

Jim Casada Outdoors

August 2013 Newsletter

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Quotation of the Month

This is a new addition to the newsletter, and one I hope you will enjoy. A couple of years back, in company with Chuck Wechsler, the longtime editor of *Sporting Classics* magazine, I edited a collection of quotations with the simple title *Passages*. It comprises material taken from three decades worth of one of the favorite sections of the entire magazine, issue after issue. That is the page devoted to memorable excerpts from sporting literature. Starting with the excerpt from Havilah Babcock offered below, each month's newsletter will begin with a tidbit of humor, wisdom, wit, or whimsy.

To take advantage of the last precious minutes, you've got to stay afield as late as the birds do, regardless of a houseful of guests, the sanguine promises you've made to the missus, or the overdraft bank notice at home. To heck with everybody and everything when birds are feeding and fish are biting. Stay late and lie like a dog if necessary. From *The Best of Babcock*.

August as I Have Known It: Dog Day Doin's, Then and Now

Over the course of my lifetime, I think it fair to say that my relationship with the month of August has been of a decidedly mixed nature. As a boy the situation was one of love-hate. I loved the lazy days the month brought, with katydids playing their winsome fiddles like there was no tomorrow, with Joe Pye weeds beginning to bloom and attract tiger swallowtails, with catfish biting as if somehow they knew winter's hard times lay but a few months down the road, and with all of the bounty of a spring and summer's work in long rows of corn and other parts of the garden gracing the family table. More of that in a moment.

Similarly, August meant that it was time to start letting our beagles do some rabbit chasing in the cool of night, toughening them up for the coming of cottontail season. The mere thought of hunting also reminded me that squirrel season would open in two months. It was a time when the trout streams, often crowded in late spring and

Special Offer of the Month

Since I'm introducing the new "Quotation of the Month" section, it seemed appropriate to offer as this month's special the book, *Passages*, from which this material will be taken.

The 200-page book, with an Introduction by yours truly, features hundreds of grand quotations in all aspects of the sporting experience—hunting, fishing, nature, dogs, viewpoint, the sporting heritage, and more.

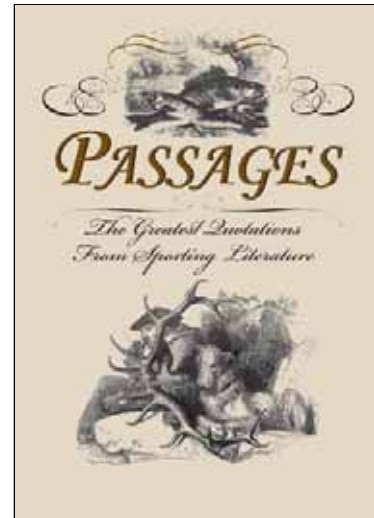
early summer, were pretty much devoid of anglers. A boy like me could set out by shank's mare, with a hearty lunch in his wicker creel, and at least on week days have every expectation of never seeing another angler. For a lad who loved solitude (and still does) that was pure heaven.

Then too, there was the food side of the equation mentioned above. Daddy always raised a big garden, and Grandpa Joe grew even more. The idea was to raise enough "garden truck" for canning, drying, and preserving to last right through fall and winter. Nor should I fail to mention leftovers for fattening hogs and feeding chickens. The list of the fruits and vegetables they grew is a long one, and although I'm going to give it a try simply because tickling that fond memory gives me joy, I know beyond doubt I'll overlook some things. Spring brought asparagus (a perennial kept it good form by periodic applications of chicken manure, always being careful because it's so rich too much of it will burn up crops), onions (both the multiplying kind and bulbs planted about as soon as the soil could be worked), new potatoes, lettuce (black-seeded simpson), spinach, mustard and turnip greens, green peas, cabbage, and chard. Some of these cool-weather crops, most notably cabbage and turnips, would have a second go-round in the fall. There were strawberries to be picked, although we relied on wild ones, finding them tastier by far than their comparatively insipid domestic cousins, and rhubarb for sauce and pies. That's a pretty impressive list of spring fixin's, especially when you realize it was supplemented by provender from the wild such as poke salad, ramps, branch lettuce, dandelion greens, and other edibles.

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Serious gardening, however, was reserved for fruits and vegetables which grew and were harvested in the summer months and on into autumn. August loomed mighty large in this regard, because in the North Carolina high country it was the time of year for putting up, putting by, laying in, laying by, canning, and drying. If you are not familiar with those terms, they all involve, in one way or another, preserving food from summer's bounty for use in the months to come. There would be lima beans, butter beans (our term for a small type of lima), green beans (pole beans, half runners, creasy beans, and bunch beans), okra, tomatoes (red, yellow, and tommytoes), crookneck squash, crowder peas (also known as field peas, zip peas, and clay peas), eggplant, pickling cucumbers and those for eating (they were in truth interchangeable but a special type which produced more or less uniform sizes were favored for bread-and-butter and dill pickles), and other vegetables. Throw in blackberries and dewberries from the wild and tame raspberries, along with early apples, muskmelons, watermelons, cantaloupes, and honeydew melons, and you had to most of it.

