

Heart of the Hunter

By Jason W. Triplett

My 10 year old son is an outdoorsman. He is quickly becoming the guy who would rather wear camo than Aeropostale, Real Tree rather than Hurley. He harvested his first doe this past youth season. Man, oh man, is he hooked. I've come to understand that in Schuyler and Adams County, Illinois, he's dialed in with some of the best White Tail hunting in the world. The kid loves nature, doesn't mind being in a tree stand and gets up with the birds. I know hunting is something he's going to do for the rest of his life; no doubt about it. But, oddly enough, his dad probably never will.

I am a city guy who married into an outdoorsy family. My brother in law and father in law are the real deal. Through them, I have come to know names like Browning, Benelli, Leupold, Cabellas and the Duck Commander (that's Phil Robertson, not Willie from *before* "Duck Dynasty"). I am the type of guy who enjoys things like Hip Hop, gourmet coffee, tech gadgetry, quoting movie lines, Music trivia, Facebook, blogging, Pop Culture, Super Heroes and Science Fiction/Fantasy.

One time, someone asked me if I minded the fact that my son is becoming ingrained in a culture that isn't a part of me. Hunting seems to be something that in families is handed down from parent to child over the generations. The question centered on the fact my kids will be tying into something that generationally doesn't come from me; but comes from their grandfather and uncle. I admit that I am outside looking in on what's happening in this part of my kids' life.

My answer is, "How could I mind?". While I don't know a duck blind from a deer blind, I appreciate the fact that my son is learning something that will serve him in enjoyment and practicality for a very long time. Until I became part of my in-laws family, I had never tasted squirrel, antelope or deer chili (all amazing by the way, if prepared correctly). I didn't know why goose decoys were so huge or that turkey's have great hearing and 360 degree vision. He's learning about all of it and he explains a lot to me. While I haven't gained "White Tail Fever", I have gained an appreciation for the art and lifestyle of being a hunter. It's more than guns and more than "being country". I've found faith, fatherhood and respect for all that nature gives us inside the lives of the hunters I've encountered. I like that.

One thing I hold onto with my son is that no matter what he learns and what interests him; I know his heart. I've committed to never let myself get far enough away from him that I cannot look at him or talk to him and know what's happening at his core. I think this is how God pursues us and how we should pursue and approach our kids. He is a loving Father who knows us intimately, from the inside-out and is never far away. Because God is the best at knowing His children, I've realized I can only maintain this commitment to know my son through my relationship with His Son.

Hunting is part of my boy's DNA, but it's not all he is. He knows Jesus and he loves his family. As much as he is a part of the "camo culture" of my in-laws, he can hold his own in my circle as well. He understands why Luke Skywalker grew up with his uncle Owen and aunt Beru instead

of with his father and mother. He knows why the “One Ring” rules them all. Tech gadgetry is a passion we share. And, thank goodness, the kid knows the difference between DC and Marvel. Did I lose you yet? Ask my son, he will explain it to you.