

Jim Casada Outdoors

January 2014 Newsletter

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

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

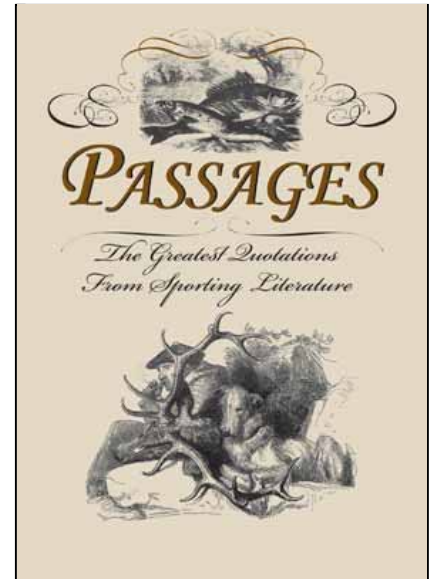
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This Month's Quotations

Out of curiosity, as I was preparing this portion of the newsletter I took a gander at the index to my trusty copy of *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*. There was nary an entry for January, whereas April boasted eight and May more than a dozen. That clearly makes a statement about the comparative poetic appeal of the dead of winter to the heart of spring. Still, 'tis the season of small game and new beginnings, and the heart lives in hope of the time when turkeys once again gobble.

As always, this month's quotations come from *Passages*, a book Chuck Wechsler and I compiled and co-edited. Copies are available [through the Web site](#) (\$20 for paperbound, \$60 for deluxe hardbound copies in linen slipcases, numbered and signed).

"A mountain is the best medicine for a troubled mind. Seldom does man ponder his own insignificance. He is master of all things. He thinks the world is his without bonds. Neither could be farther from the truth. Only when he tramps the mountains alone, communing with nature, observing other insignificant creatures about him, to come and go as he will, does he awaken to his own short-lived presence on earth."



Finis Mitchell, *Wind River Trails*.

"America is a better place because of her hunters; and when I recall that there are some ten million of these, I take confidence from the thought that if she is ever attacked, there will be one army ready to defend her; and it will be an army that possesses the essential qualification of knowing how to shoot. As a grizzle old sharpshooter of the '60s, fighting in the Valley of Virginia, remarked to a beginner: "You shoots at 'em; me, I shoots 'em."

Archibald Rutledge, *Hunter's Choice*.

January Rejuvenation—2014

Jim's Doings

Other News

The coming months will be busy ones for me. Later this month, from January 23-26, I'll be down in Alabama hunting waterfowl and whitetails, and maybe doing some fishing, on a 10,000-acre plantation owned by the folks who make that legendary Southern delight, Moon Pies.

Sumter Farm is located in the heart of Alabama's famed Black Belt and features lots of flooded timber, more than 250 acres of prime bass water, and big whitetails for which the area is famous. Anyone interested in hunting or fishing here—and the site only recently became open to the sporting public—can get more details by visiting www.wingsgroupllc.com or e-mail Elliott Davenport at Elliott@wingsgroupllc.com.

Then in February I'll be attending the [National Wild Turkey Federation's annual convention](#) in Nashville (February 14-16). I don't plan to have a booth but will carry copies of my two most recent books in the field, *Remembering the Greats: Profiles of Turkey Hunting's Old Masters* (\$39.95) and *The Literature of Turkey Hunting: An Annotated Bibliography and Random Scribblings of a Sporting Bibliophile* (limited, numbered deluxe edition of 750 copies - \$100), with me if anyone is interested. Also, I can bring copies of anything on my turkey list (a brand new one will be posted by the time you receive this newsletter or shortly afterward) if you want them. Just [contact me](#), and we will arrange a time and place to meet (probably at Tom Kelly's booth or that of Alabama Black Belt Adventures).

Come the first half of March, if everything works out right, I'll be in Namibia for ten days or so hunting. I'm scheduled to talk with folks connected with the government of that country in a few days and hopefully everything will fall together.

