

Great Outdoor Memories Last a Lifetime

by Steve Hanning



I have been a guide and outfitter in beautiful Eastern Washington for over eighteen years. When I tell people that, they have a tendency to say, "Oh what an awesome job." Then I reply with, "It's a great weight loss program because if you buy your groceries with the profits, you don't eat a lot."

I have a story I would like to share with you.

When I was a really young I would never leave the grocery store without an Outdoor Life magazine. I wish I had known how to read then because the pictures inspired me. They turned me into a person with the burning desire to be an outdoorsman.

My dad, on the other hand, was a self-employed road builder and never really had the time to enjoy the outdoors. I learned to read the magazines and the desire to be outdoors deepened. Then I experienced something I will never forget.

My dad built the road all along the Lochsa River and we spent three summers living in an "I Love Lucy" "longest trailer" at the Lochsa Lodge in Montana. There were no dams and the salmon would run every summer. My dad would wade in the river in the deep pools and grab them, throw them to me, and I would load them in his Ford Ranchero pickup for a little company salmon bake over an open fire back at the lodge.

Then, when I was ten, I completed my Hunters

Education Class and bought my hunting license, along with every Washington Game Tag known to man. My family went on a road trip to WSU where my sisters were going to college. I had my tags and a single shot 12 gauge.

After we got there my mom said, "Well, where are the great white hunters off to today?"

My dad replied, "I think we will take the Caddy down the breaks of the Snake River and look for some birds."

As we were "looking," a gentleman stopped my dad and asked if he had a hunting license and a deer tag. He replied, "No, but I'm sure my son does."

The gentleman looked over at me and said, "Oh, he's way too little to shoot my 30-06." My dad told him to give me some shells and show me where the deer was. When we got back to the sorority my mom said, "Well, where is it?" My dad pushed the button in the glove box and the trunk opened. Low and behold, there was a nice, well-dressed buck laying in the trunk of the Caddy!

Those two experiences were quite accidental and I yearned for my dad to take me on a real well-planned trip to the outdoors. He was too busy.

In 1987 my dad passed away at the very young age of 60 years old and I lost the hunting partner I always wanted. In 1998 I started Outdoor Hunting Adventures and I have been asked several times why I started a guide service. My answer always is, "To give kids an opportunity to experience the outdoors in a game hunting scenario or at least see the animals in the environment in which they live and have to survive."

I have been on the Outdoor Channel a couple

times and when asked "why" they got the same answer. I have hunted more than any man should over the last 18 years and, fortunately, my wonderful wife of 41 years has put up with me and my burning desire. A couple of years ago I was asked again on camera why I started my guide service; only this time they also asked me what has kept me going. Something came out that I never would have expected. My heart was heavy and I started thinking about my dad and those stories I shared with you.

Then I realized "why." I said that when I take young people with their dads, moms or granddads and I watch them share together the harvesting of game or, most of the time, the missed shot at a duck or goose, it's the laughing, the "high fives" or the hugs that replace my lost hunting partner and revive my energy to get ready for the next hunt and the making of memories that will truly last a life time.

I always tell my clients that I have great hunting grounds, lots of game and great gear. I also tell them there are two things I can't control - the critters and the weather. I always tell them there are a couple of things I will guarantee: a safe experience and a great time hunting with Outdoor Hunting Adventures.

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Steven, camo-style.



Jason and his son Romeo with their wild turkey.



Matt and his son Nick on their first hunt.