

# Jim Casada Outdoors

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## February 2013 Newsletter

Jim Casada  
1250 Yorkdale Drive  
Rock Hill, SC 29730-7638  
803-329-4354

Web site: [www.jimcasadaoutdoors.com](http://www.jimcasadaoutdoors.com)  
E-mail: [jc@jimcasadaoutdoors.com](mailto:jc@jimcasadaoutdoors.com)

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### February Figurin'

Although I haven't looked back to check, I would almost bet that I've used the same title in previous February editions of this newsletter. That's because this time of year my Grandpa Joe was greatly given to what he variously called "figurin'," "dreamin' and schemin'," or just "looking down the road." One thing about Grandpa—he may have had an overly healthy streak of paranoia (he didn't trust much of anyone and in particular had no truck whatsoever with the government or bureaucrats), but he was also an eternal optimist in certain ways. He always looked ahead to coming spring with eagerness, and by this time of year, no matter how miserable the weather, he would be talking about planting by the signs, getting his garden spots "laid off," ordering a bunch of biddies (baby chickens) through the local Farmers' Federation, and fishing experiences to come.

I find myself similarly enthused about coming spring, partly as a way of beating cabin fever but also as a means of preparing for the many and varied rites of spring. I've got the seed catalogs piled up four or five inches deep, never mind that I buy most of my seeds from bulk supplies at the a local feed and seed store or, in one or two cases, rely on those I've saved. For example, I am growing a variety of green beans which, according to the fellow who originally gave me the seed, have a history dating back over a century. They are Nantahala climbers (Nantahala is a Cherokee word meaning "land of the noon-day sun" and there's a wonderful trout stream and a community by that name in the area of western North Carolina where I grew up.

### This Month's Special Offers

Several years ago I received a somewhat mysterious call regarding a research/ghost writing assignment. The caller asked a number of questions about my credentials, said I had come highly recommended, and all the while studiously avoided the exact focus of the endeavor.

After a time and given the nature of the questions, it was clear to me the project involved the National Rifle Association. At that point I said as much and indicated I had written for some of their magazines and knew something of the organization's history.

The upshot of all of that is that I was hired to serve as the lead researcher and something of a ghost writer for a big, impressive history of the organization, *The NRA: An American Legend*. You won't find my name on the book's title page (the author is Jeffrey Rodegen, who has made an impressive career out of doing histories of this sort), and in fact I'm only mentioned in the small print of the Acknowledgments. Yet I had a great deal to do with the book, spending considerable time researching and interviewing folks at the NRA's headquarters, and it was an assignment I greatly enjoyed.

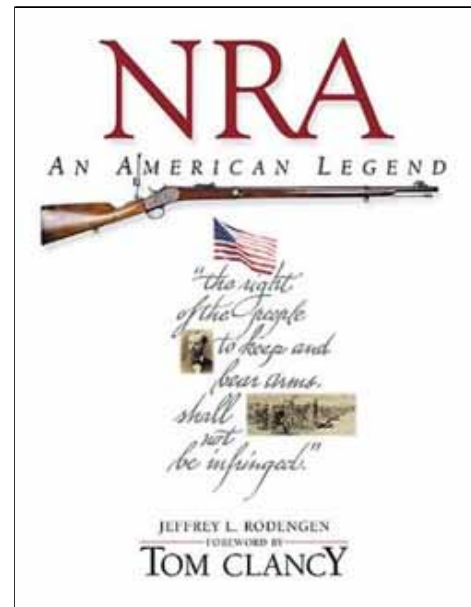
Similarly, I raise a kind of crowder peas (also variously known as field peas, clay peas, and zip peas) which someone gave to my wife at least three decades ago. They are prolific and easy to shell.

Along with thoughts about planting a garden, there's plenty to be done in the interim. I'm still cutting side shoots of broccoli, have a few cabbage heads left from fall planting, and can still pick kale and mustard greens. Within a month it will be time to plant some early seeds and sometime in March new Heritage raspberry plants will arrive. I finished pruning my muscadine and scuppernong vines last week (I have about 30 varieties) and I've got a couple which I rooted still to transplant and other rooted ones to be dug up and given to friends for them to plan. Rooting them is the essence of simplicity—just cover a long runner at pruning time, rather than cutting it off, and give it a summer. It will be well rooted by the time of the first killing frost.

