

Jim Casada Outdoors

January 2013 Newsletter

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

Web site: www.jimcasadaoutdoors.com
E-mail: jc@jimcasadaoutdoors.com

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The Enduring Joys of January

First and arguably foremost, thanks to all of you who read these monthly scribblings, occasionally take time to tell me you enjoy them, sometimes buy a book (that was the original purpose of this newsletter, the idea of promoting my books and others I sell, and it remains a vital part of my scratching to earn a livelihood writing about things I cherish), for your support. I realized I was truly having an impact when last month's newsletter, which mentioned in passing that it had been a 'coon's age since I had enjoyed the wonderful sweetness of a chocolate-covered cherry or for that matter even seen one, brought me an absolutely delightful response from not one but two readers. Bill Robinson and Stan LaFollette both sent me boxes of these sinfully delicious treats, and I'm rationing them out at the rate of one piece per day in a most delightful way. This isn't a hint for gifts to tempt the taste (goodness knows my lead New Year's resolution ought to be the shedding of an abundance of surplus avoirdupois), but rather an expression of genuine appreciation.

Secondly, all the best in 2013 to each and every one of you who honor me by reading this monthly rendering of ramblings, recollections, and reminiscences. I wish you health, good cheer, and (dare I say it when our putative leaders in Washington seem to me to be absolutely clueless on budgetary matters and pretty much everything else), prosperity. I simply wish that these elected officials, all matters of party, perspective, and persuasion aside, had my life's work experiences or those I suspect most of you have had as well. Our president wouldn't have a clue on how to skin a rabbit, load and shoot a shotgun, slop hogs, pull weeds, pluck a chicken, or hoe a row of corn. The same is likely true

This Month's Special Offerings

Offer #1 "Cuz" Strickland's Trilogy

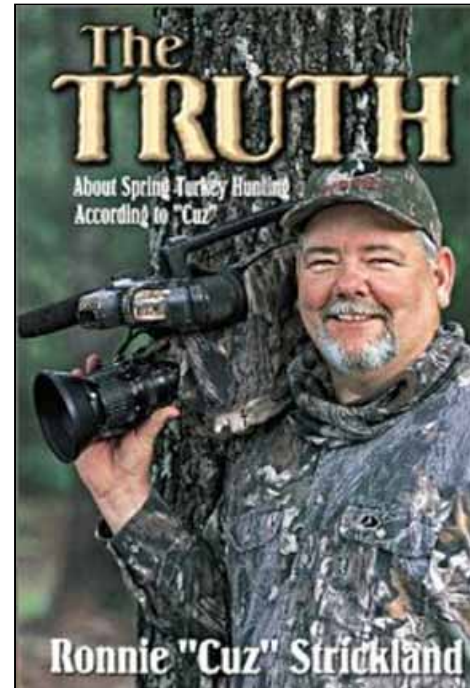
If you are a hunter and know anything about Mossy Oak camo or watch their "Hunting the Country" television productions, you will recognize the name "Cuz" Strickland (his first name is actually Ronnie, but no one ever uses it). He is a warm, outgoing guy, big as the side of a granite mountain and just as solid (never mind his morbid fear of snakes, and if you purchase this month's first special you can learn more of that in my introductory material to the second of his three books). I've had the privilege of spending a lot of time with Cuz in hunt camps and other settings over the years, and I enjoy teasing him about knowing him long before he became famous as a TV personality and industry icon.

He's a first-rate storyteller and superb turkey hunter (never mind that our views on calling are diametrically opposed), and he shares a wealth of his experiences in the sport in *The Truth*, *The Whole Truth*, and *Nothing But the Truth*. **I'm offering signed copies of the three books, all of them in hardback format, for \$50 postpaid.** If you don't find him entertaining and enlightening, then I have a thought and a recommendation. First, the thought--your funny bone or laugh meter is out of whack. Second, the recommendation--you need to schedule an appointment, and soon, with a psychiatrist.

for well over half of the members of the Senate and the House. They are by and large out-of-touch elitists (descriptions such as pantywaist poltroons come to mind) who know little of the common man, have lost an understanding of the goodness and uplifting nature of a staunch work ethic, have decided to worship the false god of entitlements in shameful fashion, and are anything but true leaders. How far we have gone, and in the wrong direction, from men like Theodore Roosevelt. That's my opinion, and that's rant enough for now. Let's turn to far more pleasant things, although again, I hope the 12 months which lie ahead bring you joy.

