

Stories from B. Rule Stout (“Ye Old Poet”)

B. Rule Stout was a school teacher in Anderson County in the 1890s, and later studied civil engineering and became General Manager and Director of Coal Creek Mining and Manufacturing Company. He retired from the company at the age of 88, and became its “Consulting Engineer for life”, while also writing the book, *Visions in Verse*.



Story from B. Rule Stout about his first day as a teacher in Anderson County in 1894... *When I was 17 years old, I started teaching school back in the Cumberland Mountains, to find that the students - 5 of them grown and older than me, had whipped and run off 4 previous teachers. I knew there would be a show down, so I made me a pointer that was as strong and heavy as a billiard cue, in case I should need it, but I decided if possible on a wrestling trick at which I was very good - diving between one's legs and throwing him over my head. One day Millard Duncan said "I guess this is about the time to find out who is boss around here" and made a lunge at me, and in 3 seconds he had gone over my head straight*

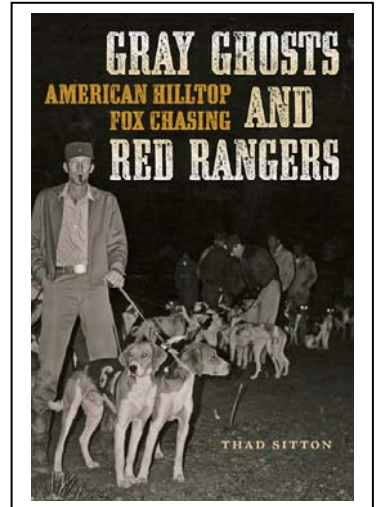
for a sharp edged post, that post splitting his head. After he had received a dash of water from the school drinking gourd, he and every one in school knew who was boss. I had no further trouble.

Oral history story about the Welsh miners who developed the first mine in Coal Creek in 1867 as documented by B. Rule Stout... *Their power for hauling coal to the outside was one heavy-built, duck-legged bull, and this bull for several months pulled all the coal mined. But development increased as well as production, so the bull was replaced by two short-legged, stout, little mules. Then the ingratitude, the tragedy... That patient, hard-pulling bull that had faithfully done his part in developing the mine was butchered, and his meat divided around among the families of all the miners. They should have choked!*

Excerpt from the book, *American Hilltop Fox Chasing* by Thad Sitton, 2010, about legendary fox-chaser B. Rule Stout...

Page 44, Excerpt from *American Hilltop Fox Chasing* by Thad Sitton, 2010

Besides a playful attitude and remarkable physical capacities, red foxes are tricky. Legends and folkloric tales depict them that way, but so do a thousand eyewitness accounts of foxhunters, men with sharp eyes and as great an interest in foxes as any field biologist. As a teenager in nineteenth-century Tennessee, B. Rule Stout was plowing the field one day when a red fox pursued by his uncle's hounds came into view. The fox ran along inside the field where Stout had been plowing. Then it jumped onto the fence at the far side of the field, ran along the fence for some distance, turned, backtracked down the fence for a hundred yards, then jumped from the fence into a nearby pasture and lay still until the hounds had come and gone. Then it resumed its backtracking and went out of sight. The hounds never figured this out. On another day Stout saw this same fox, or one that looked just like it, lose hounds by running into a herd of sheep and lying down. The sheep completely circled the fox, stamping their feet and getting closer and closer. After a few minutes the fox trotted off, but the hounds could not pick up its trail for all the sheep scent. Another time the Tennessee man observed a hotly pursued fox run out into a freshly plowed field (which retains little scent), run right to the point where plowing had stopped recently in a big furrow, then jump as far to the right as it could to a grassy low place, where it lay flat and still. Almost immediately the hounds were there, but they lost the fox's scent at the furrow, and when they circled around to try to pick it up, the fox lay frozen inside the circle. From there the dogs searched in ever-widening circles until they went out of sight, and the fox got up and ran for the nearby woods. B. Rule Stout also observed "switching foxes," foxes that take turns running before the hounds, this time a yellowish fox and a red fox, so the switching was obvious. Stout presumed they were mates. From his position on a small hill he could see the whole thing. The foxes' chosen place for switching off had thick weeds just above the trail, and they would jump in and out of these weeds at each switch. One fox would lead the hounds on a fast circle of several miles, then the next. He recalled: "That pair killed one of the best hounds I ever expected to own, Little Ned. She came in and lay down that night and died."²⁷



The rattlesnake story as told by his grandson, Allen Bush... Granddad felt that it was his responsibility to make the world a better place by killing every rattlesnake in the mountains of Coal Creek. After every trip, upon his return, there were always tales about killing rattlesnakes. And to prove it, he always brought back the rattles.

Grandmother was a very regal and proper lady. I actually thought as a boy that the Queen of England must be like my Grandmother. To her, rattlesnakes and foxhunts were things to endure and to ignore to the degree possible. Their incomes were always minimal, but she had nice things, and one of them was a beautiful highly decorated ceramic bowl that sat on the upper shelf of their mantle, looking regal. But it was filled with rattlesnake rattles.

She had three awesomely beautiful Czech chandeliers. They hung with chains of crystal beads and faceted drops. Once when Granddad was about 90 years old, he was telling about his most recent killing of a rattlesnake, one that had not gone easily, but he killed it with his walking stick. As he told the story in the living room, he raised his cane and brought it down with a crash on the floor where he was picturing the snake, but the crash was not the stick hitting the floor, but beads and drops from the chandelier he had hooked.

Later I was visiting them, and Grandmother with lots of mirth started telling the story and Granddad took it up to finish. Again he got carried away with the size of the snake and its resistance, and again he hooked the chandelier with more beads and drops falling with Grandmother saying in her quiet correctional voice, "Rule – Rule – Rule!"

Can you picture the Queen of England with a bowl full of rattlesnake rattles on the decorative shelf above the mantle in her parlor? I can – because I felt like I knew the Queen.