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## SWEET VICTORY

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Freshman forward  
Carmelo Anthony  
driving on Kansas

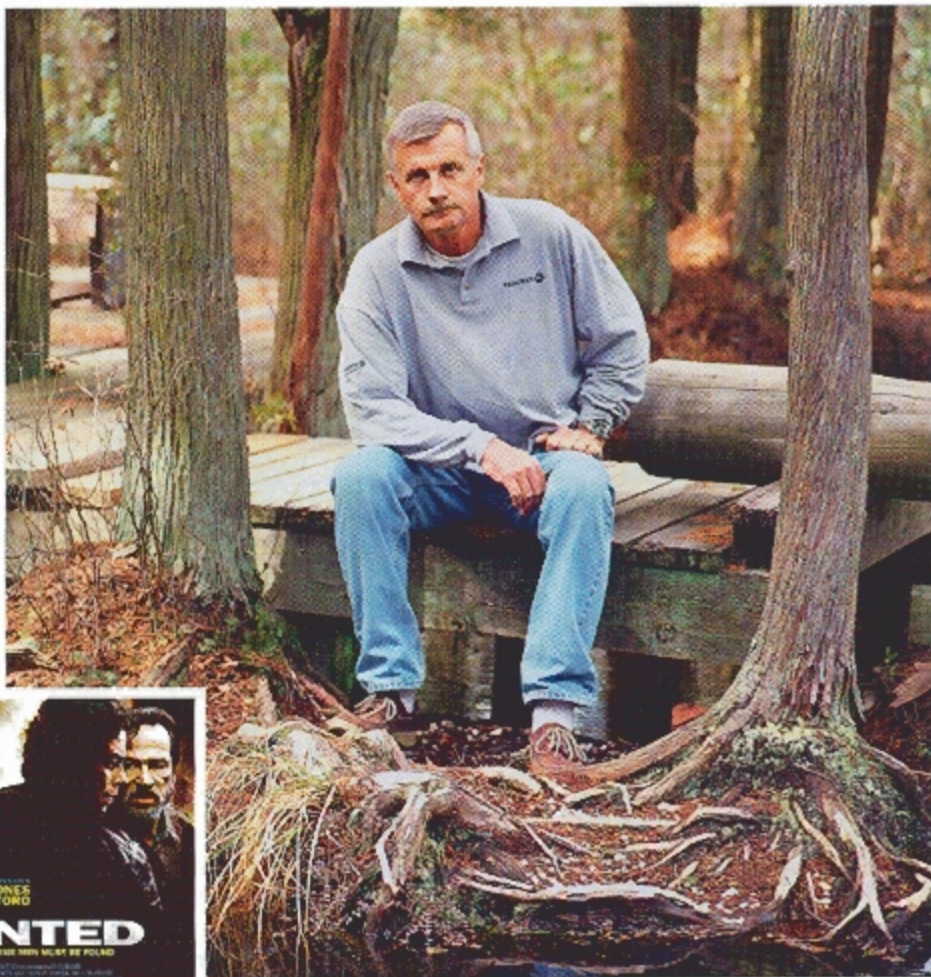
# Celebrity **STALKER**

The skills of ace wilderness tracker **Tom Brown** have found an unusual stage: Hollywood

BY CHRIS BALLARD

**T**OM BROWN JR. can track a mouse across a gravel driveway. He has helped solve more than 600 cases involving fleeing suspects, missing persons and lost animals. To someone with such developed tracking skills, a muddy boot mark stamped onto a white linoleum floor is the equivalent of a giant blinking neon sign saying HE WENT THAT WAY. So in his role as technical adviser on *The Hunted*, the new Paramount film in which Tommy Lee Jones plays a fugitive-hunter based on Brown, the 53-year-old New Jerseyite was skeptical when just such a boot print was used as a key clue. "It's funny, though," says Brown. "Hardly anyone who sees the movie notices it. That is the challenge of working in Hollywood—you can't be very subtle."

