

SLIM CROYLE

Good day, everyone--it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

Up in the area known as the northern tier of Pennsylvania--the north counties--there is a place which few but hunters visit, but since I began talking about it some years ago, others have gone to discover it. It's a place you'll enjoy visiting--Slim Croyle's Deer Cafeteria--(at least that's the last name I knew the place as.) Deer Cafeteria? You heard right. Slim Croyle's--and Slim is a man who loves animals--loves them so much, in fact, that he must be some kind of a second Francis of Assisi--this friend to the creatures of the field--the deer of Pennsylvania.

Slim's place is at Laurel Bottom, about midway between Cross Fork and Oleona in the Kettle Creek Valley--a short distance from where the Norwegian, Ole Bull, established his Norway colony in 1853.

What's Slim's story? When you visit his Deer Cafeteria, you'll find Slim feeding a herd of deer out of his hand--some deer will come up to him and actually take a piece of bread out of his mouth. These are not tame deer--penned up somewhere--but the wild deer of the mountains who have learned to know and love this two-footed Pennsylvania creature who loves them. Slim, who calls himself the chief cook of the cafeteria, has given names to many of them, and they respond to those names when he calls to them. People who come to watch in the summer put a few coins in a nearby box for Slim--and he uses this to feed the deer in wintertime, when

there is no natural food. "Golly," who is the writer of the Potter County Enterprise, has asked in one of his columns, "Where else can you go and show your youngsters a herd of deer at close range; some 50 to 75 animals, mature and fawns--where else at any price?" Nowhere in the world, truthfully.

There has been a doe which hobbled in on three legs--someone, probably Slim, had fixed up a fourth for her. She might have been killed but she made it over that winter because of that kindness. In this area, when young fawn grow up, their mothers actually bring them in to meet Slim Croyle--to introduce their young to this man and to teach them (for this is what they're doing) to teach them that when the natural foods are gone in the wintertime that Slim will feed them--he always has and he will. Can you imagine anything as tender as that; any story as lovely; any place more wonderful to visit than this sanctuary which Walt Disney could have filmed into a classic. It is Disneyesque, isn't it--this story of a man and his deer. There is Sainthood in such a man as there was in Francis of Assisi--and this place is not in the Florentine Hills but here in Pennsylvania--a place where a man blows a whistle just before twilight, and the deer, some hundreds of them, wild deer, come out of the mountains to be fed by him. Those who have seen this sight in Pennsylvania, many of them say it is the most beautiful experience they have ever had. You can enjoy it along with the other beauty of this Commonwealth; drive south out of Galeton on Route 144 and you'll come to it--or in the lower area, drive north on 144 out of the Renovo area. That's Bucktail and Roosevelt Trail Country, and some of the