

Jim Casada Outdoors

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July 2016 Newsletter

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Jim's Doin's

The biggest news from the home front in recent weeks involves a surprising, humbling and most welcome honor. A couple of weeks ago I received notification that I was to be one of four inaugural inductees into the Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians Hall of Fame. The Museum, located in Cherokee, N.C. (in the county of my birth and the place of my home trout waters), recognizes and perpetuates the rich heritage of fly fishing all up and down the southern spine of the Appalachians. Induction ceremonies will be held on September 24, and detailed information for anyone interested in attending is provided [here](#). According to the press information describing my selection I am being inducted "in the **Communications** category as the author of numerous outdoor books and as a seminar speaker who has shared a lifetime of knowledge and experience with us all. In addition to fly fishing he has written about hunting, game and fish recipes, the history of sport, and on academic subjects."

For me, as a portion of the subtitle of my book, *Fly Fishing in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park*, suggests, the sport has been a lifelong "pursuit of passion." I can almost see my father, who was an avid and accomplished fly fisherman, shaking his head in disbelief while muttering something about my having enjoyed a "marvelously misspent life." In his later years he commented, with some regularity, to the effect "I just don't understand how a son of mine goes

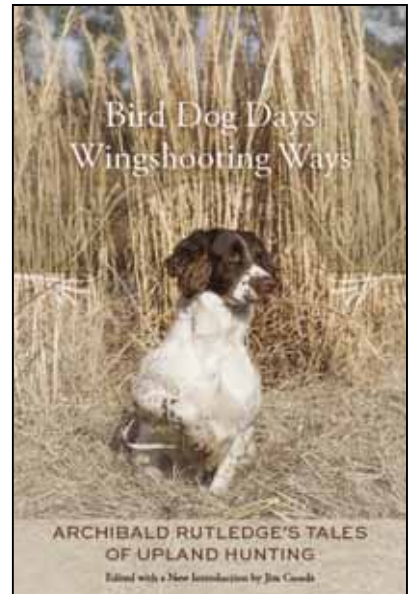
Book News

Right on time (in fact a week early), my fifth anthology of Archibald Rutledge material has been delivered.

Entitled *Bird Dog Days, Wingshooting Ways: Archibald Rutledge's Upland Game Stories*, the book brings together almost two dozen of his timeless pieces on bird hunting and bird dogs along with one delightful short story, "The Odyssey of Bodio." An earlier version of the book appeared years ago but has long been out of print. I also made a big mistake

with my original choice of a publisher. Fortunately that is now rectified and the current edition, which includes some changes in my editorial material and other contributions to the work, comes from the same folks who have published the other Rutledge anthologies, the University of South Carolina Press. They've been consistently good to work with and produce nice books at a reasonable price.

This book, like all the others, is priced at \$30. Signed and inscribed copies are available from me for \$35 (includes shipping and handling, and South Carolina residents will need to add \$2.10 state sales tax).



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Signed and Inscribed, \$35 postage paid

fishing and hunting all the time, tells lies about it, and gets paid. It's just not right." In truth he took keen interest in my trips and writings and was immensely proud of the fact that the above-mentioned book was dedicated to him.

Otherwise for me it's pretty much a typical "heart of summer" time—putting up blueberries, enjoying the first corn and tomatoes, trying to keep ahead of weeds and the lawn grass (without full success), and staying indoors during the heat of the day. How I miss my native Smokies this time of year. There you could always head to a trout stream where wet wading would soon have you plenty cool. Also, in the high country seldom indeed does the sun drive away the mist before 10:00 or 11:00 a.m., and being outside working up to that point is quite tolerable.

I've got an article, "The Simple Pleasures of Cleaning Guns," in the current issue of *South Carolina Wildlife* along with a column and a feature in the summer issue of *Carolina Mountain Life*. I am currently working on other magazine pieces on "Dreaming of Duxbak Days," "Whitetail Wisdom from an Old Master" (Archibald Rutledge), and top Southern quail destinations. My biggest thrust for the time being, however, is completing my "Profiles in Mountain Character." I've shared portions of a couple of these in the past. This project will remain my top literary priority until completion.

The other four Rutledge anthologies I have edited and compiled are *Hunting and Home in the Southern Heartland: The Best of Archibald Rutledge*, *Tales of Whitetails: Archibald Rutledge's Great Deer Hunting Stories*, *America's Greatest Game Bird: Archibald Rutledge's Turkey-Hunting Tales*, and *Carolina Christmas: Archibald Rutledge's Enduring Holiday Stories*.


