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Susan Hawk Boyle
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Survivor enjoys hunting more than fame

If pheasants would have inhabited the island on which Susan Hawk spent several weeks for the blockbuster TV show Survivor, rice would've just been a side dish, not her main course.

Hawk, a 1978 Waukesha South High School graduate, and her husband, Tim, live in Eagle but she hasn't spent much time there in recent weeks.

Last week on a hunt at Wern Valley in the town of Genesee, the two joined me for a pheasant hunt. Although far less glamorous than when they attended the Grammy Awards recently, Susan felt much more at home.

"You just can't beat a day in the field with your dogs," she said.

Her time on Survivors has brought some measure of fame.

"I must be the luckiest person alive," she said. "I had no idea Survivor would become the hit it was. It's almost cult-like."

The Hawks' hunting roots go back a long way. After marrying 13 years ago, the two tried outfitting in Ontario, Canada.

"We ran the camp for bear, moose, pike, walleye and trout," Tim said.

"It was a great time in our life, but the Canadian government had too many restrictions, so we gave it up."

The Hawks enjoy big game hunting, too. In fact, in 1992, Susan had the second largest moose in Canada fall to her gun, a 58 1/2 monster, but her heart belongs to working with her dogs.

On our trip, they brought their Visla Stinky, and their German



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short hair Ellie. And while Stinky was a bit on the feisty side, Ellie meant business.

The first bird came up, and felt no lead, in part due to this being one of the duo's first times out for the season.

"We usually get out here almost 20 times," Tim said. "We're a little rusty."

After that, the birds didn't have much of a chance.

The hunt went as most pheasant hunts do, when armed with a hard hunting dog such as Ellie. Small tracts of corn and underbrush attempted to hide the pheasants from the detective-like nose of the pointer, but their scent betrayed them.

Just then a pheasant erupted from the debris below and met with Susan's shot. It fell and was quickly retrieved by Ellie.

"I work with Ellie just about every morning," she said. "We're up at 4 a.m., jogging or working the fields. It's something that I truly love, and is a big part of my life."

Being such a die-hard hunter, you would think Susan would have found ample game and fish

on and around the island, but that wasn't the case.

"Locals had really over-fished the area," she said. "We tried fishing in the morning, and late at night, but the fishing was poor. There were some wild boar on the island, and snakes I would've hunted, but they were protected by local law."

The only thing the castaways could hunt were the rats that infested their camps. Rat, however, was one delicacy that Hawk didn't sit down to at dinner.

"I was told that rat tasted like rat, not chicken, after you had a couple," she said. "That was all I needed to hear to stick with rice as my main diet."

There were some fish to be had. Stingrays were found tucked inside the many reefs the island waters offered.

"The stingray was pretty good," she said. "We even had lobster once but mostly we ate rice. The fruit on the island was poisonous to humans."

Tim has a quicker trigger than Susan.

"Tim's a snap shooter," she said. "I hardly have time to get my gun up before the bird is down, but I've learned to adapt."

The day ended with three pheasants, and a lot of good memories.

Susan realizes her recent fame will end someday, and she'll be back at her union job driving a concrete truck for a Menomonee Falls company.

"I'm going to ride the Survivor Train as long as I can, and save up as much as I can," she said. "As



Dan Durbin Photo

Susan Hawk and her hunting dog, Ellie, worked the fields at Wern Valley during a recent pheasant hunt.

soon as this stops being fun, that's it for me. I'll resume normal life."

She likes to hunt grouse. "My agent said that I should pick a charity to donate to so that's where some of my money's going, to the Ruffed Grouse Society," she said.

She's a hunter first, celebrity second. Perhaps that's why the hunt was so much fun. In the

field, hunters are hunters. People are people. We're all on the same team, with a dog at heel and a bird at flight.

(Dan Durbin writes a weekly outdoors column for The Freeman.

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