Clarion Review

Biography

Adventures with Sam
Sam W. McQuade
CreateSpace
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Four Stars (out of Five)

If you go dove hunting in Argentina, you are expected to kill a thousand birds a day or "suffer the ignominy" of fellow hunters. That is what happened to Sam W. McQuade on the first day of the hunt, when he shot only five-hundred. But for the following three days, according to his account in *Adventures with Sam*, a chronicle of his fulfillment of an unabashedly macho, late-in-life bucket list, McQuade exceeds the thousand mark thanks to a couple of fine Benelli shotguns and a champion reloader named Pablo. McQuade admits feeling a little sqeamish after such slaughter, but then, after being informed of the "biblical pestilence of doves" that decimates Argentinian row crops, he concludes that "it is a lot of fun to help Argentina reduce the dove threat by shooting 1,000 per day."

McQuade's other adventures are a mixed bag. For ten years, he trained Cocker and Springer spaniels for field trials. There was Budman, "the only dog [he] really loved," who won a major event, and Boone, who humped a judge and ate a bird rather than retrieve it. McQuade is moved, effortlessly it seems, from one passion to another. For a time it was flying, and, later, mountain biking over ferocious terrain.

The author owns a North Dakota beer distributorship that finances his adventures, but, one suspects, a master's degree in comparative literature and studies abroad in France are what give flavor to his writing. McQuade is, for instance, adept in the use of the fall season as a metaphor for the encroachment of old age: "Now that I am in my mid-sixties the thought of fall is foreboding. It is a tap on the shoulder of life reminding me that my remaining falls are diminishing at an exponential rate. Also my remaining hunting seasons."

Besides that, he has a French wife named Maryvonne, who is long suffering, in a Gallic sort of way. "Sam, Zees ees total bullsheet!" she exclaims when McQuade informs her he is going off to the Amazon to fish for Peacock bass. "There is no such zeng as 'Peacock bas' in

zee Amazon River!”

But there are Peacock bass in the Amazon and McQuade catches a huge twenty-four-pounder, which makes him happy despite the risks involved, not the least of which is a tiny catfish that is reputed to follow a pee-stream into the penis.

Adventures with Sam is not for every man, except those who fantasize about the big kill or the big catch, and surely it is not for many women. The writing is unabashedly macho, sometimes to the verge of parody, and will appeal to the man’s man who appreciates the finer points of slaughter and likes his jokes down and dirty.

Not that all the humor is of the off-color sort. There is, for instance, epicurean advice on cooking a Sandhill crane. McQuade tells readers to field dress the bird immediately, then to skin it, leaving the head, legs, and feet. He suggests nailing the bird to a plywood square and seasoning it with salt, pepper, and Tabasco. He then advises: cook the bird a long time at two-hundred degrees. Take it from the oven, remove it from the board, throw away the bird, and “Eat the Plywood.”

Tom Bevier