Soon after I return, I will be attending the annual meeting of the [Professional Outdoor Media Association \(POMA\) in Knoxville](#). I was on the founding board of

Recently I learned of what for me, as a hopelessly and happily addicted collector of many types of sporting memorabilia—books, old magazines, turkey calls, shotshell boxes, printed ephemera, waterfowl stamps, and more—is really exciting news.

In company with a couple of longtime presences in the outdoor industry, Bill Miller and Steve Pennaz, the retired director of the National Shooting Sports Foundation, Bob Delfay, has come up with a great idea for a television show. **Bob will be filming pilot programs for "Treasures & Traditions" in the coming months with idea of going to filming of a full 13-program schedule in the second half of 2014.**

In a fashion somewhat similar to Antiques Road Show, sportsmen will bring in items for appraisal and evaluation. Everything from guns to original art work, long out-of-print books to vintage fly rods, decoys to early duck stamps, along with much more will fall within the program's purview.

Because of schedule conflicts I will be unable to be present for the first two venues—sports shows in Cincinnati in mid-February and Hartford in March—but I hope to become an integral part of the initiative with my work as an appraiser focusing in the areas I know best, collectible sporting books and the memorabilia of turkey hunting.

Although the show's website is currently under construction, you can visit www.treasuresandtraditionstv.com for news on free tickets to the Cincinnati show should you live in the area and have an item of sporting history you'd like to have valued, or contact infor@treasuresandtraditionstv.com. I'm quite excited about the future for this concept and think others of my mindset will be as well.

Special of the Month

For me, the months in the depths of winter, January and February, are a time to settle down with a good book, indulge in planning sessions for the future which my Grandpa Joe used to describe as "dreamin' and schemin'," or to enjoy hearty fare in forms such as savory soups and stews.

With the latter consideration in mind, this month's special is a cookbook Ann and I wrote several years ago. *Field to Feast: The Remington Cookbook* features fine examples of sporting art from the Remington Collection, a section of recipes contributed by company employees, and introductory essays I wrote to accompany each section.

POMA and as such was subsequently elected an honorary life member of the organization. However, I have not been active in POMA in recent years.

The outgoing president and a fellow I consider a good friend, Kevin Tate, asked me to participate in a panel or two as part of this year's program, and I was happy to do so. It will also be an opportunity to see a longtime and very dear friend, Betty Lou Fegely. Her husband Tom, a nationally known and wonderfully skilled outdoor writer and photographer, died shortly before Christmas after a long struggle with Lewy Body Dementia. Betty Lou plans to attend, and I can't wait to give her a heartfelt hug. She's one of the finest of all the people, and there have been a passel delightful folks, I've known in my decades of communicating the outdoor experience. I'm sure it will be an emotional moment for both of us.



First and foremost though, it is a collection of recipes, mostly from the Casada kitchen, with the primary focus being on game dishes. The format of the work is one I particularly like—it is a hardback with plenty of color illustrations, yet it features wrap-around binding of a type which allows it to lie in a flat position when open. Anyone who has ever tried to prop open a rebellious cookbook or place some utensil atop one to hold the page in place knows precisely what I'm talking about.

As long as they last or until February 1 if I have any left, I'm offering copies of the book, postpaid, for \$15. Order through PayPal by clicking the button below or send checks to Jim Casada, 1250 Yorkdale Drive, Rock Hill, SC 29730-7638.

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Okay, I'll confess at the outset that the title of this month's newsletter is more than a bit misleading. I'm too old, too contrary, too set in my ways, and certainly too stubborn to start a New Year with rejuvenation or even so much as a modest kick start. Resolutions? I think they largely belong to youth, although I'll readily admit that I always set out with worthy things in mind such as losing weight, exercising more, hunting and fishing more, keeping my checkbook up to date, working less, finishing projects on time, and that sort of good intentions. However, we all know where the pavement of good intentions leads, so pardon me if I pretty much avoid both resolutions or taking that treacherous track leading to a miserably hot place.

