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The Preserve at Boulder Hills

The view from the top is always stunning, especially so when surrounded by colorful fall foliage. I was bird hunting at The Preserve at Boulder Hills in Rhode Island and was quite unused to such an elevation in what typically is a flat, ocean state. Lower in the elevation was a guide working dogs through a patch of broomstraw. A beeper sounded and the pointer was locked up. Better get a move on, I thought, and then I stopped. Let them go ahead, there will be more points, but this view needed an extra glance. There were rolling hills, beautifully colored leaves and a smell of saltwater that was incredible. And all of this in Little Rhody.

I've always loved Rhode Island and Rhode Islanders. The state has always been quietly and historically relevant even though Roger Williams carved out the new territory as a disgruntled ex-pat from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The smallest state was an industrial powerhouse beginning in the mid-1660s, with gristmills grinding grain. Residents created Johnnycakes, those delicious, flat cakes made from ground corn known in other regions as *Shawnee* or *hoecakes*. Newport ushered in the Great Gatsby era with "cottages" built by the Vanderbilts, Oelrichs and Astors, and it was here that Atlanta's Ted Turner quipped after winning the 1977 America's

Cup, "If I only had a little humility, I'd be perfect." And now, in the towns of Richmond and Wyoming, which are a chip shot away from the Connecticut border, is a new club that celebrates the sporting life, the kind that has been integral in the state for over a century.

In a way, The Preserve at Boulder Hills is the sum of the work of serial entrepreneur and developer Paul Mihailides. Many wing shooters are already familiar with Mihailides who recently took total ownership of Famars, and his vision for The Preserve began in the early 1990s. The lifelong sportsman fell in love with a several hundred-acre parcel of land that stood in stark contrast to the land typical of southern New England. In an area known for its flat, just-above-sea level terrain were instead rolling hills, sweeping fields and a mixture of hardwoods like beech, hickory and oaks interspersed with softwoods like



The clays course offers target presentations that appeal to technical shooters as well as hunters. (Photos/courtesy of The Preserve at Boulder Hills)

pitch pines. The normally sandy soil was pockmarked with rocks and boulders and was dotted with freshwater feeder streams and ponds. With elevations up to a few hundred feet, the exquisite land appealed to him as a perfect sporting sanctuary.

The property had been earmarked for a standard subdivision of hundreds of homes surrounding an 18-hole golf course, which was purposed by the Foxwoods Resort and Casino but never developed. Ground never was broken for the housing complex, and after a few decades Mihailides bought the asset, and his dream to create a unique sporting club became a reality.

Mihailides broke ground in 2013 and started by constructing The Preserve's 25,000 square-foot, shingled clubhouse on the western end of the property. In here, members and their guests find all the requisite amenities of club life, from reception and dining areas to a mahogany bar stocked with just about all spirits known to mankind and a pro shop reminiscent of the original Clapp and Treat. Wrap-around verandas offer views of the stunning property.

Of interest to wing shooters is the hunting. The core of the program is the preserve-style walk-up hunts for pheasant, chukar and Hungarian partridge on the club's six different courses. Cover crops include Johnson grass, switchgrass, broomstraw, goldenrod and foxtail, with clover, thyme and timothy mixed in as well. Hunts are guided, and members or guests are able to run their own dogs as well. The many guides use a wide variety of dog breeds ranging from English pointers, setters and springer spaniels to Brittanys, German shorthaired pointers, cocker spaniels and Labs. Hunts are

The Preserve at Boulder Hills celebrates the sporting life that has been integral in the state for over a century.

pre-arranged, and with advanced notice a particular guide/breed of dog can be requested. The Preserve's hunting season runs from mid-September through mid-March.

A property as unique as The Preserve at Boulder Hills has wild birds, dove and woodcock being the top two. Rhode Island is one of the few states in the Northeast that allows for dove hunts in September. Woodcock hunting occurs according to the federally regulated seasons. Because of the lowland areas with feeder streams and seeps, there is a good population of resident birds. Numbers of flight birds are seasonally dependent.

There are other hunting opportunities as well. Rhode Island has a rich waterfowling tradition, and beginning later this year, The Preserve at Boulder Hills will offer hunts for puddle, diver and sea ducks, the latter being possible because of the club's proximity to the ocean. A large population of Eastern wild turkey and white-tailed deer are on the property, and it is a fair chase season for both. Although there is a fall season, turkeys are only hunted in the spring. Three seasons for white-tailed deer (archery, muzzleloader and shotgun) mean that big game enthusiasts can be in the woods from September through early January. The club is in Zone 2, and all state rules/regulations are followed.

Clay target shooters are pleased to know that there are two different courses developed by industry-leading experts. Chris Batha designed the Compact Sporting Course, a fun, five-stand that will be built in this spring. Jack O'Brian, who is also the general manager at nearby Addieville East Farm, developed an interesting seven-station sporting clays course that offers 14 different target presentations. The high tower offers a 160-foot elevation from which vantage high, driven-style flights are launched. Other target presentations include all classic upland bird patterns as well as a few technically challenging shots.