For me, January has always been a time of mixed feelings of anticipation, savoring a time of year others somehow find grey and grim, enjoying the absence of other hunters in the woods once the madness of the whitetail season has come and gone, maybe spending a day afield after an overnight snow and the incomparable opportunities such an event offers (at least in this part of the world) for assessing the game on your land, and more. There's the strange noise of a woodcock taking flight from its daytime seclusion in a cane brake or creek bottom, the small but sure rush of adrenalin from jumping a rabbit while rambling and then trying to get a shot, or the peaceful contemplation to be found in hours spent still hunting squirrels. All of these things are at least as much about soothing the soul as they are about the actual hunting experience. If perchance one ends the day with some heft in the game bag, that is just what that grand old poet laureate of bobwhites, Havilah Babcock, described as "the lace on the bride's pajamas."

Along with these solitary rambles, something my misanthropic soul has savored since boyhood in the Smokies, there are the more mundane but still satisfying aspects of January. Maybe an evening spent reading a good book while snuggled up in comfort with the weather outside exhibiting the kind of symptoms which produce cabin fever. Or perhaps something as simple as a hearty bowl of scrumptious soup, flanked by a goodly slab of cornbread made with stone-ground meal and slathered with plenty of butter. Then there's the joy of planning for the coming time of spring with all her greening-up glories. Just today, for example, I placed a large order for Heritage raspberry plants. My old patch had pretty well run its course, and I've tilled some new ground, far from any fungus or other vestiges of too long in one place, for the plants. The seed catalogs have arrived, and anyone closely connected with the good earth and with growing what they eat knows the joy these catalogs bring (never mind that I buy 90% of my seed, sets, and plants from a locally owned place which handles bulk seed). With their colorful pictures and tempting offers of news plants and seeds, they are in a sense a throwback to the Sears and Montgomery-Ward catalogs of yesteryear.



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However, I won't go as far as good buddy Jim Spencer recently did in writing an encomium (that's a \$10 word for a blurb or recommendation) for my most recent book, *Remembering the Greats: Profiles of Turkey Hunting's Old Masters*.

He suggested that "if you're not entertained, if you don't pick up something you didn't know, I'll eat the guts of your next turkey." Many of you have acquired the book already, but if you are a turkey hunter and care anything at all about the sport's past, **this collection of 27 profiles of turkey hunting's icons should be most attractive to you (\$39.95+\$5 shipping and handling).**

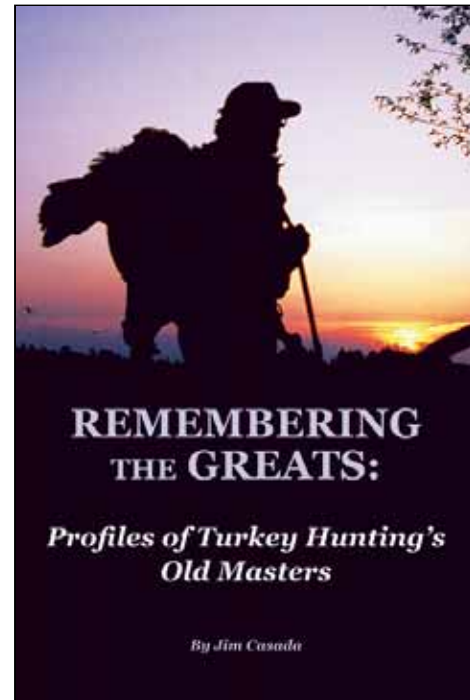
For the hunter/gatherer/gardener, there are always chores in January. How fondly I remember cracking and shelling walnuts when I was a boy, and I've got a bushel of them, all cured and awaiting application of a handy, dandy device a friend of mine, Ken Roper, made. The blueberry patch needs its annual dose of attention in the form of a bit of judicious removal of dead wood, pulling up of "intruders" and dealing with that vegetative invention of Beelzebub, sweet gum sprouts. Similarly, with a couple of buddies who help me maintain my little "Back 40" (it's actually more like a "Back 100"), some trails need treatment, some stands need relocation, there are shooting lanes to be cut, and we have a couple of new food plots in mind. Besides, activities of this sort, whether garden-related or connected with hunting, get me out of the house.

