

FOR THE YOUNG HUNTER

by

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Second Edition
December 2002

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Foreword and Acknowledgments

Foreword: The first edition of this booklet was printed in 1963 and authored by John Madson and myself. Thousands of copies were distributed and permission was given for state and provincial conservation agencies to reprint the booklet. But with the passage of time, the original text needed to be revised.

As we entered into the 21st century, the Boone & Crockett Club, always interested in "Fair Chase," launched an effort to improve hunter ethics. Meanwhile, the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) expressed an interest in a revised edition of "For the Young Hunter." With the approval of Winchester Ammunition (Olin Corp.), a triad of cooperators was organized to produce a second edition dedicated to the memory of John Madson (1923-1995) – a gifted outdoor writer, colleague, and friend.

As John wrote in the first edition: "These brief chapters are not intended to be thorough treatments of the hunting ethic. This is impossible, however large the book, for each hunter is his or her own philosopher and will develop personal values and attitudes as experienced hunters. To pretend that this little booklet (addition to the IHEA website) even scratches the surface of the hunting ethic would both be inaccurate and presumptuous."

"But we do hope that these seven chapters will give the young hunter a few broad guidelines for his or her conduct afield. If they grant only a brief glimpse into the spirit and philosophy of hunting, the chapters will have served their purpose."

To speed up the download time for personal computers (www.ihea.com), all drawings in the first edition have been eliminated.

Acknowledgments: The following people and the IHEA were involved in bringing the second edition onto their website:

George Bettas - Boone & Crockett Club
Paul Clarence - Winchester Division, Olin Corp.
Steve Hall - Education Director, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
Tim Lawhern - Wisconsin Hunter Education Administrator
Earl Morgenroth - Boone & Crockett Club
Father Theodore Vitali - Boone & Crockett Club
The International Hunter Education Association

Ed Kozicky

A Father's Advice to His Son

(This poem was written many years ago by Mark Beaufoy, an English hunter, when he presented his son with his first gun. Mr. Beaufoy's fine training and enthusiasm stayed with his sons all their lives. His youngest son, who lost his right arm in World War I, continued to hunt and shoot for many years thereafter. The poem is reprinted with the kind permission of the author's granddaughter, Mrs. Prue M. Guild of Athole Cottage, Kirkton, Hawick, Roxburghshire, Scotland.)

*If a sportsmen true you'd be
Listen carefully to me;*

*Never, never let your gun
Pointed be at anyone;
That it may unloaded be
Matters not the least to me.*

*When a hedge or fence you cross,
Though of time it cause a loss,
From your gun the cartridge take
For the greater safety sake.*

*If twixt you and neighboring gun
Bird may fly or beast may run.
Let this maxim e'er be thine:
"Follow not across the line."*

*Stops and beaters, oft unseen,
Lurk behind some leafy screen;
Calm and steady always be:
"Never shoot where you can't see."*

*Keep your place and silent be,
Game can hear and game can see;
Don't be greedy, better spared
Is a pheasant, than one shared.*

*You may kill, or you may miss,
But at all times think of this
"All the pheasants ever bred
Won't repay for one man dead."*

COMPANIONS

Your hunting partner is the most important single element of a successful hunt. Hunting is for fun, and fun is impossible with an unsafe, illegal, selfish, or irresponsible companion.

Choose your hunting partners with great care. And rate yourself by the same measure.

If he or she is a casual friend who sometimes irritates you at home, you can bet that the irritation will really blossom out in the boondocks when the going gets rough. A hunting companion should be a close friend whose natural virtues are known to you, and who you know to be durable and trustworthy under stress.

Choose a hunting partner according to the depth of your interest. Some individuals do most of their hunting over a cup of coffee. Others are eager, go-for-broke types who'll hang tough until dark. Determine the depth of your own interest and match it with your companion's.

Gun sense is vital in a hunting partner. You can hand a gun to an individual and evaluate his or her total experience in a few minutes. A safe hunter handles firearms with respect, assurance, ease, and takes pride in doing so. You owe it to yourself and your family to hunt with such a person, and you owe it to your hunting companion to return it in kind.

A hunt may be a grim trial to endure together or a dream trip to remember. In either case, it is a mutual enterprise to be shared without selfishness – sharing shooting opportunities, hunting techniques, food, equipment, and something of each other. It must never be competitive. No good thing should be hogged by one person. The only place for selfishness on a hunt is in taking more than your share of work, discomfort, or disappointment.

There will be times when Mother Nature and Lady Luck – a pair of fickle old jades – team up against you. A predicted sprinkle becomes an all-day rain, you hunt every covert but the right one, or your dog acts up badly. A good partner expects the unexpected and accepts the unchangeable with grace. He or she can endure adversity and grin off a case of creeping irritation.

And in your hunting partner's eyes, how do you stack up?

