MADSTONE

The True Tale of World War I Conscientious Objectors Alfred and Charlie Fattig and Their Oregon Wilderness Hideout

PAUL FATTIG

HELLGATE PRESS ASHLAND, OREGON

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Praise for Madstone

"Paul Fattig's fascinating MADSTONE proves on a larger stage a fact long known to readers of his deep and varied journalism: that he is 'an extraordinary teller of tales' (words he applies to his father's unfulfilled ambition to write). This remarkable book combines memoir, history, naturalist sketches, and the story of two uncles who fled to the Southern Oregon wilderness and lived like mountain men in order to avoid the draft of 1917-1918. We owe Fattig a debt of gratitude for resurrecting an alternative history, that of a forgotten resistance in rural America to the Johnny-get-your-gun jingoism of World War I."

—**Russell Working**, journalist and short story writer whose work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Paris Review*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Boston Globe* and many others

"In this compelling and spirited account, the author tells the extraordinary story of two courageous men: two brothers who refused to fight, Unquestionably, our history books are filled with 'war heroes,' but what we really need to see today, more than ever, is nonviolence and peace heroes: men and women who had and have the fortitude to say no to war and bloodshed. This intriguing story does just that. Mr. Fattig's work is worthy of so much more praise than one can give in a few lines. I highly recommend it."

—**Flamur Vehapi**, author of *Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam*

"There is a kind of madness that sweeps through Paul Fattig's towering tale of two draft-dodging uncles, who engage in their own personal war in the wilds of Southern Oregon. Against the backdrop of World War I, MADSTONE gives a rich account of the struggles of these constantly feuding relatives, who find themselves grudgingly united in their pacifism and ability to survive in the wilderness. The tension between the uncles is set against the serene, detailed descriptions of an Appalachian-like countryside that Paul Fattig knows so well and describes so lovingly...[It] takes the reader on a journey into a madness that has its own peculiar beauty."

—**Damian Mann**, journalist and author of *Shooters, Heels & Heroes: The Life and Times of Rico Valentino*

"I read MADSTONE in one sitting. It's fun to read and Fattig has a way with words that captures southern Oregon's stunning beauty and the fierce independence of its citizens…On a deeper level, the book describes the hard-scrabble hillbilly life that has shaped the outlook on life in many parts of this country, one unknown to today's college-educated, hi-tech city dwellers. To anyone who wants to understand the polarization in our country today, Madstone is a must read."

—**Nancy Tappan**, editor, *The New Pioneer* magazine"

"Madstone is an Oregon original. Told with insight and humor, it is the story of the author's two uncles, who spent years in the most remote, rugged parts of the Siskiyou Mountains evading military conscription during World War One. It is also a memoir of the author's own hardscrabble post-World War Two childhood in rural Josephine County. Fattig evokes the distinctive way of life of a region that is among the least-known but most distinctive sections of the state."

—**Jeff LaLande**, historian

"Paul Fattig has written an excellent book focused on the life of his two ornery uncles who hide out in the rugged mountains of southwest Oregon for three years to evade the draft in World War I…But MADSTONE offers so much more, putting their survival in the context of global events, ranging from the experiences of their neighbors who did go to war, to the persecution of the IWW labor movement, to the suppression of the region's native tribes…Even Thoreau's life at Walden is brought into the mix. The painstaking research that goes into this book is evident on every page. I highly recommend it."

—**R. Gregory Nokes**, author of *Massacred for Gold*, *Breaking Chains* and the forthcoming *The Troubled Life of Peter Burnett: Oregon Pioneer and First Governor of California*

"Having served with Paul Fattig in the U.S. Marines during the early 1970s, I have always observed him as 'Honorable and Trustworthy.' I found his book (MADSTONE) captivating and historical. Paul's own character of addressing facts honestly shine brightly in this book."

—**Richard L. Eubank**, MSGT, USMC (Ret.), 1967-1987, past national commander in chief of Veterans of Foreign Wars

"…It's a story about a different kind of heroism. It's a family story of Oregon, set in the sprawling, loving family of Fattigs who grew up in southern Oregon when it was still a wilderness. And it's a story well told by a master story teller, who in retirement is still a great reporter."

—**Edwin Battistella**, professor of English at Southern Oregon University

"…Paul Fattig has written a wonderful, interesting, saga…a courageous book, laced throughout with humorous lines, poignant stories, and grabbing sidelines. This is an excellent read!"