Grandpa Joe used to muse about the need to escape the women folks when winter got rough, and the older I get the more I understand. Mind you, I am sure that the female side of the equation feels exactly the same, and in fact my good missus just returned from a weekly knitting class which has give her great pleasure (although judging by occasional infusions of earthy vocabulary she normally eschews, all this purling seems at times to be like pearls before swine). What I'm trying to say, quite simply, is that January is a season of the year which lends itself to time alone.

My misanthropic moments are in no way the product of later years or something which has only recently emerged. From the time I was a boy I loved to spend hours alone in the fields and woods around home. I could literally walk out the door and start hunting. On two different occasions I killed a rabbit within 50 yards of the house and nearby there was a large covey of quail which haunted a 50-acre patch of old, overgrown fields. I routinely flushed them in my rambles. Within a couple of miles (as a boy I thought nothing of covering a dozen miles or more in a day, most of it pushing through briar thickets and dense brush or else climbing steep ridges) of home there were fine squirrel woods, and on multiple occasions I killed grouse in the course of my meanderings. My only companions on the most memorable of these jaunts were canines, and sometimes even the family beagles were not allowed to tag along.

I could stop when the spirit seized me. Maybe just sitting atop a log while munching an apple or leaning against a tree along a ridge line which afforded a fine view of the Tuckasegee River Valley, the Alarka Mountains, or the main spine of the Appalachians high up on the headwaters of my home waters, Deep Creek and its tributaries. If a squirrel happened to show up during these pauses, so much the better; but I was perfectly happy to be left with my thoughts and the peace of winter woods.

Note I did not say "quiet peace," because whenever I read



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I'm the last person to judge its merits, but I can honestly say the book has a lot of my heart and soul in it. Similarly, my firm belief is that if you are a turkey hunter and haven't read Cuz's stuff, you are missing a treat.

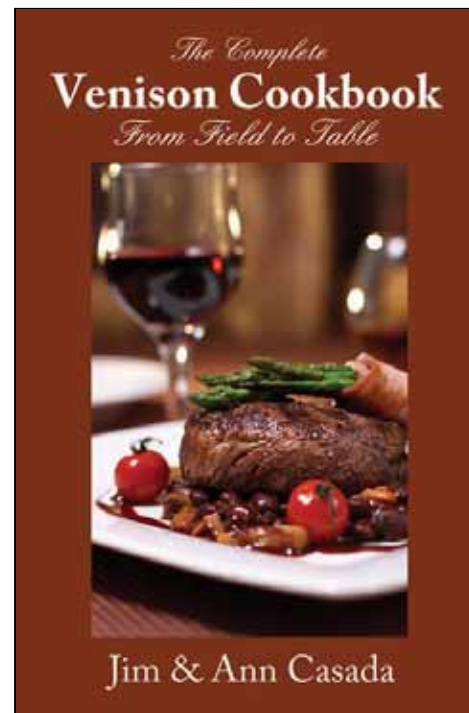
Offer #2 It's Venison Time

This is actually a repeat offer, since I tend to think of January in terms of hearty meals of venison (my season was satisfactory with meat from three fine bucks now residing in the family freezer).

Ann and I reprinted *The Complete Venison Cookbook*, which sold tens of thousands of copies in the original and shot up to ridiculous prices on the Internet after going out of print.

I'll send the book, with upwards of 200 venison recipes, for \$15 postpaid. You'll find a sampling of recipes from it at the end of this month's musings.

some writer who equates solitude afield with silence I know one of two things is true—he's either taking a great deal of literary license or else he hasn't spent much time sampling the subject of which he writes. No matter the season, the woods and wilds are never quiet. Whether it is raucous crows, laughing owls, twittering birds greeting dawn or bidding the day adieu, woodpeckers hammering away, hawks screaming, squirrels barking, coyotes howling in their wonderfully lonesome way, the sharp bark of a fox, the squeal of a rabbit caught by that fox, deer scurrying or turkeys scratching through dry leaves, nature knows little silence. As Robert Ruark once suggested, in his inimitable way, the woods are a veritable Tower of Babel. Still, I find the sounds of the wilds a comfort, not a cause for concern or irritation.