A wide variety of seasonal activities are offered, situated on a different part of the property. Golf is popular during the warmer months, and the 18-hole cross-country course was developed by legendary designer Robert McNeil of North East Golf Companies in nearby Saunterstown. A number of PGA qualifying tournaments will be held at The Preserve in May 2015 with some to be televised. Sportsmen enjoy fly fishing for trout, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass and panfish on one of the six ponds. Parts of the ponds are wadable while other sections are deep. Rock climbing and bouldering courses, mountain biking, running paths, tennis (on either clay or grass courts) and swimming are other summer activities. Favorite winter pursuits are cross country skiing and snowmobiling.

Initially, 20 cabins will be dispersed along the property. These cabins will have a main, four-bedroom epicenter with smaller two-bedroom cabins nearby. The concept behind this configuration is for a family or a group of friends/business associates to be in the same area but for individuals to have their own privacy. The club offers gourmet dining in the clubhouse, and private chef services are available upon request.

A total of 130 membership stakes were originally offered. As of this writing, 96 remain. The Preserve at Boulder Hills is 2 1/2 hours from Manhattan or northern New Jersey, just over an hour from Boston and Hartford, and a half hour from Newport or Providence, Rhode Island, and Mystic, Connecticut. The club is 13 miles from the coast at Watch Hill.



Breakfast prepared by the club's Executive Chef is garnished with the gorgeous engraving found on a Farnas 28-bore.



Preserve dogs include pointers and flushers, and specific guides and dogs can be requested in advance.

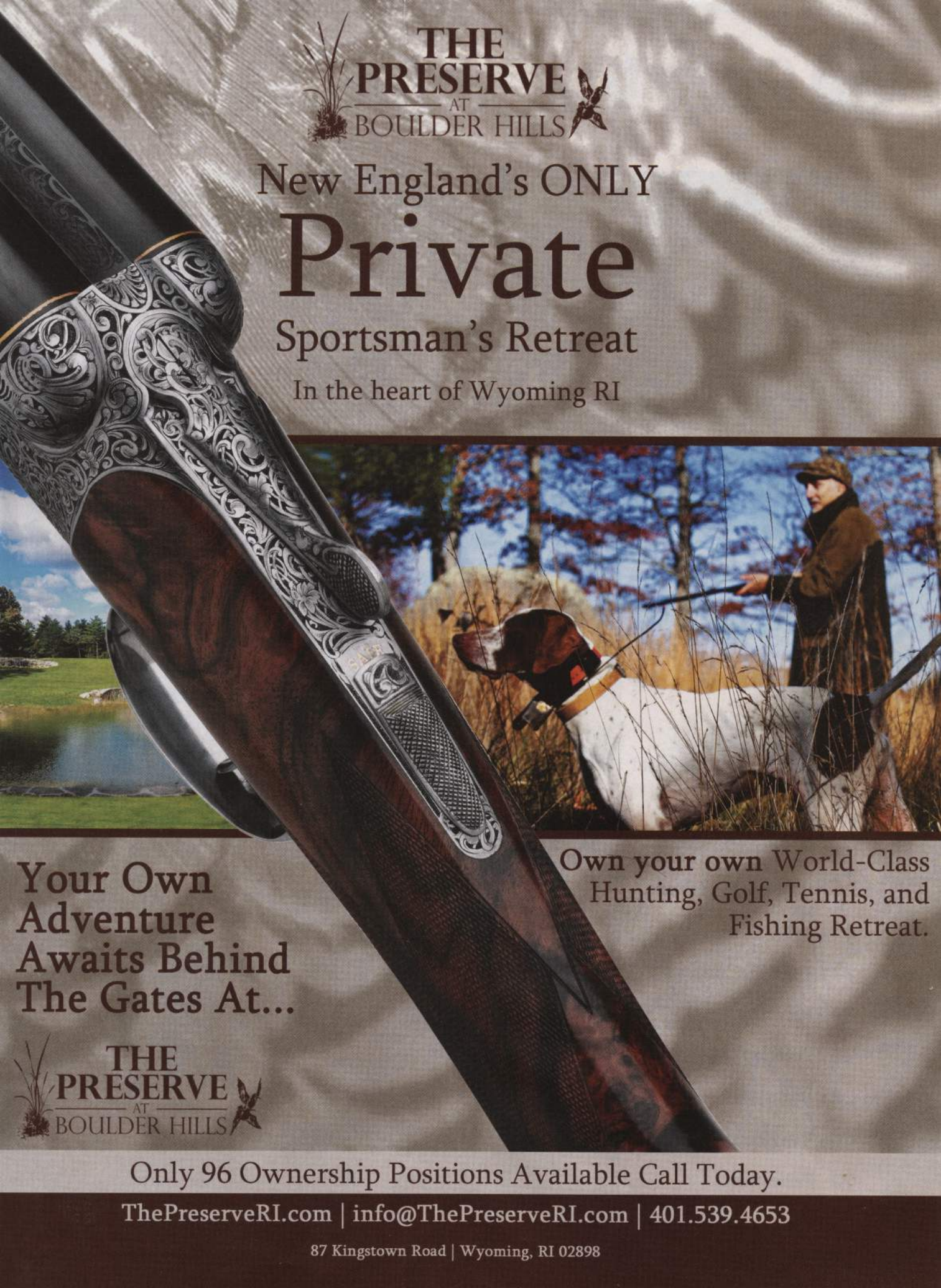


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