Order one or more of these books with *Bird Dog Days* and I'll pay the shipping (you are thus buying them at \$30 each) and if you buy all five I'm offering them for \$135 postpaid—a savings of \$15 on the books plus free shipping. Now's a fine opportunity for some early Christmas shopping for sporting friends or maybe just a chance to add to your personal library.

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All 5 Rutledge Books for \$135 postage paid

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or via personal check.


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Jim Casada
Born in Bryson City, North Carolina
Lives in Rock Hill, South Carolina

In recognition of his outstanding contributions to the art, the science and the sport of fly fishing, the Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians honors **Jim Casada** for sharing a lifetime of outdoor knowledge and experience through his seminars, public speaking, articles and numerous books on Fly Fishing, Hunting, Game Recipes and sporting history.

Communications
Fly Fishing Museum of the
Southern Appalachians
Inducted 2016 - Hall of Fame



Freelance Writer, Photographer and "Son of the Smokies"

For decades he has shared his passion for the sport and lifelong love affair with trout and the Smokies with others.

He has authored, co-authored, edited or served as ghost writer for more than forty books including three fly-fishing books, is Editor-at-Large for *Sporting Classics* and has held masthead positions with numerous publications.

Retired History Professor, Winthrop University, 1971-1996

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July's Enduring Joys

As I so often do in this newsletter, I'm going to take the opportunity, once again, to indulge in reminiscence and rumination. Many of you seem to share my affinity for these longing looks backward to a world which we have, sadly, in all too many ways lost. Maybe it's just my age, but it's going to take a heap of convincing to get me to admit that those simpler days and simpler ways of a half century or so ago weren't better times. I know for sure that growing up in a home without a television, with a party line phone shared by three other families, lacking a freezer, and even having a wood-burning cook stove until about the time I reached by teens was a blessing. Similarly, I don't think my character development was harmed by the occasional dose of "hickory tea," and there's no doubt that mowing grass with a push mower, hoeing endless rows of corn with Grandpa Joe, helping him slop the hogs and feed the chickens, or listening to old men tell tales at the local gathering place known as Loafer's Glory enriched my life as opposed to leaving me overworked or oppressed.

My allowance started out at a dime a week and went up to a quarter at the age of twelve, but it wasn't an automatic thing. I was expected to lay kindling and paper in the wood-burning stove each night so it would be ready to light the next day, and helping with the dishes was another "given" indoor chore. Outside Daddy saw to it that I started mowing our lawn at an early age, and Momma expected (in truth, demanded) help with the flower beds she so loved. Any extra chores, such as caddying for Daddy when he played golf on Sunday afternoons or picking blackberries when they were in season, did earn some extra pocket money.

I never had much of it but a little went a long way. Any time I had a dollar bill in my pocket I considered myself temporarily rich. After all, I could watch a fine Western matinee at the local theater on a Saturday afternoon for a dime, and for another dime buy a fountain drink and either popcorn or a candy bar. If I was especially flush with funds a quarter would allow me to go to one of several local establishments and purchase a milkshake made with real ice cream, a hamburger with all the fixings, or a warm fried pie with two scoops of ice cream. A dime would get you a double-scoop ice cream cone or a fountain drink at any of the local drug stores (there were three of them even though the town's population wasn't too much over a thousand) was a nickel. A bottled coke cost the same for my early years but in my teens it went to seven cents and then a dime.

I can't say that I was especially frugal with what little money I had, although certain goals could find me penurious for a time. Among them were saving enough money to buy a whole box of shotgun shells at the start of the fall squirrel season, putting aside enough to buy a dozen trout flies (although I must shamefacedly admit I was mighty bad to filch from Daddy's vest any time he had made a trip to the home of the local fly-tying wizards, Fred and Allene Hall, to stock up on these frauds of fur and feather). Interestingly, I never realized we as a family were comparatively poor until I went off to college. There was always plenty of food on the table, adequate clothing (and until I was well into high school being spiffily attired didn't matter to me one way or the other), and pretty much everyone I knew was in circumstances more or less similar to those of my family. Only when I went off to college and was around some students who had money, a car, and could seemingly buy something whenever the spirit moved them, did I realize my family was lower middle class. Once in a while, maybe twice a semester, I'd get a letter from Mom with two or three dollars and on rare occasions there would be a five dollar bill tucked inside. Talk about thinking I was in high cotton!