Maybe you are cold, hungry, or tired. You needn't dwell on it; your partner probably feels the same way. If you honestly feel you can't go on, face it frankly and cheerfully. But don't whine. Whining will ruin everyone's day, and stamp you as a gutless wonder who has no business afield.

One of the gravest offenses against a companion is to betray his or her confidence and spread the word about personal hunting spots. If a companion thinks enough of you to share prized hunting secrets, respect that confidence. Such places are meant to be shared between the two of you and not to be usurped by others.

Nearly as bad is the “game hog” who shoots and grabs and hotly denies ever missing a shot. There will be times when you are not sure who killed the game. If so, wave your claim and say you missed. No game, not even a trophy, is worth risking a friendship.

A real hunting partner is one who shares without asking a share in return, who gives without thinking, who places your well being and pleasure above his or her own.

Such individuals may be rich and well-born or from the opposite end of the social scale. Mark them well, whenever you find them. They are proper folks with whom to share your campfire.

DOGS

A newspaper once printed a slurring remark about Fala, the Scottish terrier owned and beloved by Franklin Roosevelt, and reaped a whirlwind. The President erupted:

“Say what you will about me, but don’t abuse my little dog!!!”

Anyone who has ever loved a dog feels the same way. President or peasant, never belittle a person’s dog. Rap their politics, character, but don’t abuse their dog. Dog people will not stand for it.

This is something to keep in mind when afield with another person’s dog. A hunter is often blind to his or her pup’s shortcomings and takes immense pride in the dog’s abilities – real or imagined. One of the biggest boors afield is the individual who feels qualified to pass judgement on another person’s dog, and doesn’t hesitate to do so. The fields are full of such “experts,” most of whom have never owned or trained a hunting dog in their lives. The considerate hunter leaves the other person’s dog alone and doesn’t call, work, or criticize the dog in any way unless asked to do so.

A minor violator of this ethic is the individual who talks constantly about long-dead superdogs and their abilities, comparing your living dog with their dead ones. Avoid this. Yesterday’s wonderdogs can’t work today’s birds. Besides, you may tell about Old Spot’s amazing ability within earshot of someone who has known the dog and shot over him, and who still regrets both.

A dog owner is obliged to work his young dogs as much as possible, and season them with a lot of field experience. He or she should never go on a hunt until their companions are told about the new pup. It’s their hunt, too, and some hunters take a dim view of a green pup that chews their birds or busts coveys. Never impose such a dog on your friends without asking them beforehand. They will appreciate being asked before the hunt and will usually say, “Heck, yes! Bring the pup and give him some work.”

Whether it is your dog or not, give the dog a real chance to work. Don’t crowd or rush the dog; give the dog a chance, particularly when hunting cripples. Don’t be too critical, even if the dog breaks a covey or flushes a pheasant out of shotgun range. Chances are you never would have even seen the birds without the dog.

One of the most grievous sins afield is shooting a rabbit over a bird dog without the consent of the owner. This is unforgivable, even out of sight and hearing of the dog, for the dog can always smell rabbit in your game coat. Another serious breach of

hunting etiquette is shooting at an extremely low flying bird over a dog, or a crippled bird being closely trailed by the dog, for you risk raking or even killing the dog with shot pellets.

If your dog can't get along with other dogs afield – and many fine, big bird dogs can't – use him accordingly. Don't hunt him with smaller male dogs that could be lamed for the season or seriously injured in a dogfight.

An owner has a deep personal responsibility for the health and well-being of his or her dogs. Dogs should be provided a dry, comfortable kennel, adequate food and water, a comfortable place in the car or trailer, and a chance to exercise during long trips. In hot weather, water the dog often and don't permit the animal to become overheated. The owner should keep the dog on a careful medical schedule of preventive inoculations and examinations for worms.

A hunting dog is not a machine to exploit callously and neglect. It is a friend, a hunting companion, and an invaluable guide to birds. Many of the ethics that apply to hunting companions also fit the hunter-dog relationship.

It has been said that during a lifetime everyone is entitled to one good mate and one good dog. Wise hunters cherish both, neglect neither, and count themselves among the blessed.

EQUIPMENT

Outdoor individuals must possess many things. Some are priceless, such as experience and knowledge of wildlife, along with woodcraft and outdoor lore. More easily acquired – but no less cherished – is personal gear.

It needn't be the most costly equipment. Engraving doesn't add to a rifle's accuracy, nor does an ivory hilt improve a hunting knife's temper. But your outdoor gear should be honest, high-quality equipment that will fill your needs and not let you down.

Price and quality usually go hand in hand, but this isn't always true. Some equipment is more luxurious than practical. The young hunter must learn the difference between expensive luxury equipment and expensive practical equipment. And if you can't afford it now, it may be wise to save until you can – and not settle for second best. Second best may not withstand a tempest by Mother Nature or may fail to perform on a hunt.

