



Tayton Weeter, 8-years-old, likes hunting just about anything with his dad, Tracy. — Photo courtesy of Linda Schneider

Kansas families joys of outdoors

By Linda Schneider

*Bird City Times
dublinls@hotmail.com*

Everyone has their favorite season of the year. For some it is springtime, others summer, autumn and even a few enjoy the cold days of winter. But there is a fifth season that will bring even the most hard-core couch potatoes out on a chilly mornings to sit high up in a tree or lay on the cold, hard ground. It's hunting season.

Northwest Kansas has hunting and lots of it, with miles and miles of open fields of wheat, milo, corn and other tasty grains making the area an ideal place for game. Many pheasant, dove, wild turkey and mule deer have made their way to the family's dinner table.

Within the hunting community there is a motto, "The family that hunts together, stays together." Even trying to remember the first in the line of ancestral hunters can be difficult.

Tracy Weeter of Bird City, in Cheyenne County, said he began taking his son, Tayton, now 8, hunting when he was just a year old. He has photos of Tayton holding up a pheasant while sitting in his car seat.

"Tayton has never had any fear of game," Weeter said.

Like many in hunting families, Weeter said, he was 10 when he began hunting with his

father, Jim Weeter of Goodland. Together they would scout the fields between Sharon Springs and Bird City carrying a shotgun and looking for their favorite game, — deer and pheasant. Now, Tracy is passing on his love for the hunt to his son.

Tayton enjoys the time he spends with his dad sneaking up on game, scouting out trails and figuring animals' eating patterns, his dad said. To do this, sometimes the father-and-son team use motion-activated cameras and set out corn in hopes of locating game.

When they spot game, he said, both have to remain motionless in hopes of the animal moving in closer for a better shot. Dressed in camouflage, they wait unseen by the animal.

Tracy has also taken his 7-year-old daughter, Taighe, deer hunting. She said she enjoys the waiting for game in the camouflage tent and the quietness.

Tayton uses a .22-calibre rifle for small game and a .243 for deer hunting. Tracy has hunted with a bow and got his first deer last fall. Both like to hunt dove, pheasant, deer and coyotes.

When hunting season opens in the northwest corner of Kansas each fall, it is the time for families to have some quality time together. Relatives who live outside of the area will make plans with those who still live here. Such is the

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enjoy sharing hunting together

case of the Antholz family in McDonald, in Rawlins County.

What would hunting season be without having that opening-day breakfast at Gilbert and Jan Antholz's home and serving as many as 12 hungry hunters?

"During hunting season, family comes out of the woodwork," said Jan.

When you talk about the history of hunting in the Antholz family, the stories get lively with antidotes and "first" times.

Gilbert Antholz recalls that his first shotgun was a .410, but after he married Jan, there was not much hunting for a while. His son Hal, was one of the first to attend a hunter safety class and get his license in July 1967, during his middle-school years. By the time Hal's son, Cort, took the hunter safety class in second grade, it was his second time. The first time was with his mother, Becky (Miller), when he was just a baby. Hal had told her if she did not take the class, she would have to stay home with the children while everyone else went hunting.

Cort, now married to Megan, said he made it understood while they were still dating that he liked to hunt and fish.

Cristi Antholz, the only girl in Hal and Becky's family, attended the hunting safety class in the fifth grade. A memorable hunting

moment for her was during a hunt when the wind was blowing 50 mph. As the group was moving along, she happened upon a large deer lying low in the grass with only his rack showing. She said she was upwind and, the deer was unaware of her. He made a nice trophy.

Christopher, C.J., 11 years old the youngest of Hal Antholz's family, is already seasoned in the safety rules of hunting. His favorite gun is his Remington 870, 20-gauge shotgun.

"The safety rule with any gun is having the barrel always pointed upward when walking with it," said C.J.

The Antholzs have hunting partners who go for just the excitement of the hunt — their hunting dogs. The oldest is a black lab named Ashley, now 8. Boomer, a yellow lab, is 5. C.J. recently began the training of his own dog, an English Spaniel named Macy.

"When the dogs sense game, they get real excited," Hal said. "Then we get real excited."

Hal and his family have hunted most water fowl and the other Kansas birds, especially turkey, pheasant and dove. Also in their sights are the abundant deer.

As with all hunting families, said Hal Antholz gun safety is their most important rule, with the second almost equally important: "You shoot it, you clean it."



Every member of the Hal Antholz family, McDonald, hunt. Caught before a hunt are (l to r) Gilbert Antholz, Hal/black lab, Ashley; Cort Antholz, and Cristi Antholz, holding Boomer. Kneeling is CJ Antholz with the newest hunting dog, an English Springer named Macy. — Photo by Linda Schneider/Bird City Times

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