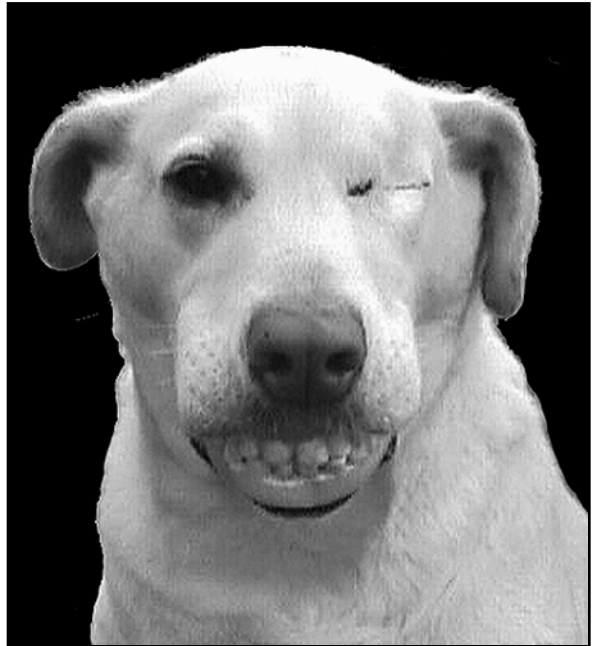


Gnarled

(the hound dog song)

by Robert Force

My first 'coon hunt was in Lawrence, Kansas about 1971. I was hitchhiking to the East Coast, taking a Southerly route because it was getting into winter along I-90. Somehow, I fell in with a bunch of banjo pickers who took me home. We joked around, ate a meal and played some bluegrass together. When it got dark, we next tossed back an apparently prerequisite number of whiskies and before long we were headed into the backwoods in pickup trucks with dogs and guns.



Being a Northwesterner where this is not a tradition, this was as different an experience as I had ever hoped to encounter. It left a lasting impression, for sure. I never did shoot at anything. I'm not sure they did either. Perhaps it's just as well considering the lubrication factor. But I did get to listen to the music of hounds while stumbling around in the dark in an altered state and it stuck with me.

A few months later I was at Denison University in Granville, Ohio. As I was walking along the upper campus pathway I was impressed by the gnarled and twisted oaks which grew there. "Gnarled," I said to myself, "That'd be a great name for a 'coon hound." And the words and tune of this song literally leapt into my head.

I've had a lot of fun with this tune over the years. On occasion, at a couple of outdoor festivals, dogs have wandered up onto the stage and joined me. Now there's a tribute to authenticity!