—**Dennis Powers**, historian, author (latest: *Where Past Meets Present*), professor emeritus at Southern Oregon University

"Paul Fattig's MADSTONE is a southern Oregon river. As I read it, I floated the river, from the woods of Fattig's crazy youth, past side-streams of stories: a boy's solo trek across the wilderness, tales of miners and hunters and Native Americans, bloody war stories and a draft dodger's musings on nature. By the end, both me and the river had changed. MADSTONE is a wild read!"

—**Thomas Doty**, native storyteller, author of *Doty Meets Coyote*

"I lead an organization that works throughout Southwest Oregon, and we concentrate on the areas written about in MADSTONE…[It] will end up being an archive I refer to as an authority on the area's history. But I think readers who aren't connected with the region will be equally intrigued. Fattig's tone is conversational and easy to read, and each story is a manifest of a universal narrative that connects us with the West and its wild spirit."

—**Gabriel Howe**, executive director, Siskiyou Mountain Club

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

LIKE MOST SAGAS, THE MADSTONE STORY WOULD not have been written had it not been for others helping to guide the author along the way.

Chief among them was my uncle Alfred Fattig who patiently and good-naturedly answered my barrage of questions just before the last leaves fell from his tree of life. His youthful decision based on his religious convictions to oppose the military draft during World War I was not a popular choice a century ago, anymore than it would be today if military conscription once again became the law of the land. He was ostracized by the very society from which he had formed his values. In defense of those who took issue with his evading the draft, many had sons who answered the call of duty, knowing full well their chances of survival on the bloody front lines were slim. Yet I respect my uncle for sticking to his religious guns, so to speak.

I am also indebted to my siblings—Jim, Charles, Delores and George—for offering their perspective when it came to our family history, from our hardscrabble childhood to our paternal uncles who refused to wear a military uniform. In particular, Charles, a history buff and the brightest fellow in our midst, broke the ice with our estranged uncle by beginning a letter-writing correspondence with him decades before the elderly gentleman passed away. With regard to my siblings, our memories generally mesh, and where they differ I accept full responsibility. Of course, any misrepresentations on my part should be placed squarely on the fact I was stuck in the head with an arrow while still a pup.

I appreciate that Oregon newspapers, namely the *Grants Pass Daily Courier,* the *Medford Mail Tribune* and the *Oregonian* in Portland, among others, were around before and during my uncles' anti-war escapade to capture the life and times of those fascinating years. It was while writing for the *Courier* in the late 1980s that I first began interviewing old-timers for the Madstone chronicle, and traveled to Texas to chat with Alfred about his draft-dodging days. Over the ensuing decades I gathered more information about my notorious uncles and their shadowy escapade.

As always, I thank my wife Maureen for putting up with my grousing and grumbling as I battle daily with the English language. Her patience and kindness would have impressed Mother Teresa.

PROLOGUE

THEY CALLED IT THE WAR TO END ALL WARS. They were dead wrong, of course, as history clearly demonstrates. But there is no question that World War I changed the course of human kind on the planet. It was known as the Great War because of its immense scope and massive bloodshed. Some historians argue convincingly that its impact still reverberates today, particularly in the Middle East where it caused political upheaval and forced realignments whose cultural and religious ramifications continue to fuel smoldering resentment. But we'll leave that global labyrinth for others to disentangle.

On the surface, Madstone is a simple story about my uncle, Alfred Fattig, and his refusal based on his strong religious convictions to fight in WWI. Accompanied by his elder brother and fellow draft dodger, Charles Savannah Fattig, he hid out in the southwestern Oregon mountains for three years, then surrendered to Uncle Sam and was sentenced to nine months behind bars for his trouble. But if you peek under the surface, you will find a strange tale about a very peculiar family living in an extraordinary time and unique place. Yet it is also the quintessential story of someone listening to his conscience while rejecting the popular drumbeat of war.

When I began research for this project in the 1980s, Uncle Alfred, the youngest of my father's two older brothers, was still alive as were some of those who knew him. I was also able to interview soldiers who fought in WWI, including those who joined or were drafted in southern Oregon

in 1917. And I've pored over countless yellowed newspaper clippings reporting on the conflict.