Presently, I need to catch a dry spell to run the tiller, take the ashes from a huge burn pile where I took care of the debris left from removal of a bunch of sweet gum trees and spread it on the garden (poor man's lime just as a good snow used to be known as poor man's fertilizer—along that line, that bloated hypocrite named Al Gore might think about poor man's fertilizer next time he opens his onerous pie hole), spread and plow in some leaf mold, and generally get things ready for spring's greening-up time.

Incidentally, mention of the jack-leg loggers removing those sweet gums brings to mind the question: "Is there any tree more useless than a sweet gum?" If you ever tried splitting one for firewood you have an inkling of how my thought process is running, or maybe you've tried dealing with sweet gum balls beneath a tree where you mow. I don't know of anything better designed to "throw" a belt on a riding mower. On top of that, in this part of the world they are THE succession tree and tend to outgrow and crowd out all other contenders. Trying to kill off their sprouts is a losing battle with Beelzebub, and as far as I know they provide nothing in the way of wildlife food. In short, I detest the darned things!

On the indoors work front, as I indicated last time, I've finally plunged headlong and with great enthusiasm into my long planned biography of the most prolific of all 20<sup>th</sup> century outdoor writers, Archibald Rutledge. Let me know if you want to be notified when the book is ready, although it's well over a year in the future. Beyond that, in recent weeks I've done a profile of Rutledge for a dandy new magazine devoted to the wonderful heritage of quail hunting, *Covey Rise*; completed a feature on my thoughts about the state of



While doing some much-needed organizing and dusting recently, I discovered I have a few copies of the NRA history. It's a beautifully illustrated, hefty book of the type sometimes described as "coffee table," but the depth and research take it beyond the status of a "pretty picture book."

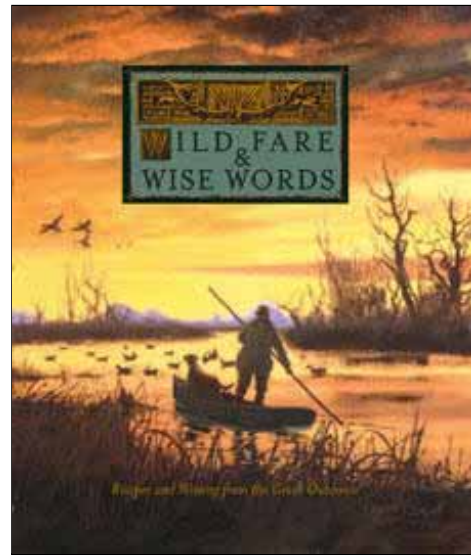
I'm offering the books, new, for only \$27.50.

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A decade or so ago my wife and I edited a cookbook for the S. C. Outdoor Press Association entitled *Wild Fare and Wise Words*. It comprises favorite recipes from dozens of South Carolina outdoorsmen along with narrative material introducing each section which I wrote. While the contributors are numerous, Ann and I provided more than half the recipes.

turkey hunting today for *Outdoor Life*; prepared an article on woodsmanship for the National Wild Turkey Federation's *Turkey Country*; and gotten up to date on assignments with my columns and features for *Turkey & Turkey Hunting*. Most recently I did a piece on Zane Grey for a special angling issue of *Sporting Classics* (you will see mention of some reading connected with that in my list of "Recently Read Books" below), the magazine with which I have been affiliated the longest. Also, if you haven't done so, I'd urge you to check out my books blog on *Sporting Classics Daily*. It appears once a week. The most recent one was on Charlie Elliott and the next will deal with my good buddy and unrivaled master of turkey-hunting tales, Tom Kelly. Throw in my regular newspaper columns and I've got enough to keep me occupied at the computer on a pretty regular basis.