Yet the ultimate crop, the one which demanded more space and harder work, was corn. In many senses, corn was THE staple of mountain life. It could be enjoyed in so many ways as almost boggle the mind—fresh it provided roastin' ears, creamed corn,



Copies of the attractive paperback, which I'll gladly sign, are only \$15 postpaid.

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Recent Doin's and Upcoming Events

While my Web site has, off and on, included information on my forthcoming activities, I decided to make information about what I've been doing or will be doing a regular part of my monthly newsletter. In other words, along with the quotation section, you'll be offered a chance to keep up with what I'm doing (although my wife gently suggests "who cares?"). Maybe she's right, but I'll give it a go anyway. One thing for certain, you can skip right over this section if you so desire.

The latest issue (August/September) of one of the most striking outdoor magazines available today, *Covey Rise*, is just out. Since the publication began a couple of years ago I've been writing a regular piece for it profiling grand figures from upland game hunting's glorious past. This issue includes my tribute to Gene Hill. Check out the publication [online](#), pick up a newsstand copy, or subscribe. I think you will readily

gritted and fried or made into fritters, and truly roasted (roastin' ears as I knew them were boiled). Dried it could be parched, but mostly it was ground into meal and that opened up a whole new world or ways to enjoy corn—cornbread, buttered grits, grits with gravy, fried grits cakes, corn dodgers, corn johnny cakes, mush, and more. Cornbread was a staple of my boyhood meals, served hot with plenty of butter ready for slathering at dinner (the mid-day meal) then eaten cold at supper (with sweet milk, butter milk, or maybe sorghum syrup. Add the corn which went into soup mix—a major part of the canning effort that combined tomatoes, okra, peas, beans, and corn—and you get a decent idea of the primacy of corn. Of course it shouldn't be forgotten that a big patch of Hickory Cane was raised every year for fattening hogs and feeding chickens. Hickory Cane was a tall, highly productive variety of corn which also was favored in some quarters for the illicit manufacture of tanglefoot (if you don't recognize that word try synonyms such as golden moonbeam, anti-snakebite medicine, squeezin's, or white lightning).

Nor was the usefulness of corn limited solely to the grains which meant so much to Native Americans long before the arrival of the first Europeans. All parts of the plant were utilized. Fodder fed cattle and hogs; stalks did double duty by offering a ready means of climbing for crowder peas, pole beans, or October beans; and in the fall shocks made from the stalks not only stood ready to do duty as winter livestock feed; they also were a prime place for storing things such as turnips, pumpkins and maybe even apples, providing protection from the cold and critters alike. Girls sometimes made dolls from shucks, and many a mountain household (although this was largely before my time) found corn shuck mattresses comfortable enough.

Looking back, I guess the versatility of corn justified the seemingly endless work it required--plowing before planting, seeding (four seeds to the hill), thinning after it was up four or five inches (leaving two plants to the hill), hoeing, and harvesting. Invariably there would be a run-in or two with packsaddles, a type of caterpillar which will sting the bejeebers out of you on contact, and for some reason yellow jackets found corn patches a mighty fine place for building their subterranean nests. A late summer run –in with them could be a painful experience indeed.

Skipping to the present, I enjoyed corn-on-the-cob twice today and Ms. Ann put up creamed corn just this morning, knowing that one of the big freezer packets will be a "must have" part of our family meals at both Thanksgiving and Christmas. Corn fed my mountain forebears, feeds me, and remains a staple of high country life, at least in traditional rural areas, to this day.

That's a lot of words to explain the love part of my love-hate relationship with August, but make no doubt about it; the month has its negative aspects. First and foremost, at least when I was a boy, was the fact that time to go back to school lay right around the corner. That meant returning to an orderly existence, no more going barefooted, the sudden burden of homework every night, freedom

agree that for eye-catching appeal and first-rate content it is top drawer. I'm proud to be a regular contributor.

In addition to the book column I contribute to each issue of [Sporting Classics](#) magazine and my longtime connection with the publication as its Editor at Large, I now am writing an occasional book-related piece for "Sporting Classics Daily." This is a five-times-a-week Internet offering which can add a fillip to your morning. My offerings appear roughly once a week or so (basically when I can find time to write them), but "The Daily" also affords an opportunity to keep up with the latest news in the worlds of hunting and fishing, pick up a fine game recipe, or garner insight from some of sport's great figures—from yesterday and today. [Visit the Web site](#) for details.

