

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A Time to Hunt, a Time to Ponder



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I just returned from a brown bear hunt on Kodiak Island (successful, too, I might add), during which I had time to think about hunting and the Boone and Crockett Club's

history and future. I thought about what our magazine, *Fair Chase*, means to me and to the Boone and Crockett Club membership. I chuckled as hunting tales shared in *Fair Chase* resurfaced in my memory, and realized that this is an important role for the magazine. *Fair Chase* allows us to participate vicariously on the described hunts, becoming part of our rich tradition through which we forge fraternal bonds.

During this time of transition in the land/wildlife management arena, the articles by Jack Ward Thomas, Rollie Sparrowe, and Lowell Baier, to name a few, remind me of our responsibility to stay informed and involved in the debates that affect hunting. We have a wealth of experience, knowledge, commitment, and passion in our Regular and Professional Members and Associates. Policies that influence our hunting legacy are discussed daily at Washington "power breakfasts," in caucus rooms, and at budget meet-

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ings. While we collectively consider ourselves hunter/conservationists, each of us is really part of many other segments of society. We, collectively, exhibit a broad array of interests, talents, and professions, but we are bound together by our love of wild places and wild things. Now, more than ever, the Boone and Crockett community must step up to our responsibility to insure that we pass on our hunting legacy to those who follow. We can take a step toward that goal by sharing our experiences and staying involved in the political debates that shape the future.

I remember "how it was," and not so long ago. In years past, hunting was an event that sometimes took a month or more. Now, in our busy lives, in a land of shrinking wild places, we are lucky to be able to hunt for a week. Time limitations tend to emphasize the kill rather than focus on the whole hunting experience. Hunting is more than taking of animals, however. Hunting should involve a feel for the land and the people who nurture that land and live with the animals that we pursue so diligently. Part of hunting is the experience of meeting and living with outfitters who demonstrate a commitment to fair chase and ethical hunting.

The essence of hunting should be pure enjoyment of wild spaces and wildlife – of all species. In the urban world of today we tend to forget what wild spaces really are and what they represent, ranging from clean air and water to a multitude of natural resources, to the pure "wonderment" of what remains of wild places, wild things, and our place in the natural world. While we may be able to hunt for only a week or a month, it is in those brief engagements we are, once again, part of what our ancestors were for the tens of thousands of years before we became the relatively tame creatures in a tame world that we are today.

I am often asked, "Why do you continue to hunt; haven't you hunted enough?" I answer, "I hunt because it is a critical part of who I am and always will be."

So, as we share hunting experiences, we should reflect on wild places and wild things and the forces at work to undermine our ability to pass on our culture

and heritage. The Club's founders helped assure the vast open spaces that exist in the public lands for the American people by working tirelessly and effectively within the political/bureaucratic system. We should recognize and accept what we have inherited and continue to play a pivotal role in influencing decision-makers who have responsibility for the protection and care of our wild spaces and the creatures they support.

As we think ahead a hundred years, we should concentrate on the hunting experience as a value to be retained. When privileged to be in wild country, it is well to take time to remember that it is hunters and fishermen who are primary visitors to wild places. The experience of non-consumptive users and those of hunters/fishermen tend to be quite different.

Hunters and fishermen commit license fees, other contributions, and ourselves to protection of these precious open spaces. We lay our money and our time on the line to assure the future of wild places and wild things. Non-consumptive users have not, and likely will not, step forward to that same extent.

Contrary to popular belief, the National Wildlife Refuges (which the Club was instrumental in creating) are, in most cases, enjoyed by hunters and non-hunters alike. In fact, my recent bear hunt was in a refuge. As we celebrate the 100th birthday of the National Wildlife Refuge System, we should remember that hunting is an integral part of its management.

Non-consumptive users are becoming more vocal and powerful in determining how refuges and other lands are managed. Oddly, the extreme environmental community seems to have discovered Theodore Roosevelt and Aldo Leopold, among others, and has claimed them as patron saints. Although it is heart-warming that they now realize just how much Roosevelt and his cohorts accomplished in the early days of conservation, we need to remind them that Roosevelt's conservation policy IS the legacy of the Boone and Crockett Club and that Leopold and Roosevelt were Club Members.

I hope that as we read *Fair Chase* we recognize that we are bound together by more than hunting stories and experiences. We are equally, and more importantly, bound together by the issues that bear upon our future and our grandchildren's future, as hunters who experience wild places and wild things. And, that makes all the difference. ■