Many of the markings in *The Hunted* are exaggerated for effect, such as the set of shoeprints in pristine grass that are so deep they look to have been made by elephants. ("Huge, absolutely huge," says Brown.) To convey the finer points of Brown's work would have been nearly impossible, however, considering that his craft relies on such powers of observation so keen that at times they seem to border on the supernatural. A professional wilderness tracker, Brown can read signs in compressed dust, re-create crime scenes from studying the angles at which grass blades are bent and trace some-



**THE REAL MCCOY** The negative perception of tracking will be altered, Brown hopes, by Jones's portrayal of a fugitive-hunter in *The Hunted*.

one's movement across pavement based on sand and dust patterns. From a single footprint he says he can tell a person's age, sex, height, strength and emotional state. "Inside every track there is a miniature topographic landscape with thousands of features, and each one is an indicator," says the trim, sturdy Brown. "Every movement of the human body has to be compensated for. For example, do you walk the same way when you have to take a pee or not? Of course you don't, and from looking at a footprint, it's possible to tell exactly how badly you have to pee."

Brown learned to track while growing up in Toms River, N.J. The grandfather of one of his best friends was an Apache elder named Stalking Wolf, a man Brown now reverentially refers to as Grandfather, and the old man taught him the ways of the land. In his late teens he began helping local police in missing persons cases, and by his early 20s he had become an expert—once spending an entire year living in the woods. In 1978 he was called in to track a suspected rapist who had eluded a team of police and search dogs for two days in the New Jersey woods. He found the trail almost immediately and followed it a little more than

a mile to a house that, as it turned out, the suspect had used. The discovery led to an arrest and a flurry of publicity for Brown in the pages of national publications such as *The New York Times* and *PEOPLE*.

Not long after, Brown wrote a book about his life, *The Tracker*, and he has since put

never left," says Kevin Reeve, who is now the director of the school. "We've found that 75 percent of our students come back for a second class, and those that do usually continue on to take an average of five courses."

Tracking is an ancient art, practiced as

I thought that if these soldiers were ever caught behind enemy lines, they could use this knowledge to escape, but instead they were using it to kill and attack." After the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, in which Brown's brother-in-law was the first officer of the United Airlines plane that hit the World

## FROM A SINGLE FOOTPRINT Brown says he can tell a person's age, sex, height, strength and emotional state.

out 16 more, with themes ranging from the spiritual to the practical. *Tom Brown's Field Guide to City and Suburban Survival* includes such tips as, "If stranded in a car in a severe snowstorm, tear the stuffing out of the seats and jam it inside your jacket to stay warm." "As soon as people hear the word *survival*, they figure you're a loony in the mountains of Montana or some deadbeat on a TV show," says Brown. "But people are aliens to their own planet. I'm just trying to reintroduce people to their own natural landscape."

In 1978 Brown also started the Tracker School, which is based in Asbury, N.J. The school now offers close to 30 courses, most of which last a week, on everything from search and rescue to scouting. Much of the curriculum is now taught by Brown's former students, many of whom become Brown devotees. "I came in 10 years ago for a class and basically



**FILM CRITIC** As an adviser Brown (left) saw some scenes in the movie, which starred Del Toro (center), as implausible.

long as humans have hunted for food, but it has rarely been treated as a teachable science. For years the school also taught classes on combat survival, but it stopped in the early 1990s. "I used to train the military heavily," says Brown. "Survival skills, how to be invisible moving at high speeds.

Trade Center, Brown revived the program because, he says, "I realized the enemy we were up against." So now there is a branch of the school that works with SWAT teams and other elite forces. Currently, a number of Brown's former students, "mainly in the elite units," he says, are in Iraq.

Brown is constantly working on one tracking case or another. On a recent Wednesday afternoon he was busy mapping out a search for an unmarked grave near the New Jersey shore. With the aid of 30 of his students, he planned to canvass a one-square-mile area for a kidney-shaped depression

in the ground, which indicates a body may have decomposed in that spot. (Says Brown, "It's shaped like a kidney because all killers are lazy and bury bodies in the fetal position.") Before Brown could get started, though, he was called in the next morning to track a 13-year-old boy who'd gone miss-

## FAST TRACK LEARNING

### THE TRACKER SCHOOL

The country's premier tracking school, now in its 25th year, offers close to 30 courses, covering everything from scouting to spiritual healing to making bows and arrows out of animal sinew and wood. All students must first take the Standard Course, a seven-day camp that focuses on tracking, survival skills, stalking, camouflage and Native American lifestyles and philosophy. The Standard Course is offered in southern New Jersey, northern California and central

