

Jim Casada Outdoors

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June 2016 Newsletter

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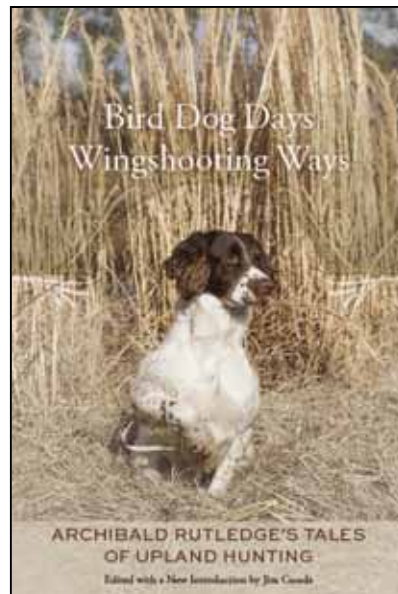
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Jim's Doings

June invariably seems to fall into a predictable pattern for me. Early mornings, from around wake-up time at 6:00 a.m. until 8:00 or a bit after, are devoted to piddling in the garden or doing something outside. It's a time to soothe my soul and get ready for the heat of the day while temperatures are still bearable. If there is any one thing I miss most from my long lost yester-youth, it's those cool mornings, with the sun seldom dispelling the fog before 10:30 a.m. or so, that I knew in my Smokies' boyhood. By that time of day here in South Carolina from June through September, it's normally already hotter than the hinges of Hades.

There's more on daily activities below, but mention of a few developments on the writing front are merited. My new and expanded edition of *Bird Dog Days, Wingshooting Ways*, is on track, as scheduled, to be out in July. The cover, which I find quite attractive, is shown here, and I'm going to go ahead and start taking advance orders. **The hardbound book will be \$30 + \$5 postage, and I'll ship as soon as they arrive.**

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Of course if you want to wait that's fine as well, and I'll send out the promised notification to

This Month's Book Offers

I finally got around to doing something I should have done many months ago; namely, update, correct, change, and generally refurbish my list of books on turkey hunting.

When I did so I discovered a good many titles I had never gotten around to listing and also found that there were some items still listed which I no longer had in stock. **You can [click here](#) to access the new list.** It contains a lot of price changes, many of them reductions, along with all the new items. Perhaps you'll find some things to add to your summer's reading.

Also, I want once again to draw attention to my most recent book on turkey hunting, *Remembering the Greats: Profiles of Turkey Hunting's Old Masters*. It won a couple of awards when it appeared and provides coverage of the subject matter which is as good as I am capable of producing. I'm proud of the book and like to think that it adds something in terms of providing perpetuation of the history of a sport that has long meant so much to me.

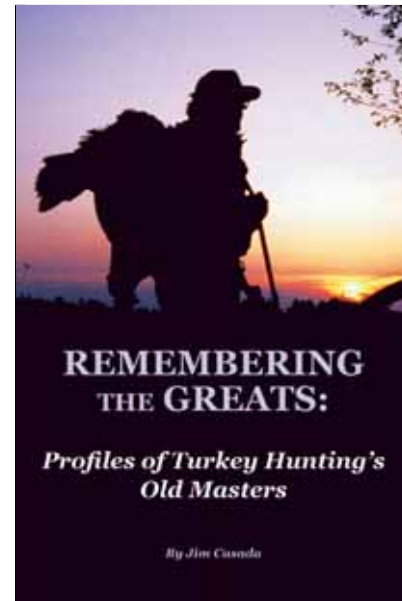
All of the twenty-seven individuals covered in the book were truly icons of the sport, and in each profile I try to delve fairly deeply into the life and legacy of the man being covered. That includes a bibliography at the end of each chapter covering works by and about the man.

those of you who [expressed interest](#) the day the first shipment of books arrives.