What is noteworthy about all of this is that it never troubled me in any way and I was certainly shaped by aspects of my parents' characters related to money. Both were very frugal, although Mom more so than Dad (and he never threw anything away, always figuring there would sooner or later be a use for scraps of wood, metal, or whatever). Both had grown to adulthood just as the Great Depression rocked the country, and on top of that both came from very poor families. They endowed me with a strong belief in the sanctity of hard work, the importance of watching my pennies (something I've never actually been particularly good at), making do with what you've got rather than detesting or envying those who had more, and as they might have put it, never getting above my raising.

One other thing that was really important to them was education. Daddy had realized this before he was married and did a good deal to help put two of his younger sisters through college. Mom, despite losing her mother when she was an infant and being raised by relatives in what was a traumatically peripatetic childhood, loved books

and everything about learning. Having had such a fractured childhood she also knew the value of home and when she and Daddy bought a house shortly after getting married she expressed her thoughts quite simply: "I never want to move again." Her fervent wish was fulfilled and that house is still in the family, today the home of my brother and his wife.

That home provided so many summer memories, and after wandering down side paths on family background, as I am wont to do, I'd like to resurrect some of the more meaningful of them. Here's a sampling.

- Sitting on the back porch in the evening, as the day cooled into darkness, and performing chores as a family (often with extended family being present). That might involve stringing and breaking beans, shelling field peas, peeling peaches Mom had bought for next to nothing because they were bruised or a bit past their prime, shucking and silking corn, or similar chores. Sometimes there wasn't any work but just rocking and relaxed conversation with aunts and uncles.
- Visiting my grandparents (who lived about a mile and a half away) and working in the garden with Grandpa, fishing with him in the river that ran in front of their home, or just piddling at things such as whittling, making slingshots, working on some project connected with the pig pen or the chicken house, or merely talking and rocking. Grandpa was a great teller of tales and I could listen to him for hours.
- Fishing by myself or with a buddy. From the age of twelve or so, Momma and Daddy would let me venture out to nearby Deep Creek or Indian Creek on my own, and the hours I spent there remain some of the most meaningful of my entire life.
- Occasional feasts of watermelon and, more infrequently, home-churned ice cream (see watermelon-connected recipes below).
- Wonderful meals of fresh vegetables. Dinner (and for those of you not familiar with culinary terminology in the southern Appalachians, that's eating at mid-day) was the main meal of the day. Regular items on the menu included corn on the cob or cream-style corn the mountain way (see recipe below for "fried corn," the term Momma always used); green beans, field peas, or lima beans cooked with a hefty chunk of streaked meat (also known as fatback, steak-of-lean, side meat, or salt pork); fried or stuffed squash; fried okra; sliced cucumbers (Daddy detested them and said he wouldn't eat anything a hog wouldn't touch, but he grew them to keep Momma happy); fresh tomatoes (Momma always took the time to peel the big ones, although tomytoes were just a bite-size bundle of deliciousness eaten whole); greens; cornbread; and sometimes but by no means always, a meat dish. This was usually pork chops and invariably, on Sunday, fried chicken. I doubt if Momma ever heard Bobby Bare sing "Chicken Every Sunday" but she would have appreciated the sentiments of that song's lyrics.
- Fried trout were on the menu with some regularity once I got big enough to go fishing on my own. The most common meat, however, was pieces of streaked meat fried until completely crisp. It may have been way too salty and too laden with fat to be healthy, but my gracious was it good. There would be fruit of some type, with canned apples or possibly fresh applesauce from June apples being the most common, and the normal dessert was cobbler (blackberry, apple, peach, or other fruits). Momma wasn't real big on pickles but Grandma Minnie's table always featured a variety of them such as watermelon rind pickles, bread-and-butter pickles, pickled okra, and pickled peaches.
- Supper (the evening meal) would usually be leftovers, sometimes nothing more than cornbread crumbled in cold milk, or if you were so inclined to "fix your own" there was always the option of a tomato sandwich, a fried baloney sandwich, or my favorite, a thick slab of streaked meat tucked inside a slice of cold cornbread. Occasionally Momma would make what she called "hamburger gravy" (see recipe below), and there would usually be cake, fried pies, or leftover cobbler to suit the sweet tooth. Beverages for dinner and supper were milk or ice tea infused with sprigs of mint that grew just outside the door to the porch. That mint is still there, having survived and indeed thrived for three-quarters of a century or more.