Florida. Most other courses are held in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey. Must be 18 years or older. Cost: \$800 for the Standard Course, \$850 for all others. [www.trackerschool.com](http://www.trackerschool.com)

### BOULDER OUTDOOR SURVIVAL SCHOOL

Classes last from four days to four weeks and are held in Colorado, Utah and Mexico. Founded in 1968 by Larry Dean Olsen, who helped create the original requirements for the Boy Scouts' outdoor-survival merit badge. Must be 18 or older. Cost: from \$575

for a four-day intro course to \$3,095 for four weeks. [www.boss-inc.com](http://www.boss-inc.com)

### NATIONAL OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP SCHOOL and OUTWARD BOUND

Two options for those under 18. Both offer a variety of courses, from kayaking to outdoor survival, some of which can be taken for college credit. Other courses for those 18 or older, including families. Cost: from \$595 to \$8,995. [www.nols.edu](http://www.nols.edu) or [www.outwardbound.com](http://www.outwardbound.com)

ing in Waretown, N.J. Brown and his students soon located the boy in nearby woods, where he was sleeping. In the process Brown converted some skeptics. "You watch him and you say to yourself, 'This guy is trying to pull the wool over my eyes. There are no tracks on the pavement to see. Who does he think he's kidding?'" one of his former students, Lieut. Scott Sprague of the Ocean Township Police, told a newspaper afterward. "Yet he was able to do in two hours what nine cops, a bloodhound and a guy in a helicopter could not do in twice that time."

Considering Brown's affinity for the wilderness, it is somewhat disconcerting to visit his home on Long Beach Island, an affluent Jersey shore community laden with summer homes. In *The Hunted*, Jones's character lives in a small log cabin

movie," he says. "That part is accurate."

Brown says he has a "love-hate relationship" with *The Hunted*, an at-times predictable, over-the-top action movie in which Jones's character hunts down a fugitive played by Benicio del Toro. (The plot is loosely based on an incident in Brown's life in which he hunted down a former student, a case he won't talk about publicly because the mission is, he says, "still classified.") Even to viewers who have never ventured into the wild, it's clear that some of the scenes—such as when del Toro's character rigs a series of sophisticated traps in mere minutes and when Jones follows a wounded wolf through the woods and takes a trap off its leg—are implausible. "It would take the better part of a week to gain a wolf's trust, and you'd have to throw a blanket over it to get that close,"

**"PEOPLE ARE ALIENS TO THEIR OWN PLANET,"** Brown says. "I'm just trying to reintroduce them to their own natural landscape."

without heat or electricity deep in the woods of British Columbia. The reality looks more like something out of a TV sitcom—a three-story house, complete with plush carpeting and a living room dominated by a television the size of a bus windshield. "I'm rarely here," Brown says. "Of course I'd rather be out in the woods [all the time], but you make certain sacrifices." In Brown's case the little boys playing pirates in the gravel driveway, his two children from his second marriage, are the primary reason. (Brown says the high quality of the school system keeps him on Long Beach Island.)

There are hints of his profession in the house, such as the arrowheads strung to a wooden shaft with sinew in the living room and the two Hummers parked in the driveway. Brown wears a pair of brown Top-Siders, even padding around inside, because the shoes have rounded edges that don't leave markings as square edges would (thus helping prevent any confusion between his footprints and those he might be tracking). "They're similar in shape to the ones you see Tommy Lee wearing in the

says Brown. "But that's Hollywood. The mantra of the staff during the filming was, 'Tom, it's just a movie.'"

There is much about the film of which Brown is proud. One cutaway of Jones's hands "knapping" a knife out of stone (that is, sharpening the edges with another stone) is actually footage of Brown's hands. And many of Brown's mannerisms—the way he strokes his mustache when he thinks, the way he fidgets with his hands when indoors, the way he moves through the wilderness as if on his toes—are apparent in Jones's performance. "He'd study me and how I react, how I walk," says Brown. "It almost gives you a feeling of paranoia that someone's watching you."

One thing Brown has worried about some is what he calls "the damn movie publicity that makes it seem as if I train killers." So far there haven't been any vigilantes showing up on his doorstep. Says Reeve, "We don't get a lot of gun-toting, bunker-building types. Tom's approach is a lot more balanced than macho. It's almost an effeminate approach to survival. It's not about fighting nature, it's about living in harmony with it." □