Next year will be the bicentennial of the birth of Henry David Thoreau, one of our nation's greatest nature writers, and in conjunction with celebrations of his life and work I have agreed to participate in the [Deckle Edge Book Festival](#) in Columbia, S.C. It will be a weekend devoted to various literary matters associated with Thoreau, and on the panel of which I will be a part I'll join noted naturalist Rudy Mancke and others in discussing the joys of nature writing and nature travel. I've also agreed to be a part of the planning committee for the event.

Another new development for me involves working as a sort of freelance consultant for a group that intends to revive that wonderful old line of clothing made under the Duxbak name. When I was a boy and young man you didn't venture into the fall or winter woods without being clad in Duxbak attire from a hat right on down to your boots, and in my opinion there's never been a finer, more durable type of clothing for the sportsman. I've written about Duxbak from a nostalgic perspective periodically over the years, and you'll be hearing more from me on this front in the coming months.

Finally, and this is somewhat outside the norm of coverage in this newsletter, an aspect of my past is being revived (sort of) in the present. I played soccer in college and then, for several years afterward, played on various amateur and semi-professional teams. I also became a national-level soccer official and continued that for the better part of three decades. In addition, I began the men's soccer program at [Winthrop University](#), served as head coach for a dozen years, and during that period won three "coach of the year" recognitions. A few years back I was honored to be inducted into Winthrop's Athletic Hall of Fame. In other words, soccer was an important part of my life for a long time. Now I have an opportunity to give back. I was recently elected to the board of directors for the Eagle Club (the support group for all Winthrop athletics) and starting later this summer I will begin a three-year term on that board.



As a special this month I'm offering the book for **\$40 postpaid** (in other words, the postage is free), and if you want to obtain a book or two as gifts for the future, perhaps something to donate to your local NWTF chapter's next banquet, or just as something special to share with a turkey-hunting buddy, I'm offering **two copies for \$70 postpaid or three for \$95 postpaid**. In other words, there's savings to be had with the purchase of multiple copies.

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June's Enduring Joys

Were I asked to look back on the month of June through my life and say what aspects of it have been most durable or meaningful to me, I think there would be three or four that really stood out. They would include picking blackberries, gardening, various types of fishing, and camping in connection with trout fishing. I thought it might be fun to reminisce a bit about some of these enduring joys.

Pickin'



Picking blackberries isn't for everyone. It's hot, sweaty work that can have unwelcome side "benefits" such as chigger bites, scratches aplenty, the rare encounter with angry wasps, and possibly even an unwelcome crossing of paths with a rattlesnake or copperhead. Yet those things have never for a moment deterred me, because the benefits of a good pickin' outing are of such culinary delight that minor irritants such as hands stained a vivid purple or honorable temporary war wounds in the form of scratches or a few briars in one's fingers are all but meaningless. Sitting down to a big bowl of blackberry cobbler is just as fine a moment as being invited to a five-star restaurant, at least in my opinion, and a cathead biscuit soaked in butter and slathered with a big dollop of blackberry jelly can bring sunshine to the greyest and gloomiest of winter days.



Grubbin' in the Garden

One of the most satisfying moments of my adult life came several decades ago when a local woman widely known as 'the plant lady,' thanks to the fact that she raised a wide variety of plants for sale, commented on me to another customer. That customer recognized me as a college professor and said something to that effect. The plant lady replied to the effect "he's not a professor; he's just an old dirt dauber." I took it as a great compliment.

Wielding a hoe, getting your hands so dirt-encrusted from pulling weeds that no amount of scrubbing will get them completely clean, or laboring up one row and down another hour after hour isn't for everyone. Yet I've always loved working in a garden. It provides closeness to the earth, gives you a sense of self-worth and self-satisfaction when you eat something you've nurtured, and is a great escape from the pressures of everyday life. Just this morning, for example, I was tying up some tomatoes and chopping down some weeds before it got too hot.