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Tel.: 803-329-4354

E-mail: jc@jimcasadaoutdoors.com

Those precious boyhood days of solitude and thought continue with me and if anything, I cherish them more now than I did those long decades ago. Indeed, if I manage to finish this newsletter and polish up an assignment on turkey hunting I'm doing for *Outdoor Life* far enough ahead of day's end, I intend to go for a couple of hours' walk this afternoon. I'll carry a gun and will welcome any opportunity afforded for a shot at a cottontail, a squirrel, a woodcock, or a dove (I think that if I flushed a covey of quail I'd likely be so thunderstruck as to forget to shoot—they are that scarce today in this part of the world). I'll pay some attention to favored deer bedding areas and heavily used trails; take note of any thinning which needs to be done around persimmon trees, honey locusts, or young white oaks (to encourage them to grow faster without competition); and contemplate placement of a food plot or two. Mainly though, I'll just pause and ponder, dream and scheme, as I have done all the days of my life which lie within the scope of my memory.

There are, to my way of thinking, few actions which are more refreshing and rejuvenating. Call is laziness if you will, but I'd like to think I've got a solid work ethic. Instead, my preference is to consider these times alone ones of charging mental and physical batteries, thinking about matters which lie ahead, and yes, since it is January, resolving to accomplish certain things in the course of 2013.

Perhaps you find similar approaches refreshing, and if not, I would humbly suggest that maybe, just maybe, you are too busy. Or, on the flip side of things, you might consider the wisdom inherent in thoughts from my Grandpa Joe: "Just because a fellow likes to be alone or just because he needs some thinking time doesn't mean he's trifling."

Again, all the best for 2013, thanks for your support, and [let me hear from you](#) with any suggestions you have for improving these monthly offerings in terms of what you would like to see, whether you find regular features

(special offers, recipes, comments on my schedule, and lists of my reading) worthwhile, and more. I welcome input, and you ain't likely to hurt my feelings. I've dealt with too many editors, had too many words rewritten (only to make them worse), and made too many mistakes not to develop a pretty darn thick hide. Or maybe I've gradually adopted the attitude Grandpa Joe had whenever things surfaced with which he disagreed. He'd mumble, shake his head a bit, and say: "They'll learn; they'll learn." Me? I'm still in the process of learning.

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Let's conclude with a list of what I've been reading and my monthly offering of recipes. All of those for venison come straight from the pages of one of this month's special offers, *The Complete Venison Cookbook*.

Recent Reading

Continuing my practice in recent newsletters, I'm sharing a sampling of what I've been reading the last few weeks. My tastes are moderately eclectic, although they lean heavily towards history, biography and autobiography, adventure, most any type of outdoor activity, and mysteries. Of late I've been on a biography/memoir kick.

Those with an asterisk (*) are ones I think you might find interesting.

1. Lovat Dickson, *Wilderness Man: The Strange Story of Grey Owl*. Archie Belaney was an Englishman who traveled to the Canadian northland at the turn of the 20th century and went native. The essence of his fascinating story did not emerge until after his death in 1938.
2. *Robert Easton and Mackenzie Brown, *Lord of Beasts: The Saga of Buffalo Jones*. This is a biography of the fascinating figure who played the major role in saving the bison, was a friend of Theodore Roosevelt, furnished material aplenty for Zane Grey, and was altogether a fascinating figure.
3. Alice Ford, *John James Audubon: A Biography*. Exceptionally detailed and well researched, this life at times reads wonderfully well while at others dragging. It is the standard life of Audubon and anyone who has much interest at all in ornithology needs to read it (although there was much more to Audubon than study of birds). I found it most interesting but the author, even though she wrote a number of books, is clueless when it comes to transition.
4. Frank Johnson, *Great Days*. The autobiography of one of the key figures in the Pioneer Column which penetrated into and started settlement of what became Rhodesia (today's Zimbabwe). My primary interest comes from study of Fred Selous, another member of the Column. Johnson basically trashes Selous in this book.
5. Eric Parker, *Memory Looks Forward*. Parker was a noted English writer of the early 20th century who wrote or edited many important works on hunting, fishing, and shooting. He worked for *The Field*, a noted British publication on sport and country life, for many years. The book is really enjoyable until the final seven chapters, when he goes off the deep end on spiritualism, the occult, séances where he talks to his deceased wife, and the like.
6. *Ferrol Sams, *Run with the Horsemen*. This is actually a re-read, and for the umpteenth time. If you aren't familiar with this book and its two companion volumes, *Whisper of the River* and *When All the World Was Young*, do you ever have a treat awaiting you. A Georgia country boy who became a doctor, Sams writes with wit, humor, and insight, and if he doesn't have you laughing you were born without a humor gene.
7. *Herbert L. Stoddard, Sr., *The Memoirs of a Naturalist*. Stoddard was and likely always will be the pre-

