

Greetings from Ontario, Canada.

November is a slow month for ATA trap in Ontario and in many states and provinces. Some of our ATA friends hunt and are in duck blinds or prowling the great outdoors for game to fill their freezers. I came from a farm and hunting was a way of life to control predators or add some additional nourishment for the table. Those that oppose hunting use all sorts of arguments and tactics. On the other hand, hunters often struggle to express why, in this day and age, they do hunt.

I may have shared the following with you previously but I think it important enough to remind you how a young elementary school lad supported "hunting" in a class presentation to a teacher and classmates who for the most part knew nothing about hunting.

The "speech" went like this:

"Quack, quack, quack, quack, quack, boom, boom, boom.

Mr. Coutts and fellow classmates I have chosen to do my speech on hunting. Some of the people in this class probably think that hunting is simple. Well I have news for you. There is a lot of learning and studying to be done before you can become a licensed hunter.

I personally took the Firearms Acquisition Certificate course. This is the book that I had to read and study. I passed this course but since I am not eighteen I am not eligible for an F.A.C. which would let me own and possess guns. I was however able to get a minor's permit which allows me only to possess a gun.

I also had to take a hunting course. After a long time reading and studying this book several times I was ready for the test. I passed this test as well. I must be at least fifteen years of age before I can get a hunting license where I can hunt on my own. I cannot get my hunting license but I can get the next best thing, the hunter apprentice outdoors card. This allows me to hunt with a person who has a full hunting license. There is a catch though, as I need to be under the hunter's immediate supervision, share a gun and share game limits.

After all of the class work I was eager to hunt. My dad and I had one little problem. We had to share a gun. That meant that I would tag along and watch my dad hunt like I did when I was a youngster, or have him tag along and watch me hunt. Luckily my dad was smart enough to think ahead and got my mom to take the courses with me at the same time so she could be my mentor. We had all the angles covered and it was finally time to prove myself as a hunter and bag my first duck.

Ding, ding, ding, ding. Yes, you heard me right – only four dings. It was four o'clock in the morning and I was finally ready to hunt. It was a two-hour drive to where we were going to be hunting. I was too excited to sleep in the vehicle. We finally pulled into the driveway at the swamp. My heart was pounding. We splashed to a great location in the swamp

and were ready to hunt a half an hour before sunrise. Perfect timing. My first hunt was about to begin.

I waited in the freezing swamp water, with my teeth chattering. I tried to keep as quiet as I could. There were no ducks in sight but I knew that they were near because I could hear the whistling of their wings and the quacking from their beaks. It was almost too much excitement for anyone to control.

A small flock of three mallards came straight towards me. If they kept flying straight the ducks would be in range so I would be able to get a shot. They kept coming, I switched the safety off my gun. My mom plugged her ears. I recognized that these ducks were nothing like a clay target. They were going up, down, fast, slow, every which way. I knew what it was, "The moment of truth."

I jumped up from behind my blind and took careful aim on the lead duck. I pulled the trigger. BOOM! I held my breath. The lead duck crashed to the swamp water just ahead of my yellow lab Chester who proudly retrieved my duck. "Dinner" I thought to myself. That duck gave me the right to be called a man in the hunting community.

I love hunting not because of the studying or homework but because it is a tradition in my family. Fathers share hunting secrets and stories with their sons which get passed down from generation to generation. I think that hunting is exactly like how Charlton Heston describes it, "A boy, his dog, a gun, and the great outdoors."

Editor's note: In September 2000, Drew was 12 years old. He loves to shoot International Trap and is the 2014 Canadian International (Olympic) Trapshooting Champion. He promises to return some day to shoot ATA trap and to also do some "hunting".

Have a great fall.

Paul Shaw

Ontario Delegate