Instead, I think I'll find sustenance and joy in doing something which seems to become more a part of my being with each passing year; namely, taking longing looks back to younger days, enjoying the prerogative known as reflecting on the "good old days" (one of my favorite writers, Archibald Rutledge, wisely entitled one of his books about youth and young manhood *Those Were the Days*), doing more of what I please, flagrantly flaunting the bounds of today's dismal preoccupation with political correctness with fervor worthy of a younger man, and piddling when it pleases me. More about piddling in a moment, but first some thoughts on what I do hope to accomplish in 2014.

Foremost on my list is at least getting into the short rows, if not actually finishing, a biography of Archibald Rutledge. It is something I've periodically worked on—sometimes with intensity and at others scarcely touching it for months—for two decades or more. It will be one of the biggest literary projects of my entire life, but I don't want to think of it in terms of being a last hurrah or final flash in a very small pan. For one thing, I've got another book focusing on my many wonderful memories of the Smokies and my boyhood in mind, and yet

another one dealing with mountain people and places, folkways and traditions, on the drawing board. Add to that two newspaper columns, one appearing weekly and a second every other week; the occasional magazine assignment, my regular book column for *Sporting Classics* magazine, every intention of contributing more material to "Sporting Classics Daily," and determination to reduce the massive stock of out-of-print books I have on hand (my wife will lead cheers on this one), and I've got plenty looming on the horizon.

Among these the perennial favorites (and failures) involve loss of weight and improved fitness. If only I lived the lifestyle of my grandfather or even my father, excess poundage would not be a problem. As it is, just today I got a ration of grief from the good lady of the house on the subject. The simple truth of the matter, and not just for me but for our world, is that most of us don't do anything near as much manual labor as our forebears. We may talk endlessly about food fads, appropriate diets, organically grown foods, and the like, but folks in yesteryear didn't get fat for two primary reasons. They worked any excess calories off and in many cases they didn't have a whopping excess of comestibles in the house at any given time. Still, I reckon I'll try to walk more, eat a bit less, and to at least a minimal degree behave myself.

Meanwhile though, as these words are being written on New Year's day, savory smells are wafting from the kitchen into the study. I've got a big pot of mixed mustard and turnip greens picked from the garden simmering away, with diced turnips in the pot along with a couple of chunks of streaked meat (that's what we always called it, although there are other names such as streak o' lean, fatback, side meat, salt pork, and the like). On another burner sliced turnips are cooking to a perfect tenderness. I like to mash mine up with some butter and a hearty sprinkling of pepper. To my taste they are every bit as appealing as mashed potatoes. Then there's a whopping mess of pork backbones-and-ribs in the crock pot. They've been cooking since mid-morning, and I just checked a little while ago. The meat is fall-off-the-bone tender, and the ends of the ribs where they attach to the backbone are soft enough that I'm going to have some fine marrow to suck from them. If you've never eaten marrow from pork ribs, rest assured it's a tiny taste of heaven to a country boy's palate. Throw in Hoppin' John (black-eyed peas and rice) and you have a mighty tasty way to start 2014. I just hope you fare as well.

Now that I have that little rabbit trail into gustatory delight out of the way (and I'm coming back to the keyboard after some mighty fine eating), let's get back to piddling. There's no easy way to define the fine art of piddling simply because it varies so much from one individual to the next. In their later years, especially at this time of year, both my paternal grandfather and father were masters of good, practical piddling. For both of them there were certain "givens," with telling tales and recollection of friends and family who had added joy to their life looming large. Not surprisingly, their tales often revolved around hunting and fishing.

Another shared pursuit in the world of piddling involved pocket knives. Whether whittling, sharpening, trading (in the case of my grandfather—I don't think Dad ever traded one), or doing some little task with a knife, both put considerable importance on having a good folder, sharp enough to slice a finger to the bone if one wasn't careful, in their pockets. Then there were "projects" of one sort or another. These didn't involve anything urgent, or, in most cases, even anything which really needed doing. On the other hand, the "task" was always fun and had a logical outcome in the eye of the beholder. Grandpa and Daddy both thought a session of cracking black walnuts and picking out the meats was a fine way to spend an evening, and given the sort of fine eating that sooner or later resulted I can't disagree.

