

300+ Yard Hunting

By [Randy Wakeman](#)

It was back in 1880 when Report of the Secretary of War, 1880, Volume III, under the chapter titled, "Extreme Ranges of Military Small Arms," stated:

"The firing was done by Mr. R.T. Hare of Springfield Armory who has the enviable distinction, so far as is known, of being the only person in the world who has hit the Bull's-Eye six feet in diameter at 2,500 yards with three different rifles, and who has ever fired at and hit so small a target as that described in this report at 3,200 yards. In comparison with this, all other so-called long range firing pales into insignificance. The gun was held (by hand), a muzzle rest only being used."

In the November, 1977 issue of *Rifle* magazine, W. John Farquharson wrote (regarding Hare's US Army tests of the .45-70 infantry rifle):

"While these tests may be considered mere oddities today, they proved extremely useful at the time. The fact that the 500-grain bullet penetrated through the three-plank target and eight inches into sand meant that it could kill or wound enemy troops at extreme distances, even if they were partially protected and that was significant military information in a period when it was quite usual for large masses of troops to form up within view of defenders. Although no average infantryman could be expected to equal Mr. Hare's accuracy, a large number of defenders shooting from barricade rests and given the proper sight adjustments for the range could severely harass companies and larger bodies of enemy troops at previously unheard-of ranges."

There is naturally a huge difference between military area fire, long distance shooting and ethical hunting. You must decide what is ethical for hunting, under your conditions.

As a rule, the less anyone knows, the more impressed he is by the complicated. This was the comment from the late Jack O'Connor (Dean of American Gun Writers), expressing disdain for gimmicky, busy scope reticles in his 1970 book, *The Hunting Rifle*. Mr. O'Connor could barely contain his contempt for bracketing reticles in scopes, noting that animals come in different sizes and that they must pose with the proper presentation and the hunter must have his scope in a rocky-steady, vice-like grip to allow for any proper measurement.

Jack O'Connor avoided gimmicks, such as complex scope reticles, like the plague. Instead, he zeroed his hunting rifles to take advantage of the maximum point blank range (MPBR) of the cartridge/load he was using, thus eliminating the need for trajectory compensation when hunting.

O'Connor went on to discuss his general contempt for long range hunters, who left as much wounded game in the field as they brought in and the tremendous ignorance of the hunter who put his faith in factory charts and trajectory tables. It is wind drift, not trajectory, that introduces the most difficult variable into any long range shooting. Mr. O'Connor felt that any shot that required hold-over was likely reckless, unnecessary and unsportsmanlike.

Mr. O'Connor's feelings on the matter were also memorialized in his 1967 masterpiece, *The Art of Hunting Big Game in North America*, one of the most comprehensive and well-written books ever published on the subject. In Chapter 21 of this epic tome, Jack O'Connor laid down some rules about long-range hunting. Among them are the following:

- A long-range shot should never be taken if there is a reasonable chance of getting closer.
- A long-range shot should never be taken if the rifleman feels doubtful of his ability to make a good, solid, well placed hit in the vitals.
- A long range shot should never be taken if the hunter cannot get into a solid position, such as prone with sling or from a solid rest.
- A long range shot should never be taken at an unwounded, running animal.
- A long-range shot should never be taken if the animal can get out of sight so quickly that it would be difficult to ascertain the effect of the shot.
- A long-range shot should not be taken if the range is so great that a hold on the top of the shoulders will not drop a bullet into the chest cavity.

Jack O'Connor, after writing his set of rules, went on to say that likely some folks would find them a bit on the conservative side. However, he felt that anyone with respect for the animal they were hunting should appreciate that following these rules would help eliminate unnecessary wounding and leaving wounded animals to die in misery several days later.

For the most part, Jack O'Connor was completely right. The human animal is a jumpy, nervous, unsteady concoction of muscles and nerves. Mr. O'Connor found even the best hunters to be horrible at estimating range and had no problem soundly and loudly

criticizing both himself and his wife, Eleanor (an extremely experienced hunter in her own right), for some poor judgment exhibited in their earlier hunting days.

Things have improved for us in recent years, so we can be a bit more precise at longer ranges than Jack O'Connor could. The advent and popularity of the laser rangefinder has played the most important role in this, and its most important function is to tell us when an animal is beyond the MPBR of our cartridge/load and, consequently, when NOT to shoot.

O'Connor's comments that any shot that required hold-over was likely reckless, unnecessary and unsportsmanlike would not be well-received today, particularly by riflescope marketing departments. You won't find one major scope company that doesn't encourage and market riflescopes for what Jack O'Connor expressed such deep contempt: holding over for long range shots at game animals. Jack O'Connor's sentiments that you cannot buy experience, wisdom or judgment are true and should be remembered, regardless of any allegedly miraculous long range rifle and telescopic sight you might purchase.