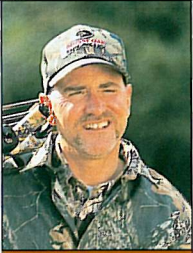


# FROM THE EDITOR



Greg Tinsley  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
Boone and Crockett Club

## Living the Dream

Sara Beth Tinsley gazed over the book she was reading, *Star in the Storm*, which appeared to be about canine heroism, to suggest a wildlife theme for my latest column in *Fair Chase*. Sara is nine

years old and has new eyeglasses that make her look like a beautiful young scientist or a slightly underage media buyer living in Chicago, the studious angel-face of a kid who has perpetually tender feelings for wildlife and domestic animals.

With my assignment assigned, Sara briskly began to multitask a cold breakfast while conducting a primitive, boiler-plate experiment where compressed, pill-shaped foam beads soaked in warm water bloom into spongy cutouts of fishes and marine mammals. Saturday morning's first culture wrought a creature she deemed a mutative mistake, but I was encouraged to offer a second opinion as she moved it towards the trashcan. It's a tiny sail or swordfish, I believe, perhaps a blue marlin, which satisfies her to no end.

She went back to her book for awhile and then to an indoor game of catch with her brother's glistening black Labrador, Cole, the duck machine. She was wearing purple silk pajamas featuring cartoon cow heads with the words "moove over." She didn't look like a hunter and, in fact, she has never hunted. She's good up close with a bow and arrows despite her dominate left eye competing with her right-handedness, and she has popped an empty soda can from 100 feet with a scoped pellet gun. The book and the dog notwithstanding, her attention was on us, so this was her suggestion for what I should write next for this issue of *Fair Chase*:

"Today it is sunny. It is an excellent day to go squirrel hunting." She prefaced that by saying that she would not shoot a baby squirrel.

Absolutely not, no babies or mothers of babies, I promised.

Rather than the single-shot .22 rifle that I accidentally fired at my Dad's heel during my first hunt, a hunt for South Carolina grey squirrels almost four decades ago, we chose a super-lightweight Ruger 10/22 with a Leupold scope. One of my dearest friends, Tim Lewis, composed the rifle for me about a year before

his sudden and excruciatingly early passing. Sara and I spoke of Tim just before we eased into a magnificent southern wetland that has been leased for hunting by another friend, Mr. Fox Haas, for more than 30 years.

Warm and happy that our camouflaged clothing had such real and special purpose, we walked east and then north, surrounding ourselves in deeper bottomland with each step. A hushed discussion was held at the first whitetail deer scrape that she'd ever seen. Then we sneaked passed the Sunrise deer stand and sat in the litter at the base of an oak to the north of it, a setting where the sound of the cold February wind carried the calls of the hawk, the crow and the wood duck to us through the switches. We sat wishin' up squirrels for probably not quite long enough before proceeding northerly down the small, soft hill to the floor of the slough.

Passed a junction of deer trails where we discussed the proper tree to hang a stand; through leaves well stirred by wild turkeys; across a narrow channel of water and among a thin veil of cane to another whitetail scrape bristling with fresh sign; to the exact spot in a vast tract of woods where my arrow had met the deer named The Sultan; west and back up the hill at a point 50 yards north of the Ivorybill deer stand; eventually staring up for a moment at the infamous Woodpecker oak before moving on again.

We really slowed our progress to study the hardwood treetops at an oak-bottom drain farther west. Sara suggested a setup just ahead against the broad base of a towering white oak, a position that we took very quietly, with Sara to my right and opposite the rifle, which I rested lightly on the leaves. I glassed a bit and helped her hood her ears before returning to the work of running the field glasses across the otherwise blank tapestry of branches.

"Dad, there's a bobcat," she whispered.

That Sara and I could match the nearly invisible short tail's smoothness and invisibility during the pulse-pounding minute that followed was pure divinity. Landing such tricks may happen only once in a good life, if ever at all. But happen it did. And after she prayed for our prize, as I brought the beautiful wildcat off the mossy log and slung it carefully over my shoulder, she looked me right in the eye and proclaimed that her prayers had been answered with an unforgettable adventure, a magical afternoon that was ours alone to share forever. ■

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