Another example, at least with Dad, involved making small wooden crosses, perhaps two inches high and an inch and a half across. They were beautifully done (he could make most anything out of wood and had the tools to do it) and he enjoyed giving them to friends, members of the church, neighbors, and family. Grandpa worked with wood as well, and carpentry skills ran fairly deep in the family, although goodness knows they somehow eluded me in the genetic line. However, his projects in wood tended much more towards the recreational side of things. Fashioning a fine slingshot or a walking cane suited him to a "T," as did cutting down a dozen or so cane poles and going through the entire process of getting them ready for fishing come spring.

Incidentally, if you've never done this, it's a great project to undertake with a kid. Grandpa had access to a couple of sprawling cane brakes (or is it breaks—I've never seen a satisfactory answer), and thanks to lots of experience he had a keen eye for just the size cane he wanted. He'd cut them down with a hatchet or saw and lug them back to the house. There he would carefully trim the little side limbs and foliage from the canes and use a

saw to cut through the big end at a joint. He'd also trim the small end at a joint. The next step was to take a length of sturdy cord and tie a cinder block or heavy weight (Grandpa used window weights) to the small end. The cane would then be suspended from a tree limb or barn rafter to dry. The weight made it hang perfectly straight so that when cured you had a pole without any bend in it.

Once the canes had cured, turning from green to an eye-pleasing light yellow, he would take them down and remove the weights. At that point he sometimes gave them a coating of shellac (they lasted longer that way), but not always. I think he enjoyed the process so much it didn't matter whether the canes only lasted a season or two. At that juncture all that remained was to equip the pole with a length of line (you wanted it to be about three feet longer than the length of the pole) and rig it with hook, bobber, and sinker. The hooks were store bought at a penny apiece, but the float and sinkers were homemade. Grandpa would use pieces of cork from bottle stoppers and other sources (one time he somehow acquired a big slab of cork and it outfitted many a pole) and his weights came from the thin pieces of lead used to cover roofing nails. Once all that was done it was time to think "hurry spring." Those simple fishing outfits caught many a catfish, bream, and knottyhead, not to mention the occasional trout or bass along with plenty of "trash" fish, and the poles gave about as much pleasure in the preparing as in the catching. Now that was what I'd call productive piddling.

Hopefully you get the idea. My piddling tends to run in the direction of things which need to be done but have no specific time frame. One example should suffice. I've got to get my muscadines and scuppernongs pruned in the next month or so, but it isn't weighing heavy on me. I'll root some of the cuttings, dig up some I rooted last year to give to others (I've already got 15 or 20 varieties and at least twice that many vines), and the missus will likely turn some of the longest, most supple runners into wreathes. I somehow like seeing things of that sort put to decorative use, and you can perform similar piddling with deer antlers (think a turkey tote or key chain fob) or turkey bones (wingbone call, humerus used for the handle of a short, fixed-blade knife, or striker).

That's enough on piddling for now, although I guess when you get right down to it this newsletter involves piddling. I'll finish with recipes, some of them the essence of simplicity involving my New Year's day fare, and others for the soups and stews which go so well at this season. The latter all come from this month's special, *Field to Feast*.

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Recipes

WINTER GREENS

My approach to cooking winter greens (I like mustard and turnip greens mixed) is almost no mistakes simple. Pick a big batch of greens and clean thoroughly (it will take four or five washings and rinsings). Place them in a large pot and press them down as much as possible. Add two or three inches of water and turn heat on until the water comes to a rolling boil, then cut back to simmer.

