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## Hunting in Maine

Elizabeth Tibbetts

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HUNTING IN MAINE

by

Elizabeth Tibbetts

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors  
(Psychology)

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## ABSTRACT

Hunting remains a common practice for many people in the state of Maine. While the stories and traditions held by hunters differ from person to person and family to family. There are commonalities that aid in building the sense of community between hunters in the state of Maine. This hunting community is strengthened through the sharing of stories and the common traditions shared by many. These communities remain strong even as the Maine landscape and hunting legislation changes over time. Here a number of questions regarding hunting are explored through the lens of one family spanning multiple generations through oral interviews. This thesis analyzes the stories and interviews of this family to find commonalities in the hunting community and answer important questions like “why do we hunt?”

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### A: Background

Hunting camp was always one of the most exciting places I got to go every year as a child. A large number of my family members used to gather at my grandparents' hunting camp in Weld, Maine, every year during hunting season. During this time at camp, the hunters in my family would go off for the day returning briefly for lunch and then again for dinner while the non-hunters and those too young to hunt would don their blaze orange and explore the woods surrounding camp or play board games. When the "kids," as my grandparents like to call us, got older, hunting camp stopped happening on a regular basis. Hunters in my family continue to make time to get out there and look for game.

Hunting is an activity that is widely practiced by those who live in Maine and across the country. It is an activity that I have grown up surrounded by my entire life, even after the trips to camp ended. My grandparents hunt, my parents and uncles hunt, and a number of my cousins hunt. As a child enjoying my time at hunting camp I never asked the question: why do we hunt? It's possible I already had some type of answer to that question in my young mind that made sense and also equally possible that I just simply didn't care. Hunting was what my relatives did while I was left to play games with my cousins and climb on all the big rocks around camp; it didn't matter to me where the hunters had gone or why just that my Grampy would make his famous meatloaf for lunch and I'd get to sleep in the spooky cabin at camp. As I've gotten older, I've begun to wonder, why do we hunt? From an evolutionary standpoint, and a survival standpoint I

can understand why people hunt. I've never been interested in hunting myself and a part of me has always wondered; is hunting just about the food and survival aspect? Or is there something more to it? Sports hunters are obviously after their trophy but are those really the only two reasons why people choose to hunt; for food or a trophy that shows off how good they are at hunting?

As a child who grew up going to hunting camp every year with numerous avid hunters in our family, I'm sure some would be shocked to know that I went hunting for the first time in 2022 as a 21-year-old. Even then I didn't carry a gun; I just followed my mother to the blind where she sat for hours waiting for a deer and sat there with her. My older sister has never gone hunting and I would be shocked if she ever did end up going hunting. Even with all the exposure to hunting and the countless hunting stories we heard growing up my sister and I never developed an interest in being hunters ourselves. This is part of the reason why I have become so interested in the question of why people hunt. Usually, it's said that people are products of their environments but in a big pro-hunting environment neither of us have ever shown interest; what about hunting is keeping us away? Could that question also be answered in the answer to the question of why we hunt? In creating this thesis I finally had a chance to get to the bottom of these questions and discover why my relatives enjoyed hunting and wanted to do it in the first place.

## B: Overview

This paper aims to answer the question of "why do we hunt?" Through looking at my own family's answers to that specific question and a series of questions about their hunting practices and relationships to other hunters, hunting tools, and the landscapes in which they do their hunting. Throughout my research I was confronted with countless

stories my family members had never shared with me before and some stories my family members had never shared with anyone before. These stories simultaneously aid in answering the question of “why we hunt” and creating a sense of community between the hunters sharing them. This thesis will aim to understand why my family has chosen to hunt, how their stories build their community, and how different stories touch upon the same themes and traditions. This paper will discuss broad topics and themes like thier first gun, first deer, favorite hunting memories, how hunting in Maine has changed over time, and the traditions associated with hunting in my family.

### C: Methods

To complete this study I interviewed five of my family members, my papa, my grandmother, my uncle, my stepfather, and my dad. To conduct these interviews I first had to schedule an interview time with my family while I was home during breaks and on weekends; to talk with them in person. Each interview lasted roughly an hour and was recorded on my phone using the Anchor Podcast app, now called the Podcasters app. At the very beginning of each interview, I asked the interviewee if I could record our interview and they all said yes. After asking this first preliminary question I moved on to ask these questions:

#### General

- What’s your name?
- What’s your birthday?
- Where did you grow up?

#### Hunting

- When was the first time you went hunting?
  - Who did you go with?
  - Where did you go?
  - What were you hunting for?
- Can you tell me about the first time you ever got something while hunting?



- Why do you hunt?
- What do you enjoy most about hunting?
- What's your favorite thing to hunt?
- Where do you do the majority of your hunting?
- When did you get your first gun?
- Have you ever hunted with something other than a gun?
- What's your least favorite thing to hunt?
- Do you have any pre or post hunting routines that you do everytime you go hunting?
- Have you ever hunted for a reason other than to get food, like for protection or for another reason? If so, what were you hunting for and why?
- What's your favorite hunting memory?
- Are there specific people you enjoy hunting with?

#### Camp

- When did you start going to camp?
- How often did you go to camp?
- What did you do at camp?
- Was it a hunting camp or just a vacation camp?
- Where is your camp located?
- What's your favorite camp memory?

To create my questions and learn the best practices for interviewing people and conducting recorded interviews I utilized the books *Fieldwork* by Bruce Jackson and *The Tape Recorded Interview: A Manual for Field Workers in Folklore and Oral History* by Edward D. Ives (Jackson, B. (1987).; & Ives, E. D. (1980).). Not all answers to every question will be included in this paper. I had originally planned to discuss hunting camps as well as hunting but received far less information about them than I had originally believed I would receive. Some of the stories my papa tells do take place at camp so those answers will be included in the paper but for the most part those questions are not important to the specific purpose of this paper. I had also originally planned to interview my mother for this paper but due to busy schedules and distractions, we never got around to it. Instead of an in-person recorded interview, my mother wrote out her responses to my interview questions and emailed them to me.

In order to create this paper I had to transcribe these interviews. I re-listened to the interviews and wrote down everything that was said during them; pausing when I needed to catch up with writing as people were speaking too fast and rewinding when I couldn't really understand things to help get a better idea of what was said. After transcribing these interviews I got to work going through them and categorizing the stories they told and questions they answered into the topics that make up the chapters and sections of this paper; "my first gun," "first deer," "favorite hunting memory", "hunting stories", "traditions and teaching", "why we hunt", "us vs them", "the times are changing", and "less than legal." Some of the stories told could easily fit into more than one of the categories presented and in that case, I attempted to choose the category that fit the story the best.

For clarity I have cleaned up some of the interview transcriptions; removing words that were said multiple times while people were thinking and words like "ahh" and "umm", unless they felt crucial to the conversation itself. The only things I have added to the interview transcriptions are parentheses containing clarifying information; for example "Steve (his uncle)". Other than these few acts to make the conversation easier to read, everything that was said by my family members has remained the same to allow the reader to experience their exact feelings relating to the question asked. As you'll see in this paper the interview sections are put in many places between the text. Each interviewee has a letter, or letters, attached to their name so readers can know who is being interviewed in that section. The family members I interviewed will be better introduced in the next section but the L you will see frequently is for the interviewer Liz, that's me asking all these questions and responding to the answers. The T is for Tom (my

papa), the G is for Gordeen (my grandmother), the C is for my Uncle Chip, the R is for Rick (my dad), the CL is for Chelsie (my mother), and the M is for Mark (my stepfather). Throughout the entire paper, you will be able to know who is who by the letters connected to their names except for in one section.

The “Less than Legal” section is the only piece of this text that will not directly tell you who is saying what. This section will discuss the illegal activities that some of my family members may have gotten up to in their time hunting and in an effort to protect them from legal harm while still being able to share their stories; this section will be anonymous. The only names that will be mentioned are my great-grandfather and grandfather (Charlie); who have since passed and are free from any legal consequences for that reason. My Uncle Chip and my mother will also be mentioned as they do not discuss committing any illegal acts and instead discuss the ethics of hunting and sharing deer tags. The names of others doing illegal things will be changed in the transcriptions for their protection unless they have passed. For these transcriptions, L will still be for Liz but the interviewee will be denoted as A regardless of who is telling me the story so as to further protect those that were willing enough to share their less than legal activity with me for this project. Some transcriptions have also been altered extra to remove the identities of anyone being discussed unless they have since passed.

#### D: Key Players

T is for Thomas H. Skolfield, usually called Tom, born on February 25th, 1949 in Rumford, Maine, and raised in Weld Maine. He is my papa, my grandmother's second husband. Tom went to college for forestry and worked for the Maine State Park Service for 44 years before retiring and moving back to Weld. Throughout his life he has spent

countless hours outside working, hunting, and simply just enjoying all that nature has to offer. He went hunting for the first time at 8 years old with his father and went hunting for the first time on his own at 11 years old. He has done the majority of his hunting in the Weld area around his home and camp and also up north in the Allagash. He participates in both deer hunting and upland bird hunting. He and my grandmother had a chocolate lab named Sabel who they trained to bird hunt and hunted with for many years before her passing.

G is for Gordeen Trumble Skolfield, my grandmother, born on August 26th, 1953 in Portland, Maine. While growing up she moved around a bit because her father was a marine. Her family returned to Maine when she was about 6 years old and moved around the state; living in five different places until she got to the fifth grade. From fifth grade until she was a Sophomore in high school she lived in Gorham. She moved back to Windham after her grandmother passed; where she remained until she graduated from high school. She was married first to my grandfather Charlie, who she had two children with; my mother and Uncle Chip. She later married my papa Tom, who also had two children of his own from a previous marriage. She worked for the Maine State Park Service for 28 years. She continues to spend as much time as she can enjoying the outdoors whether she's hunting or just simply out on a walk along the trails behind her home in Weld; where she moved with my papa after retiring. She has done the majority of her hunting in Weld around her home, camp, and in the Allagash. She participates in upland bird hunting and deer hunting.

C is for Charles Noble Jr., always called Chip, he is my uncle. He was born on June 6th, 1975, and grew up in Gorham, Maine. He began bird hunting at the age of 18

with my grammy and papa in the Eustis/Stratton area on weekends and breaks when he was home from Bates College. He later began to go bird hunting in the Allagash with my grandparents and began deer hunting soon after that. He participates in deer hunting and upland bird hunting. He raised and trained a bird dog named Beezy for 16 years before she had to be put down, she was a yellow lab. He is now in the process of training a new yellow lab named Sprout to bird hunt with him and his daughter Abby who is turning 14 in June. He also has a daughter named Emma who just turned 11.

R is for Rick Tibbetts, my dad, born on March 4th, 1972. He grew up on a farm in Gray, Maine where he has done the majority of his hunting; he also does a significant amount of hunting in New Gloucester Maine. He began hunting when he was 10 years old and for many years when he was younger, he and his family would hunt on their camp property in Norway. He is a deer hunter but also an avid fisherman. He now hunts frequently with his Uncle Steve who he sometimes refers to as Scotia.

CL is for Chelsie Amanda Lohmann, my mother, born on March, 6th, 1974, and raised in Gorham, Maine. She went hunting for the first time with her friend Kristina at age 13 in a field near her house; they were hunting for woodchuck. She went hunting a few times with friends in her teen years but didn't frequently carry a gun; she became more interested in hunting when she became an adult around 21. Most of her hunting experience has been in Franklin County and at my grandparents' house and camp in Weld, Maine. She participates in deer hunting and upland bird hunting. She is the one who started the hunting camp tradition that I mentioned earlier in this paper before I was born.

M is for Mark Lohmann, my stepfather, born on March 3rd, 1971, and raised on a farm in New Gloucester, Maine. He went hunting for the first time when he was 11 with his father in New Gloucester behind his family's farm. He mainly hunts for deer and he occasionally goes upland bird hunting but has also gone on a bear hunt, a moose hunt, and duck hunts.

#### E. When Reading

When reading this paper look for my scholarship surrounding the transcriptions I present. I will make an effort to frame each transcription before presenting it and once it is presented I will aim to draw conclusions from the interview and stories themselves using prior knowledge of my family members as people. I will be analyzing these stories in the context of their chapter titles and also based on their content, the people telling them, and the other stories surrounding them. I am looking at these stories in an attempt to draw conclusions about my family members and hunting as a whole as I analyze them. I have done my best to introduce things as best as possible here and provide clarification in the chapters themselves for ease of understanding.

