

URBAN MEETS OUTDOORS

When I first saw the headline in the Thursday Styles section of *The New York Times* (12/19/19 print version) I thought it might be a spoof. After all, could a story in the grande dame of America's urban newspapers titled, "Living in the Era of an Artisanal Ax Craze," be for real? Well, you betcha.

According to author Alexandra Marvar, this affinity for fancy axes was first championed by a graphic designer named Peter Buchanan-Smith who (earlier in his career used to work for *The New York Times*) got the chips flying in 2009 when he began selling high-quality axes with handles painted with block and stripe motifs through his Best Made Co. brand. Today, the brand's brick-and-mortar stores are in two of America's largest urban centers, New York City and Los Angeles.

This craze shows no sign of abating. Marvar points out that, during the 2019 Christmas season, the high-end department store, Nordstrom, sold out of axes. To me, the idea of Nordstrom carrying axes is akin to Cabela's selling evening gowns. Who woulda thought?

In any case, the real question is, "Why?" Why are young men and women with urban lifestyles buying a traditional outdoor tool that in many ways is the antithesis of today's high-tech, digital product?

Craig Roost, a tool designer at Council Tool Co., an American ax-making company founded in 1886, notes that, "Just because so many people live in cities doesn't mean our internal desire to get out into the wilderness has been completely bred out of [us]." Amen.

I also believe that many younger urban Americans, even though they likely did not grow up swinging an ax, naturally and intuitively view a well-made ax as a tool that is, at its core, authentic, something they can own and use with pride.

I also believe, that many younger urban Americans, even though they likely did not grow up with a rifle in hand, instinctively view hunting, in its traditional and Fair Chase context, as authentic, something in which they may not currently participate but nonetheless see as credible and legitimate.

Unfortunately, far too many young urbanites now believe that big game hunting involves captive-raised animals that are "set out" for so-called "hunters" to kill. Absent an opposing view, this may become the de facto



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perception. In essence, the counterfeit may replace the genuine article.

Here at the Club and within *Fair Chase*, we're taking a hard look at some initiatives that can help set the record straight on hunting. And you can be sure that we'll be reaching out to you, our supporters and readers.

Let's make it a point to get a young non-hunter out into the field with us. Sure, they'll have a lot to learn, but these days they'll likely already be a natural around the kindling pile.

Hope to see you down the trail. ■

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