

Our Point

It's a good bet that you heard the news in late August, that of the passing of one of the all-time giants in outdoor art – Eldridge Hardie. He graced many of our covers and interior stories, but he was an even finer man than an artist.

As the family said in his obituary: “Eldridge cherished his family and friends, expressing his love through small acts such as bringing Ann coffee every morning, carefully planning outings where his companion always got the best fishing hole, and being an attentive, compassionate listener... To his children and grandchildren, he modeled integrity, humility, perseverance, generosity, and honor.”

I still remember one of our few conversations in which we chatted about dogs and fishing more than whatever business I had called him about. At the time, he was getting ready for a trip for Atlantic salmon, I believe on dry flies, and I offered that should time allow in the coming weeks, I'd whip up a few creations and send them out for him to try. I regret having never completed that little project, but that was the way El was – after just a few minutes of conversation, he had you feeling like an old friend you desperately wanted to share your outdoor passions with.

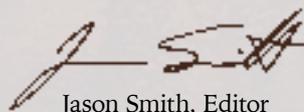
Tom Davis is working on a feature for a future issue. I'm sure that in his conversations with friends and family, common themes he will return to are those traits that his family knew all too well – integrity, humility, perseverance, generosity, and honor.

There is something about sporting art that transcends whatever artillery social media might try to lob at it in terms of trying to evoke memory and emotion. Social media – the crystal clear photos and videos and commentary – puts it right there in your face. A morning on a North Dakota prairie. A Montana mountainscape. A Michigan fall forest in October on this trail. A pile of dead birds. A puppy on point. It is this place, this time, this day, this dog, and, pretty much, what you see is what you get. This is mine, not yours.

But the layers of color and the individual brushstrokes in sporting art seem to coalesce to paint *your* picture, your memory, or at least some fragment of a dream you may have had or hope to have. While the artist might be envisioning their own grouse covert, the truly gifted ones – people like Eldridge Hardie – also seem to paint *your* grouse covert at the same time. The sunset over the corn stubble is just like the time when you and your dad walked back to the truck with a limit of roosters. It isn't the photo of a stark South Dakota corn stubble at sunset, but it is every corn stubblefield, every sunset, an amalgamation of hunts and memories that only seem to come to life and speak to you within the swirl and color and detail and suggestion of a painting.

You want to be there, you hope to be there, but you also know deep down that you already have been there.

Until next time,



Jason Smith, Editor