## CHAPTER 2: MY FIRST GUN

Throughout my research I found that the significance of the “first gun” was different from person to person. There are two different types of “first guns” in my family's lives; the very first gun that they own and the first gun that they purchase for themselves. Everyone I spoke to received their first gun as a gift but there appeared to be two different sets of people; those who kept their first gifted guns and still have them today and those who no longer have them. This chapter will look into the importance of guns to the hunters who use them and the discussions about the guns acquired and used by those in my family.

My papa was gifted his first gun on his tenth birthday from his parents; the gun was a 4-10 shotgun that he still has today. This gun is 64 years old and is no longer manufactured but still works just as good as the day he got it. He hasn't used it for hunting in “quite a while” but he and my grandmother do bring it out every once in a while to take care of the flying squirrels that attempt to nest in their attic. My papa was so excited about being gifted this gun that he carved his name into it the day he got it and even slept with it that night. When asked why he's kept it these 64 years he had this to say:

T: Well part of it's sentimental you know, it was my very first gun given to me by my parents on my 10th birthday. I occasionally still use it, it's got mostly sentimental value and they don't make them anymore. That shotgun probably sold for less than \$50 when it was brand new and today it's probably worth \$400.

They're kind of rare, Winchester didn't make too many of those.

L: Would you say it still works just as good as it did when you got it?

T: Yeah, I think that will work just as good as it does now 100 years from now

We also discussed the guns that he had bought for himself and when he began purchasing his own guns:

T: I bought a 22 revolver when I was 16 years old it was at a store in Wilton, Maine, a gunshop sporting good store I saved up my money one summer and I bought a 22 H & R Harrington Richardson 9 shot model 949 uh Harrington & Richardson 22 revolver

L: Do you still have that?

T: No that's gone away, then I bought a model 742 Remington Woodsmaster semi-automatic in 1976 and then I bought a few guns since then but a lot of guns that I own have been my grandfathers or my fathers that have been handed down I have one that, it's probably from a great great uncle that was made in Portland, Maine. It's a shotgun a 12 gauge shotgun it was made in Portland, Maine and I can't recall the name of the manufacturer back in those days a lot of big cities had gun manufacturers

My grandmother got her first gun many years after my papa got his first gun, it was gifted to her by her first husband, my grampy:

G: I got my first gun when your mom was like I don't know I want to say she was 10 maybe, so I would have been 30. I won it in a raffle, well actually your grampy won it and gave it to me. Before that, I used one of his guns but that was the first one he gave to me and it was my gun

She does not still have this gun as she gifted it to my uncle:

L: Why did you give it to Uncle Chip?

G: I didn't hunt much with Grampy Noble because he didn't hunt very much so when Uncle Chip started hunting and he didn't have anything I gave him a gun. And by then papa had bought me a new shotgun so that was the one I used and I didn't need several so I gave Uncle Chip that gun and I think he ended up trading it in to get something he wanted. I thought it was neat to hand down to Chip because it was sort of like his dad gave it to me when he won it so I gave it to him.

Although she no longer has her first gun she does still have her second gun which was also gifted to her by one of her husbands:

L: So your second gun is the one Papa gave you and you still have that?

G: Yes I still have that

L: And why have you kept that?

G: Because that's the one, well papa has given me a single shot, a 20 gauge, a 12 gauge. I wanted a short shotgun that I could carry in the truck so I have a short barrel shotgun and I can use all of them. I have two single shotguns and a pump shotgun because after Terminator I thought that was cool but it's heavy so I don't use it very much. My most favorite gun I just got oh 4 or 5 years ago it's a double



barrel shotgun so those are my favorite and I have a lever action rifle and a couple of handguns

T: You got a 30 3 lever action

G: That's a rifle

T: That's still a gun

G: Yes, I have a rifle that I only use deer hunting and I don't deer hunt that much

T: You shot a deer with it

G: I shot a deer with it but I don't deer hunt that much.

When asked which was her favorite to hunt with she answered:

G: The double barrel, I bought that double barrel in Greenville, Maine near Moosehead Lake and I took it out of the store and I went into the woods and I shot 2 partridges my first time, right out of the box boom boom.

As previously stated my Uncle's first gun was also my grandmother's first gun because she handed it down to him after receiving it as a gift from his father. It was a Mossberg 270 that he later traded for the gun he continues to use today:

C: I traded it for the Remington that I have when I started deer hunting because you (my grandmother) gave me the rifle and I wasn't deer hunting yet. And then my first shotgun was a Mossberg 12 gauge that I carried bird hunting until I got Beezy and then I started carrying a 20 gauge

L: So you traded the first gun that Grammy gave you in for something else?

C: I upgraded it because it was a lower caliber

L: Do you still have the gun that you traded it in for?

C: Yes, that is my hunting rifle

L: And why have you kept that one?

C: Because it is a pump action and I'm left-handed and the bolt on the right-handed rifle is hard to get to and it's easier for me to use the pump. I don't hunt enough to have the desire for a semi-automatic so the pump is good enough for me and I suppose there's some ahh I don't know if I keep it for the nostalgic historical value or if it's just because it's been the one I've carried for 25 years maybe.

When interviewing Mark I was shocked to learn the young ages at which he received his first BB Gun and real gun:

L: When did you get your first gun?

M: 6 maybe 5 or 6

L: Really? Did you use it when you were 5 or 6?

M: Yeah

L: For what?

M: To shoot at targets  
L: Just to practice?  
M: Mhm I was probably 3 or 4 when I got my first BB Gun  
L: Yeah, what?! Did you use it at 3 and 4?  
M: Yup, shot my brother in the eye \*laughs\*  
L: Oh my god of course you did, do you still have your first gun?  
M: I do, my first rifle yup  
L: Does it still work?  
M: Yup  
L: Do you ever use it or do you just keep it for sentimental purposes?  
M: I have not used that for 40 years plus  
L: When did you buy your own first gun, like one that wasn't gifted to you?  
M: Oh golly, I had to have been 18 maybe  
L: Do you still have it?  
M: Uhh no I don't actually, I sold it  
L: What gun do you use now? Have you had the gun you use for bird hunting and deer hunting now for a long time?  
M: Yep, 25 years probably  
L: Why have you kept that gun for so long?  
M: \*Laughs\* it's a good gun, but they all are so

When asked about his first gun my father shared the tradition in our family of getting your gun a year before you are given the bullets for it:

L: When did you get your first gun  
R: When I was 11, but I didn't get bullets for it until I was 12, it was a shotgun so I didn't get shotgun slugs I should say  
L: The first gun you used hunting, was it yours or were you just borrowing it?  
R: It was given to me  
L: So it was yours as a gift?  
R: Yeah, it's still in the gun safe  
L: You still have it?  
R: Yeah, 16 gauge Mossberg shotgun  
L: Why do you still have it  
R: It was my first gun, so sentimental reasons

My mother was given her first gun when she was 21 by her father as a Christmas gift; it was a Winchester 12 gauge single shot shotgun. She decided she wanted to try hunting when she was an adult and when she showed interest her father was "all over it." She used the gun to shoot skeet a few times but didn't actually hunt with it until she was 23; she still uses that gun for hunting birds today. She also now has a Remington 20

gauge pump shotgun given to her by Mark for bird hunting and a Remington 30/60 Semi-Automatic Rifle for deer hunting.

Guns are an instrumental part of hunting; the relationships people have with their guns differ from person to person but one thing that remained the same between each of the interviews I conducted was my family members' respect and love for the guns that they owned. Most of my family members still have the guns that their fathers and grandfathers used to hunt; these guns are not kept to be used. Although if I asked I'm sure each of the guns handed down would still be perfectly functional, they are kept for more personal and sentimental reasons. The guns handed down by grandfathers and fathers all have their own stories and are important to those who owned them now because of who used to own and use them. These guns will also likely continue to be handed down from person to person as long as there are family members who find some sort of value in them; whether sentimental or materialistic.

The guns my relatives have bought for themselves also mean a lot to them, many have been using the same gun for longer than I have been alive, 22 years, to hunt with. These guns have a history all on their own and they carry stories with them the same way people carry stories. Take my grandmother's double-barrel shotgun for example, she can still remember where she got the gun and the first bird she got with it. Maybe she remembers this because she got a bird the first time she ever used the gun or maybe she remembers which gun she used for each of the birds she's ever gotten. Either way, the gun is important to her and to the experiences she has had and the stories she tells.

Along with the sentimental connections people make to guns there are also more surface-level and materialistic connections made to guns. My grandmother bought a

pump action shotgun because she saw it in a movie and thought it was cool. Most of my family members have hunted with the same gun for years because it works well and they like hunting with it. Hunters get to know their guns, the weight of them, how fast they shoot and reload, and they quickly learn the quirks of their guns. Buying a new gun every year would likely make hunting a more difficult task; the guns my family uses have been used for a number of seasons and the hunters who use them know exactly how to use them to the best of their ability because of the time they've spent getting to know them. Relearning a new gun would take time and could inhibit their ability to hunt the best; no need to fix something that isn't broken. No reason to replace a gun that works perfectly for you. While all of this is purely speculation on my part based on the response of "the gun works good" when asked why the hunters have used the same guns for twenty-plus years I'm sure the answer would fall along the lines of what I have discussed here. This is also consistent with certain aspects of psychological ownership; that is the way one feels that they own an object or place. When someone feels that they have predictable control over an object a sense of ownership can be created. While these hunters already feel they own their guns, being able to get to know all of the guns' little quirks and precisely how they work can aid in creating that sense of ownership and connection with the gun (Khan, H. R., & Turri, J., 2022).

Guns are important to the hunters who use them, they are a tool utilized in the hunting and killing of animals. As hunters have special bonds with each other because they participate in this same activity; hunters and their guns have special bonds because the hunters use their guns for this activity. While not everyone kept their first gifted gun or even the first gun they bought for themselves they all remember when they received

their first gun and who they received it from. They all remember the first gun they bought for themselves and what they did with it, whether they kept it or got rid of it. These guns and the experiences and stories associated with them are important to the hunters who use and own them. If they were not important to them why would they remember these details?

## CHAPTER 3: FIRST DEER

The purpose of hunting is to bring home whatever you went out hunting for; whether you appreciate the meat or the antlers more doesn't matter much because at the end of the season if you don't get a deer you don't get either of those things. Everyone remembers the first deer they got while out hunting; some have exciting stories about how their first deer was shot when they went hunting on their own for the first time. Others have more upsetting stories about how they shot a baby deer because they thought it was larger than it actually was. The first time you succeed in a difficult task like hunting is extremely rewarding and can leave you wanting to experience that gratification more and more. All of the experienced hunters in my family have a first deer story except for my Uncle Chip, who in all his years of hunting has never gotten one; although he has come close. My mother has also never gotten a deer despite her efforts. My grandfather got his first deer the first time he went hunting by himself:

T: And the first time I went hunting on my own I was like 11 and the first deer I shot I was 11. I came home from school one day in the fall and my dad was home working on a building and I asked if he'd like to go hunting but he was busy so he said no but you can go. He let me borrow a rifle and we went over all the safety precautions and I stood there I'm sure rolling my eyes because I'd heard it a million times. I went up the road and I barely got into the woods and I shot a deer and I hadn't been out of school for nearly more than half an hour so that was my first deer. My first deer and it was really easy and I got spoiled because I thought that's the way it was gonna be forever more

While many hunters may have stories like this about getting their first deer on their first hunt alone; my grandfather is the only one in my family that I know of that has this kind of story and it feels special. As an 11-year-old he went off into the woods hunting alone for the first time and he got his first deer; it was a special moment for him

that he remembers fondly. My grandmother's first deer is a memory she does not recall with as much joy:

G: It's not my finest hour, I was deer hunting and we had scouted around and I knew where there were some deer tracks where they'd been crossing and things like that. I had actually shot at a buck and missed so I was sitting in a chair or I think I was sitting on a crate. I was sitting at the end of a ridge where I knew trails went by and Grandpa Skolfield was on the other end of the ridge. So I'm sitting there and not expecting to see anything and I heard something coming so I looked through my scope and I saw a deer. I saw a whole deer so I knew what I was shooting at, I was very careful and everything so I shot and killed the deer. It seemed like a huge deer in my scope and right behind it a big deer came along. I had shot a year-old deer. A baby and the mother stood there and I was crying and I stood up and I let her see me so she ran off but she was not leaving so I was crying and Tom was yelling "where are you" and I was crying and he thought I hurt myself because he heard the shot. So anyway he helped me to dress the deer and drag the deer out and then I was embarrassed I didn't want anybody to know that I had shot this little deer so I didn't want to go and get it tagged but you have to go and get it tagged so I go and tag it but I didn't want them to weigh it I didn't want to know how much it weighed it was tiny in my mind.