You can take one of two approaches to seasoning. For taste, you can't beat frying two or three thinly sliced pieces of streaked meat to a crisp turn. Set the meat aside and pour the grease into the greens to salt and season them. When served, crumble the fried meat atop them or, better still, put a slice in a chunk of cornbread and eat it along with the greens. An alternative, and it is easier, is to place the uncooked meat straight in the pot of greens. As a substitute you can use bacon. Salt to taste when the greens are done. If you wish, you can chop a turnip or two into the mix. I like to simmer them for several hours, adding water if needed. They will be tenderer and you can't beat the pot liquor. Incidentally, if you haven't sopped up pot liquor with a cathead biscuit or a chunk of cornbread you haven't lived the simple dining life to its fullest.

STEWED TURNIPS

When I first visited Scotland many years ago, folks kept talking about "neeps." I had no idea what the dish was until it was served and I had the first taste. It's just their colloquial word for turnips. Call 'em what you will,

stewed turnips are dandy in my book. Wash and then peel several turnips. Cut into fairly thin slices and place in a suitably sized sauce pan with enough water to cover. Cook until tender (it won't take long—they cook appreciably faster than potatoes, for example). Drain, salt and pepper to taste, and top with a good chunk of butter. Or you can mash them up like potatoes, which I like to do.

BACKBONES-AND-RIBS

I like backbones-and-ribs simply because they are cheaper and offer the chance to enjoy marrow, but any of the cheaper cuts of bone-in pork will work just fine. Cut away larger pieces of fat (there'll still be plenty) and place in a crock pot or slow cooker on medium heat. Add salt and allow to cook, covered, for hours. Other than maybe turning the pieces of meat once or twice, you don't need to do anything else. If you cook long enough (yesterday I probably cooked the pork for 7-8 hours) meat will fall off the bone and the actual bones will soften to the point you can gnaw them for marrow. With the above-mentioned dishes and cornbread, you are in country boy heaven.

SQUIRREL BRUNSWICK STEW

2 squirrels
 1 tablespoon salt
 1 minced onion
 2 cups lima beans
 6 ears corn (you can substitute 2 cups canned corn)
 ½ pound streaked meat
 6 potatoes
 1 teaspoon black pepper
 2 teaspoons sugar
 4 cups diced tomatoes
 Flour

Cut squirrels in pieces. Add salt to 4 quarts of water and bring to a boil. Add onion, beans, corn, pork, potatoes, pepper and squirrel pieces (if using canned corn, add later with tomatoes and sugar). Cover lightly and simmer 2 hours. Add sugar and tomatoes and simmer one more hour. Ten minutes before removing stew from stove, add a stick of butter cut into walnut-size pieces and rolled in flour. Boil up, adding salt or pepper as needed. Pour into a soup tureen and serve with a ladle.

ITALIAN PASTA SOUP

½ cup chopped onion
 1 minced garlic clove
 ½ cup chopped celery
 ½ cup grated carrots
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 1 can chicken broth
 ½ pound ground venison, browned
 2 (14-ounce) cans diced tomatoes
 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
 1 (16-ounce) can red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
 1 (19-ounce) can cannellini (white kidney beans) drained and rinsed
 1 cup chopped cooked ziti or elbow pasta
 1 teaspoon parsley
 ½ teaspoon basil
 1 ½ teaspoons Italian seasoning
 Salt to taste

Sauté onion, garlic, celery and carrots until tender crisp. Add chicken broth and simmer. Brown ground venison. Add venison, diced tomatoes and tomato sauce. Add beans to soup. Cook pasta and chop with scissors, then add

to soup. Add seasonings. Simmer 20-30 minutes to blend flavors. Serve with freshly grated Parmesan cheese as a topping.

SIMPLE OVEN STEW

¼ cup flour
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
2 pounds venison stew meat cut into 1-inch cubes
3-4 tablespoons canola oil
4-5 medium potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
4-5 large carrots, cut into chunks
2 ribs celery, cut into chunks
1 package onion soup mix
1 large onion cut into slices
3 cups water

Mix flour, salt and pepper in a paper bag. Add venison and shake well. Brown meat in oil and place in a large casserole. Add potatoes, carrots, celery, onion, soup and water. Cover and cook at 325 degrees for 2 hours or until meat and vegetables are tender.

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