They are all gone now, the doughboys of the first global war. Had I waited even a few years, Madstone would have lacked the gravitas the subject deserved since most of the principal characters would have no longer been around to toss in their two bits. To a man, the WWI veterans I met over the years were remarkable folks who deserved our respect. In Madstone, you will meet several genuine WWI heroes from southwestern Oregon whose courage was conspicuous. Contrary to what some well-intentioned folks may have insisted in recent years, not everyone in a military uniform is a hero. Truth be told, many veterans like me fought nothing more than hangovers during our uneventful tours of duty. There is no shame in that, providing you served honorably while in uniform. The shame is in lying about your exploits. Anyone falsifying his or her military history steals the honor from the deserving folks in uniform who risked their lives for others or gave their full measure for their country.

Fought in Western Europe, WWI began in 1914 and ended four years later with roughly ten million soldiers killed. The armistice was signed on Nov. 11, 1918—precisely on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. The day was celebrated as Armistice Day until it morphed into Veterans Day in 1954 to honor all who once wore a military uniform.

Obviously, some wars are bloodier than others. WWI was a war's war. Consider this: the U.S., which declared war on Germany in April of 1917 but didn't fire a shot until that October, lost some 116,500 Americans in uniform in the war. Some were mowed down by machine guns. Others died an agonizing death from gas poisoning. Many others succumbed to diseases that ran rampant in the rat-infested trenches. While it is true that a soldier dying on any battlefield is just as dead regardless of where or when the battle was joined, WWI was a brutal conflict which required being on full alert and a bit of luck to survive each day. It was a bloody, muddy hell.

In this book, I focus on what was happening in southwest Oregon in

the years leading up to World War I and the period immediately following the armistice. The towns you will come to know are places like Grants Pass, Medford, Jacksonville and Kerby, all in southwest Oregon. The region, the people and the local newspapers unflinchingly reflected country life when our nation went to war a century ago. Southwest Oregon was a microcosm of rural America during the Great War.

You will notice that Alfred Fattig's quotes are often grammatically challenged. I purposefully did not change his manner of speaking because his earthy but spoken-from-the heart approach to our mother tongue told volumes about the man. Besides, it wasn't until I was a high school senior that I learned grammar wasn't my maternal grandmother. I have also discovered over the years that simply because a person uses poor grammar means he or she is a dullard, any more than a learned person employing proper grammar reflects brilliance. Being well acquainted with both college graduates—I are one—and fence posts, I am sometimes in awe of the intellectual similarities. Yet I have also been mightily impressed by the brain power and depth of knowledge of degreed folks.

To get the proper Madstone perspective, you will need to plunge into the family gene pool with all its odd characters to get the full flavor of the narrative. Otherwise, you will keep shaking your head and muttering to yourself, "My God, how could anyone live like that?" Not an unreasonable question. In answer, I've included several chapters about my family and it's extremely rustic lifestyle, chapters which may make the squeamish squirm even more. Those chapters illustrate that for Alfred and Charlie Fattig, already accustomed to an extremely roughshod lifestyle, the Madstone cabin era would be a mere extension of that rustic existence. In some respects, it could have even have been considered a bit of a reprieve.

Like most families, ours has never been too keen about inviting outsiders to peek into the family closet. We may have been raised in poverty, but we are rich in pride. Dragging two felonious Fattigs out into the light of day may not sit well with some family members, past

and present. But I figure the strange yet fascinating tale of our two jailbirds is worth shaking the family tree. Besides, we're not talking about vicious criminal kith and kin preying on society. The draft-dodging Fattig brothers were two strong-willed individuals simply opposing war as a solution to global problems when they refused to be drafted into WWI. What's more, having spent decades asking people questions as a journalist, it seems only fair that I be willing to sit down and study my own family's belly button. It should come as no surprise that, like all navels, it is downright unsightly once you pluck the lint.

By the by, I become a journalist because nothing seemed more appealing than spending my adult life visiting people and hearing their life story. I've always enjoyed talking to folks in the autumn of their life who had followed the Robert Frost road, the one less traveled. Uncle Alfred would turn out to be one of the most fascinating people I would interview in some forty years of journalism.

The obvious question that comes up when folks refuse to fight for their country is whether they are driven by cowardice or conscience. As the reader, you be the judge.