My father and stepfather have much more common first deer memories. Mark, a man of few words, told me he got his first deer when he was 15 years old; it was a doe he shot down behind his family's farm fields. When my father shot his first deer he was hunting with his Uncle Steve in New Gloucester and Steve got to it and dressed it out before my father could even get there. My father isn't a fan of dressing deer so he wasn't too worried about that and believed he would get another chance to dress a deer. My father and stepfather don't have much to say about their first deer because they're pretty straightforward hunter experiences and both have shot a significant amount of deer since their first. They were excited to get their first deer but it was only special in the way that it was their first and it was an expectation that it would happen eventually. Once their first deer was acquired the expectation was gone and they knew, and their family members knew, that they could do it. Whether their first deer stories are memorable or

simple they have not been forgotten by these hunters. The first deer is important because it shows a hunter that they can successfully hunt; they can accomplish this difficult task that many never attempt to do and some attempt but never succeed in.

The first deer is also an important learning opportunity for those hunting deer; it can teach them what to expect when they finally get a deer. Even if you know everything about hunting and have gone multiple times you can never truly prepare yourself for what killing a deer will be like until you actually do it. Take my grandmother for example, her first deer was a baby, she had not set out to shoot a baby deer but through the scope of her gun, the deer looked far larger than it was. When she got her first deer my grandmother learned a few things; the way a small deer can look larger in the scope of your gun but she also learned that she can shoot a deer if she needs to or wants to. When I interviewed her she explained that she has killed and finds comfort in knowing that she could kill again to feed her family if the need ever arose. But shooting the baby deer made her never really want to shoot another deer again, although she does get excited about the prospect of getting a “great big buck” because she would want the antlers as a trophy but she’ll never hunt for a doe ever again; if she can’t see antlers she won’t pull the trigger even if she has the perfect shot.

While my grandmother learned an important lesson about herself and what she can emotionally handle as a hunter, my grandfather learned some misleading ideas when he got his first deer. He shares that his first deer really spoiled him because he thought hunting was as easy as going into the woods and immediately finding and shooting a deer. As an 11-year-old it was hard to believe people really thought hunting was so hard when his first experience hunting alone was so successful and easy. But as he grew older



my grandfather learned the difficulties of hunting, although he claims that when he was younger he got a deer every year so he may not have experienced a year so difficult he could not get a deer until he was older. I was at first surprised to learn that he never went a season without getting a deer after he shot his first one but when I think about it he was doing his hunting in a very rural area that likely had an abundance of deer during the time he was hunting as a young man. My grandfather grew up and hunted in the village of Weld, Maine. It's considered a village because of how few people call the town home; when he was a boy many of his neighbors still used outhouses and lacked electricity or even indoor plumbing for sinks. Bears were a common occurrence in the town before they closed their old dump; people would visit the dump every night to watch the bears dig through the trash as if it was some kind of animal exhibit at the zoo or circus. When taking all of this into account his strange story of shooting his first deer almost immediately after entering the woods begins to make more sense as does his ability to bag a deer every year. Even today we see deer in my grandparents' backyard daily in Weld, meanwhile, we hardly ever see them in our own backyard at home.

While most of the hunters in my family have shot at least one deer there are two hunters who have still not bagged a deer. My Uncle Chip has yet to shoot his first deer and he's been hunting since he was 18. This is not for his lack of trying though; his explanation for why he hunts even though he has never gotten a deer is explained in more depth in the chapter "Why We Hunt", but for him, hunting isn't about the deer or the meat—those things are just bonuses. My Uncle says he feels some shame about having never bagged a deer when his two nephews seem to get at least one a year but hunting for him is less about the success and more about the experience. My mother has also never

bagged a deer, she is a more casual hunter than my Uncle and the rest of my family members are. She has hunted on and off since she was younger, sometimes even going hunting without a gun just to be out in the woods while someone else was hunting. In her family, and the families of her previous boyfriends and husbands, the men were the only ones who actually hunted. But when my grandmother remarried and began hunting more so did my mother. Having less time out in the woods seriously hunting for deer is likely a big contributor to why she hasn't tagged herself a deer yet. While she enjoys hunting with a camera more than with a gun she has recently started hunting with a gun again and seriously attempting to get a deer; my sister and I have both gone off to college which gave her extra time to get out into the woods no longer being tied down by our fall sports schedules.

My grandfather has not bagged a deer in about 30 years and yet he still goes out and hunts every year and helps to teach the younger hunters in our family about the best hunting practices and where the best places to hunt around his home in Weld are to have the best chance of getting a deer. The motivations of my family for hunting will all be discussed in more detail in the "Why We Hunt" chapter but it seems that the meat and trophy aspect, seemingly the entire purpose of hunting, is not the only reason people hunt. It may also be that one's reasons for hunting change as they get older, whether that's due to a change in mindset over the need to get a deer every year or a change in physical capabilities. These are interesting things to consider when thinking about the reasons people choose to hunt especially if they are no longer being successful or have never been successful.

## CHAPTER 4: FAVORITE HUNTING MEMORIES

The memories made while hunting inform the stories one tells about their hunting experiences and in my search for an understanding of why people choose to hunt and enjoy it, I was curious to know what memories would be considered favorites from those I interviewed. Some memories are more appreciated than others and I wanted to see what my family would share as the one that meant the most to them when asked. Most of them gave me only one story as their favorite memory but my grandfather couldn't choose just one so he gave me a few. My grandmother's favorite hunting memory is from "many many years ago" when they had a slide-in camper that went in the back of their pickup truck:

G: So Uncle Chip was camping with us and hunting up in the Allagash and we parked our camper in an old gravel pit and there was a trail that went into some trains and we went into the trains and we got partridges. Then one of the nights that we were camping it must have been a full moon because it was really bright and a moose came into the gravel pit and stood right beside the camper so we could look at it and that was a good memory.

She also shared that the making of a good memory for her wasn't so much about the partridge she shot but it was about other things like the people you're with. She loved the slide-in camper they had because it made hunting more manageable, as it allowed them to spend more time out in the woods together as opposed to on the road traveling to the hunting location or home. Her favorite hunting memory happened while she was on a hunting trip but not necessarily out actively hunting which points to a possibility that hunting isn't all about the activity itself but more about what happens surrounding it. My grandmother's favorite hunting memory was when she saw a moose from her camper window after a long day of hunting while Mark's favorite hunting memory was when he

got his first and only moose. Ever the man of few words he only really told me that he shot it up in Eustis Maine roughly 27 years ago on the last day of the moose hunt and that it weighed 981 pounds requiring them to use “a lot of rope and chain” to drag it out of the woods. While he didn’t talk much about the moose hunt with me, I’m sure it must have felt pretty good to finally get a moose at the end of the moose hunt. The whole week he was out in the woods attempting to get a moose and on the very last day he finally got one; he may have been thinking that he might miss out on a moose and have to wait and see if he would get another permit in some future years. Some people put in for permits every year but never get chosen so to be able to finally get the moose at the last opportunity I’m sure it felt like a weight was lifted, he finally got his moose and he wouldn’t have to worry about getting another moose permit unless he really wanted to get a second moose.

When considering her favorite hunting memories my mother said she didn’t really have a favorite memory. She remembers certain things fondly like:

CL: Walking the pole line clearing behind our home with Uncle Chip the first time I hunted birds; he gave me pointers. Getting Grampy situated in a spot since his mobility hampered him was always fulfilling because he loved being involved. I enjoyed driving the logging roads with Mark, Gammy, and Papa (my grandparents, not hers) hunting birds. I helped Mark drag his 240LB buck out of the woods this year; he even waited to dress it until I met him where it fell. Mostly I enjoy walking for getting exercise and staying warm and I’m always looking for the next memory.

Most of her hunting memories are around the people she is with when she makes them; she doesn’t have a specific favorite hunting memory but she does have at least one fond memory that stands out in connection to each of the people she’s hunted with. As we’ll discuss later, for my mother hunting is more about the people she’s with than about

the critter she's hunting or the location she's hunting in which makes sense as to why her fondest memories are all attached to the people she hunts with.

When asked about his favorite hunting memory my father said he doesn't really pick favorites, but I made him and he shared:

R: Oh I guess when I shot my second biggest buck, we were hunting and we were in the woods with Grandpa (his dad) and Scotia (his uncle Steve) and Uncle Bob (his brother) was living in New Hampshire and had shot a big buck like the night before. We were hunting that Saturday and we were with this guy Dwayne Mashino and a couple of his friends and Dwayne sent his buddies to hunt where the deer always cross and he sent me to hunt up the road wherever I wanted to go because he didn't think there would be any deer up there. So I said whatever and I went and found a nice spot where I thought they'd been crossing. It had been a while and I thought I heard somebody coming through the woods. This chipmunk had been chattering at me the whole time I was over there and I'm pretty sure that chipmunks are early warning systems for deer because they'll bark at you from a tree and they're just little jerks. So this thing is literally sitting in a tree and I thought somebody had come through and was just standing waiting to come out and I just got tired of the chipmunk so I snapped the safety off the shotgun and I raised the barrel up and I sighted the chipmunk and was contemplating shooting him or not when this great big buck stepped out onto the road and all I had to do was drop the barrel of the shotgun and waste him. I took two quick shots then I took a third shot and then I saw him go down, I probably didn't need to take the third shot. I know I drilled him on the first shot and probably the second one. I had a bolt action shotgun and I went and put the kill shot to him. Grandpa came up before I started gutting it and he was like "who's shooting" and I was like "I did" and he was like "no really, who was shooting" and I was like "I did" and I pointed at the buck was laying right there where I was standing because grandpa was a little ways back and he walked up and was like "I didn't think that was you" and I'm like "what do you mean" and he's like "I thought that was a semi-automatic" I'm like "I'm good with this shotgun, I can operate it pretty fast" and he's like "I didn't think you could operate it that fast honestly, I thought it was a semi-automatic the way those first three shots popped off, no way I thought you were banging those in with a bolt action" and I was like "I did, I smoked him." And it was a nice big buck, I think it was like 190 pounds.

This story appears to be my father's favorite for a few reasons, getting a big buck the day after your brother got a big buck is always satisfying to someone as competitive as my father. Getting a deer after being sent to a spot that the "lead" hunter believed the deer weren't frequenting, essentially preventing him from getting any deer if Dwayne had

been correct in his assumption about where the deer were visiting, probably felt really good too. Not to mention he was able to confuse his father because he fired his gun far faster than his father believed he was able to. He pointed towards all of these things without coming right out and saying them but getting a 190-pound deer on top of being put in an area where deer weren't as frequent and impressing your father simultaneously by firing your gun faster than expected and getting a big buck that could have been larger than your brothers. That must have felt great which helped to make this memory one of his favorites.

Good feelings associated with a memory appear to aid in that memory becoming a favorite as is evident by my Uncle's favorite hunting memory:

C: One of my favorite memories was when Abby (his daughter) started hunting. She wanted to hunt with Beezy and so the first year she carried the shotgun and we didn't really hunt we just practiced but I think the next year she was hunting we went one time because of all the sports and things we didn't really have very many chances to get into the woods. We were up here at Grammy and Papas' and we drove all over creation trying to find birds and we didn't find any and we came back to the gravel pit on the way to camp and Tom said "why don't you take the dog and Abby and walk in" and so we did. We were ahead of Tom and Gordeen and Beezy flushed a bird. You've heard that the dog's tail will spin and that's how you know that the dog is onto a bird and she went into the bushes and Abby and I walked up and Beezy flushed the bird and I shot it and Beezy retrieved it. And Abby, her eyes were huge and it doesn't happen that well hardly ever and it was just a particularly special moment that I remember; I was excited because Abby was excited. A wing shot on a partridge is not easy and I shot it and my child was with me and she was moderately impressed and I should have stopped hunting right then because that's when it all peaked.