Many major items of outdoor equipment are long-term investments that you may use your entire life. You will learn faster and enjoy the outdoors more with fine equipment. And because it is usually very durable, the young hunter has time to achieve an intimate familiarity with it.

The best outdoor gear is often plain, with no fancy frills or trimmings. Some young hunters are carried away with the romantic trappings of the sport and buy things they want but don't need. It's one of the occupational diseases of enjoying the outdoors. But a 10-inch Bowie knife is rarely as useful as a large, sharp clasp knife. Beaded moccasins or tennis shoes don't come close to a pair of today's leather or lightweight synthetic boots. A hunter can take just as much pride in a clean, well-loved "work gun" as in a gold-inlaid model that is seldom used.

It's a wise hunter who knows what equipment he or she needs and when to tailor the equipment accordingly. An expensive, down-filled or synthetic jacket is a splendid item of equipment, but who needs it for a September squirrel hunt? On the other hand, that jacket may be a necessity on a mountain pack trip. It's all a matter of need and timing. A hired guide is a ridiculous extravagance for rabbit shooting in a weedpatch, but a basic necessity on an Alaskan moose hunt.

The best equipment is usually a product of a reputable manufacturer that has produced such equipment for many years. Whenever possible, buy time-tested equipment from the maker that originated it – whether it is a lever-action gun designed in 1894 or insulated underwear invented in 1951.

The young hunter's best source of advice on outdoor gear is an individual with a

great amount of genuine experience. Advertisements, and many books and articles, are not the most reliable source of information. Instead, put your faith in **seasoned** outdoor folks who have finally settled on certain items as a result of trial and error, culling out needless gear under the same field conditions that you may expect to meet.

Proper use and care of outdoor gear is necessary to safeguard the equipment and to assure the success of your outing. A good hunter takes deep pride in the bore of his rifle and the conditioning of his boots. Hunting equipment should always be cleaned and stored in good repair after every hunt before you even consider the next hunting trip. Such care can almost be an end in itself, for it's a lot of fun to oil-finish a favorite gunstock.

An important part of equipment care is in knowing how to use the equipment for its intended purpose without abusing it. Good knives aren't meant to be used for hacking, prying, or driving screws. Guns aren't levers or clubs. Axes should never chop kindling that lies on rocky ground. Some items of hunting hardware – guns, compasses and knives – will last if cared for properly. But even the best gun, if seriously neglected or abused, can be ruined on one hunting trip.

Hunting equipment is as personal as a toothbrush, and you should never be embarrassed by refusing to lend it to those who feel there is no need to buy their own hunting equipment as long as they borrow your good, well-cared-for equipment. There are several valid reasons for not lending personal hunting equipment. For one thing, it may represent a considerable personal investment. Secondly, it represents a great deal of care on your part in keeping it in good condition. And most importantly, it may hold many memories. Good equipment is a source of personal joy and comfort to an outdoor enthusiast, and this is rarely understood or appreciated by the borrower. A hunter's boat, outboard motor, ATV, canteen, compass, axe or big game rifle may literally mean life or death to him or her. You'll probably never be in the position of having your life depend on an axe or a compass; but if you are, don't trust your neck to equipment that has been abused by someone else.

Good equipment is a pleasure to own, use, and keep ready for the next hunting trip. While it may not be as important as a broad working knowledge of wildlife habits and the outdoors, it is an excellent passport to such knowledge.

OUTDOOR LORE

A hunter represents the sum of his or her outdoor knowledge, and hunting success depends on how such wisdom is applied. Hunting is at its best when the hunter possesses a wealth of understanding of outdoor lore – an intimate knowledge of plants, animals, water, soil, and the effects of each on the other.

The young hunter's most important task is to increase first hand knowledge of nature through careful study and personal observation. Every generation of hunters has known this and has schooled youngsters to observe, learn, think, and apply knowledge as they acquired it in order to cement that knowledge. The Native Americans trained their hunters from babyhood and although their great skills were bound up with magic and mysticism, they were solidly based on an immense fund of practical outdoor lore.

The best of such knowledge is the hunter's own. Some may be gained by formal education, but the printed page of a book is no substitute for field experience and keen observation of the printed page that is the outdoors.

Successful hunters have three things in common: alert minds, sharp powers of observation, and years of outdoor experience.

