

FISHERMEN'S VOICE

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News & Comment for and by the Fishermen of Maine

FREE

Getting Ready

Sunday. Leaving early Monday for North Country. Worked at one thing or another all week. Packin', gettin' ready had taken a back seat. Tried to forget about it. AJ'd done her part with menu and food buying. Her Rucksack was sitting by the door, 28ga double snugged in case propped over.

"Okay, Wilbur," she says, "better get a leg on or we'll be pulling out of here tomorrow with half your gear still in the closet."

"Right Dear, be back in a bit, I'm headed for the garage now."

Wasn't going to be easy. Garage apartment had flooded early summer and everything stored in garage below was now in boxes. None marked. Luckily most of my hunting gear had stayed in one area and guns were cased in the closet though they'd need to be checked.

First order of battle was locating the brown ash packbasket; one AJ had given me for Christmas some years ago. Just the right size. Handmade. Guy we'd met at a common ground fair in Unity. Explained the whole process from finding the right tree to separating the wood and weaving the basket. Somehow AJ had later talked him out of his own personal packbasket so she'd have one in time for Christmas. Could then go into hunting camp, head up, not lugging canvas totes.

Found the rain jacket in the third carton amongst flyfishing vests. Brought back memories of two years previous when rain was so heavy we'd had to ditch off the parking area around camp just to get the vehicles out. Lot of cribbage and cards that year. What clearing time we had was quite soggy and bird recovery became a technical foray.

One carton held seven blaze orange hats and four cheapy vests. All bought on various trips when one or another or both had been forgotten. In same carton was a plastic container with Dad's knives. Collected some of the best. Enjoyed good steel and demanded a sharp edge. Then in retirement he'd begun making his own from files or spring steel. Carved handles from exotic woods. I inherited collecting and hoarding from him but after awhile gets to be just a bit ridiculous. Only have hands enough for one tool at a time.

Hunting jacket hangs in the closet. Feathers still dribbling out of the game pocket. Never have washed the blood spots. Probably never will. Father's old jackets hanging alongside look worn and faded. I'd guess Mother must have gotten hold of them after a few trips and had her way with them in the wash machine. Never could say he'd just fallen out of the L.L. Bean catalog. Dad was happiest out of his doctor office with a gun or fly rod in hand.

Surviving ammunition was stacked neatly in two large boxes. Most of the cardboard shotgun shells had swollen from water and been thrown away. Might as well. Lead has seen its day. 10, 12, 16, 20 and 28ga. No 410's. This was the year I wanted a lightweight gun to pamper right shoulder after a muscle tear this spring. Have to buy a new box. Make a note or I'll forget.

Boots. Low boots, packs, high boots, waders, all piled in the corner. Sort through. Try to remember if the rubber packs were leakless. Lot of water in the woods this year. Leather and rubber packs to take along. Should pretty much cover most contingencies though could envision dropping a bird over swamp area when waders would feel good but won't get out there.

Finally, back to the lake, I pull the 20, 28 and 410 out of the closet. Unsheath the 20 ga my Uncle Skip had given me. One with the embarrassing scratch on the forestock. Bad trip on hidden barb wire. Thought I'd be headed for the gunsmith after that one. Lucky with just the scratch and bruised wrist. Cleaned and oiled all three again. We'd have a backup if one malfunctioned. Packed the van and by noon next day we'd cleared the "last minutes" and "forgottens" and headed north. Ten miles out and we're headed back. AJ's combo license was still on my desk.

Quote of the week: "Just think what God could have done if only he'd had money." T. Mulherin.

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For the last night feed at Shin Pond this year, Shelley made venison chili and venison sausage lasagna. Work of art and 6-and-a-half months pregnant to boot.

Shelley's Hunting Camp Venison Chili

3 lbs. venison (stew meat)	3 cloves garlic chopped
6 cans assorted beans (drained), save liquid	1 1/2 tablespoons cumin
1 green and 1 red chopped pepper	Black pepper
1 large onion chopped	1 can corn
2 cans diced tomatoes (garlic and onion variety)	Glug of beer and whiskey
3 fresh tomatoes diced	

Brown meat in beer. Put everything in pot to simmer. Add bean juice as needed. Simmer 6-8 hours or overnight. Good duty for a large crockpot. Half hour before serving add glug of good whiskey.

Fair winds and good roads.

Lee S. Wilbur