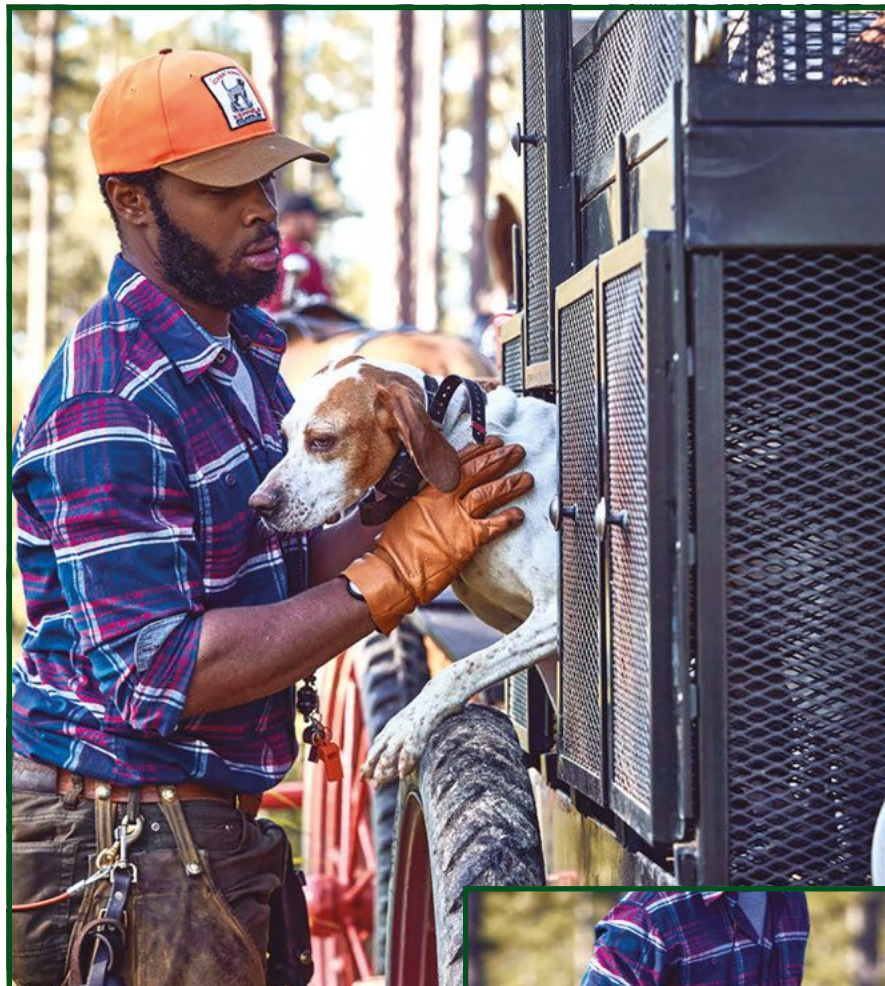
The big man knew the dog wasn't lost, but there was a growing sense of skepticism in the woods. He was a hollerin', sqallin' man. He touted a big booming voice that called back to Howlin' Wolf himself...

"Ahhh OOOHHHH!!!!!"


And, his song rang, savage and illustrative, his lyrics violently weaving the fibrous pine straw. Last time he saw the dog was moments after the old neck leather left the lead. Last words he spoke to the dog was, "Get Out!"

The guests hadn't seen the dog since then and maintained a nervous assurance that their handler knew the lay of the land and were forced to admit internally their own diminishing sense of trust. They had to give in, there was much to the unknown. The piney woods

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**ALL HAIL THE HANDLER!** Elite dog handler Durrell Smith is pictured here, working with one of his beautiful bird dogs.


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# He's out there getting the job done

(Continued from page 8)

were the abyss, and the dog seems lost to oblivion.

"Trust the dog, ain't much else to it," the big man said.

"Was he lost?" The guests wanted to know, but didn't want to appear rude.

"Naw...just way gone. Likely on

point somewhere."

It was just after the first crack of daybreak, and the big man sat high in his trooper saddle. He pointed with his eyes, sending a far-flung gaze that his scout knew all too well. The young man knew that the dog was in the area and to go find him in the direction of his gaze.



Photo courtesy of Jon Kohler

He raised that dog from the bottle. He saved the dog from getting stuck in his mother's birth canal. The dog was born on the road as his dam was rushed to the vet. He knew the ins-and-outs of that dog, Jack. He loved that dog for that connection, he put confidence into him as a puppy, and ever since, the dog hailed to his handler.

"I put my hands on that dog. He's out there getting the job done."

The big man came from a school of hard knocks and knew nothing else. His days were long, started early and always ended well into the nightfall.

His dogs were all calibrated, dialed in and tailor-made to his liking, but not fit for the impatience of a trigger-happy clientele. They too must hail to the model of patience, a dogman in his element.

His dog then cut back into view, quickly, an apparition between pine stands. His range was big as the day was long. He was a leggy, 60-pound 2-year-old that charged the woods with an exuberant performance that is only witnessed by a select few, yet appreciated by all.

His grace contradicted the brashness of his master's bellowing. And as the call cut deep, echoes lost to the distance, the dog cut hard and kicked dirt. His tail rising high in harmony with an already rising sun.

"That sir, is your point." The guests approached and the covey rose.

Two shots rang, feathers fell, blanketed by the coolness of Lord's whisper. There was worship going on here, all hailing to the handler.

## A Message from Jon Kohler:

Our philosophy is that the plantation is all about the dog. We hold the dog on a pedestal – so much so that Jake, my own pointer, serves as our beloved icon. We like to think of the plantation as the dog's canvas, and his work in the field is the art. However, the handler too should be hailed.

He works long and hard hours, and knows the lay of the land perhaps better than the landowners themselves.

Like Durrell, "the big man," and the many great handlers that came be-

fore them, there is an unspoken bond between a handler and bird dog.

No one knows every fiber of that dog's being better than the handler. Hours afield, hours training and a whole lot of sweat equity culminate in that final point, tall and true, and the sweet reward of the covey flush.

All hail the handler indeed. For without him, we wouldn't be able to pursue this great sport, fueled by our passion for that tiny little bobwhite, and embrace a lifestyle so dear to our hearts.

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