My Uncle's favorite hunting memory is one he shared with his daughter on one of her first hunting trips. It's his favorite because he shares it with his daughter and it was one of the last, if not the last, bird that Beezy got before she retired from hunting; it was just a picture-perfect moment. My grandfather also describes a picture-perfect moment in one of his two favorite hunting memories:

T: I remember coming home from college, it was November 8th, 1968 and I drove home in a terrible snow storm from college. I got home just in time to say “well I’m gonna go up to camp and I’m going to go hunting for whatever time I have left.” I had less than an hour of daylight left so I went up to camp and I hiked up to a spot where I had seen deer before and I walked in and there was a buck. It was snowing so hard that it was just one of those spooky snow storms and the deer was standing there and it was feeding and didn’t see me and I stepped down on one knee and I shot the deer. It was snowing so hard that by the time I got it out, I didn’t know if I could drive back out again because there must have been a foot of snow on the ground at that point. But I got the deer out and that was just neat because it was quiet, still, and snowing and it was just like a big snow globe. I don’t know why it comes back but that’s a very prominent one.

My grandfather still remembers the exact date that he shot this deer and it’s the story he seems to tell most frequently because it’s one of his favorites. His other favorite hunting memory is the time he shot a black bear:

T: It was on Thanksgiving, our neighbor had been out hunting and he shot a bear and he came down and it was dark. He said “I shot it and I think I wounded it but I don’t want to go in the woods alone after it” so he asked if I would go with him and I was 16 years old so I borrow my dad’s 38 revolver because I didn’t want to be weighted down lugging a rifle because the neighbor had a rifle. He was around my father’s age, so I went off with him and we went up to where he shot the bear and he said, “you know I called a guy before I went down to your house, he has bear dogs and he’s gonna come out, I think I better go back to my house and see if he’s come, you stay here.” So I said “okay” and I stayed there but after he left I noticed some blood on the ground and I started following the blood and I kept going and kept going and finally it went into this little fur thicket that was so thick you had to just crawl your way through them. I got about four to five feet and I saw the bear was alive and wounded and very very angry and I just unloaded my 38 revolver into it and killed it and then I started dragging it out. I got it out of the thicket and got it back and the neighbor came back and we dressed it out and hauled it home and he had a bear rug made out of that.

This is my grandfather’s other favorite story and he doesn’t really say why but I’m assuming it may be because he shot his first and only bear as a teenager alone in the woods after someone else had already shot it and made it angry. As a teenager that was probably a pretty cool experience; especially when he dragged it out of the woods and saw the surprised look on his neighbor’s face. When I asked him if he was scared at all

while looking for it or when he found it he said he wasn't scared he was just way more alert than usual. Now looking back on it he thinks his decision to follow the blood trail alone with only a 38 revolver was "foolish" because he could have gotten hurt but everything worked out fine for him.

A favorite hunting memory is one that sticks with the person and presents itself as more enjoyable to remember than all of the other hunting memories one accumulates in a lifetime. Many of these favorite memories revolve around getting the animal that the hunter is attempting to shoot. But on top of getting the animal they set out to, these memories have different aspects that make them special to each individual. My Uncle shot the bird with his dog and daughter, my dad impressed his dad with his quick shooting, and my grandfather enjoyed the atmosphere of shooting the deer in the snow and the surprise of his neighbor when shooting the bear. My grandmother did not actually shoot anything in her favorite memory but it's her favorite because of the people she's with and the magical sight of seeing the deer. My mother may not have favorite memories but her fond memories of hunting are all connected to the people she hunts with similarly to my grandmother's favorite hunting memory. These memories show that hunting isn't only about the animal you're after, it can be about so much more; even if it's not a surface-level thing.



## CHAPTER 5: HUNTING STORIES

Hunting stories are an essential part of the hunting community and tradition; as will be discussed in the “Why We Hunt” chapter they are even an important reason for why some people hunt. On top of the hunting memories that people have picked out to be their favorites, everyone I interviewed also had a plethora of other hunting stories that they shared with me and in this chapter, I will share a handful of those with you. While their stories are shared throughout this paper in the sections that correspond best to them, this section will be dedicated solely to stories and present these stories in an organized fashion. Beginning the story section will be a subsection about the way hunters become one with the nature around them, then as everyone seems to have come across a moose in their hunting adventures we’ll look into those stories. Next, we’ll explore the same story as told from the perspective of my grandmother and my Uncle and lastly, we’ll look at the story of my Uncle getting his first bird as he is not given a spotlight in the “First Deer” chapter as my other relatives are.

### Becoming one with nature

When you spend enough time in the woods you begin to become one with your environment and less of an intruder in some way. All of my family members have stories of squirrels running across their legs or animals, like mountain lions, looking at them as they walk by but paying them no mind. My grandfather was once followed by a Canadian Jay for about ten to fifteen miles while he was out hunting once; it’s said that Canadian Jays are the souls of dead woodsmen which may be why they’re so easy to befriend.

Another time my grandfather told me the story of how a fox came within three feet of him before even noticing he was sitting there:

T: One time I was sitting along a wall watching for deer, it was evening and a fox showed up and he started working his way up towards me. He was looking for stuff, you know mice or whatever and he worked his way up towards a break in the wall and he was within three feet from me to my right. As he's walking by me he didn't even see me so I made a noise and he stopped when he heard the squeak and he turned and looked at me like "oh my god" and then he just booked it out of there like it scared the living life out of him because he didn't know that he was that close to me.

My grandfather was hanging around that stone wall for so long and being so calm that the fox had no idea he was there until he made his presence known to it. When you spend enough time in a certain area the animals that live there will stop being overly cautious of you and will continue on with their lives as this fox was attempting to do and this owl does in Mark's story:

M: I was hunting in Gray once, sitting up against a big pine tree and 20 probably not even 10 yards from me a big gray squirrel was milling around. Then all of a sudden right by my shoulder just as quiet as could be a great big owl snagged that gray squirrel and away he went.

Mark's presence in the woods didn't stop either the squirrel or the owl from continuing on with their daily business of looking for food. The owl even came down right over Mark's shoulder as if it was completely unbothered by his presence in the pursuit of the squirrel. One time when my Uncle was hunting he came across a white coyote just simply walking through the woods near him with no worries about my Uncle being there at all. As will be discussed in the "Why We Hunt" chapter, being out in the wilderness and surrounded by nature is a big reason why my family members enjoy hunting and with stories like these I can understand the appeal.

## Moose

Moose appear to be a common sighting for my family members, they have all seen them on at least one hunting adventure. Moose sightings are frequent and sometimes while walking along logging roads you may come upon a moose couple just hanging out as my mother did once. As was already discussed my grandmother's favorite hunting memory is when she saw a moose from her camper window after a long day of hunting. Moose encounters range from potentially dangerous as we'll see with Mark's story to funny, as we'll see with my father's, to just plain cool as we'll see with my grandfather and Uncle's. Mark's moose story is a good one but could have been a pretty bad one had things gone differently:

M: When I was moose hunting we were in a log yard up in Eustis with a Canadian logger and he was going to call in a moose. It was on Sunday before the hunt started and he made us get up on his skidder because when he (the moose) came out he would be mad and so the logger called him out and we were standing on the tires. He would headbutt the tires and stuff and it made quite a noise. It wasn't scary because we were kind of in a safe place but if you fell off of there you might be in trouble and it was cool but that little thought of "jeez, if you fall." When he had his head up we could kick his antlers with our feet.

This story is by far the closest any of my relatives have been to an angry moose that might wish to harm them. Alternatively, the moose my father saw may have been the least likely to cause harm to anyone:

R: While hunting I've had a moose come out and I used a grunt call that you use for a buck and I grunted it and it was like you were watching a cartoon. The moose started to run as fast as it could and it just fell right over. I stood there laughing and this was before we all had cell phones but if I had one I would have recorded it because it was the dumbest thing I've ever seen. Like literally its feet were going as fast as it could and it just fell over sideways and it flopped around for a minute before it got up, but then she ran up into the woods.

Like a scene right out of a cartoon, my dad watched a roughly 900-pound (by his guess) cow fall down because she was trying to run too fast. I'm not sure many people have personally watched a moose fall down in the wild but I'm sure it's as funny as my imagination made it out to be when hearing this story for the first time. My grandfather and my Uncle have more common moose stories. My grandfather was sitting by a pond one day and saw a moose grazing and didn't think much of it until the moose walked right up to him and his friend. The moose got so close that it stopped to sniff the two of them and then continued on with its day. My Uncle saw his moose while he was riding in my grandparents' truck on an upland bird hunting trip. The moose wanted to cross the road and it began running alongside the truck until it veered off and continued on with its day. Moose are the biggest animals in the Maine woods and being able to see them rampage and headbutt skidder tires or slip and fall or even just live their lives in the wild is an exciting experience for those who get to witness it.

### The Train

The beautiful thing about stories involving multiple parties is that you can get the story from multiple different perspectives. This can simultaneously shed light on what happened and the individuals who witnessed and interpreted what happened. My grandmother and Uncle remember the same story about looking for old trains in the woods while hunting one year but they don't tell it quite the same:

G: So there's these tracks that are in the middle of the woods and because they've stopped using it trees have grown up and everything. So we went there and Uncle Chip had just seen the Blair Witch Project; so he's a little afraid of the woods to this day. It's getting near the end of the day and we've found the tracks but we haven't found the trains and we still gotta get back to our camper and it's starting to be twilight and we're in the woods. So Chip said "I'll go this way" and I said "I'll go this way" and we're walking and I found the trains on the tracks and

because Chip and Sabel (her dog) had gone the other way I yelled “Chip we found them” but he to this day if you ask him to tell you the story will say that he heard me saying “Chiiipp, Chiiipp” (said in a spooky voice) and he said that the dog turned and ran to find me and so he panicked. He thought that something horrible had happened to me like in the Blair Witch Project and he came and found me so it was weird to him but it wasn’t weird to me.

To my grandmother, this was just another successful hunting trip to an abandoned place but to my Uncle, it was a terrifying event; one that he was not very happy my grandmother told me about:

C: You told that story grammy?

G: I did tell that story

C: Nothing's sacred. The Blair Witch movie had just happened so we were hunting and we had separated and I was hunting with Sable and it was like kind of illuminated, rainy, dark, and Grammy yelled “Chiiipp” (said in the same spooky way my grandmother said it even though I interviewed her first while no one else was around). All I knew was that Sable took off sprinting running to Grammy and I thought for sure that some kind of horrible attack happened so I went trying to run and carrying the shotgun and also be safe and all that good stuff. I found them eventually and there was nothing horrible happening.

I assume that my Uncle would have told the story in greater detail had he not known that my grandmother had already told it to me. I think it’s interesting that when retelling it they both said what my Uncle heard in the exact same way; that could be because my Uncle explained that to my grandmother after he found her by the train and she stuck with that story from him and has been retelling it. It’s interesting to hear the two different sides of this story, one side being casual and simple communication while the other side is an anxiety induced interpretation of the communication and the dog running. My grandmother and Uncle remember this story similarly in the sense that the events that occurred are the same but different in their interpretations of it and the emotions driving them.

## Chip's First Bird

My Uncle Chip is far more interested in bird hunting than deer hunting for a number of reasons that are discussed in other locations throughout this thesis. But since he has yet to shoot his first deer I wanted to give him a spotlight here to share the story of his first bird, because it is an accomplishment like getting your first deer and it's also just a good story:

C: The first bird I ever shot was with grammy and papa, we were riding in the truck on the dirt road and there was a bird in the road. We stopped the truck and I got out to shoot it and I was nervous and waited too long and the bird skittered off into the bushes and so I walked up really slow and I went to follow it into the woods. I walked in and walked in and walked in and I thought "oh my gosh I blew it, that was my one chance and I missed it" and all of a sudden the bird walked in front of me and I shot it and it was laying on the ground. I had wounded it but hadn't killed it so it was flapping and flapping and flapping and I had talked to my dad, grampy, about what to do and he said you hold it by the head and you give it a little flick and it breaks the neck and then the bird stops. So I gave it a little flick and it kept flapping and flapping and flapping and so I flicked it again a little harder and it kept flapping and flapping and flapping and I said "oh my gosh what do I do" and after the third time I flicked it the head popped off. It stopped flapping and I was like "oh my gosh" and Papa and Grammy had just recently gotten married and I thought "Papa's going to think I'm some wild, awful, hunter" and I walked back and I had the bird in this hand and the head in this hand. They were both super excited like "oh my gosh you got the bird, you got the bird, that's wonderful and I said "yeah but what do I do with this" and I still had the head and Papa said "oh this" and he threw it over his shoulder and said, "you throw it in the woods." My grandfather had very strict hunter safety rules and respect for nature and animals and all these things and I thought pulling the head off a bird was disrespectful but then I saw how you clean a bird and pulling a head off is the least of the things that was going to happen to the bird. So yeah, that was my first bird and it was extremely memorable.