A veteran Pennsylvania hunter once declared: "Well. I'm gonna kill a wild turkey tomorrow afternoon for my Thanksgiving dinner." It takes a lot of gall to make an announcement like that. Some hunters try all their lives to shoot a wild gobbler and never come close. But this hunter knew what he was talking about and made it stick. He had located a turkey flock while grouse hunting, but hadn't hit the panic button or done anything foolish. He wasn't prepared, nor in the proper position, to shoot a turkey that particular day. But this seasoned hunter knew the value of patience. Wise to the ways of turkeys, he knew that the flock would probably be undisturbed in the remote area where he had seen them and knew also that they would probably range through the same area the next day. Why? Because the place abounded with wild grapes, and because the scratches on the forest floor indicated daily feeding in this area. His seasoned instincts told him things were "right." The man already had the necessary skills of shooting and turkey calling. So, the next afternoon, he shot a fine gobbler – much to the bewilderment of eager but inexperienced hunters who had never taken the time to learn the habits of wild turkeys.

Today's young hunters often can't begin their training in the deep forest or broad prairies that developed such men. But even in the suburbs and cities, there are insects, birds, trees, and weather to study. Keen observation of the available outdoors, plus good books, can build a solid foundation of outdoor lore.

Check with your public library or local bookstore for outdoor guides -- mammals, birds, and plants. You may want to go on to reptiles, amphibians, fish, flowers, and rocks. There are scores of inexpensive handbooks about such things and all are highly useful to hunters of any age. Try not to depend on books alone. Whenever possible, link them with personal field observation and with friends or family members familiar with the outdoors.

Deciphering animal signs such as tracks, buck rubs, scats, dens, kills, and feeding activities is a fascinating study and can add immeasurably to the success of your hunting trip. Animal signs tell an absorbing story if you learn to read them.

Woodcraft, shooting skills, and similar outdoor activities are essential to the hunter, but they are not substitutes for the vital basic element – close personal knowledge of the natural world. Woodcraft, for example, is not only a means to an end, it is an enjoyable tool to be used to pursue outdoor activities more safely and effectively. But your most valuable outdoor tools are patient observations and alertness.

Hunting, and especially stalking, is a demanding and effective outdoor teacher. It is a discipline that enforces outdoor training. Wild game is sharply attuned to any differences in the immediate environment. And the young hunter quickly gains a vast new respect for the ability of a hunted squirrel, crow, or rabbit to cope with its enemies and use its own outdoor lore to the fullest.

Your outdoor know-how will add not only to the success of the day but to your comfort and health. Such abilities as sensing weather changes, choosing a proper campsite, using the right wood for a cook fire – all can spell the difference between fun and misery. One beautiful fall evening, in the mountains of south-central Pennsylvania, hunters were preparing for a raccoon hunt. The host, a shrewd old woodsman, made a chance remark: “Hear that wind in the trees atop the mountain? It will rain before we get home.” The rest of the hunters could hardly believe this. But it rained within the hour. Thanks to the wise hunter, the others were ready for it.

Treasure every scrap of your outdoor lore. Somewhere, sometime, it will be invaluable. The outdoors is a living environment – ever changing, never sleeping. If you are to enjoy and understand it, capitalize on your ability to think and reason. After all, they are the only real advantages we humans have in the animal kingdom.

GUNMANSHIP

A real rifleman lived in our town. We youngsters held him in great awe, for he had shot at national rifle matches at Camp Perry and knew more about guns than any other man in our small world.

One day a boy showed him a birthday .22. The man took the little rifle, carefully opened the action, and inspected the chamber to see that it was empty. He then sighted the rifle and pronounced it a “beaut.”

The boy asked, “How come you opened the bolt. My gun ain’t loaded?”

The old rifleman replied: “In the first place it ain’t a gun. It’s a rifle. And I figured it wasn’t loaded but didn’t know for sure. And because you handed me the rifle with the action closed, neither did you!”

Since then, the authors have watched many such shooters and their gunmanship. When they handed a gun to another person, the gun’s action was open. It is a common courtesy between shooters – and the unwritten law of never taking anyone’s word that a gun is unloaded. The point is simply this: the real shooter never takes chances. The real shooter never relaxes his or her vigilance when handling firearms.

When a young hunter becomes a shooter and is entrusted with a gun, childish horseplay must be put aside. It means that someone believes he or she is old enough to use a gun safely and correctly. A gun is an adult-sized responsibility. The young hunter should use it as often as possible – for shooting skill is honed with practice – but always remember that a gun is an adult-sized tool and not a child’s toy. A good gun, used with proper ammunition, is no more dangerous than an axe or a saw. It is only a tool. It is the person handling the gun who makes it dangerous or safe.

Never miss a chance to go afield with experienced shooters. But beware of going afield with guns and other youngsters. Sure, your buddies are interested in shooting, but it’s not your job to teach them. Unless you have capable adult supervision, don’t go shooting with kids who have little or no gun training. The authors know many gray-haired hunters who pick their field companions on the basis of safe gun-handling and not for friendship alone – which is one reason they lived long enough to have gray hair.

You must always be watchful when dealing with guns and gunning, but there are certain times when you must be doubly alert:

1. When you have had just enough experience to think you know all of the answers, and grow careless. You may “know” the answers, but your

subconscious mind and reflexes have not been thoroughly trained in safe gun-handling.

