

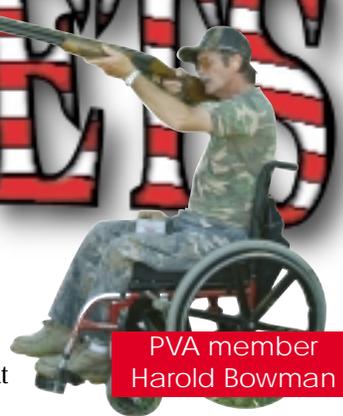
# Quail Unlimited & Paralyzed Veterans of America

## TEAM UP FOR

# AMERICA'S VETS

by

Rocky Evans



PVA member  
Harold Bowman

The first trucks rolled in to the staging area of the Georgia dove field around noon. Many of them pulled ATVs or camouflaged golf cars. Some of them had just one passenger and some were packed. The common denominator was that they were all dressed in camo from head to toe and they were on a mission.

They were members of the Augusta Chapter of Quail Unlimited and the dove shoot, which would take place later that afternoon, was the first of its kind in the country. This shoot was different from all the others that the chapter had hosted previously. Some of the guests were chapter sponsors. However, the guests of honor on this day would be paralyzed veterans from all branches of the service. This was the first event hosted between Quail Unlimited and Paralyzed Veterans of America. We all wanted to get it right.

Early this year, QU signed a memorandum of understanding with PVA. The endeavor was to get QU chapters more involved with PVA members and their chapters.

From the perspective of Quail Unlimited and The Dove Sportsman's Society, it was seen a great opportunity for the our organization to share its passion of the outdoors with those who, because of paralyzing incidents years ago, now find it difficult to participate in outdoor activities.

Those who grew up hunting, as I did, tend to take something like a dove shoot with friends on a September day for granted. Sometimes we have great shoots. Some-times not. However, we all know that we'll enjoy the experience and the

chance to see old friends again. We might end up on a stand along a tree line or hedge row that offers great shooting, or we get a spot facing the sun that's, well, not so hot. But we never consider that just getting dressed that

day or getting a wheelchair from the vehicle to a dove blind might be a difficult or daunting task.

As Americans, we all owe these folks who gave their all for our freedom and country, a debt that we cannot repay. I was called up by the draft during the Viet Nam era while in college. However, after the medical exams were completed, the doctors confirmed that because of several factors, the U.S. Army would be far better off without me. I've often wondered though, how I would have acted in a combat situation. Would I have charged forward into enemy machine gun fire, as did thousands of brave Americans at Normandy? Would I have stood steadfastly on the deck of an American warship facing incoming Japanese fighters or dive bombers? What would my day be like, if I were in Afghanistan or Iraq today? This is a question that only those who have been there can answer. The men who arrived on our dove field later on that September afternoon know what war is like. Our chapter members were looking forward to doing something special for them, as a way of saying "thanks" and "we'll always appreciate you and what you did."

The field had been meticulously planted and cared for. The landowner, Larry Sconyers, of Augusta, had donated the use of the field along with his equipment and labor just for this event, and a youth dove shoot, which the Augusta chapter would also host the following week. The seed, corn and sunflower, was donated through the QU seed program. All steps were taken to provide a quality shoot. Eight rows of corn were planted adjacent to eight rows of sunflower, then corn again, then clean disced dirt that would be later planted in browntop millet. The crop covered some 80 acres. The field was surrounded with mature pine trees, interspersed with some dead hardwoods which had been killed by prescribed fire.

This area is also managed for quail and small game. A small, wet weather pond bordered the field on the east side. This setting did indeed make the perfect dove field.

The stands had been flagged for the guests prior to their arrival. The west side of a tree line had been reserved for PVA members, to keep them out of the broiling September sun. As the PVA members arrived, they were shuttled to their stands and an Augusta chapter guest was assigned to each PVA guest. A local John Deere dealer donated Gators to constantly provide bottled water, soft drinks and Power Ade (compliments of Coca Cola - the official soft drink of Quail Unlimited) to all the shooters.

With a bright sun, we expected the birds to fly late. However, portable radios kept the Georgia residents tuned into the Georgia-South Carolina game (UGA 31 - South Carolina 7, Bob Red-fern, you owe me a dollar) and well entertained until the first flight of doves arrived.

"Hey, over your head," we heard as the first bird or two got a free pass.