eminent bobwhite quail biologist, but there was much more to the career of this talented and most interesting man. I find the techniques of his time fascinating, because he shot a lot of rare birds—it was considered imperative to prove one had been sighted in a given region. On the other hand, he was a visionary when it came to controlled burning.

8. Frank N. Streatfield, *Sporting Recollections of an Old 'Un*. Streatfield was one of those peripatetic Englishmen of the late Victorian era for whom sport was almost a way of life. This book covers bird hunting, fly fishing, a bit of cricket and a way of life which is gone forever. It was a golden time in the sun for those hardy men, such as Streatfield, who ruled an empire on which the sun never set.
9. *Bryce Towsley, *The 14th Reinstated*. I've been a friend of the author, one of America's leading gun writers and a man who really knows his craft, for decades. In this book he makes his first foray into fiction, and it's a dandy. There's a mixture of survivalist realities, adventure, anti-liberal outlook (if possible, Towsley is more conservative than I am), and straightforward good reading. The underlying message is a cautionary tale for our times.
10. Frederick Turner, *Rediscovering America: John Muir in His Time and Ours*. A reasonably well researched biography of Muir (although it is not a scholarly effort). Muir was a strange and fascinating fellow, and for the most part this book chronicles his life well. However, the conclusion, with Muir's death, is in my view poorly handled.
11. *Johann Wyss, *Swiss Family Robinson*. I gave my granddaughter this book for Christmas and thought it might be a good idea to re-read this classic. The survivalist aspects of the book have always appealed to me.

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RECIPES

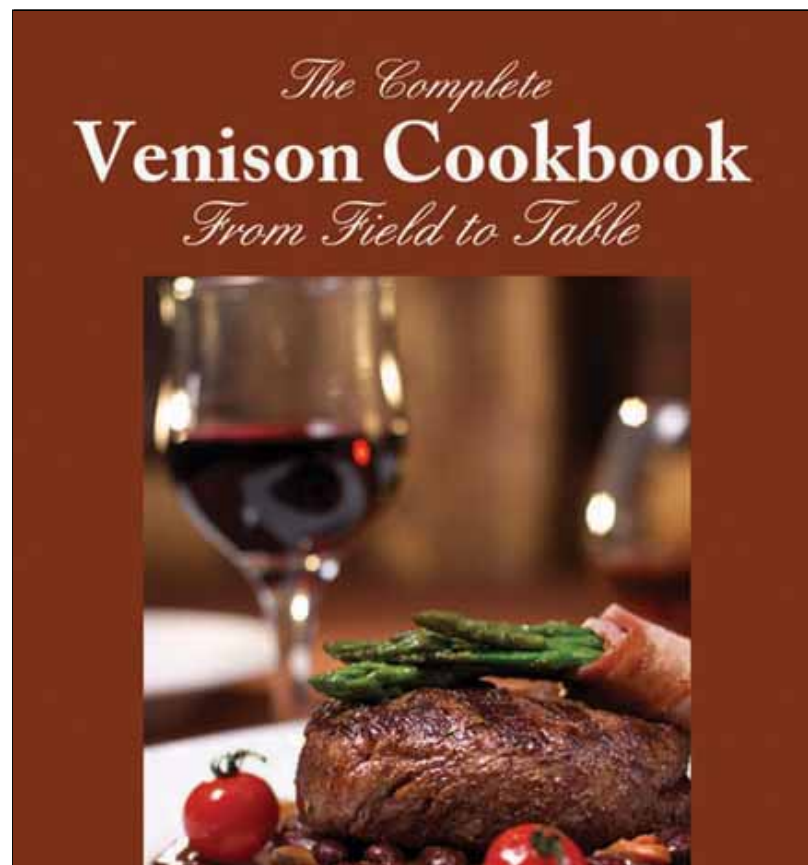
BRENDA'S SOUPER STEW

2 pounds venison, cut into chunks
 1 can cream of potato soup
 1 can cream of mushroom soup
 1 can cream of celery soup
 1 package dry onion soup mix
 1 can water