2. When carrying a gun over rough country, windfalls, ditches, fences, or handling a gun around the home, camp, or car.
3. During a plinking session when everyone is out to have fun and burn ammo. Someone may be tempted to “horse around.”
4. Late in a hunt, when everyone is tired and reflexes are dulled and gun carrying becomes sloppy.
5. During the hunt when game appears. This burning excitement cannot be duplicated in a hunter education class or training range. Anticipate this great excitement, and double your caution when it comes.

If hunting companions ignore safety rules, tell them about the rules. They may be close friends, but when they are careless with their guns, they are careless with your life. This is a deadly insult. It simply means that they don't care enough about you to handle their gun properly, or take the time to learn how. If they don't mend their ways, limit your friendship to a ball diamond or a swimming pool.

As you should never trust an “unloaded” gun, never trust a gun that is “on safe.” A safety catch is only a mechanical device, and devices can fail. It is the least reliable of a gun's safety features – far more important is your own good judgement, skill, and the ingrained habits of safe gun-handling. Of course, part of that good judgement dictates proper use of your gun's safety catch. It should be “off” only as you are actually shooting, and should be snapped “on” as you are lowering the gun from your shoulder. Get in the habit of checking the safety with your fingertips throughout a hunt to make certain that it is “on,”

When you handle, carry, or shoot a gun, do it in a way that keeps you in full control of the muzzle. Keep that business end pointed in a way that if the gun goes off, you'll have nothing to regret. The cardinal principle of gun safety is NEVER POINT A GUN AT ANYTHING YOU DO NOT WISH TO SHOOT. There are **no** exceptions to this rule!

At all times, know exactly where your hunting companions are. In the field, be constantly aware of their location and never relax your vigil over your friends. Guard them against shooting danger; you'll also be guarding yourself.

Never take a loaded gun into an automobile, house or camp. There is no good reason to do this. Sure, the authors know about burglars, chicken hawks and things that go “bump” in the night. And we repeat; you have no good reason to keep a loaded gun in camp, car or house.

The International Hunter Education Association (Appendix A) has developed outstanding hunter education programs throughout North America with qualified instructors. There's probably a hunter education course near your home. Drop a postcard or telephone your state or provincial game or conservation department and find out. In most states and provinces the successful completion of a hunter education course is mandatory in obtaining a hunting license. Your graduation from a hunter education course means that you have learned the rules of a game where mistakes can't be corrected with an eraser.

When a youngster is given a first gun (or given the right to earn it), he or she is paid a high compliment. It means that the parents trust their youngster's judgement, that they are inviting their youngster to share adult games in an adult world, and that they realize their youngster has grown beyond childhood.

Your folks are right. You may not be an adult. But when you handle a gun, you are more than a child. Don't let us old folks down.

YOU, THE HUNTER

In hunting, as in everything else, there are “givers”, and there are “takers”. Some folks give advantage; others take it.

As a “giver” you respect and cherish the game you hunt and you bag it in a sporting manner – offering an advantage – or you do not bag it. You put your own comfort and enjoyment second to that of your companions and make an effort to learn the life ways and needs of wildlife to the end of making yourself a better hunter and conservationist. You may be the one who always washes the pans in camp, or spends the last day of your hunt trailing a crippled buck.

A “taker” is self-centered to a fault. He or she may not obviously violate the hunting ethic by hogging game or shooting birds on the ground, but feel obligated only to themselves.

Also remember that none of us is perfect. In some respects we’re all “takers”, and have hunting habits which irritate our partners or aren’t fair to the game we’re hunting. The fact is, a few small faults in a partner help to cushion our own. A canvas cap is more becoming to a hunter than a halo.

A high personal ethic is reflected in a sincere concern for others’ property – whether it’s a borrowed rifle or a borrowed place to hunt – and for others’ rights as well. The rifle is rarely borrowed, for a genuine hunter knows that hunting gear is as personal as a toothbrush. Anything you borrow must be returned in topnotch condition and is borrowed only once. The same respect is shown to borrowed hunting country. As a “giver” you know that trespass is often regarded as a personal insult by landowners, and you never use a person’s land without permission. You also know that finding a place to hunt is your own duty and not that of the government or of friends.

It is sometimes necessary for a “giver” to take, but when you do so, show genuine gratitude and maybe a small token of appreciation. If you are given permission to hunt on private property, feel obligated to repay that favor with perhaps an off-season visit, a dinner invitation, or a personal letter. And if friends share their favorite hunting grounds with you, do the same for them.

A basic consideration is also directed towards the game you hunt. A “giver” will go to any length to recover crippled game. Lost game due to negligence or failure to make every reasonable effort to recover the game is a blot on a “giver’s” conscience. Game brought to bag is promptly and carefully processed to insure high table quality. When the ethical hunter makes a gift of game – which one may rarely do – give the best birds and choicest cuts to people who will appreciate them. Such hunters regard both friends and game too highly to treat either with disrespect.

