

## PASS IT ON

David McNeal



*Dad and Me*

The thought occurred to me that from time to time I need to say something about passing on these traditions many of us have enjoyed all our lives. My own father wasn't much of a hunter but he sure loved to fish and as soon as I was old enough around nine or ten I was invited to tag along on one of his expeditions. I can still summon up as if it were only a few days ago that first fishing trip with my father. Waking up (for the first time) before daylight; smelling the aroma of fresh coffee mixed with those of bacon and eggs frying in the pan.

Dad is a life long fisherman and every chance he got (when he was younger) he spent on a river bank or lake somewhere and being invited to go with him meant that I was coming of age. That first morning we headed for one of the many inlets that fed off Mobile Bay and carried what Dad called brackish water (part salt and part fresh) which meant that you might just catch a Largemouth Bass as well as salt water Spotted (Speckled) Trout. Pop had a friend who had a crafted eighteen foot wooden boat he had constructed from scratch and it was plenty big enough to hold two grown men and one small boy.

We didn't catch any bass or trout that morning but we did get into a school of Mullet (the chicken of the bay). Dad hung into a nice two pounder and without a word just handed me the pole. For a nine year old that fish seem like he was twenty pounds and he dang near pulled me out of the boat. I believe he would have to if Dad hadn't come to my aid by lending one of his strong; weathered hands. The thrill of that struggle and the fight in that fish lives in me today and remains like a timeless; priceless pearl. It is a gift from a father to his son; one that can never be taken away.

My love for hunting and those experiences would come later but I can tell you without reservations that my love and appreciation of the outdoors was born that morning in that brackish Alabama backwater.

Thanks Dad for that first fishing trip all those years ago and the many others that followed it. Thank you, for a lifetime of priceless; precious, memories. I have tried to pass it on.