My Uncle's first bird was an "extremely memorable" experience for him and I must say it would have been for me too. I could not imagine pulling the head off of a bird while trying to put it out of its misery but it appears to be a common enough occurrence that neither of my grandparents even batted an eye at it. I'm sure getting your first bird is

a similar experience to getting your first deer. One that shows you that you can be successful in your hunt and in my Uncle's case one that shows you that you can rip the head off of a bird while trying to put it out of its misery and keep your lunch down.

Stories are an important part of the hunting experience, every hunting trip creates a story even if it's not as exciting as any of the stories shared here. Stories connect the hunting community together, everyone has their own stories that they love to share and they all usually enjoy hearing other people's stories. There's a shared nature of these stories even if they're vastly different because they are all about hunting in some way or another and they're all important to the teller in some way to encourage them to be told.

## CHAPTER 6: TRADITIONS AND TEACHINGS

Tradition is a huge part of hunting for many people and my family is no exception, as will be discussed later in the “Why We Hunt” chapter. Tradition is a big part of why many of my family members hunt even when they are no longer getting deer or have never gotten a deer. While my family members discussed the traditions they had and their love of traditions surrounding hunting with minimal prompting I did have to ask them a few directed questions to dig deeper. To understand their personal traditions better I asked each of them if they had any pre- or post-hunting rituals that they did every time they went hunting. When answering this question my grandfather said:

T: I get everything ready I guess, I try to make sure all of my stuff is in place so that I don't forget anything. I basically have everything kind of ready to go, I've got a vest that I keep all of my stuff in so I just make sure I got all of the stuff I need. I think it's important when you go out in the woods, especially if you're going off for the day, that you have things with you in case of an emergency. You should have something to get a fire going with and with the advent of cell phones and communication it's much easier for you to get help if you get in trouble but back in the day before all of that it was important to be able to sustain yourself in case of an emergency. A few food items you know some matches, something to build a fire with, a knife obviously. Things that could keep you alive if you fell down or broke a leg or did something. Something you could signal with; some orange tape, I used to keep orange tape and a rope, you know something that if you did shoot something you could drag it out with. Just basic things that you need to have with you in the event that you do shoot a deer so you can be prepared to deal with it.

My grandfather makes sure he has all the supplies he needs to hunt and also survive if his trip into the woods doesn't go the way he originally planned it would go. Ensuring you have all of your supplies together beforehand when preparing to go hunting was a common theme among my family members. My grandmother discussed more specifically what she would bring into the woods and what she would wear when asked this question:



G: I have to get my clothes ready so I have special jeans that have material on them so that you can go through the bushes and they won't scratch you, I have a special red flannel shirt that I wear, I have a red wool jacket that I wear and it has a partridge pin on the lapel. When I was younger I would like to get the things that make sounds, rattling sounds, and stuff like that but I haven't for years gotten anything special that way. So I do get my clothes ready and then I put them all in a tote to store them at the end when the seasons are over to put them away.

When preparing to go hunting my stepfather ensures that his guns are clean and his knife is sharp while my father makes sure that his guns are in proper order, unloaded while in the car, and loaded properly when he arrives at the specified hunting location. My father always ensures that he has not one but two compasses in his vest when he goes hunting just in case he loses or breaks his main compass he always has a backup and if one of the people he's hunting with doesn't have a compass for some reason he has an extra that he can lend them. My mother treats hunting as she treats every other day; ensuring that she has the appropriate clothing for the weather and her hunting gear all together, for example having the appropriate gun and ammo for the correct season she is hunting in and making sure all of that is clean and in working order. My Uncle Chip also gets all of his hunting gear gathered the night before to make sure he isn't missing anything he'll need while hunting the next day. All of my family members ensure that they have their gear together and ready before they leave to go hunting for the day. The activity of getting your supplies together may seem simple and obvious which is why some of my family members didn't dive too deeply into the subject but it is an important part of the hunting process. It is a tradition everyone has yet does slightly differently based on their own preferences because it is something that is necessary. If you leave for a day of hunting without your compass you may get lost in the woods and have a difficult time getting home. If you leave without your rope and end up getting a deer, dragging it

out of the woods is going to be a lot more difficult than if you remembered your rope in the first place.

Apart from ensuring that they have all of the gear they need to succeed while hunting in the woods, my grandmother and my Uncle Chip have another pre-hunting ritual that was unique to their interviews. Both of them like to do some prior research before they get out into the woods. My grandmother usually picks up a few magazines about hunting and reads them to stay up to date on the best practices and methods hunters should use for a most successful hunt. My Uncle enjoys asking other people who have been hunting more regularly for tips about where the birds and deer are so he can make sure to visit those places while hunting to increase his odds of getting something. My Uncle Chip is currently the only member of our family who has hunted with a bird dog in recent years and when he is bird hunting with his dog they have some pre-hunting rituals:

C: So the dog once they've gone through their training responds to seeing the gun and that will get the dog excited. The vest, so Beezy had a hunting vest that she wore and she had a bell and all of those were triggers that it was time to work and she would switch modes pretty noticeably; she would go from playful to focused business and she would just change her demeanor from what she was up to.

People have their own traditions and pre-hunting rituals to get them in the mindset of going out into the woods to hunt and look for game; the animals used to aid humans in hunting also have their own pre-hunting rituals that help them know that it's time to do the work they trained for. The use of hunting dogs will be discussed more in-depth later in this chapter. Still, I wanted to mention that there are rituals shared by hunters and the animals they hunt with.

Perhaps one of the most important pre-hunting traditions, the discussion and planning of the hunt, was only brought up by one of my family members; my Uncle Chip.

My Uncle said he enjoys getting up early and getting ready and talking to the other people who will be out hunting that day to choose who is going to be where and talking through everything so that they don't end up being too close to each other without knowing. Coordinating who is going out and where they are going is a very important part of hunting when you are going with a group It's important not to have too many people out, lest you risk having an illegal deer drive and it's also important to know where other hunters will be so you don't think there are strangers in the woods you are hunting in. The planning of the hunt is just as important as the carrying out of the hunt itself and I'm shocked that this was not discussed or even brought up by most of my family members. My family always plans out their hunts even if it's a very loose plan of the general area and times hunters will be out and about but they didn't discuss that with me.

My Uncle Chip told me about a category of hunter who is considered to be the hunt master. A hunt master, according to him, is someone whose only purpose is to coordinate and help others get their deer. My grandfather used to be the hunt master but the position has seemingly been handed down to my step-father Mark because he drives everyone up to where they should be looking for deer in his side by side. The hunt master is apparently a very important individual because they help everyone else in creating the best odds to get a deer; my grandfather hasn't gotten a deer in about thirty years so his time has been devoted to being the hunt master for others to help them get their deer. Mark still hunts to get a deer for himself and while he helps others find the best places to hunt he becomes much more helpful to others once he has already gotten his deer for the season and cannot get any more.

The planning that goes into a hunt is important for having a successful and safe hunt and the hunt master is an important aspect of this. The hunt master is usually the most experienced hunter in the group and has a strong knowledge of the land and area that the group will be hunting on. My grandfather grew up hunting on the land that my family now hunts on in Weld; while the hunters in my family go off into the woods with compasses and GPS tools that can aid them in getting home if they get lost they can find their way through the woods with little help from a map or compass on a good day. The woods around my grandparent's house are discussed and known by the cellar holes and remains of old houses and town roads that sit on their property. When my grandfather says they have seen a lot of deer crossing at the Merwin Place my whole family knows where that is and how to get there without even needing to consult a map. This tradition of using natural landmarks and common names to describe the places on my grandparent's property goes back to when my grandfather was a child (Buckley, M. G., Smith, A. D., & Haselgrove, M. (2014).). As a child, my grandfather and his father would always meet at the same yellow birch tree every time they went hunting. The tree still stands on their property and my grandfather can point it out to you at any time of the year. A forester once came to cut down some trees and my grandfather requested that the birch tree be left alone as it was special to him.

My father's side of the family also plans out their hunts before they all go off into the woods, like who is going where, when everyone will go home, and how many deer they will shoot that day. Sometimes they agree that if somebody has a deer nobody else will shoot so they can just deal with one deer at a time and not have to worry about tagging and processing more than one deer at a time. On this side of the family, you

always put a “kill shot” to the deer, which is a shot right behind the ear to ensure that they’re dead. This shot serves a few purposes, it puts the deer out of its misery if the initial shot that took it down doesn’t finish the job and when done with a shotgun or a rifle, it makes a very distinct noise that my father described as a “bup.” When the other hunters hear that distinct sound they know that somebody has a deer and they head to where the sound came from to check in. Once they check in they either help dress the deer or make sure no more help is needed before they continue hunting depending on the decision about the number of deer they wanted to deal with earlier in the day. Once a deer has been shot the hunters must field dress the deer, usually, this consists of hunters just taking the guts out, but my father’s side of the family also removes the heart, lungs, and liver as a part of their routine because they don’t eat that stuff usually. On some occasions, my father will take the heart because he has friends that like it and he’ll take the liver to cook for our dog. On my mother’s side of the family, the hunters always take the organs because they’re suckers for pickled liver.

In order to get to this point of hunting though my father's family has to go through two years of going hunting without actually being able to shoot a deer before they can actually start hunting for real. Here’s how my father describes this tradition:

R: In our family the first year you went hunting you didn't bring a gun, you just went to see how it was done. The second year you got to bring a gun without any munitions to make sure you weren't doing anything stupid with it and that you handled it properly even after taking the hunter safety course, there was still no ammunition you just brought the rifle and ammunition to show “hey I'm not holding it in my mouth and I’m not doing stupid stuff and pointing it at people.” And the next year you were going live, free range. Not everybody does that, it was just our family to prove that you weren’t stupid with a gun and that you weren’t going to do anything stupid. Some people just hand it to them and say “hey you’re hunting” but in our family, it was you go and you learn how to do it and you had to take the steps to earn it. If I was doing stupid stuff with the gun I probably wouldn’t have gotten bullets my third year but I did.

In order to be allowed to become a fully-fledged hunter in my father's family you had to prove that you could be smart and safe while out in the woods and handling a gun while hunting. If you couldn't show that you were capable of being safe in the woods when hunting then you were not allowed to hunt on your own until you could prove yourself. This method was a way to ensure that new hunters were learning the proper ways to hunt without the pressures of carrying a firearm and being worried about using that safely and learning the proper techniques and trying to get a deer. The second year you went out and got a feel for what it felt like to carry your gun through the woods with you while hunting without having to worry about actually shooting something. And if you proved that you had what it took to hunt then in the third year you finally were given bullets and allowed to hunt for real. It's similar to a driving simulator, a safe place where you can learn and ease into the task of hunting, a place where you can learn and prove to your father, or whoever is doing your hunting training, that you can safely move through the woods and handle your gun when hunting.

Everyone who hunts in the state of Maine must complete a hunter education course that covers hunter safety topics (Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, *MDIFW recreational safety courses*). My father took hunter safety on top of doing the three-year family plan. My mother and Uncle Chip took their hunter safety course and practiced shooting at the local Rod and Gun club that their grandfather and great-uncle were active in. Gun safety lessons were always reiterated yearly for my mother and Uncle and being respectful of the animals and environment and safe while hunting were heavily emphasized lessons for them; although they never participated in anything like what my father's family did.