ONE

The Killing Shot

THE HUNTER TOOK A DEEP BREATH, HOLDING IT for a few seconds before slowly letting it out in an attempt to steady his .40-65 Winchester as he pulled down on the deer. The young man was tired and hungry. He desperately wanted a clean kill following unrelenting lean days in which a skinny squirrel was considered a veritable feast.

With its long octagon barrel, the model 1886 rifle weighed heavy in his weary arms. But this was the first deer he had seen in several weeks. He could ill afford to miss the opportunity. A good shot would reward him with fresh venison; a miss meant prolonging his hunger pains.

Earlier that morning he had waded across shallow rapids below a crystal-clear pool in the Chetco River deep in what is now the 180,000-acre Kalmiopsis Wilderness tucked away in Oregon's rugged southwest corner. Even today, it is unforgiving rugged country known to take the life of those who venture into it not fully prepared.

Hiking along a rocky stream flowing from the west into the river, the hunter had startled the young buck nibbling on the tender green leaves of the streamside brush.

After bouncing a short distance on spring-loaded legs, the buck began tiptoeing through the wild azaleas whose pink blossoms filled the canyon with an airy perfume worth a mint in Manhattan if you could figure out

a way to bottle it. Halting in mid-step, the deer peeked through the foliage at the man who had come for breakfast.

His chest no longer heaving from his exertions and the rising sun warming his back, the hunter snugged his cheek against the rifle's wooden stock. Sighting along the top of the barrel with his right eye, he carefully aligned the tip of the tiny steel post mounted on the far end with the bottom of the "V" in the rear sight. He lined them both up with the deer's head and gently pulled the trigger.

"It was standing there, a forked horn, looking at me through the brush," the man would recall some seventy years later. "I shot him right between the eyes."

And nearly blew off the top of the young buck's head when the 260-grain bullet slammed into its target. The rifle belched a puff of black-powder smoke as the sound of the blast echoed up the narrow canyon that early summer morning in 1918.

Walking over to his fallen prey, the man drew his hunting knife, one kept sharp enough to shave a cat if you could hold the feline still during its hissy fit, and swiftly slit the dead deer's throat. Blood gushed out onto the rocky soil before eventually slowing to a trickle. Working with the efficiency of a hunter who had bloodied his knife countless times before, he cut into its tender underbelly, slicing from the genitals to the throat, spilling its bowels out onto the ground. He took great care not to puncture the bladder, knowing the deer's strong urine would contaminate the valuable meat.

"We was real hungry," stressed the man who spoke with the parlance of someone little acquainted with formal education. This fine morning would feature venison for breakfast, a tasty treat for any omnivore, let alone two brothers working hard to build a cabin in these rugged mountains before the snow flew.

Yet the hunter was not so ravenous that he didn't take a few minutes to cut open its fore stomach. It was there he discovered a curious-looking stone the size of an acorn. At last, he had found the prize he had long sought—a madstone.

"I had begun to look for madstones after meeting a man in the woods

years before I got that one," he said in an interview seventy years after he shot the buck. "He told me how he got his, finding it in the stomach. I didn't kill any more deer after that but what I didn't cut the guts open and went to looking for one. What causes them, some people say, is a deer licking himself in fly time, getting that stone going in his stomach."

"I carried that madstone in my pocket for a good many years," he added. "Don't know if it brought me luck, but I was mighty proud of it. It's a beautiful thing, that stone."

The man speaking was Alfred Fattig, my uncle. Despite having blood on his hands that morning, he was a World War I draft dodger on the run, one who steadfastly refused to kill for Uncle Sam. He was a devout pacifist, at least when it came to shooting men between the eyes. He and his older brother, Charles "Charlie" Savannah Fattig, were hiding out from the long arm of the law in the remote mountains.

After three years on the lam and growing ever more lonely and melancholy by mountain life, Alfred hiked out and surrendered to authorities. He was tried in federal court in Portland and sentenced to a relatively light punishment of nine months behind bars. The two brothers had parted company the last year in hiding because they could no longer tolerate each other's company. However, the elder sibling also gave himself up a year later, receiving the same punishment.

The man who shot the madstone-carrying buck in Oregon's Chetco River drainage back in 1918 would dub the stream where he made the killing Madstone Creek. The rustic dwelling he and his older brother, Charlie, were building across the river became known as the Madstone cabin. The cabin is long gone today but the historic cabin site is marked on the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest map at roughly 2,200 feet elevation above sea level. Just across the Chetco River from the cabin site is the confluence of Madstone Creek, the name chosen by the two brothers.