I frequently return to my highland homeland in North Carolina's Great Smokies for speaking engagements, to visit the old family home place (now owned by my brother and his wife), to fish the streams which have always haunted my dreams, or simply to be carried back to times of fond memories. I'll be in the area at least twice over the next few months along with jaunts to other places. Here are the details:

August 13—Jackson County Library, Sylva, NC—7:00 p.m. This library, beautifully housed in the old courthouse which looks out over downtown Sylva, is a joy to the eye and has a quite active public outreach program. I'll be sharing some tales from my mountain boyhood and indulging in storytelling on hunting and fishing in the Smokies. I'll have some of the books I've written on hand for sale, or if you already own some which you would like for me to sign, bring them along. I hope to meet some new friends and do some shaking and howdying with newsletter readers. www.fontanalib.org/sylva

September 16-27—Hunting in the country of Namibia in southwest Africa. I'll share more about experiences growing out of this grand opportunity to visit a raw but strikingly beautiful part of Africa, where the country's folks are do wise and wonderful things with game management as an economic tool, in coming months.

October 7-12—Attendance at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Outdoor Press Association (SEOPA) in Lake Charles, LA. I've been a member of this outdoor communicators' organization for virtually all my years in the field, and it is my organizational home. I'm a past president of the 500-plus member group, and presently

only on the weekends, and an end to summer's endless opportunities for carefree adventure. Then there's the heat and humidity, the pervasive sense of atmospheric oppression, which helps explain why the word doldrums is often associated with August's dog days. I use the present tense because I didn't notice such things as a boy, maybe because there was always a creek nearby for a cooling dip or a watermelon awaiting some serious gustatory attention. My has that changed!

Each morning when I come in from a couple of hours of working in the garden or yard, drenched with sweat and bearing a skeeter bite or two, I can't help but think about how age has taken its toll on my outlook. Old Havilah Babcock, one of our great sporting writers and the man I consider to be the poet laureate of the bobwhite, knew what he was talking about when he wrote "boyhood improves with age, and the more remote it is the nicer boyhood seems to become." I reckon I'm sufficiently remote for it to seem mighty fine, or maybe I've finally rolled around to appreciating just how blessed I was as a youngster.

Other negatives to August include the increasing number and prevalence of yellow jackets (goodness knows how often I've had bad encounters with these rascals as a boy and man), a certain sense of lassitude which I can't describe in words but which seizes the soul (or at least mine) this time of year, the month's tendency to be quite dry (after July here, mind you, we could use a spot of desert-like weather), and a "hurry up and wait" air about everything which makes it seem like hunting season (and fall) will never arrive.

Still, when August has arrived opening day of dove season can't be too far away, and if you are much of a dreamer at all thoughts readily turn to the month which can make a mighty pitch for being the best of all—October. Meanwhile, let's end with some recipes, simple yet most satisfying, which focus on the sort of foods, from the wilds and the garden, associated with August.

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FRIED OKRA

It's not the healthiest way to eat it, my wife doesn't particularly like it, and I can't get enough of it. Okra and August go together like heat and humidity, and right now I garner a bountiful harvest every other day. For fried okra, chop the pods into pieces about one-half to three-quarters of an inch in width, dip in an egg batter, coat with corn meal, and fry in canola oil until crisp. Drain briefly on paper towels and serve piping hot.

GRILLED TOMATOES

Cut away the bottom end of your favorite tomato (to my way of thinking you can't beat a Cherokee Purple), remove any core which is left, and place top side down on a barbecue grill on in the oven. Once the tomato starts to sizzle, sprinkle liberally with grated Parmesan cheese and continue cooking until the cheese melts and shows a bit of brown.

TOMATOES WITH OIL AND VINEGAR DRESSING AND FRESH MOZZARELLA CHEESE

I'm going through the officer chairs again. At my age that may be foolhardy, but I simply couldn't resist the opportunity to be in charge of planning and the program for the group's 50th anniversary, which will come next year at Fontana Village, NC. That's right in my boyhood backyard and also happens to be where SEOPA was founded back in 1964. Ann and I always thoroughly enjoy the annual meetings, which mix fellowship with major infusions of inspiration through contact with others in the field. <http://seopa.org/>

December 6-7—Featured speaker at the Western North Carolina Fly Fishing Expo at the Agricultural Fairgrounds near Asheville (adjacent to the Asheville airport). For anyone who lives in the region and fishes mountain streams, this is a must. I'll have seminars both days and will also have a booth offering books, both those I have written and a selection of out-of-print stuff, along with ample opportunity to chat about one of the enduring loves of my life. www.wncflyfishingexpo.com

Slice and core tomatoes, peeling if you wish (most people don't peel them but my Momma thought she hadn't done things full justice unless she took that extra step), and spread on a platter alongside slices or balls of fresh mozzarella. Sprinkle liberally with olive oil and balsamic vinegar, dust with black pepper and salt if desired, and dig in. Good for you, non-fattening (free-range chickens will eat themselves down to nothing if they have access to a bunch of tomatoes), and a never-fail dish.