The traditions associated with hunting are an important aspect of the hunting experience and hunting culture and as will be discussed further in the “Why We Hunt” chapter it is a big reason that a lot of people enjoy hunting. My Uncle enjoys the traditions surrounding deer hunting more than actually hunting for the deer themselves, he says he enjoys:

C: Going into the woods and waiting until my toes are too cold and then coming in and getting breakfast and then watching other people decide to go back into the woods, and deciding how guilty I feel for sleeping in the chair. And then I usually sleep in the chair and wait, but I will usually go back out for the last bit and freeze my bum off

My Uncle’s favorite traditions are the naps he takes in the woods while out hunting and the meals put on for those who are going hunting, like large hunting breakfasts and lunches. My grandmother also loves the hunter’s breakfasts and she really enjoyed going to them when she was younger. Now one of her favorite things about hunting is the traditions associated with the activity, she especially loved the tradition of hunting camp:

G: We used to do hunting camp since before you were born with your mother and so that was a tradition. We’d come together and then as the years went by it became just kind of eating camp because we didn’t hunt very much, but we did like to be together and play cribbage and eat special food and stuff like that. And we still do that stuff and we call it that but we don’t even go near hunting anymore we just put on the blaze orange and do a picture.

Hunting camp was a yearly tradition created by my mother because she didn’t really fit into the traditions of male hunting parties that were common in my father’s, her first husband’s, family. She started the hunting camp tradition after my grandmother remarried to feel more connected and included in the hunting community she had been encouraged to join. Now that we’re all older we don’t have the traditional hunting camp like we used to, we go to my grandparents’ house for Thanksgiving and people go off

into the woods to hunt in between meals. My mother and Mark visit my grandparents frequently during hunting season and go hunting with them now that they aren't restricted by a high school sports schedule.

While everyone has their own personal traditions and some have traditions that reflect others there is one tradition that seems to be consistent among everyone that I interviewed. The tradition of handing down guns from one generation to the next is a common practice in each of the family branches that make up my own. My father and step-father both have guns from their father's and grandfathers'. My grandfather has his father's, grandfathers', and even great great uncle's guns that he plans to hand down to his children when it's time. As previously discussed my grandmother handed her first gun down to my uncle but she never received any guns from her father because he was a Marine and was not a fan of guns due to wartime trauma, so he had none to hand down to her. My mother and Uncle both have some of their father's guns. When talking to my uncle he explained in detail a number of the guns that had been handed down to him and how they were special to him:

C: A big part of our family is the tradition of handing down firearms from one generation to the next generation, so I have my dad's shotgun. I have a shotgun that his grandmother bought him when he was a young boy that he passed down to me. I have shotguns and rifles that belonged to my grandfather, I have this Blackhawk 357 revolver that I remember him carrying when he hunted when I was a young kid and I have his firearms because I was the only kid that hunted and he asked me and it was special and it was Grandpa's connection. So I asked for that so I have his Blackhawk super 6 357 I think it's a revolver. Then on the other side, on Amy's (his wife) side of the family, they have a big hunting tradition on her side of the family and Emma and Abby (his daughters) are the only grandkids so he's already passed to them several firearms that were significant to him that were belonging to him and his parents. They each have a shotgun and for him it was a 22 rifle for target shooting and things like that and that kind of tradition.



Passing down guns is a practice performed by many people, guns are something that if they still work many people keep them and hand them down to their younger relatives. As my grandfather explains:

T: Firearms are one of the few material goods that actually often increase in value. They appreciate in value and there's a second-hand market and you can hand them down. They last forever, most people will never wear a gun out and while there are exceptions to that, some people who shoot a lot will wear guns out and, even then they'll replace the barrels when the barrels get thin but most people don't. The average hunter doesn't shoot that much.

As was discussed in the "First Gun" chapter many people still have their old guns because they mean something special to them because they were their first gun or because someone special gave it to them. The importance of the first gun can aid in informing us as to the importance of the practice of handing down guns from one generation to the next. The guns that people used during their lifetimes are important to them so they want to share those important objects with their younger loved ones who share the same love of hunting that they do. And those who are getting these guns handed down to them look up to the people handing them down and find value in the guns as tools themselves and also for the importance they had to the people who once owned and utilized them. A gun is an important tool for a hunter, something that they often get and keep for many years as long as they enjoy the way that it works; to be able to hand something that served you well down to the next generation so that it may continue to serve someone you love well is also a good feeling to have. Being given something that had so much importance to someone is always special and it's even better if the object being handed down can still be useful for the shared experience that hunting is.

Along with the many traditions my family enjoys surrounding hunting there also seemed to be an unspoken and even unacknowledged tradition shared between them of

explaining things to me in what appeared to be an attempt to teach me more about the activities that I have never participated in. This was a very interesting aspect of the interviews, sometimes I would ask for clarification on things, and at other times explanations were offered up willingly to help me understand our conversation better or just to understand hunting better. For example when I was talking to my dad about how he tried bow hunting once he explained that bow hunting was:

R: Just basically sitting in a tree stand waiting for the deer to come, you have to put your tree stand up in the right place and wait for the deer to come to you. It's just boring, some people put up their tree stands and sit there for hours and I just can't do it. I sit there for an hour or two and I just get bored and I gotta go because I wanna be up and moving.

Because bow hunting is just simply sitting around, he much prefers to be moving around hunting with his rifle and I would also prefer to be moving around while hunting, not just sitting in one spot waiting for the deer to come to me. When I was interviewing my dad he also explained how to use a compass, as previously discussed he doesn't go out into the woods without making sure he has both of his compasses with him in case he gets lost and to help him get back to his starting point. When explaining how to use a compass he shared:

R: You always check before you go into the woods, you always orientate yourself where you are with the compass and which direction you should be headed in so if you're line on, say if you go in on a trail then you're supposed to come out on that trail in a southerly direction you would check your compass and find north. So you know which way north is and, like mine has an arrow on it, when I find north I turn my compass in whichever direction I need to go. If you really get down on it you should use degrees because a compass has 360 degrees and mine swivels because mines actually weighted like you can set it down on a map and orientate yourself on a map, but I've never really hunted with a map I just make sure I know to get where I need to go I go south, southwest, at whatever degree. Every now and then I'll just pull my compass out and check my bearing and make sure I'm going in the right direction. There's one strip of woods I use my compass in over at Steve's (his uncle). I use my compass in it every time we go into it because I can't get from point a to point b and I've been through it about 100

times. Most places I know I don't have to but I'll still look at it just in case I get turned around because it happens. Like if you see a deer track or if you see a deer then you start chasing it and you get turned around or if you've gone a far ways like I should be out by now, okay I need to check my compass, like if I know it should take me 45 minutes to walk through this piece of woods and it's been an hour and a half then something is wrong, so you check your compass. I mean everybody has a cellphone now so it's a lot different than it used to be because now you can look where you're at and be like "oh I gotta go this direction." We used to whistle to communicate with each other instead of talking because a deer will listen and hear that but if they hear talking, they know what talking is but if they hear a whistle they'll be like "what's that, is that a bird maybe I'm not so on alert."

This in-depth explanation of how to use a compass was appreciated, I feel like I could potentially figure out how to use a compass based on this explanation. What's most notable about this explanation, apart from the compass usage explanation itself, is the explanation of how they used to whistle in the woods and why. I had never considered using a specific form of communication when out in the woods because deer would be frightened of people talking due to human speech being an unnatural sound to hear in the woods. Humans are predators of deer so hearing talking even if it was a natural sound in the woods would still put them on edge. The use of whistles to communicate to sound more like a bird and not alert the deer too much to your presence is a great way to communicate in the woods and I'm glad that tidbit of information was shared with me. Throughout this project, I have been learning so much about the best ways to hunt and be successful that at this point I feel like I could put a lot of it into practice and potentially be successful.

If I were to go upland hunting with this newfound knowledge and I was successful I feel confident in my ability to clean a partridge as both my grandmother and uncle explained the process to me just in different ways. When my grandmother discussed the process of cleaning a partridge she explained:

G: There's a way of cleaning a partridge where you lay it on the ground facing up at you and you spread the wings out and you stand on either side of the wings and you pull the legs and it's like pulling a toddler out of a snowsuit. So then you just get the breast because the rest of it is just too small on a partridge. One time when I was hunting with Papa we were up in the Allagash so we were hunting on an old tote road and I got a partridge, so we pulled it out and that leaves the whole body of the bird intact and so we left it on the side of the road and I put the breast in my hunting bag in a ziplock. So we're coming back later in the day and there was another man that was a hunter there and papa and I were going by and the guy said "did you see this, did you see this!" and we said, "no, what's that?" "Look the whole bird is intact except the insides are gone," he said, "you know a minx will do that, a minx will attack a bird and will eat the insides."

I personally love this story because this man had no idea that this was a way that you could clean partridge easily in the woods and my grandparents didn't have the heart to tell him that they were the ones that had removed the bird's insides, they just let him believe it was a minx. I also love the allegory of pulling the insides of a bird out is similar to the way it feels to pull a child out of their winter snowsuit, it paints a picture that I understand better than if she would have just explained pulling the insides out in a more technical way as my Uncle did:

C: You spread the wings and put them on the ground and you stand on the wings and pull the feet and it pulls the intestines and everything out and you're left with the rest and the wings and the head comes off too so you don't have to worry about that.

My Uncle's explanation paints the same picture essentially just far more technical, when he was told that my grandmother related it to pulling a child out of a snowsuit he said that was "inappropriate" but I have to say I prefer that description as it's funnier. Another common practice used when bird hunting is the use of dogs to aid in finding and retrieving birds, my Uncle and grandparents all had their own bird dogs. My Uncle is currently in the process of training a new bird dog. When talking to my Uncle about hunting with a dog he explained the training process for them:

C: Training is a cycle, to train the dog it takes a year and a half usually and it's lots and lots of work but then you get 10 or 12 years, if you're lucky, of good hunting and then you get a couple years of this might be the last one; the last season. You're supposed to start a puppy in the middle of that and I never did so we missed out on hunting season.

It's best to start a new bird dog when you still have your last bird dog I would assume that's so the other dog can help to train the new dog and be a good example for the training dog. My Uncle had his old bird dog, Beezy, for 16 years before they had to put her down. They were lucky enough to get a new dog, Sprout, only a few months after losing Beezy. Sprout's training seems to be coming along well but that will be better understood once she has her first hunting season down. When discussing hunting with dogs with the family members who use them I learned that your success rate in bird hunting is roughly five times better with a dog than without a dog (Jolley, F. H., *What hunters should know about the 2022 pheasant and Quail Hunts.*). And for a bird dog to be acting correctly, they need to stay within sight of you, if they wander too far they aren't doing as much as they could to help you hunt. My grandparents used to have a dog named Sable that they would take hunting with them but she was funny because she would not retrieve the birds they shot. Bird dogs are supposed to flush birds so hunters can shoot them and go retrieve the bird and bring it back to the hunters who shot it. Sable knew the scent of partridge and would go flush them and if one was shot she would go find it and guard it for my grandparents but she would refuse to put it in her mouth and bring it back to them. If they wanted it they would have to go find her and pick it up themselves.

The traditions associated with hunting are wide and variable depending on the people participating in them but there are common practices, like hunter's breakfasts, that

keep people coming back for more every year. The tradition of teaching others about hunting and things relating to hunting like using a compass or cleaning birds is something that many may not think much of. Sharing stories and explaining how to do things comes naturally for the people in this community because they enjoy bringing others into their community and being able to talk to them. Even when an outsider, who doesn't hunt, is interested in learning more they share even more than they would with an experienced hunter because this newcomer lacks much of the knowledge that they have. It would appear to me that the tradition of teaching others about hunting is just as important as the traditions associated with making sure you have all of your gear together before going hunting and working with others in your hunting party to plan a hunt. The act of teaching newcomers in the community welcomes them into your group and it has been shown that people have a strong tendency to help out other in-group members as opposed to out-group members; which would be people outside of the hunting community in this case (Amira et al., 2021). The act of teaching someone about different hunting techniques and traditions is a way to help the in-group at an individual level and as a whole; the learner becomes a part of the group and gains knowledge that the rest of the group seemingly already knows. If a group is full of people who don't really know anything about what brings them together that's not a very strong group, so the newcomers are taught by those more experienced.