After field dressing the deer, Alfred lifted up a foreleg, then cut the skin around the ankle and sliced the tendon. With a snap, he broke the ankle bone and cut off the hoof. He quickly repeated the procedure on the other three legs. Following that, he cut through the fur around the

neck at the base of the skull, slicing down to the vertebrae. Grasping the horns at their base, he gave the head a sharp twist, hearing the telltale snap of a broken neck. Picking up the knife once more, he quickly cut through the remaining tendons to decapitate the animal. He tossed the head and hooves onto the pile of guts which would soon be consumed by scavengers. But the heart and liver were tucked back inside the chest cavity. While he did not want to carry any unnecessary weight, he would not waste any precious meat. After all, there was no corner meat market nearby to pick up a few steaks when their supplies ran low.

Draping the carcass over his shoulder in a fireman's carry, he trudged slowly back to the cabin site, stopping periodically to rest. Upon reaching the cabin site, he would hang the deer carcass in the shade of a nearby cedar tree to cure.

Having washed his hands in the river as clear as holy water, he prepared a hasty meal, cooking slabs of the heart muscle in an iron frying pan on a campfire. His hunger satiated, he later picked up an ax, hewed a crude board out of a soft cedar log and began carving letters into the rough wood with a knife. Written on that crude slab of wood he placed over the door were the words "Madstone cabin." At least those were his intended words. The spelling may have been a mite off.

TWO

A Short Madstone Primer

BEFORE PROCEEDING ANY FURTHER INTO the tale of the two draft-dodging brothers in Oregon, we need to examine the reddish-brown madstone Alfred Fattig found in the soft underbelly of a buck back that summer morning of 1918. About the size of a bantam chicken egg, it looks like a polished agate you would find in a lapidary shop along Route 66 in Arizona. But this was obviously no rock formed in the belly of the earth. A close inspection reveals granulated material with light-brown rings at each end, indicating it was created in concentric layers.

It is an enterolith, a mineral concretion of mostly calcium which develops in the gastrointestinal tract of some ruminants. Like a pearl, the stone is created when a foreign object, perhaps hair as the hunter suggested, becomes lodged in the gastrointestinal system. Over time, it becomes coated with layers of mineral, forming a stone.

Some North American Indians, believing such stones had healing powers, called them "medicine stones." To the Euro-Americans who roamed the southwest Oregon mountains in search of venison, they were also considered good luck charms. Certainly finding one meant venison was on the menu for a hungry hunter.

In American mythology, some of our forefathers—and foremothers—also subscribed to the belief a madstone was a talisman whose principal powers included the ability to heal. Some insisted it was so powerful it could even cure rabies. Moreover, a madstone was believed to be particularly strong if it came from the gut of a white deer. Since a madstone in any deer is a rare thing and finding an albino deer is rarer still, it stands to reason such a madstone would have the most powerful medicinal powers, so went the thinking of those believing in the madstone myth. Just why they would believe such twaddle has been lost in time but it is arguably less delusional than much of the internet drivel one finds orbiting in cyberspace today. No matter your perspective on the power of the stones, they were a conversation piece around a camp fire or hearth.

Madstone is obviously an unusual name with a hint of mystery. Some folks say the moniker was derived from the practice of using the stone for medicinal purposes in the belief it could cure someone gone mad after being bitten by a rabid animals. Since many of those foaming at the mouth are dogs, often called mad dog, the talisman became known as a madstone. According to folklore, the stone could be used to draw poison from the unfortunate person who developed hydrophobia.

You will notice when I refer to madstone as an irritant in a deer's tummy, I use the lowercase but bump it up to upper case when referring to the Madstone cabin or Madstone country. My rationale is the latter deserves proper noun status. It is also a tip of the hat to those who built the cabin and explored those rugged mountains.

Madstones are mentioned in passing in a few pieces of American literature. One that stands out is *The Heart of the Alleghenies*, a book published in 1883. Penned by Wilbur Gleason Zeigler and Ben S. Grosscup, it flows with an interesting journalistic prose not often demonstrated in that era. The madstone pops up when the authors interview a veteran hunter named Ben Lester who is described as the epitome of a backwoods hunter with a rifle as long as his short, stocky body. They asked their version of Natty Bumppo if he had heard tales of a stone being found in a deer.

