

'ROUND THE CAMPFIRE

Inner Peace Through the Great Outdoors

By Eric Badofsky

Two years ago, when my son Ben bagged his first whitewing dove at the age of 9, I felt confident it would be the first in a virtually endless succession of rewarding outdoor adventures. That confidence was grounded in a conviction most parents take for granted—their child's continued good health.

Unfortunately, there are thousands of American families who share our love of the outdoors, but who can't share the assumption of robust health. They're families with a child suffering from a terminal illness or a wrenching disability that, tragically, will rob them of their lives before they reach adulthood. Like Ben, these kids harbor a passion for outdoor adventure; but unlike Ben their dreams may never be fulfilled.

Fulfilling those dreams has become the mission of the United Special Sportsmen Alliance, a grassroots, all-volunteer organization based in Pittsville, Wisconsin. Through the USSA's Outdoor Adventures program and its team of volunteers, the Alliance has placed hundreds of deserving youngsters on dream hunting and fishing trips. This year, we're determined to arrange 600.

You can help in four ways:

If you know of a seriously ill or disabled child who dreams of a hunting or fishing trip of a lifetime, have his (or her) parents contact us and we will do everything we possibly can to fulfill the child's wish.

If you own a shooting preserve or hunting or fishing lodge, donate a trip

Guest Column

Got something to share with *TSJ* readers? A special fishing trip? A hunt? An old family legend? Submit your story to editor Mark McDonald at markmcd@ktc.com.

to one of the children. We will work hard to match appropriate children to your donation.

If you have any gently used hunting or angling gear collecting dust in the attic, consider donating your equipment to the USSA. Many of our children come from homes whose financial resources have been drained by medical bills,

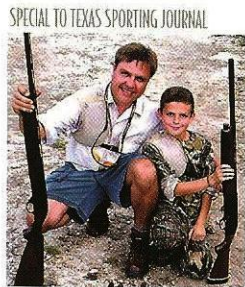
ongoing treatments and therapy. A rod/reel or a hunting vest—even a fishing patch—often become treasured mementos.

Make a small financial contribution. Annual USSA memberships start at just \$25, and you can enroll online at www.ChildsWish.com. The United Special Sportsmen Alliance is an all-volunteer, 501(C)(3) charity headquartered at 7864 Shotwell Road, Pittsville, WI 54466. For information or to make a donation, call (800) 518-8019.

Act now. With these children, there is little time

left to defer dreams that can come true with the help of your kindness and compassion. •

Eric Badofsky is an advertising and marketing consultant specializing in the hunting, fishing and outdoor industries. He can be reached via e-mail at badland4@earthlink.net.



Special to *TEXAS SPORTING JOURNAL*
Guest columnist Eric Badofsky and his son Ben, 9, savor a recent dove hunt together. For families with terminally ill or disabled children, these moments are all too rare.

Bouquets

My old pal of 40-odd years, Rhodes Baker, gave me a subscription to *TSJ* for my birthday and I just got my first copy with his story about his mother-in-law. I enjoyed the story and also the rest of the magazine. Very well done and I'm looking forward to more issues to come.

—Webb Wallace

*(Editor's note: In his *TSJ* debut, contributing writer Rhodes Baker showed a command of the language. Turns out, he also has a flair for gift-giving.)*

You have a beautiful magazine. The color of your pictures is second to none.

—Allegra Wechsler Lowitt, Bedford, MA

TSJ is so much fun to read, I wish it came out once a month. I really enjoy the adventure stories.

—R.B. Wilson, Dallas

Barbs

Hey, you guys wake up! There's a whole universe of bowhunters out here. You're missing the boat.

—Billy Wayne Johnson, Tyler, TX

To comment about *TEXAS SPORTING JOURNAL*, please email editor Mark McDonald at markmcd@ktc.com.

Or you can write:

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