I need to do a lot of that in coming weeks, because once we reach mid-March, as is the case with me every year, turkeys take most of my time and consume what saner souls would consider an inordinate amount of my time and thoughts. But then few folks have ever argued that turkey hunters are sane or that we act in a rational manner during the season. Maybe that's why I anticipate the last day of the season almost as much as I do the first, because a steady diet of early risings, ample doses of defeat at the hands of a bird with a brain the size of a marble, irregular and unhealthy meals, and lots of travel leave me worn to a frazzle. All in all it's a glorious mess.



The book, although a nicely done hardback with a striking cover image, traveled a rocky road from the outset. I won't go into detail other than to say it was a cooperative project in which cooperation proved to be in short supply. As a result, the book never sold particularly well and recently I have been able to procure a bunch of copies inexpensively.

My good fortune can be yours, because I'm offering signed, inscribed copies of the book, which retailed for \$20, at a **dramatic reduction of only \$8.50 (and that includes the postage)**.

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If you want to stock up with a bunch for gifts, I'll do even better—**buy five or more copies and I'll reduce the price to \$6 a copy** (again, I'll pay the postage). All of this month's recipes come from the cookbook.

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Tel.: 803-329-4354

E-mail: [jc@jimcasadaoutdoors.com](mailto:jc@jimcasadaoutdoors.com)

For me it will, in some senses, begin in the next two weeks. I will be speaking at the [Fly Fishing Show](#) in Winston-Salem on Feb. 8 and 9. While trout will be the focus of that weekend, I'll have a few of my turkey books in my booth along with angling books. Rest assured there will be the occasional soul who wanders by and wants to "talk turkey." Then the following weekend I'll be in Nashville for all of the [NWTF's annual convention](#). There I'll see a bevy of old friends, no doubt make some new ones, check out all sorts of turkey gear, pay particular attention to things which interest me such as custom callmaking and memorabilia of the sport, and more. If you are going to be there, I'll have copies of my latest book, *Remembering the Greats: Profiles of Turkey Hunting's Old Masters*, with me. Also, if you have specific needs from any of my lists, [let me know in](#)

[advance](#) and I'll bring the books along and we can arrange a time and place to meet (I have a couple of friends who are gracious enough to let me use their booths as a sort of rendezvous point).

That's enough rambling for now so I'll close with a thought or two and some recipes. If you haven't yet done so, I urge you to visit the *Sporting Classics* Web site ([www.sportingclassics.com](http://www.sportingclassics.com)) and sign up to receive *Sporting Classics Daily*. I'm doing a book blog (at least I guess that's the right term, although blogging hits me with the same sort of reaction as googling—both sound slightly obscene) there once a week. In fact, I just finished one on my good buddy Tom Kelly.

Also, [let me know what you think](#) about my list of books I've been reading (below, following the recipes). Is it worthwhile? Mind you, I'm not going to stop reading any more than I intend to quit turkey hunting or trout fishing, but if it's a worry and a bother I'll just stop sharing my current reading interests.

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## RECIPES

### OYSTER STEW

2 (12-ounce) cans of oysters or, better still, fresh ones  
 2 sweet onions, chopped  
 ½ cup olive oil  
 1 teaspoon self-rising flour  
 4 cups milk (use whole milk if you want a richer broth)  
 1 tablespoon dried parsley  
 1 teaspoon seasoned garlic salt  
 ½ teaspoon black pepper  
 Oyster crackers or saltines

Drain the oysters and check for pieces of shell. Sauté the onions in the olive oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the flour, whisking until blended. Add the oysters and stir to combine. Stir in the milk, parsley, garlic salt and pepper. Bring to a boil and remove from the heat. Serve immediately with crackers.

**NOTE:** To my way of thinking, there are precious few things which satisfy the inner man on a chilly winter's day than a big bowl of oyster stew.

### CRUMB-COATED VENISON

1 sleeve saltine crackers, crushed  
 1 ½ cups self-rising flour  
 1 teaspoon black pepper  
 1 pound cubed venison  
 1 cup 2 percent milk  
 1 to 4 tablespoons vegetable oil

Combine the crumbs, flour and pepper. Dip the venison into the milk, then coat with the crumb mixture. Heat oil in a skillet and cook the venison for 10 minutes or until gold brown, turning occasionally. Drain on paper towels.