- Family picnics. We never, throughout my entire youth, went on what would be called a real vacation. Looking back, I suspect it was out of the question money-wise. However, there were family reunions (I'll be going to the current rendition of the Casada family reunion later this month) and frequent gatherings of the immediate family. Several of Daddy's siblings and their spouses lived locally, and one aunt who tragically lost her husband in an airplane crash visited with her daughter for a couple of weeks each summer. I loved those gatherings because they featured wonderful food, fellowship, and a sense of family togetherness I think is all too often missing in today's world. Sometimes they would be at the home of a family member but the ones I liked best, and they continued well into adulthood, involved driving to a picnic area in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park where you could count on it being pleasantly cool in the evening.

There was more, much more. I played lots of golf, messed around the river as a sort of river rat in training, and from the time I was about fourteen always had some type of summer job. Among the things I did were bag groceries, work on the golf course mowing fairways and dragging greens (the "greens" were actually sand and had to be smoothed with a drag on a regular basis), mow lawns, and work in gift shops and a motel in nearby Cherokee. It says a world about the time of my boyhood that I regularly thumbed to the jobs in Cherokee, which was ten miles away, although I had a ride home in the evening. Today the simple thought of a teenager thumbing would scare the bejeebers out of parents, yet never once did I fail to catch a ride to work and never once was there so much as a hint of danger. Tell me those weren't better times and I think I've got a sound argument to counter any such statement. I reckon that's enough musing for this month, so I'll finish with a sampling of recipes.

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FRIED CORN

What Momma called fried corn wasn't really fried at all although it was prepared in a frying pan. She would fry fatback in the pan she was going to use for the corn and save some of the grease. She would then introduce corn she had cut from the cob, possibly with a bit of milk if the corn had gotten a bit too big and was past roasting ear stage, and let it simmer until done. The grease from the streaked meat gave it a magical flavor, and I liked a big slice or two of tomato atop my hefty helping of corn.

WATERMELON SALAD

Most of this month's recipes come straight from Momma's kitchen, but this one is my own invention. Cube a portion of a good watermelon and remove the seeds (a good watermelon, to me, is going to have seeds and not be one of the modern sissy seedless pretenders that sacrifice taste in order to get rid of seeds). Add some torn spinach, lettuce, or arugula along with a chopped mint leaf or two and some sunflower seeds. Dress with just a bit of oil and vinegar and, if you wish, add a few thin slices of fresh pineapple.

WATERMELON RIND PICKLES

Grandma Minnie was a dedicated disciple of the "waste not, want not" school of thinking. That doubtless came from a combination of circumstances including having had a hard life from the time she was a child right through marriage and indeed to the end of her life, the responsibilities of raising a large brood of children with too few resources, living through the Great Depression when she was middle aged, and thanks to her Scotch-Irish heritage. Jim Webb's first-rate book on the role of the Scotch-Irish in American history carries the title *Born Fighting*, but the title "Born Frugal" would have been equally appropriate.

A fine example of Grandma's frugality came with watermelon rinds. Thanks to Grandpa having a passionate culinary love affair with watermelons, there were always plenty of rinds available for pickling. One of the enduring images from my childhood is going to the refrigerator at Grandma and Grandpa's home in the summer and opening the door to paradise. On the top left shelf you could always find three things that suited me to a "T." Those were a big glass jug full of water, a quart jar holding pickled peaches, and another quart jar holding

watermelon rind pickles. The water was so cold it set your teeth on edge and so sweet it was almost like liquid dessert (the town of Bryson City where I grew up has always had exceptionally fine water, and it has always come from mountain streams), while the pickles were to me a perfect between meals treat.

I don't have Grandma's watermelon rind pickles recipe, and in fact I don't ever recall her consulting any recipe card or printed material when she cooked. She cooked by pinch, dash, a "touch of this," and lengthy experience. That being said, this recipe comes close.

8 pounds watermelon rind
 1 cup pickling salt
 4 ½ cups apple cider vinegar
 6 pounds sugar
 30-40 whole cloves

Prepare the rind for pickling by cutting away the hard outer green of the rind, leaving white flesh and a quarter inch or so of pink watermelon meat. Cut the pink-and-white rind into one-inch cubes and then mix with the pickling salt in a large bowl or porcelain churn and refrigerate for at least 12 hours.