SHRIMP AND GRITS

Talk about a marriage made in culinary heaven, when you can combine one of the finest offerings of the sea with a personal favorite when it comes to ways to enjoy corn, you've got something to soothe the soul and fill the stomach.

4 cups (or more) chicken stock
 Salt to taste
 2 cups stone-ground grits
 ½ cup half-and-half
 ¼ cup (half stick) butter
 3 tablespoons finely chopped onion
 3 tablespoons finely chopped red bell pepper (omit if you wish, and since peppers are a food which I get too "enjoy" long after eating them, that's my choice)
 2 ounces chopped country-cured ham (you can substitute fried bacon bits)
 2 ounces chopped andouille smoked sausage
 1 pound peeled medium shrimp
 8 sea scallops
 1/3 cup light Madeira
 ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro
 ½ cup half-and-half (this is not a redundancy, you use it twice in preparation—see below)
 ¼ cup chopped chives

Bring four cups chicken stock and salt to a boil in a large pot. Add the grits. Simmer, covered, for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add ½ cup half-and-half and stir to combine. If the grits seem too thick, stir in additional chicken stock until the desired consistency is reached. Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Sauté the onion, bell pepper, ham, and sausage in the butter until the onion is translucent. Add the shrimp and scallops and cook for an additional minute. Add the wine and cilantro, stirring and scraping up any burned bits. Cook for three more minutes. Add ½ cup half-and-half and cook until reduced by a third or so. Serve the shrimp and scallops over the grits and spoon the gravy over the top. Garnish with chives. Makes 6 hearty servings.

FRIED GRITS

When allowed to cool after having been cooked, grits readily congeal. To enjoy fried grits, cook an extra batch when you are having them as a breakfast dish, and place the surplus, while still warm enough to flow, in a baking dish or rectangular cake pan. Keep in refrigerator until ready to use, then cut into serving-size sections. Lightly oil a skillet and fry the grits cakes, turning once. Easy and scrumptious.

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Recent Reading

Patricia O'Toole, *When Trumpets Call: Theodore Roosevelt after the White House*. I've always been fascinated by TR, and this is a first-rate look at his intriguing and in some way bedeviling final years. The author digs up some previously overlooked sources but overlooks at least one treasure trove (the papers of Fred Selous) which merited examination. Of course they are held in Zimbabwe and that may have posed major access obstacles. She also has him shooting lions with a shotgun (journalistic inaccuracies when it comes to guns is nothing new), and selfishly no doubt I was disappointed she didn't list my work on Roosevelt,

Forgotten Tales and Vanished Trails, in her bibliography. These are mere quibbles though—read this book if you find TR appealing.

Lovett E. Williams, Jr., *Who's a Florida Cracker?* Those of you who are turkey hunters will readily recognize the name of this author, since Lovett is probably the greatest wild turkey biologist of all time. I've known the man for years, hunted with him, and paid a heartfelt tribute to him (he is suffering from a debilitating somewhat akin to dyslexia but much worse) in one of the last issues of *Turkey & Turkey Hunting Magazine*. However, it was only thanks to a fellow sportsman from out Wyoming way, Ron Dube, that I learned of this book. Williams devoted his career to studying and writing prolifically on the great American game bird, but in this book he digs deep into his roots and into Florida as it once was. Lovett knows about as much about nature and living off the land as anyone I've ever been around, and this book is a dandy (although turkeys figure significantly only in the final chapter).

Otha Barham, *Spring Beckonings: Gobblers Call and We Must Go*. Otha is a Mississippi writer whom I consider a cherished friend. He's a first-rate sporting scribe, picks a mighty mean guitar, and is as genuine a good guy as you'll ever meet. In this book he shares a bunch of tales, some of personal experiences, others of situations, characters he has known, and the like, of the sort which turkey hunters love to read. I will have the book on offer in the turkey list on my Web site, which I hope to update soon, or you can order it now by contacting me directly. Signed and inscribed copies of the 192-page hardback (with a dust jacket) are \$22.50+\$5 shipping.

Jeffery Deaver. I'm always nose deep in the writings of one mystery/adventure author or another, and in recent weeks I've plowed through half a dozen or so of Deaver's novels. He's good; indeed, very good.

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