Place venison chunks in Dutch oven. Mix all soups and water and pour over venison. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer until tender (1 ½ to 2 hours). Serve over rice or pasta. Simple, swift, and scrumptious.

CHERRY VENISON STEW

¼ cup canola oil
 1 cup all-purpose flour
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon black pepper
 2 pounds venison, cut into two-inch cubes
 1 can (12-ounce) cola



1 small bottle maraschino cherry juice
 (reserve cherries and cut in half)
 2 cups chopped pecans
 Hot cooked noodles

Heat oil in skillet. Mix flour, salt and pepper. Toss venison cubes with flour (a paper bag works well). Brown venison in oil. Remove from skillet and drop in saucepan in which cola and cherry juice are boiling. Reduce heat to low and cook one and a half hours (or until tender). Stir occasionally. Add cherries and nuts. Simmer additional 30 minutes or until meat is tender and gravy is thick. Serve over hot cook noodles. Delightfully different.

BARLEY VENISON SOUP

1 cup fine barley, rinsed and drained
 1 small onion
 4 cups beef broth
 3 cups frozen mixed vegetables, thawed
 1 46-ounce can tomato juice
 3 or four cups leftover venison stew (or substitute an equal amount of venison burger you have browned in a skillet)
 1 teaspoon sugar
 Salt and pepper to taste

Bring broth to a boil and add washed barley, chopped onion, and mixed vegetables. Cook on low about 40 minutes until barley and vegetables are done. Add tomato juice and leftover stew and seasonings. Simmer until hot.

SPLIT PEA SOUP

1 cup chopped, cooked ham
 1 cup chopped venison kielbasa
 ½ pound dried split green peas
 2 carrots, chopped
 2 potatoes, peeled and chopped
 1 small onion, chopped
 6 cups water
 Salt and pepper to taste

In a large kettle combine ham, venison kielbasa, peas, carrots, potatoes, onion, 6 cups water, and salt and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer covered one hour or until peas are tender. With a potato masher, mash vegetables right in kettle. Simmer uncovered about 15 minutes for a thick, hearty soup.

BLACKBERRY DUMPLINGS

1 quart frozen blackberries (thawed)
 1 cup sugar (or to taste)
 Enough water to thin berries and enough to cook dumplings

Dumplings

1 cup flour
 2 teaspoons baking powder
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 1 tablespoon sugar
 1 cup milk

Place blackberries, sugar and water in saucepan and heat to boiling. Meanwhile, mix dumpling ingredients thoroughly and drop tablespoon by tablespoon into boiling berries. Cook for 15 minutes or until dumplings are cooked through the center. Serve hot with ice cream.

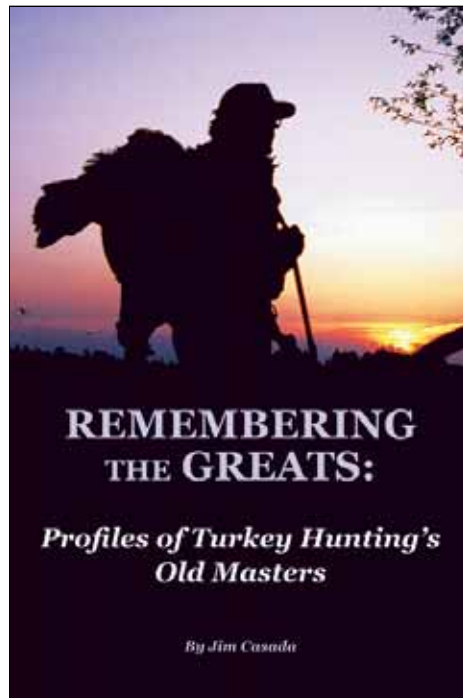
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Appearances and Activities

Other than a [radio talk with Ray Eye recently](#), and a birthday towards month's end which will remind me of two things in powerful, poignant fashion--that time is marching on in terms of my age and my father's death (he died just a day after my 69th birthday, and I get misty eyed every time I think about him trying to call me and wish me well less than 24 hours before he passed at the age of 101 after a wonderfully full life well lived), I don't have a lot going on in terms of public events this month.