After the rinds have marinated in the pickling salt rinse thoroughly and set aside momentarily. In a large soup pot, stock pot, or stew pot mix the remaining ingredients (vinegar, sugar, and cloves) and bring to a boil, stirring constantly to be sure the sugar dissolves completely. Add the rind to the resulting brine mixture and bring back to a boil before reducing the heat to a low boil. Cook uncovered until the rind becomes translucent (20-25 minutes). If necessary, add a bit of water.

Next fill quart jars that have been washed and sterilized for canning to within a half to three-quarters of an inch of the top with the rinds and liquid (a funnel and tongs help with this process). Once the jars are full carefully wipe their edges clean then seal them with lids. Place the jars in a canner, being careful to keep them vertical at all times, and then cover with hot water to at least an inch above the jar lids. Bring the water to a rolling boil and process for five to seven minutes. Allow to cool undisturbed for several hours before checking to see that all the jars are sealed. If a jar or two fails to seal, place them in a refrigerator and eat in the next week or two. The sealed jars will last many months but pickles should be consumed within a year.

MOMMA'S FRIED CHICKEN

I'll acknowledge at the outset that try as I may I've never quite been able to match Momma's fried chicken, and I don't think anyone else has either. Grandma Minnie was a wizard in the kitchen, but when it came to frying chicken Mom had her beat. My brother Don fries first-rate chicken as well, but somehow it's never quite as succulent or melt-in-your mouth tender as Momma's was.

1 or 2 whole chickens, cut into pieces (legs, thighs, wings, and breasts) with skin left on
 1 or 2 eggs beaten
 Salt and pepper to taste
 Flour
 Cooking oil

Drench each piece in the egg wash and then coat thoroughly with flour (mix your salt and pepper in with the flour) before placing in piping hot oil in a cast iron spider. (I think cooking in cast iron makes a difference, but don't ask me to prove it.) Cook slowly until thoroughly brown.

All of this seems normal enough, but it is Mom's final step that made all the difference. Once she had all the chicken fried and placed atop paper towels to drain a bit, she would clean the cast iron skillet and put the fried chicken back in it. She would then turn the oven on at low heat (200 degrees or maybe a bit less) and put the skillet in the oven. She normally did this just before heading off to church on Sunday. After church she would pop the skillet out of the oven once she had readied the rest of the meal. I don't recommend leaving it for a couple of hours the way she did, or at least not until you figure out the right timing and temperature of the oven.

Being in the oven seemed to do two things—cook away some of the surplus grease and make the chicken so tender it almost fell from the bones and melted in your mouth. Mercy was it fine!

VENISON BURGER GRAVY

This variation on Mom's hamburger gravy is the essence of simplicity, and the only difference is that I substitute ground venison for ground beef. Incidentally, I like the gravy atop crumbled cornbread even better than over a cathead biscuit or sliced bread.

Brown ground venison in a large cast iron skillet, adding a bit of olive oil if it did not have any suet included when processed. Add flour to the meat just as the browning is completed and stir steadily while alternating adding milk and more flour until you get the desired consistency. Just remember that the gravy will thicken quickly once you remove it from the pan, and a mixture that seems a bit thin will actually be just right by the time you get it to the table.

FRIED STREAKED MEAT AND CORNBREAD

I've shared my cornbread recipe in the past and if you can't fry streaked meat you best not fool with something complicated like boiling eggs. The key to frying streaked meat is simple—fry it until the fat streaks are fully cooked and crispy. At that point it's a salt-laden, cholesterol-laced slab of pure sinful delight, and a big piece fried until it's so crisp you could crumble it with your hands and placed in a piece of cornbread will flat-out bring tears of joy to a glass eye.

STUFFED SQUASH

1 or 2 yellow crookneck squash or one small zucchini per person
 Cornbread
 Sharp cheddar cheese
 Fried bacon bits

Cook squash in oven or microwave just long enough to get them done completely through. Remove and allow to cool before scooping out the small seeds and interior flesh. Mix the scooped material with crumbled cornbread, bacon bits, and maybe a spoon full of grease from fried bacon. Stuff the squash with the cornbread mix, and top with cheddar cheese. Bake briefly in oven until the cheese melts and maybe just begins to brown. Serve piping hot. This is my favorite way to eat squash.

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