If you would be an ethical hunter, your interest is not a sometime thing that blossoms only in October. You have a personal stake in hunting that shows itself in all seasons and you feel obligated to pay, in some measure, for the enjoyment you've had during the hunting season. Perhaps you decide to be a volunteer instructor in hunter education programs (See Appendix A) through your state wildlife department, or join a conservation club of your choice and become active in wildlife restoration activities.

Gun safety must become a sort of religion to you. You must learn your gun intimately and make no unreasonable demands of it. You must know its capabilities and how to use it safely, effectively, and mercifully. You should become an all-season shooter who takes pride in gunning, not only for shooting's own sake but as an effort to harvest game cleanly. You'll likely keep a hunting dog, knowing that such a dog will reduce crippling loss of game and add immeasurably to the sport.

Ethical hunters give much to their hunting partners, to others who witness their actions, and to the game of hunting itself. And in giving advantage, rather than grasping it selfishly, you'll richly reward yourself as well.

A CODE FOR YOUNG HUNTERS

This is neither an easy chapter to write, nor is it a simple concept to understand.

Hunting is a complex affair with roots too deep to be pulled up and examined. If hunters are asked to explain hunting, they can no more rationalize it than describe emotion. Hunting is, and always has been, a conditioned instinct that is largely emotional.

As a species, human beings were born hunters. It is not often necessary today to hunt for food, but it is often very necessary for today's hunter to reach back over the centuries and take a measure of peace from our forest beginnings. Some folks say, and perhaps rightfully so: "But man is no longer a savage; it is time that he put his tribal childhood behind him and grow up. Hunting was the work of his ancestors. Man is now mature and should stop playing savage games."

The hunter might agree, then shrug his or her shoulders and go hunting. They are keeping faith with their fathers and exercising their legs and instincts. As Aldo Leopold*, a renown sportsman and the father of modern wildlife management, stated in 1939: "We can refine our manner of exercising the hunting instinct, but we shall do well to persist as a species at the end of the time it would take to outgrow it."

The careers of many hunters exhibit a strange evolution. As youngsters, they often hunt with a single purpose: to kill game and prove themselves as adults. A sure sign of youth is hunting solely for the sake of killing. While young, they have stark black and white values: a gun is to shoot and the measure of a hunter is the weight of his game bag. Some hunters never grow beyond this.

But if a youngster begins hunting early enough and hunts long enough, this old hunting urge may undergo a subtle change. The veteran hunter never loses a love of hunting or the act of taking game, but it becomes tempered with an almost mystic respect for the creatures that he or she pursues. This is the hunter's greatest reward and can usually be earned only by long years of rich experience.

In the early 1880's, the great cowboy artist Charley Russell spent two years with a salty old market hunter named Jake Hoover in the rugged hills above Montana's Judith Basin. Hoover was a professional hunter in the fullest sense; he killed wild animals for a living, selling hides and meat. From one point of view, he was a cold-blooded, relentless predator. Yet Russell never knew Hoover to shoot animals within a mile of his cabin. Instead, he would spend hours watching the elk and deer in his dooryard and protected a colony of beavers near his cabin that he enjoyed almost every evening.

The most important things in the lives of such men are the bears they shoot, the wolves they hear, and the mountains on which they hunt elk. At the same time, they deeply respect and admire the creatures they hunt. This is the mysterious, ancient contradiction of the real hunter's character – to kill animals the hunter also loves. It is a paradox only experienced by seasoned hunters.

Part of the hunter's deep attachment to wildlife may stem from the fact that he or she sees wild creatures at their best – when they are being hunted. It is then that they are the strongest, freest, and sharpest. The completely safe, "protected" wild creature is something of a vegetable. Hunting is a game of intense concentration. A dedicated hunter is more carefully attuned to his or her environment – and is far more receptive of nature -- than other nature lovers.

Because the genuine hunter's attachment to hunting is usually based on the wild values of the animals hunted, a strong measure of respect for wildlife is reflected in the way he or she hunts. This respect is manifested in rigid codes – the written and unwritten law observed by hunters. The code dictates that a game animal be given a sporting chance and allowed to live or die with dignity. The prestigious Boone and Crockett Club, established in 1887 by Theodore Roosevelt, requires that all candidates for regular membership must have demonstrated the highest ideals of sportsmanship and "Fair Chase" (See Appendix B).

Hunting ethics demand that the hunter make every possible effort to avoid crippling game. In the event that game is wounded, every reasonable effort is made to recover it. A game bird is shot on the wing and is never "ground-swatted," shooting within one's capabilities for an accurate and clean shot, and using a bird dog. In the last case, the dog not only increases the hunter's chances of bagging grouse, pheasant, quail or waterfowl, but testifies to the respect for game birds by recovering kills and cripples that might otherwise be lost.