## CHAPTER 7: WHY WE HUNT

There are many different reasons that people choose to hunt and even reasons that people choose not to hunt. Having once been a hunter/gatherer society humans have been hunting for thousands of years, but what was once a necessity to survive has become a leisure sporting activity in an age of fast food and grocery stores. So why do people still continue to hunt when they could easily get their food source somewhere else assuming they had the money for it? This chapter looks into the reasons why my family members hunt, what their favorite and least favorite things to hunt are, and what they enjoy most about hunting as an activity. When discussing this question with my grandfather he shared that he hunts partially because he just enjoys being outdoors and in nature which was a common answer among those I interviewed. He continued to say:

T: I like to be out and about, I like seeing what's over the next hill and exploring, just being outside and observing wildlife and observing the habitat. I also enjoy the competition between the wildlife, you're in pursuit of something that doesn't want to be found or captured so there's an element of contest there that's kind of fun. You're playing a game, it's a sport I guess and it's just as old as nature, we've been hunting for a millenia so it's part of our makeup and it's part of our psyche. We are meat eaters and that's how we get our food but it's more than just the food. It's a part of the cycle of life. When you do get an animal then the fun is over and you have to deal with it, you have to gut it out and have to take it home and cut it up. Then you get the chance to eat the venison or whatever else you shot.

The sporting aspect is an important aspect of why some people hunt but my grandfather was the only one to discuss it as a reason for why he hunts. The theme of enjoying being out in nature and the outdoors is a common one among those I interviewed. When I asked Mark why he hunted he told me it was so he could get outdoors and that he hunted for deer meat and birds but those were just bonuses to hunting if he could get them. He enjoys hunting because it takes time and patience and

it's quiet in the woods as it's just him out there looking for deer while the woodland critters go about their daily lives. My father also had a similar appreciation for the outdoors and the animals that could be seen while out hunting for deer. When answering the question he told me that he hunts because he enjoys being outside and he likes the taste of venison, like Mark, he believes that getting a deer is just a bonus to hunting. His favorite thing to hunt is deer because he wants the meat but he still enjoys hunting whether he gets a deer or not as do most of the family members I interviewed. He enjoys spending time in the woods because you "see a lot of stuff out there" and hunting is different than just going on a regular hike through the woods because there's the prospect of getting venison or another type of meat during your trip.

My mother similarly enjoys hunting because she enjoys nature and she enjoys looking for exciting things in the woods while walking there to get exercise and stay warm. My mother began hunting to relate to family and boyfriends when she was younger which she says made her put pressure on herself to seem like she knew what she was doing. She never really thought too deeply about hunting until her mother remarried and started hunting more herself. For a while, my mother felt that she only hunted to see wildlife so she stopped carrying a gun and even now she claims to enjoy hunting with a camera more than a gun. She loves the meat that can be harvested through hunting but has never really felt the need to get a trophy or prove that she can kill something and she can shop for most of the meat she would like to eat so hunting hasn't really been something she loves to do. She has started carrying a gun again while hunting and enjoys it these days because she hunts with Mark and he is laid back and supportive so she doesn't feel any of the pressures she used to feel when hunting. She continues to hunt



today because hunting with her family is relaxed and fun and because she has become a part of a community that she hadn't been fully aware of in her younger years and she enjoys the comradery of that community.

Strangely enough, tagging a deer did not seem to be the reason any of my family members choose to hunt, of course, it's a part of why they hunt but it's far less important than I had previously thought it would be. My family members enjoy their time in the wilderness far more than they enjoy the shooting and tagging of the deer itself and while they appreciate the meat they get, hunting isn't really about that. My Uncle is an avid upland bird hunter but he has never shot a deer before, nevertheless, he continues to go out during deer season year after year. So what keeps him coming back? When asked why he hunts he explained:

C: I hunt partly for the challenge, mostly for the nostalgia of 25 years of hunting with Grammy and Papa and different relatives and with my dog Beezy, she's gone, but now we have Sprout who were training to hunt. I hunt for the exercise, for the activity, for being able to get out into the woods instead of sitting. I don't really do it for the food, mostly because I don't care about the food because I don't need the food but I eat it because that's the right thing to do. I think I hunt for the dream of a Norman Rockwell painting of myself with my first deer which has been lucidly avoiding me for the last 25 years. I have my grandfather's deer mount that I inherited after he passed away and someday maybe we'll have a camp to put it up in and maybe that's one of my motivations for hunting, to contribute to my generation's mount and collection.

My Uncle also enjoys the aspect of being out in the wilderness and dreams of getting his first deer because of the aesthetic of it all and the romanticism that something like a Norman Rockwell painting would convey. There is an outside pressure for my Uncle to hunt, he talked about feeling shame for having never shot a deer before and I'm sure that adds to his willingness to get back out into the woods every year and finally get the deer that's been eluding him all these years. He also feels a personal motivation to

add to a collection of family mounts that he could one day hand down to his children or grandchildren. Along with the exercise and outdoor experience provided by hunting my Uncle also enjoys the traditions associated with it and the memories he has with it:

C: When I started hunting we used to stay at the camp and we had a wood fire and we pumped out water from the spigot from the brook and we got up crazy early and went out in the dark and waited for the sun to rise. A lot of those traditions have just evolved, now we stay at the house and go into the woods here. For me it's more about the tradition than any attempt to actually harvest a deer, it's about the hunter's breakfasts and lunches and taking naps in the woods. I hunt for the history and the wonderful stories and I've heard all the stories and it's fun to contribute to them.

The traditions and stories associated with hunting are very important aspects for my Uncle and my grandmother. On top of hunting for food my grandmother explained that she finds herself getting excited about the traditions associated with deer season; every year she would:

G: Get the right clothes and get the noise makers and everything to get ready for deer hunting and you get up early in the morning while it's still dark out. There's a lot of excitement about hunting season and we've gone to what they call hunters breakfasts where different places will put on a breakfast for men and women who are going out early, so there's that. It's not just hunting that I enjoy, it's the campfires and it's the food and it all goes together, it's a good excuse to gather together with people and I like to do that.

My grandmother hunts because she enjoys the traditions and togetherness that hunting and hunting season brings. When she started going hunting it was because her boyfriend at the time, her first husband, was a hunter and invited her to go with him. Later when she got married to her second husband he was an avid hunter and he taught her how to hunt. She doesn't come right out and say that she began hunting because the people she loved hunted but it appears to be a big reason why she started and the way hunting brings people together and creates traditions has kept her interested in it all these years. She also enjoys the trophy aspect a little bit apart from being with people and

knowing she could get food if she needed to, she has a dream of shooting a big buck for the rack but she has no plans to get out into the woods and find that buck, it's a dream she enjoys to have but may never act upon.

When talking about the reasons why people choose to hunt and why they enjoyed hunting they gave differing answers depending on what they were setting out to hunt. For example, my grandmother says she's not the biggest fan of hunting deer but she appreciates it for the tradition and she would never want to hunt a moose because they are too big and dragging it out of the woods and processing all of the meat seems like it would be far too much of a hassle. Similarly, my grandfather says he has no desire to hunt anything other than deer or birds and my father has no interest in hunting anything other than deer; he used to put in for a moose permit every year but never got one so he gave up that dream. My father also enjoys hunting turkey but he doesn't do it very often. Everyone I interviewed except for my father goes upland bird hunting and all but Mark enjoy it more than deer hunting. My grandfather had this to say about it:

T: I actually enjoy upland hunting more now than I did back then and more than I do deer hunting, now I tend to be more interested in it now for a couple of reasons. One, it's just a beautiful time to be able to be out in the woods, in October it's warmer than it is in November so you can still be out in the woods without being heavily laden in tons of layers of clothes. It's just a nice time of year and I like to explore. When you're out bird hunting you have a good chance to explore and poke around in different places. You may run across an old cemetery and that's neat because you get the chance to look at old cemetery stones and find old things in the woods and old historical objects and that's pretty cool.

My grandmother enjoys upland bird hunting for very similar reasons to my grandfather:

G: Bird hunting I get really excited because I like to go off into the woods in places where I've never been and you'll see cellar holes and things that will bring up the history of a place. We've found rusted saw blades or things that show that

people used to live there although they've been gone for so long that everything has grown up around it. Or you'll find apple trees and apple trees don't usually grow unless people have planted one so you know that at one time or other somebody lived here long enough to plant an apple tree and you could hardly tell because the woods are so thick and there's no roads or there's barely a road. Being outside and seeing new places and thinking about what the past was like and talking about it, seeing logging camps and farms and things that were places that today people wouldn't even imagine that people ever lived there but obviously they did a long time before we came along. And I enjoy bird hunting more because you don't have to be quiet.

The act of being outside in nature and being able to explore the wild places that people once lived is a big reason why my grandparents both enjoy upland bird hunting. My mother enjoys bird hunting for similar reasons, there's more movement involved in a bird hunt but she acknowledges that she can also get frustrated by bird hunting because the target is small and more difficult to hit. My Uncle enjoys it for different reasons:

C: I think I prefer upland hunting with a well-trained dog because there's something special about watching a dog work and the dog flushing a bird that you didn't know was there.

On top of hunting for animals that would usually be eaten or harvested in some way after being killed, my family has also hunted for a number of different animals for reasons other than food or enjoyment. My grandfather hunted for porcupines when he was younger because there was a bounty on them so he would shoot them and turn their feet in to get the bounty money for them. My father also killed porcupines although he would not consider it hunting, he would consider it pest control. A porcupine once stuck his dog so he waged war against them and killed every porcupine he came across for years. Apart from porcupines, my father has also hunted coyotes but he does not consider it hunting he considers it "killing" and hunting and killing are two very different things to him. My father and Mark both killed coyotes when they lived on their family's farms' to protect their livestock. The distinction between hunting for sport or food and hunting as a

form of pest control is an interesting one that I didn't think I would come across. It may be interesting to look further into distinctions between why these two forms of hunting are considered to be so different, on a surface level I can understand it. There is an appreciation for what's being hunted but no real appreciation for what's being "controlled" but maybe that's just an outsider's perspective, maybe someone who participates in these activities could explain that difference better.

The reasons why people hunt are not the reasons I believed that I would get when I began this project. When I started this project I believed that I would get answers like "I hunt for fun" or "I hunt for food" not like what I did receive which were answers detailing how they hunted just to be outside in the wilderness and be a part of nature. The idea of getting food or trophies is just a bonus to the act of actually being out in the woods with a goal. The success of the hunt is a bonus and not the real reason anyone I interviewed actually hunts and I would be interested to know if that is consistent with other Mainers and people who hunt or if my family is a nature-loving anomaly in the hunting community. The primary goal of hunting is not the reason why my family members are hunting, which makes hunting that much more fascinating to me.

## CHAPTER 8: US VS THEM

There are many reasons that people choose to hunt, some were detailed in the “Why We Hunt” chapter, and lots of people have opinions on the reasons why people choose to hunt. There are distinct lines drawn between those who hunt purely for food and those who hunt purely for sport, as well as those who participate in poaching and those who are vehemently opposed to poaching. I discussed these differences between those who hunt for food and for sport and poaching most extensively with my father and my uncle; while everyone in my family hunts primarily for food these two were the most forthcoming about their feelings on this subject. My father shared outright that he’s “never agreed with poaching deer” and he’s:

R: Not a fan of people who go for giant antlers, if you're not doing it for the meat you shouldn't be hunting as far as I'm concerned. I've found deer in the woods with their antlers cut out, just like somebody took a saw and cut the antlers off and left the rest of it sitting right there.

L: They shot it and just took the antlers?

R: Oh yeah, shot it and cut the antlers off but left the deer there to rot. Those are the people that are just scumbags, those are the people that shouldn't hunt at all and shouldn't own guns. You don't just, it was a nice big buck and we were gonna take it but once we cut into it it stunk and it had already started rotting.

Finding this deer was very upsetting for my father, he says he would have loved to be there when it happened so he could have turned the people in to the wardens because he “would have turned them in in a heartbeat.” He told this story and described it as “stupid and a waste of a deer” which is true, shooting a deer and leaving it to rot is silly when even if you didn't want the meat you could at least donate it to a local food bank. This story was hard for me to wrap my head around. When I first heard it, the way my father understands it, someone simply shot a deer for the sole purpose of taking its antlers and left the rest of it to rot for the heck of it. That's a big waste of a deer and to

me it would only make sense to leave the whole deer behind if whoever shot it didn't have a tag for it and didn't have a plan to sneak the deer itself out of the woods to be processed untagged as many people who have illegally shot deer do; as we'll discuss in the "Less Than Legal" chapter. To me this story shows that someone believed the antlers were the most important thing, the meat didn't matter because if it did they would have taken it away with them. When I brought this story up to my Uncle Chip he had a hard time wrapping his head around it but for different reasons than I did. When I asked him, at a family gathering if he had ever heard of something like this he told me:

C: I have never because usually someone who is trophy hunting; I would have expected them to want the full glory of taking that animal to the tagging station and getting credit for it. If it's big enough to have a rack that you're proud of it should be big enough to take to the tagging station

My mom: Unless they also found it after it had been there too long

C: And just took the antlers, yeah that would, I mean that happens where some people shoot a deer and they're not able to find it and then I might think I could see someone saying "wow that's a big rack on a deer that we're not gonna take because it's been here too long and let's just take the antlers," short of a forensic investigation it's just hard for me to wrap my brain around why someone would kill a deer and take the antlers and not the meat if it was big enough for the antlers to be you know something, you were proud of but not big enough for you to go through the trouble of hauling the meat out.