Two of the tools I use most while grubbin' in the garden (and "grubbin'" was a word my Grandpa Joe loved to use in this context) give me a sense of comfort and linkage to the past that are mighty meaningful in my little world. They are an old-time push plow for laying off rows or cultivating, depending on which attachment you use, along with a hoe with the broadest blade I've ever seen. I just put a measuring tape on the hoe blade and it is a full eight inches wide—roughly three inches wider than most hoes. On the other hand, it only extends out about two and three-quarters inches from the hosel connecting the blade to the handle. That's thanks to what is likely at least a century of loving use gradually wearing away at the metal. Both implements belonged to Grandpa Joe, and



all I have to do is have one of them in hand to harken back to all those countless hours, in the garden and elsewhere, we spent together. Along with a rocking chair that was his and a very few photographs, it's all I have

in the way of tangible ties to him, but in my view I'm blessed. Every time I hoe out a row of corn, prepare a row for planting seeds, or chop away at some intrusive weeds, I'm reminded of him.

Speaking of weeds, as is ever the case in my garden they flourish like kudzu in the heat of summer, this morning's work involved dealing with a fair amount of red-rooted pig weed (purslane). The plant is quite edible in salads and as the colloquial name suggests, hogs absolutely love it. Never do I chop a pig weed plant down, or maybe enjoy an impromptu garden salad by eating a few leaves, that I don't once again think of Grandpa Joe. He raised hogs and we gathered pigweed for them times without number. Those were good times, no, change that to great times, and occasionally when we were through work there was a big cannonball watermelon sitting in an ice-laden wash tub awaiting our attention. When Grandpa Joe touched it with the point of a kitchen knife he had made from a saw blade it would split wide open. The luscious red flesh would be dotted with seeds for spitting and have a taste that has in no small degree been lost with the pantywaist poseurs known as "seedless" watermelons that today's stores offer. They are quite decent eating but a far cry from a cannonball, Georgia Rattlesnake, or a Charleston Grey melon.

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Fishin' Fun

June in my youth meant freedom in so many ways. Sure there were chores to be performed and daily expectations both at home and in connection with various jobs I held throughout my teens, but there wasn't any homework, no upcoming tests, or none of the drudgery associated with going to school five days a week. Mind you, I loved school but by the time June rolled around I was more than ready for a break. One of the most meaningful aspects of summer freedom focused on fishing.

My fishing took two distinct forms—fly fishing for trout and river fishing for various species, although catfish and bream dominated my catches. Since I wrote about trout fishing (and camping) last month, I thought I'd devote some space this time around to fishing in warmer, slower waters.

I was lucky enough to grow up under the sort of unofficial mentorship of a catfishing wizard by the name of Al Dorsey, and he knew every trick of the catfish trade you could think of. He caught them with trot lines, limb lines, throw lines, jug fishing, on cane poles, and with rod and reel. He had a special contraption in the branch next to his house where he kept the catfish he caught to clean them up much like folks used to cage 'possums and "feed 'em clean" before eating them. The Tuckasegee River where old Al fished was badly polluted, so this made good sense. He sold catfish on a regular basis, and by the time June rolled around he spent every day, from fairly early in the morning right into darkness watching set poles, running lines, or otherwise dealing with catfish.

Al was an absolute stranger to soap and water, and anytime you got downwind of him your nostrils were assaulted in a most distinctive and distressing fashion. He never wore socks in the summer, just overalls, a long-sleeved shirt, and brogans. Whenever his pants were hiked up high enough to see his ankles, a solid crusting of dirt was readily visible. Momma often said something to the effect of "You don't need to be fooling around with that old man," but they never really offered an explanation other than that he was dirty.

It wasn't until many years later, when I was well into adulthood, that I discovered on my own that Al Dorsey had been convicted of second degree murder and spent a number of years in the state penitentiary. I plan to tell the story of his life in my book on "Profiles in Mountain Character," so I'll save most of the details for then. Suffice it to say for present purposes that he was totally harmless when I knew him, long after he had been released from prison, and he was quite good to a whole bunch of juvenile river rats in training. I've never been around anyone who knew more about catching catfish, and it wouldn't be much of an overstatement to apply a line from the wonderful song by Allison Krauss, "Catfish John," to old Al. In the song she talks about a fellow somewhat similar to Dorsey, albeit without the murder conviction figuring in the picture, and part of the lyrics state "I was proud to be his friend." Rest assured I was proud to call Al Dorsey friend, and I'd like to think that he looked on me as a youthful friend in return.

