

From Generation To Generation

By Scott Warner

What are some of my most memorable experiences in life? Let's just say that the majority of this list would have something to do with my dad taking me hunting or fishing. At the time I didn't realize how important they were. But looking back, trout fishing on the South Branch in a pair of my dad's old waders that were two sizes too big, or rummaging through



Sarah Warner



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The author with son Sam after successfully reeling in a bluegill.

our hunting clothes the night before opening day quarreling over whose gloves were whose, where's the other one and who wore them last, are only a couple of endless memories I shared with my father.

The times shared with my dad always had something to do with hunting and fishing, and was a bond that would keep us close until his death a few years ago. Since my father's death, every once in awhile something as simple as the smell of fall in the air or seeing a child catch their first fish reminds me of a time when we were heading out to the woods or a stream.

Three years ago, my wife and I shared in the wonderful experience of becoming parents for the first time to a healthy baby boy named Samuel (after his granddad). So to say our lives haven't changed would be an understatement. Diapers, mid-night feedings, day care, adjusting our work schedules, colds -- we've been there. My wife would say that she's been there a little more than I have, and she would be right. But I appreciate every minute that we have with the little man.

Because of my obsession with hunting and fishing, my coworkers/friends from the Division of Natural Resources pitched in and bought us the perfect baby shower gift -- an Infant Lifetime Hunting and Fishing License -- which our son received at the ripe old age of 6 weeks. Kind of sounds like a Jeff Foxworthy joke -- if your kid gets a lifetime hunting and fishing license as a baby shower gift, you might be a Yes, you guessed it -- a father who's going to be spending a lot of time with his son.

In his first three years, my wife and I have shared the experience of taking Samuel on camping trips to several of the State Parks around the



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Author enjoying a day of fishing with his son on the family farm in Pendleton County.

state and even on a few trips fishing. These usually turned into a piggyback ride or a rock-throwing spree.

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I realize that it may be sometime before he actually learns how to fish, but we have already started to enjoy doing things together as a family

and getting him involved in the outdoors.

Will Sam and I share the same type of experience as my father and I did hunting and fishing? I hope so, but a lot of this will be up to him. There is no way of knowing what his interests may be when he gets older. I can assure you, however, that we (my wife and I, along with everyone else in the family) will provide him with plenty of opportunities to hunt and fish. That's what we do. In fact, my father-

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Author with father proudly displaying his first turkey.



Author holding fox squirrels after a day's shoot with his dad.

in-law has already started buying camouflage clothing and makes it a point to let us know he'll have to teach the little man the right way to hunt and fish -- since the rest of us are still learning how!

Today we live in a society where the time we have available to spend with our children is becoming scarcer, and some of the activities they get involved in are limited in allowing everyone in the family to participate. Working with the DNR I have had the opportunity to work with kids on all levels, from teaching them how to shoot a bow to learning how to cast a line. I constantly see kids interested in learning how to fish or hunt, but if the parent doesn't share a similar interest it won't be too long until the child will find something else to do.

This disconnect is not something new. In fact when I was younger, there were times that I would rather hang out with my friends or do my own thing than to

hang out with my dad. That's normal. But no matter what I was into, hunting and fishing were always something that kept my dad and me close. One thing that we have noticed since becoming parents is that children are constantly involved in some type of sporting activity. When a season is beginning to wind down, something else begins. Don't get me wrong, I commend the parents who have devoted any free time

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they have to participate in these programs to be with their kids, and I understand the importance of belonging to a team. In fact, I don't want to be casting any stones since we'll be doing the same thing in a few years. My point is that many of these activities do not allow the parents and children to participate

as a family, and in a noncompetitive atmosphere.

If you're not into hunting or fishing, it's difficult to explain this bond, but I have personally experienced it with driving back from college in the middle of the night just to get a little trout fishing in because I needed a fix, or having a relative who lives out of state use all their vacation time to enjoy the family tradition of deer hunting over the Thanksgiving holiday.

I can't remember ever picking up a baseball glove with my dad after high school. But I'll never forget how persistent he was and how much I looked forward to taking off a week to bow hunt with him in 1998. I am very glad that I listened because unexpectedly he passed away only a few months later. Reflecting back on these memories makes me realize how fortunate I am. I'll always remember how special these trips were and hope to share similar experiences with my son (and possibly with the daughter we're expecting in a few months).

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