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# Outside the box

I recently met up with our managing editor, Justin Tubbs, to catch up on things in general. Justin is a fine young man with a growing outdoor spirit, as well as an accomplished writer. Justin explained to me how much he likes it when a writer reaches “outside the box,” to show an inner side to the readers.

Thinking about this long after our get together, I concluded that I don't have a box. If I did have a box, it would probably be in the garage loaded up with hunting stuff. Because of a lack of general organization, most of my stuff is scattered around in a haphazard style.

Perhaps the box Justin was referring to is one of a thought process? My wife of many years tells everyone that, "He does not own an unexpressed thought," when describing my conduct in social situations.

Still in all, Thanksgiving gets me thinking and reflecting, and I will make an attempt to go outside of the box and share some of my philosophy. I am truly grateful for all things outdoors, and the health and stamina to go out and enjoy them (not to mention a wife who not only encourages, but funds the excursions.)

Recently, a friend of the family asked me, "Why do you travel everywhere and hunt? You spend every hour of every day doing something outdoors, and I just wonder why?"

The answer goes back to my youth. As a child, I had the attention span of a monkey chewing on the end of a fly swatter. My grandmother, who raised me, was thoroughly convinced that I would not grow up to be anything more than a burden to society. She knew I was an adventurer, but she saw no career options for an adventurer.

Nothing could hold



my attention, especially school. The only thing that would excite me, and hold my attention, was the great outdoors. At 16, I spent every minute of every day hunting, fishing, camping, hiking and generally practicing woodcraft and outdoor survival. I saw no reason to change and never wanted to get any older.

By the time I was 30, I had acquired a wife, kids, house, mortgage, taxes, "the full catastrophe," as Zorba the Greek once said. It was during those years that I did almost nothing outdoors. Time did not allow it.

Eventually, as the kids grew up, I went back to my outdoors and reconnected with the lifestyle. We sold off the businesses, called it quits from the past life careers and came back to Colorado. Once here again, I vowed to never go back to the past life.

I have been to Chantry Inlet on the Arctic coast of Canada, and stayed up all night watching the Northern Lights with a friend who is long gone. Recently, I travelled to South America where I spent many an hour looking at the Crux, or Southern Cross, and the way the Southern Milky Way illuminates the cross. Something tells me that my friend who went on that hunt with me won't make another one because of health issues.

Hunting and fishing, like so many outdoor sports, are a sport based on expectations. The very best hunters and fishers persons are those who “expect” at any moment, the world’s largest bull elk is going to pop into view, or the 200 pound tarpon is going to climb up from the depths and inhale your hand-tied fly. Would it not be fantastic to be able to live all of your life with those kinds of intense expectations?

For my personal outdoor philosophy, all outdoor sports are primarily the enjoyment of just “being there.” Being there in the moment, with friends, mountains, waters, views and experiences. Just being there.

The outdoors has taught me the real joy of a trip is the planning stage. This is when all the looking forward to the trip is. Anticipation is almost as much fun as the trip itself. After the trip, you have the memories. Memories of campfires, game, fish, sunrises, old friends ... you get the idea.

As I write this, I am watching the sun come up over the Black Canyon. That sunrise over there is tomorrow. Later, I will watch the sun drop down behind the Plateau. The sunset is yesterday, and hopefully I will be reflecting on a day spent outdoors.

My 60th birthday is far back in the rearview mirror. I have no idea why I went from 16 to 60. Most people have birthdays in between, to sort of spread out the years. Perhaps the years did trickle by one at a time and I just was not paying attention, as my grandmother always told me.

It is amusing to think that I have spent so many years in maximum outdoor enjoyment mode, especially when you look at my collection of scars. Scars are the medals that life hands out for participation in the outdoor sports. My attendance has been perfect; I have never been truant. A long life spent in the outdoors is preceded by a lot of close calls.

Hunting around the world, from safari fly camps; lodges and tent camps have given our retirement finances a double hernia. I am thankful for a wonderful spouse who helps finance these adventures. In recent years, as time is now finally giving us the chance, she is going with me. Her accompanying me is something I have looked forward to for many years (again, the planning stage of an adventure).

I see things differently than most people. Two of us can take a trip together, come back and tell the story, with completely different versions. Almost like we were not on the same trip. It is just that I see things outdoors differently than most people.

Maybe my grandmother was right about my attention span. I know that my wife certainly agrees with her general assessment of me. But I would not change a thing, even if I could. I love the outdoors and the people who enjoy it with me. I wish all of you a Happy Thanksgiving, and hope you have much to be thankful for. Now if you will excuse me, I have to go look for that box so I can get back in it.

*Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email [info@mcspi.org](mailto:info@mcspi.org)*

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