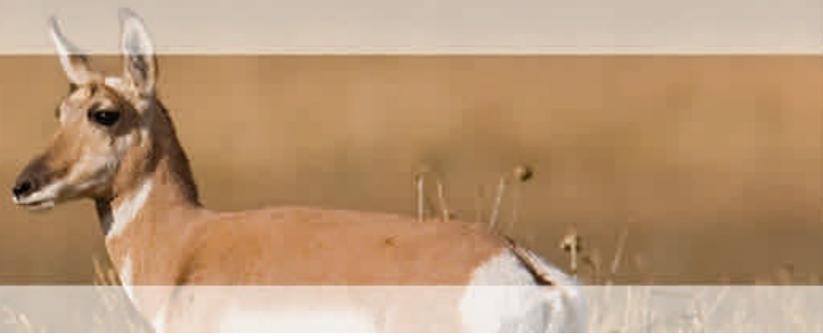


ESSAY CONTEST



Taylor Talley
Junior Division Lady

Grade: 8 Age: 14

Sharing the Heritage

As we walked in the dark to our blind I could feel the cool crispness of the early spring morning through my face mask. Quietly we slipped into our blind, set up the shotgun stand and shotgun, and sat in wait for sunrise. The morning sun climbed up over the horizon, determined to make itself be seen. As it made its climb higher, little by little, the clouds were turned a rainbow of fiery colors by the sun's kiss. Its warming rays reflected off the tall browning grass making it appear to be long slender fingers trying to

grasp just a little more of the sun's rays. The birds, after having their wings warmed by glowing rays, started their morning salute to this beautiful sight. As we took in the breathtaking sight of nature beginning a new day, a brilliant red head rose up over the golden grass and started toward us.

It was the beginning of the season. The morning started out slow and chilled. My dad and I were both excited for my first turkey hunt, that I was old enough to shoot a turkey. I had gone with my dad when I was five or six, but I couldn't stop laughing at the sound of the call.

We had parked the truck behind some trees, a good distance from the blind. Once we got set up, dad had me look through the scope a few more times to make sure it was working. The scope was working fine. About a week before our hunt dad had gotten a new scope, electronic with a red circle in the middle of the

scope in place of cross hairs. His normal calm demeanor was replaced with a hint of giddiness.

After sitting and waiting in the blind for almost two hours, listening for the occasional gobble, we were looking out over the open field when we saw him. His brilliant red head rose up over the golden grass and started toward us and our decoys. When he came in he had his head up to see over the tall grass, but once he spotted the decoys he went into full strut. With the sunlight reflecting off of them, his feathers were iridescent, changing from copper to green to purple with so much of a tilt of his fan.

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We watched in amazement as he strutted around the small circle of decoys. He stopped about twenty yards from us to investigate the Jake decoy. I pull the shotgun even with him and aimed at his redhead. However, as I looked through the scope, I couldn't find the red circle. It was gone. I whispered to my dad that I didn't know what was going on with the scope, and he made several attempts to fix it without alerting the Tom. When it still wasn't working he told me to put the Tom in the middle of the scope, which wasn't difficult since he took up the entire space. Once I had him centered in the scope, I slowly pulled the trigger. BAM! When I shot him he jumped up, started to run away, wheeled around, and ran toward the Jake decoy! He thought the decoy had attached him, and was coming back for revenge! Right as he was about to spur the poor Jake to shreds, I got the scope centered on his head and pulled the trigger again. This time when I shot he didn't run; instead, he sank to the ground in a flopping flurry of feathers, wings, and sharp spurs. As soon as I saw that my shot had been true I handed the shotgun to my dad and ran out the back of the blind over to my prize Tom. Just like my dad had told me to do, I placed my boot on the turkey's

neck and pressed down hard. As I pressed my boot down and tried to avoid flapping wings and slicing spurs, I looked at the blind to see a huge smile full of pride on my dad's face.

That was last year, and it is one of my most prized and favored memories in my possession. I hope to make many more like it, just with a slightly different hunting technique. When I talk to my friends it amazes me that none of them have ever shot a bow or had the opportunity to participate in hunting or archery. I remember making my first bullseye with my bow and the confidence that it gave me. Because of my dad and granddad exposing me to this amazing sport and helping me practice and get better, my confidence has boosted in incredible ways.

Now, when turkey season rolls around my goal for this year will be to get one with my bow. My dad started when he was in eighth grade, the grade I'm in now. My grandfather did not shoot a bow when my father started the sport of archery; therefore, he was self-taught. I consider myself very fortunate that my dad is there and willing to support and teach me to shoot with a bow. Ever since I started shooting a bow, archery has been a big part of my life and will continue to be. I hope that I will

be able to pass this amazing sport down to my children and grandchildren.



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