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Recipes

SALT AND PEPPER CATFISH

2 pounds catfish fillets cut into one-inch strips
 6 cups cornmeal
 Salt and black pepper to taste
 Peanut oil for deep frying

Mix the cornmeal with salt and black pepper and toss the catfish strips, a fryer full at a time, in a plastic or paper bag. Heat oil to 375 degrees in a deep fryer. Cook the nuggets, a dozen or so at a time, until they are golden brown and begin to float to the top. Drain atop paper towels. This is a recipe that makes 10 to 12 servings, but it can be halved or quartered.

EASY PEASY CATFISH FILLETS

1 cup lemon juice
 2 pounds catfish fillets
 Fish seasoning of your choice (can be Cavender's, salt and black pepper, or another selection)

Pour the lemon juice into a bowl and dip the fillets into the juice before sprinkling with seasoning. Cook on a grill pan or in an oiled skillet from 10 minutes per inch of thickness or until the fish flakes readily. Makes 4 hearty servings.

MEDITERRANEAN-STYLE CATFISH

4 catfish fillets
 Salt and pepper to taste
 3 tablespoons olive oil
 2 minced garlic cloves
 ½ red onion, sliced thin
 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
 2 tablespoons lemon juice
 1 cup marinated artichoke hearts, quartered
 2 tablespoons chopped black olives
 2 cups diced or canned tomatoes, drained
 ½ cup crumbled feta cheese

Sprinkle the fish fillets evenly with salt and pepper. Heat the oil in a large non-stick skillet over medium heat. Add the catfish fillets and cook for five minutes. Turn the fish and add the garlic and onion. Cook for an additional five minutes. Add the vinegar, lemon juice, artichoke hearts, olives, and tomatoes. Cook for three to four minutes to make a chunky sauce. Place the fish on a platter and spoon the sauce over top. Sprinkle with the feta cheese. Serve with crusty bread and couscous. Makes four hearty servings.

SPICY CATFISH NUGGETS

1 bottle buffalo-style hot wing sauce or other hot sauce such as Texas Pete or Tabasco
 Catfish fillets cut into small strips or chunks
 Cornmeal
 Salt and black pepper to taste
 Peanut oil for deep frying

Marinate the catfish nuggets in hot sauce for 30-45 minutes. Mix the cornmeal, salt, and black pepper, and then shake the nuggets, using a Ziploc or paper bag, until coated. Deep fry a few nuggets at a time in oil that has been pre-heated to 375 degrees. The nuggets will be golden brown and begin to float to the top when done. Drain atop paper towels and keep warm until all nuggets have been cooked. Serve with coleslaw and hushpuppies.

ANNA LOU'S BLACKBERRY COBBLER

I've offered this recipe before on multiple occasions, but it is so easy, so fail-safe, and so versatile (use about any kind of berries such as blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, boysenberries, dewberries, or huckleberries, along with cherries, apples, or peaches) that it's well worth repeating. Anna Lou was my mother, and her two favorite ways of making this cobbler were with blackberries or apples. That's probably because as a boy I was a prolific picker of blackberries (getting a quarter a gallon for all I could pick) and because we had a tiny apple orchard to provide plenty of makin's.

1 cup all-purpose flour
 1 cup sugar
 1 cup milk
 1 stick (1/4 cup) butter, melted
 2 teaspoons baking powder
 2 to 4 cups fresh berries

Combine flour, sugar, baking powder, and milk and stir with a wire whisk until smooth. Add melted butter and blend. Pour batter in a 13 x 9 x 2 inch baking pan. Pour berries evenly over batter. Do not stir. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 to 40 minutes or until golden brown.



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