Several of the shooters were too tuned into the game (I'm guilty) or temporarily asleep at the wheel. Soon, however, the field erupted into gun fire as more birds headed for

Photos by: Donald J. Tilton



PVA member Dan Hedtke and Augusta chapter volunteer, Philip Brown, team up on incoming doves



PVA member Al Evans



Augusta chapter sponsor, Lee Smith, and his hunting buddy, Cache, use their "dove-brella" to beat the September sun

experience. I left it with a personal vow that I will never forget our vets or military and the freedoms that they fought for. I hope that many of our Quail Unlimited and Dove Sportsman's Society chapters will get involved with PVA through our agreement.

Call us or email me at [revans@qu.org](mailto:revans@qu.org). We can put you in touch with PVA in Washington and they can put you in touch with their chapters. It will be the one of the most rewarding experiences of your life.



the groceries. These small gray rockets can humble even the best wing shooters and this was to be no different for many of our guests. I counted 26 shots fired at one dove as it made its way across the field and down a tree line. The shooting was sporadic, too heavy for the next three hours.

Like most shoots, some hunters couldn't keep their guns loaded, while others wished for more chances. One thing that all of our chapter members had in common was that we all were honored to be in the presence of these vets.

They weren't finished when the shooting died down. The chapter had arranged to take all of the shooters, about one hundred of them to a beautiful pond site surround by live oaks, for a southern barbeque. What a great way to end a great day. A three piece combo played on the boat dock as our guests reminisced about the day about new friendships created, great shots made, and easy ones missed, and about appreciation for each other and just the right to live in this great nation. The barbecue, like the dove field was donated by Larry Sconyers who by the way, owns just about the best barbecue restaurant in this part of the South. As a gorgeous sun settled behind the pond, we knew that we would soon have to say good-bye.

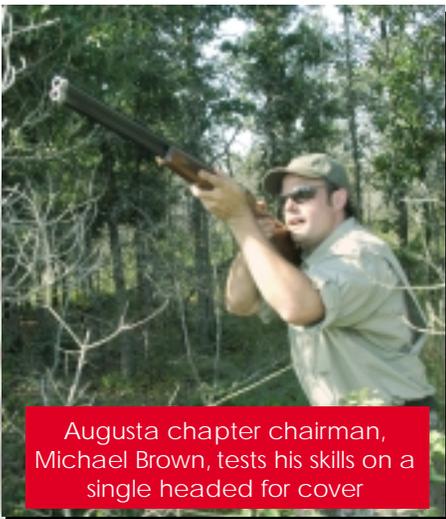
The PVA guests were most thankful for the opportunity to enjoy a plantation-style dove shoot while our chapter members seemed to be even more thankful to have had the chance to say "thanks for what you did." It may be a toss up, just who thanked who the most. From my perspective, I can assure you that I left that September dove shoot all the richer for the



The three-piece combo entertained the guests during the social hour and barbecue



Holly, Charlie Warren's black Lab, gets a special ride to and from the field.



Augusta chapter chairman, Michael Brown, tests his skills on a single headed for cover



Landowner and host Larry Sconyers welcomes Dr. Ron Bennett

**Editors Note:**The following is an email I received several months ago. I don't know the author, but I have read it many times, and each time, I think of a soldier of marine who fell on foreign soil ,or a sailor or pilot who won't be coming home. Please take a moment to say a prayer for those who are serving us now and for the families who will never see a loved one again. Pray for our President and our leaders who are faced with the task of keeping us safe from those who hate simply for the sake of hatred itself. And pray that we will never forget hostile acts against us and especially those who put themselves in harm's way to protect us.

-- Rocky Evans



## The Veteran

I watched the flags pass by one day as it stood at ease. I looked at him in uniform so young, so proud. With hair cut square and eyes alert he would stand out in any crowd. I thought how many men like him had fallen through the years.

How many died on foreign soil? How many parents' tears? How many pilots' planes shot down, how many died at sea? How many fox holes were soldiers' graves?

No, freedom isn't free. I heard the sound of taps one night when everything was still. I listened to the bugle play and felt a sudden chill. I wondered just how many times that taps had meant amen.

When a flag had draped a coffin of a brother and a friend.

I thought of all the children, of the mothers and the wives. Of fathers, sons and husbands with interrupted lives. A thought about a graveyard at the bottom of the sea.

Of unmarked graves in Arlington -- no freedom isn't free.

