Exit Laughing (From "Field and Stream")

By Ed Zern

Ralph Coykendall, whose new book, Guide to Decoy Collecting ($12 ppd., signed soft-cover edition, The Sporting Connection, Londonderry, Vt. 05148), has just been published, sent me a copy of the January 1932 issue of Reader's Digest containing an article by the late Lowell Thomas called "The Great American Whopper," a collection of tall stories and bare-faced lies. Not surprisingly, eight of the ten stories in the piece were submitted several times in the recent Munchausen Memorial Contest held here, because most of us are skimpily endowed with creativity, and content ourselves with swiping stories that were well-worn and moth-munchd half a century ago. Two of our three prize-winners were versions of yarns in the Thomas article. Here are the ones that hadn't shown up in the Munchausen entries:

When several ferocious mosquitoes invaded the bedroom of a West Virginian, he lit a candle and succeeded in burning all but one particularly large and aggressive critter. He finally cornered it and held the flame under it, but it merely sneered and blew out the candle.

A Pennsylvanian went out on a very cold night with a kerosene lantern, to walk a mile to the grange hall. On arriving there and going inside, he tried to turn down the wick of the lantern, but couldn't. Then he realized that the flame had frozen solid, and it was 5 minutes before he could thaw it on the stove and blow it out.

Mr. Wuehle, who under the alias Scotty Barclay is also the founder and president of the International Home and Private Poker Players' Association, writes to find out what's with the version of 5-card stud called (by me, who stole the game and name from its inventor David Bascom, a.k.a. Milford Foltroon) Hi-Lo-Moose or sometimes Hi-Lo-Middle-Moose or, if played in a mooseless milieu that may harbor some other make of ungulate, Hi-Lo-Middle Lord Derby's Eland, or whatever. Mr. Wuehle enclosed a clipping from a recent issue of The Milwaukee Journal which reveals that "he edits a tabloid for poker players called Poker Chips and has written two books on poker." If I knew any poker players called Poker Chips I'd ask one of them to order me his book on 7-card stud ($2.95 a copy, from Scotty Barclay Poker Products, 1401 First Avenue South, Escanaba, Mich. 49829), but I don't. If I can find a copy of the "How To Call Moose" column I'll send it to him.

Burk Roberts of Harker Heights, Texas, writes to offer several fishing alibis that aren't yet worn to a frazzled, including these:

1. Mars and Jupiter were in jazzy, but not close, to within 50 million miles.
2. The black hole Cygnus X-1 was emitting massive quantities of X-rays.
3. The second law of thermodynamics declares that the processes of block transfer and transcendent stimulation I will lose the fish if I were to set up a gravity bubble forms around the core of the causal nexus; this situation can only be reversed by means of temporal inversion isometry using synchronized time-code converters, and I had forgot to put new batteries in my time-code converter.

And finally, to strike a more serious note, the most amazing letter I have ever received from any man or woman, and one most people wouldn't believe on a stack of bibles (but which I do believe, for reasons I'll go into later). It's from Joshua White Bear, a Cree Indian medical man or shaman who is now in his late nineties and still getting around, living in the woods near Ishiquois Falls, Ontario, whom I met about 1956 or '57 while fishing for lake trout and smallmouth bass. It reads (with some corrected spelling):

"Mr. Zern: Maybe remember me. Your guide long ago. Now I see your name in Field and Stream in Hudson Bay store. Remember talk you about secret my grandfather tell me for catch big fish and beautiful woman that work like miracle always. Now I nearly 100 years and not good health but still fish and woman. In dream I see two times with white bear and know this mean I must tell you miracle secret. Now for first time white man or red man ever. This secret. First make fire with twigs. Then take large (continued next month)."
GOOD EVENING. TODAY'S TOP STORY: GIANT PARASITIC SALAMANDERS ARE MOVING UP FROM MEXICO AND DEVOURING ALL FISH, PLANTLESS WATERFOWL.

"Axolotl ATTACK!"

YEAH, RIGHT! WE'RE NOT KIDDING!

YOU'RE KIDDING!

WE'RE NOT KIDDING!

OH MY GOODNESS... OH MY GOODNESS... YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING!!

WELL, WE'RE KIDDING A LITTLE...

THE MEDIA'S GETTING COCKY!