A true hunter admires animals as individuals in the wild more than statistics in the bag. A person who loves to hunt would rather come home empty handed than with a limit of "ground-swatted" quail. The code of such hunters dictates the observance of written laws – another testimony of respect for the welfare of wildlife, fellow hunters and hunters yet unborn. Responsible hunters never violate hunting regulations and work with state or provincial wildlife agencies to manage wildlife for the betterment of all.

As the hunter's regard for wildlife grows, so does the measure of his or her level of sportsmanship. Such respect is fed by experience, sympathy for wildlife, game laws, and the sporting codes under which game is hunted. This is not simply a matter of age. Some hunters never learn and are case-hardened old game hogs to the end – forever blind to the wonders they have walked among. On the other hand, the young hunter may begin developing a personal hunting ethic on his or her first trip afield and hardly be aware of it – a set of ideals that is roughly based on the sense of fair play but which will go far beyond this.

One other point:

A person who buys grocery bacon without flinching may bitterly condemn hunting. The individual may say, “The hog that gives me my breakfast bacon is mercifully killed in a packing house. Game birds or animals killed by hunting may suffer.”

This is sometimes true, but the real hunter’s personal ethic constrains him to kill mercifully and without waste. The most vital elements of the hunting ethic are to shoot clean, kill clean, and waste not.

Game is a food crop of the land to be harvested in bountiful years and conserved in lean times. These fluctuations are the basis of game regulations. But once an individual assumes the role of hunter-harvester, he or she also assumes the responsibility of not wasting that harvest. Game is not discarded, but cleaned promptly and properly to insure its best table quality. If the hunter gives game away, it is given ready for the oven or skillet – and only to friends or food donation programs who values such a gift.

Yes, a youngster may still ask his hunter-father: “Why do we kill wild game? Why do we hunt?”

The only responsible reply is: “We don’t hunt if shooting endangers the game supply. But if there is enough game to support hunting, it is no less merciful to shoot that game than to leave it to die naturally by fang, storm, starvation or sickness.”

If there is one word that sums up the hunting ethic, it is **RESPECT**. Respect for your companions, dogs, equipment, the land and water, the wildlife you hunt, and for yourself. This respect may almost border on reverence and, lacking it, a youngster can never hope to become more than half a hunter. He or she may kill game by the truckload, but such a young hunter never will be a Jake Hoover.

*Leopold, Aldo. 1939. Game Management. p.391. Charles Scribner’s Sons. N.Y. 481 pp.

APPENDIX A

The International Hunter Education Association (IHEA)

Today, every state in the United States and most Canadian provinces and Mexico require hunters to be certified graduates of a hunter education course. The goals of the North American program include:

- (1) preventing firearms, hunting, and outdoor incidents,
- (2) increasing compliance to hunting regulations,
- (3) improving hunter behavior and the image of hunters, and
- (4) continuing our hunting and outdoor heritage.

The IHEA was created by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to support state and provincial hunter education administrators. The goal of the IHEA is to produce safe, responsible, and knowledgeable hunters and shooters.

In 1946, the State of Kentucky started formal hunter safety training as part of its statewide youth camp program. In 1949, New York State initiated the first mandatory hunter safety program. The National Rifle Association of America led the charge in the 1950's and 1960's to train hunter safety instructors, set hunting and firearms safety standards, and to provide information to the states to use in their newly established hunter safety programs. The main purpose of these early efforts was to prevent hunting and firearms incidents.

In the 1970's, three things occurred which established the NAAHSC and provided funds for states to use in their hunter education efforts:

- (1) Lee Robertson, the hunter safety coordinator from Utah, was asked to write the bylaws for establishing the NAAHSC at the annual meeting of the NRA in New Orleans, Louisiana.
- (2) Congress passed the Dingell-Hart bill on handguns. In 1972, Congress passed legislation that taxed archery equipment, and funds from these acts were earmarked for hunter education and the development of target range facilities where the public could be trained to shoot safely.
- (3) In 1972, the NAAHSC held its first official business meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah.

As the hunter education movement and the NAAHSC grew more and more, states and provinces established mandatory programs and created higher standards for shooters and hunters, hunting ethics, outdoor survival, and the use of primitive sporting arms. Emergency preparedness and the hunter's role in wildlife management were added to the firearm and hunter safety lesson plans. Courses were being expanded to address new issues facing hunters and hunting.

Advanced hunter education and organizations such as the National Bow Hunters Foundation, National Muzzleloader Rifle Association, and National Trapping Association

established education and training programs to compliment the efforts of the NAAHSC. Sporting arms and ammunition industries were enhancing their educational efforts through organizations, such as the National Shooting Sports Foundation, as well as the archery manufacturers organization (now called the Archery Trade Association).