**NOTE:** You can also cut the venison cube steaks into small pieces and use this recipe for appetizers. Cooking time will be a bit less. Don't overcook.

### VENISON STEW

2 to 3 pounds venison roast  
 2 (10 ½ ounce) cans beef broth  
 1 ½ to 2 pounds potatoes, cubed  
 3 or 4 onions, quartered  
 8 ounces baby carrots  
 Salt and pepper to taste  
 Worcestershire sauce to taste

Cut the roast into one-inch cubes. Combine in a Dutch oven with the beef broth. Simmer until the meat is tender.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Add potatoes, onions and carrots to the pan and season with salt, pepper and Worcestershire sauce. Cover and bake for an hour or until the vegetables are very tender.

**NOTE:** Serve with a big pone of cornbread cooked to a crusty turn and you have my definition of fine fixin's.

### PECAN CURRIED FRUIT

1 (29-ounce) can sliced peaches  
 1 (15-ounce) can pineapple chunks  
 1 (16-ounce) can pear halves  
 1 (16-ounce) can apricot halves  
 1 (16-ounce) jar maraschino cherries  
 ½ cup chopped pecans  
 1/3 cup butter, melted  
 ¾ cup packed light brown sugar  
 1 teaspoon to 1 tablespoon (depends on your taste) curry powder

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Drain all fruits and arrange in a 9 x 13-inch baking dish. Sprinkle with the pecans. Combine the butter, brown sugar and curry powder. Sprinkle over the fruit mixture. Bake for 45 minutes to an hour.

**NOTE:** This is easily prepared and makes a great accompaniment for quail or wild turkey.

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### Recently Read Books

\*Books I think others might enjoy.

1. Roland Chambers, *The Last Englishman: The Double Life of Arthur Ransome*. Ransome may be a name some of you recognize as an angling writer. He was a double, maybe triple agent with close ties to Russia and was there during the Russian Revolution. Assuredly a complex character.
2. \*David Finch, *R. M. Patterson: A Life of Great Adventure*. Patterson was a Canadian wilderness adventurer turned author who wrote popular works such as *Dangerous River* and *The Buffalo Head*. Although he was born in England, the most interesting years of his life were spent paddling canoes in little-known territory in western Canada and in ranching in idyllic territory. The book is well-researched and written in interesting fashion.
3. \*Stephen Hunter, *The Third Bullet*. If you have read any of Hunter's previous Bob Lee Swagger novels, I don't need to say much more. This one uses the assassination of John Kennedy as background. Unlike so many novelists delving in this field, Hunter actually knows guns. Fine stuff and a plausible alternative for Warren Commission questioners.



4. Candace C. Kant, *Zane Grey's Arizona*. Grey fell in love with the wild, arid regions of Arizona and was a key figure in convincing Hollywood to use the state's landscapes to film Westerns.
5. J. I. M. Merritt, *The Last Buffalo Hunt and Other Stories*. A collection of 17 pieces, most of them previously published in *Field & Stream*, on subjects such as Theodore Roosevelt hunting out West, John Muir, Frank Forester, the first stockings of brown trout, Daniel Boone, and more. Nicely written although lacking as much depth as I would like in most cases (but remember, I've studied most of the author's subjects and have written on many of them, so my expectations are likely too high).
6. \*Thomas H. Pauly, *Zane Grey: His Life, His Adventures, His Women*. I found this book fascinating and it sure did open my eyes on Grey. He was a serial philanderer who in some ways might have served as a model for one of Hugh Hefner's early *Playboy* sexual adventurers. The fact that Dolly stood through him and his womanizing is remarkable.
7. \*Archibald Rutledge, *Tom and I on the Old Plantation*. I'll be re-reading a lot of Rutledge stuff as I work on my biography of him. This is one of his early books and recounts some of the escapades he and his older brother had while boys growing up on Hampton Plantation.
8. George Frederick Ruxton, *Ruxton of the Rockies*. The journals and notes of a great 19<sup>th</sup> century traveler. Dated, but for anyone fascinated by travel, which I am, still fine stuff.

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