[Listen to Ray Eye Radio Interview](#)

Remembering the Greats: Profiles of Turkey Hunting's Old Masters.



\$39.95+\$5 shipping and handling

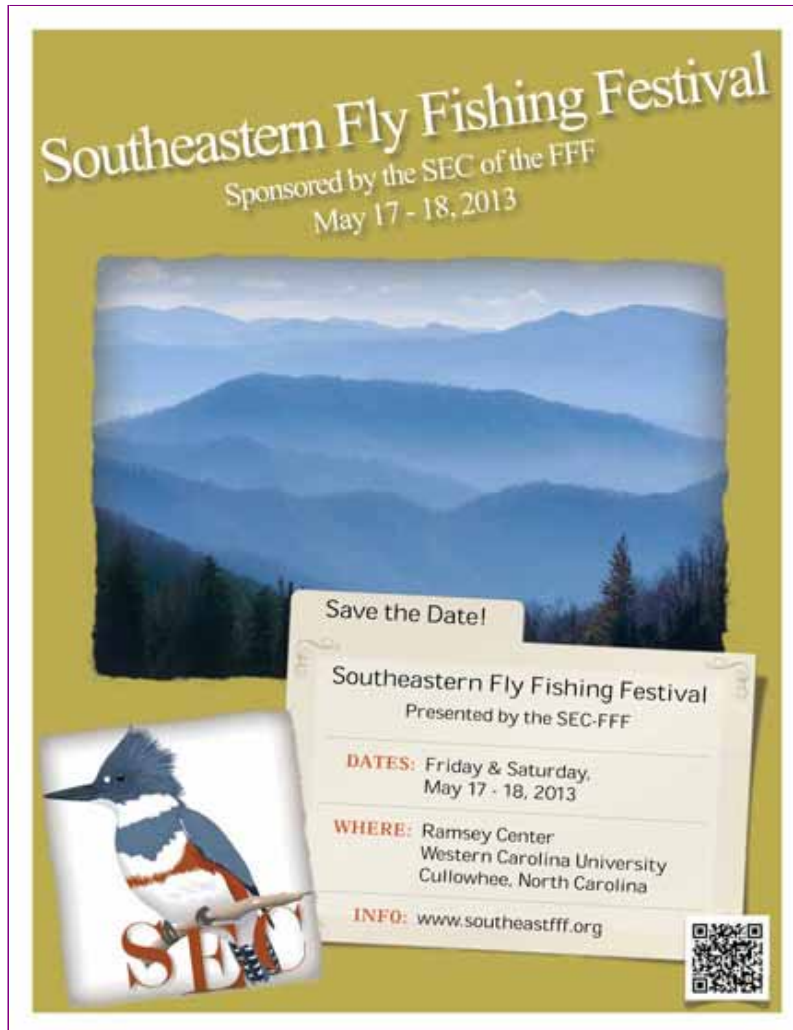
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That changes dramatically in February.

- I'll be at the [National Wild Turkey Federation convention](#) in Nashville for the whole show (Feb. 15, 16, and 17), and if you want to contact me in advance to bring a book or two along or maybe just to shake and howdy, [drop me an e-mail](#).
- For those living in the Carolinas, the week before I'll be one of the featured speakers at the [Fly Fishing](#)

Show in Winston-Salem, N.C. I will offer two seminars on Feb. 9 and two more on Feb. 10, and at other times I'll have a booth where I'll be peddling books and chewing the fat. If you want full details on the Show, visit www.flyfishingshow.com and click the Winston-Salem link.

- Several months on down the road, on the weekend of May 17-18, I'll be at the annual conclave of the Southeastern Federation of Fly Fishers in Cullowhee, N.C. Again I'll be giving multiple presentations and will have a booth. This is right in the back yard of my old stomping grounds and is an ideal location for this gathering. There's trout fishing aplenty within an hour's drive.



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