"Yes, the madstone," Lester responded on page 158. "People believe it will cure snakebites and hydrophobia."

With that, Lester produced a madstone which the authors described as smooth and red with a flat, white side. It was about the size of a man's thumb, they noted.

"It was found in the paunch of a white deer I shot this fall…mind you, the deer with a madstone in him is twice as hard to kill as one of ordinary kind," Lester told them. "Five bullets were put in the buck that carried this one."

While there is nothing to suggest the deer slayer was not a skilled hunter or that the buck was not tougher than rawhide, I submit Mr. Lester's aim may have been off a bit that day. Either that, or the madstone's magical powers were at work warding off bullets. Although Zeigler and Grosscup didn't question the hunter's ability, perhaps owing to the fact he was armed with the large weapon when they met, they clearly dismiss the madstone's reputed powers.

"The peculiar properties attributed to it are, in all probability, visionary," they wrote diplomatically. "The idea of it being a life preserver for the deer which carries it savors of superstition." In other words, unadulterated horse hooey.

Back in southern Oregon, the only person I had ever met who had a madstone was A. Donley Barnes, former Josephine County sheriff and one of our dad's lifelong friends who will pop up again in this tale. He carried a reddish-brown madstone in a small leather pouch. A little smaller than a fifty-cent piece, it was given to him by pioneer Sam Bunch who lived in the Illinois Valley all his long life.

"That's the only one I've ever seen," Barnes said as he carefully took it out of the pouch as though he was about to reveal a rare jewel. "An old Indian fellow gave it to Sam when Sam was twenty years old. When Sam was seventy-five, he gave it to me. He told me he hoped it would do as well for me as it did for him. He was ninety-seven when he died."

In fact, Sam Bunch was pushing ninety-eight when he died on July 9, 1984. He was born July 24, 1886.

"Indians always said it would keep you in good health and contribute

to your longevity," Barnes said as he gently returned the stone to its worn pouch. "Might be something to that."

Could be. Not only did Sam Bunch live a long life but Barnes was ninety when he died on Oct. 19, 1995. What's more, Uncle Alfred, also a longtime carrier of a madstone, lived until he was ninety-seven. On the other hand, a medical doctor would suggest that genetics and healthy lifestyles, not magical stones, were the major contributing factors in the longevity of all three.

Shortly after killing the deer with the madstone, Alfred met a grizzled hunter who told him he had once killed a deer which carried a madstone. The fellow hunter told him he had cracked open the stone and found a small ball of deer hair inside.

"If that's so, it must be that it's caused from the deer licking himself and swallowing the hair," Alfred said, noting that hair isn't digestible. "It just stayed there until, you might say, it petrifies. It's just as hard as any other stone."

Upon examining the madstone Alfred had found in the forked horn buck, Dr. Walt Krebs, a longtime veterinarian in Grants Pass, had a more scientific explanation when I interviewed him in 1989. The veterinarian had practiced on domestic and wild animals in Southern Oregon for half a century, the latter at Wildlife Images, a local wildlife rehabilitation center which has earned acclaim throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Such a stone forms in the reticulum of ruminants, Krebs explained, noting the reticulum is also known as the fore stomach.

"Heavy things, such as bits of rock or sand, are forced over a little ridge into the reticulum," he told me. "Humans refer to that lining as tripe. You can buy it in local butcher shops."

The heavy objects settle in the waffle-like reticulum where they may become covered with minerals over the years, he said.

"Yes, this was probably formed in the reticulum," he said as he rolled it between a thumb and forefinger while examining it. "Once these solid objects get in there, they'll remain there. They don't come out."

Like a cow, when a deer begins chewing its cud, the action causes its four stomachs to activate, from the larger rumen to the reticulum, he said.

"The fact it is this shape, that indicates it had rolled around in there for a long time, like a tumbler effect," he said.

Yet Krebs, a life-long hunter, had never found a stone in any of his prey. "I'm going to start opening up the reticulum and look for them," he said. "I've never seen one of these before. Fascinating."

As to whether a madstone brings anyone good luck, he just shrugged. "Now that I couldn't tell you," he said.

Meanwhile, anyone hoping to fine one in a deer should be prepared to look long and hard, Alfred Fattig cautioned.

"Them stones are about the most rarest things on earth with no value," he said.