At the heart of the North American Hunter Education system since the 1950's are volunteer instructors – people dedicated to passing along their knowledge and skill and collectively donating hundreds of thousands of hours of their time as well as money to teaching others to be safe, knowledgeable, and responsible while hunting and heading outdoors. Fish and wildlife agencies established volunteer management systems to perpetuate and recognize their individual efforts. Each year the NAAHSC Administrators and sporting industries honor volunteers for their involvement in hunter education.

Hunting participation was at a high in the 1970's and 1980's. Hunter education instructors numbered 55,000 across North America. The number of students trained exceeded 750,000 annually. Hunting accidents and violations were cut in half and hunter education had become one of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and state and provincial fish and wildlife agencies greatest conservation stories.

In the early 1990's, NAAHSC had a name change to more accurately reflect its mission and became the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA). The organization represents all programs collectively and helps support administrators in developing higher quality programs and standards.

Today, the challenges continue. Hunter numbers are dropping. More people have moved to urban neighborhoods and have little understanding of wild landscapes and how hunting is used in North American wildlife conservation and management efforts. More people are exposed to television programs that show non-natural systems, values, and attitudes. Accidents and poor behavior by hunters, especially under more crowded circumstances, continue to plague conservation efforts. These trends demonstrate the need for hunter education and your involvement as a young hunter. Be sure to go on-line and learn more about hunter education. You can find the International Hunter Education Association site at www.ihea.com. Learn how to become involved in efforts that started more than 50 years ago. Visit your state or provincial fish and wildlife agency web site. Opportunities abound! As a young hunter, you will not regret learning more about the history of hunter education, but more importantly, about how you can help continue our hunting heritage into the future.

Steve Hall, Education Director, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Austin

Appendix B

The Boone & Crockett Club and “Fair Chase”

Recognizing that sport hunting and our country’s wildlife resources were headed for disaster, a group of concerned individuals, led by Theodore Roosevelt, banded together and formed the Boone and Crockett Club in 1887. By the turn of the century, unrestricted killing of wildlife was out of control. There were few effective game laws, hunting seasons, bag limits, or any form of protection for wildlife. Working with Boone and Crockett Club members, comprised of outdoor sports enthusiasts, scientists, military and political leaders, explorers, artists, writers, and industrialists, the foundation for the world’s greatest wildlife conservation system was established and is cherished as one of our nation’s greatest accomplishments.

As a vital element in supporting our newly formed wildlife conservation system, the Club began publishing and championing a “Fair Chase” hunting ethic in the late 1800s and made it a basic requirement for membership in the Club. “Fair chase,” as defined by the Boone and Crockett Club, is the ethical, sportsmanlike, lawful pursuit and taking of any free-ranging wild, native North American big game animal in a manner that does not give the hunter an improper advantage over such animals. Free-ranging, as defined by the Boone and Crockett Club, is any native North American big-game animal that is unrestricted within its biological home range, has adequate protective cover, and a reasonable opportunity to escape the hunter.

George A. Bettas, Executive Director. Boone and Crockett Club, 250 Station Drive, Missoula, MT 59801

Adult hunters are blamed for 32 times as many as accidents as young hunters who are supervised, according to the study by the Hunter Incident Clearinghouse. Tim Lawhern, new president of the International Hunter Education Association and the chief of hunter education in Wisconsin, said more recent statistics are even more favorable to young hunters. Lawhern, who plans to focus on recruiting more young hunters in his role as IHEA president, sees no need for the government to set minimum hunting ages, whether kids are alone or supervised. "I think the important thing to remember is it's the parent's responsibility until they're 18," he said. In states with no minimum ages, "There's no significant reports of there being a problem with young people hunting. A hunt where the young hunter is the only tag-holder comes with the advantage of the adult mentor not being concerned with their own harvest. Most parents or mentors would take as much or more joy out of a young hunter harvesting their first animal, but some might still let their focus wander to their own successes. Whether it is a youth hunt or a general opportunity, pick a hunt that coincides with the considerations we have already discussed." As an example, to a young hunter, a finishing shot to the head of an animal may seem brutal. Offering a little explanation can help them understand that it is a humane thing to do, and respectful to the animal.

Conclusion. The young hunter's eyes met with his master, his mentor, and saw a determination ignite in that old frame. It burned fiercely and for a moment, he could not help but see Gehrman true to his form, a hunter of beasts. The young hunter nodded, but before he could leave he had heard what could be his master's last words: "Do what I could not. And remember, to fear the old blood." "Tonight, Gehrman joins the hunt." The young hunter ran into the workshop with the Doll in tow. He lifted the lid of the storage casket, and began throwing as many books and texts as he could into its confines. He was unsure if it would do any good to protect all the data and information gathered from those before him, but he would certainly try.