This new perspective made the story of a scalped deer left to rot a little bit easier to wrap my head around but without having been there when it happened we'll never truly know which understanding is right. It's easier, or maybe just nicer, to believe that someone shot the deer and then couldn't find it once it ran and it died and was found by someone else later on who decided to take the antlers. As someone who doesn't hunt it's easy to forget that once a deer is shot that doesn't mean the deer will be found and removed from the woods because sometimes the shot isn't perfect and deer survive or they run and die far away from where they were shot. It's sad to think about for the deer

but to believe the best in people it's nice to think that it was just a mistake and misunderstanding. However, there is always the possibility that it was shot and scalped illegally but that's something we'll never know.

My discussion with my Uncle can help shed light on how complex the conversation about poaching can be and how the Warden industry is a difficult one to be in:

C: I'm glad that I don't work in that industry because I think it's a very difficult thing. I think times have changed, my grandfather told me stories about when he was a kid that they would because they were poor growing up, they would shoot deer and process them, butcher them in the kitchen with the shades pulled and no one would question it. I think even today there's probably people in parts of the country and parts of the state of Maine that can't afford groceries all the time and maybe for them, that's how they get their supplement, their meat you know for the winter. So that's tough and I have heard stories that I can't confirm that different places' wardens take different positions on that and I don't know but that to me I have much less concern particularly now where there's so few people hunting. I don't think that we have a shortage of deer, we have a shortage of hunters and the population of deer is not managed as well as it could be. But I believe that there's also the other side of it which is wasteful hunting and sport hunting and I don't think that's good.

Poaching is only a problem when it's wasteful, as long as the deer population is remaining strong and the people doing it are only doing it because they need to be hunting out of season or processing more than they should be in season because they need the meat; my Uncle who is the most ethically minded hunter in my family sees no problem with it. This is a great example of in-group and out-group dynamics; in-group preferences have been known to contribute to negative attitudes toward the out-group (Shamo-Nir et al., 2021). The feeling that poaching is wrong only if you're doing it for the "wrong" reasons is a common idea among my family members that sets them apart from others. You'll see further in the "Less Than Legal" chapter that my family is only really opposed to poaching when someone else is doing it and when they're doing it for a



trophy as opposed to hunting illegally for the sole purpose of getting food. Poaching to feed your family is not something that my family members take issue with. As long as the meat is processed and used the legality of how it was acquired does not appear to be a problem for most of them. There is a debate about whether it's okay to shoot a deer and have someone else tag it; this is illegal but many people believe that if someone has a tag it doesn't matter who shoots the deer as long as the tag is filled. While this debate can create two distinct groups, those who are willing to share their tag or fill someone else's and those who aren't; we'll be discussing that as well in the "Less Than Legal" chapter because it fits well with the stories that will be shared about tagging other people's deer.

There is a distinction between those who hunt for sport and those who hunt for food, whether they're doing it legally or illegally. It's all frowned upon by many of my family members, although sport hunting illegally is more of a problem for my family than legally hunting for sport. Only my Uncle Chip has ever gone sport hunting, the rest of my relatives interviewed for this paper have never hunted for sport alone, they hunt for food with the added bonus of getting some nice antlers. For many of them, the size of the deer only matters in that bigger deer offer more venison. When asked about hunting for sport my Uncle had this to say:

C: I believe in the management of populations and management of species and I trust, well I hope that I can trust the game management process. In Maine, we have Fish and Wildlife that maintain the population stats and say "okay this many deer in this region, this zone" and tell you how many you can hunt. If that's working, we cross our fingers and we hope that that's all working, then I think hunting is okay and if you hunt because of the sport or for the trophy or for the mount on the wall so long as you're processing the meat and doing something with it that's for people to decide what they want to do with it.

My Uncle has a deer mount that belonged to his grandfather and is hoping to put it up in a camp someday and he has a mounted Eider duck that he shot while hunting with

one of his friends. It's the only time he has gone hunting for sport and he says he wanted the mount partly because his friend threatened to have the duck mounted if he didn't; also because it's a really special memory for him. He's a big proponent of eating everything you kill so that nothing goes to waste but this duck may have been one of the only things he's ever shot that he didn't eat himself. He once shot a Spruce Grouse because he thought it was a Ruffed Grouse, as they look very similar until you shoot the wrong one the first time. While he only ever hunts for food other than that one instance of sport hunting with friends my Uncle says he used to have a dream that he would have a camp full of taxidermied animals he had shot. And while he may dream of owning a picturesque hunting camp one day, he's not there yet and would not fill his camp with only animals shot for trophy purposes.

The arguments about sport hunting fall along the lines of whether it's right or wrong to hunt animals if you don't care about the meat that they provide. Those on either side have their own opinions. If we wanted to boil it down to two camps we might say that one group believes that hunting should be for food along with the added benefit of trophies and the sporting feel; the other group would argue that as long as there's game management and something is done with the meat so it doesn't go to waste, hunters should be able to go after the biggest trophies they can. While the relationship between those who hunt for sport and those who purely hunt for food creates two distinct groups of hunters there is also a distinction between those who hunt and those who do not hunt. Those who hunt, even if they hunt for different reasons, have their own traditions and cultures and some might say even a language. The number of terms I had to ask for clarification on may have been a lot more if I didn't grow up around hunting my whole

life. My Uncle describes this difference between hunters and non-hunters the best by discussing his friends and coworkers:

C: There's conflict because of my family's traditions of hunting. A lot of my friends in my day-to-day circle are not hunters, well some of them are there's a few people at Garmin (where he works) that hunt and we have a special code that we can speak. But around the vegetarians which I have no problem with I didn't mean to say that in a negative way, but there's some people that I don't talk about hunting in front of because they're not hunters but they are friends and they respect the fact that I hunt. They've never shamed me for being a hunter, it's just not a shared language so we don't talk about it.

The difference between those who hunt and those who don't is only that one hunts and one doesn't but there's an added factor and feeling of community among those who hunt. As my Uncle points out here he doesn't frequently talk about hunting with his non-hunting friends because they don't share the hunting language. Those who hunt can speak their own code and understand the things that non-hunters can't. Sharing a language with someone is an almost immediate way to establish a group when surrounded by those who do not speak that language. My mother also acknowledged this difference in communities of people she knows who hunt and who do not hunt. My mother explained that since she's been hunting more she's shared more stories and photos on social media and she's had girlfriends that she didn't know hunted initiate conversations about their hunting experiences. A whole new side of her friends was shared with her after she shared some hunting posts on her social media.

I think that this conversation did not come up with any of the other people I interviewed because they are surrounded by others who hunt frequently in their personal and work lives just based on where they live and the types of jobs they have. Even though I have experienced this type of group-making in my daily life, most of my friends' families don't hunt but when my friends who do hunt or have family members who hunt

find out that I have a family full of hunters they start talking to me more about hunting than before they knew that. In writing this thesis and telling people it was about “hunting in Maine” my new coworkers believed that I myself was a hunter even though I had never claimed to be one and began to talk to me about hunting and things that they do not normally discuss with others in the office because no one else hunts. Hunters have their own welcoming community even if it is divided in a few places concerning ethics; those who are interested in joining or learning more about hunting are, at least from what I’ve seen, welcomed in and eagerly taught by those who have been a part of the community for longer than them.

The hunting community is a community of people who share a common language and a common love of hunting even if their reasons for hunting and the game they are hunting for differs from one person to the next. There are many different subsections of hunters within the broader community, for example, those who hunt for sport and those who hunt for food and also those who use compasses, and those who don’t. But despite their differences, they are all still hunters. There are many people who aren’t hunters and who have their own opinions, whether positive or negative, about hunters and the activity. For this outside group, one hunter or a small group of hunters can represent the entire group and if they are a bad representation of the group that could make a number of people dislike hunting as a whole; which in the most drastic scenarios can lead to new restrictive legislation for the hunting community. This idea that every hunter represents them all may be part of the reason why my family members and other hunters get so frustrated with the individuals who they believe aren’t behaving properly or hunting the

way they should be because these people could be making the community look bad which is not good for anyone.

## CHAPTER 9: THE TIMES ARE CHANGING

Once upon a time hunters were able to use lights to startle deer into freezing to make them easier to shoot; people could chase them down with dogs, and they could even run them down on soft snow and kill them without using guns (Judd, R. W. 2010). As with all things the rules and regulations surrounding hunting were changed to make it more sporting and better for the environment and the animals being hunted. The changing legislation impacts everything surrounding hunting, the animals being hunted, and those doing the hunting; which is why we will discuss some of the changes in legislation here. There are enough changes in hunting legislation in the last 80 years that an entire paper could be dedicated to the discussion of them. Here we will only be discussing the changes that were brought up during my interviews, namely porcupine and bear bounties, the deer driving regulations, bear baiting, and the recent change in antlerless deer permit rollout.

When my grandfather was younger there were bounties on both porcupines and bears. The porcupine bounty was in place from 1904 to 1967, before the 1950's a set of porcupine feet had a bounty of 25 cents but in 1954 the bounty was upped to 50 cents per porcupine (Joseph, 2012). My grandfather used to hunt porcupines because 50 cents was the price of a box of 22 shot so you could shoot one porcupine and get enough to buy a box of 22 shells. My grandfather describes how one would go about getting the bounty for the porcupine and why there was a bounty for porcupine:

T: If you cut off the hind feet and took them to the town clerk she'd give you 50 cents and the state would reimburse the town. It was a state bounty, they had a bounty on porcupines because porcupines were detrimental to pine trees, they would girdle the trees and kill the tree so they used to have a bounty.

My grandfather would cut off the hind legs of the porcupine and turn them in for 50 cents, but because the town clerk didn't know the difference between the front feet and the hind feet of a porcupine they would cut off the front feet as well and turn them in giving them a dollar for one porcupine rather than just 50 cents. While this is a clear instance of taking advantage of the system it was a common practice among the porcupine hunters my grandfather knew, it was an easy way to get an extra 50 cents that didn't really hurt the town they were living in because it was money coming from the state. There was also a bear bounty in Maine when my grandfather was younger because they were considered pests, you could get \$15 for shooting a bear in Maine when there was a bounty on them. The bounty on bears ended in the late 1950's due to the declining bear population but they became game animals in 1969 and today have numbers significant enough to allow for the continued use of bear baiting (OneProtest.org, *Maine: Bear-Defenders.*).

Bear baiting is a bear hunting technique defined as "hunting from an observation stand, blind, or other location that overlooks any bait or food, except standing crops and foods that have been left as a result of normal agricultural operations or natural occurrence (Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, *Bear Hunting*)". There are specific rules and regulations surrounding bear baiting, like when you are allowed to put bait out and when bait areas must be cleaned up by. There are also important regulations surrounding what can be used to bait bears, but even with all of these regulations bear baiting is a heavily debated practice. So heavily debated that in 2014 a bear baiting referendum was held that sought to ban the use of bait, also the use of dogs, in the

hunting of bears because it was considered “cruel, unsporting, and ecologically unsound” (Kevin, 2020).

The outcome of this referendum was close to a 50/50 split in votes but the referendum failed and bear baiting has continued to be legal and has not been voted on again since (Fleming, 2014). I remember this referendum coming up, we discussed it in my classes and even held a mock vote in my middle school to see how our voting would stack up against the state of Maine. I honestly can't remember the outcome of our vote but I do remember the arguments my classmates had for and against it. The only family member I really talked to about this was my Uncle Chip who felt that bear baiting and the use of dogs should be allowed for hunting bears because hunting bears is extremely difficult in general so “any advantage we can give hunters to get the bears” is a good thing in his opinion. He believes that these methods are fine as long as they continue to aid in population control and bear populations don't become lower than a healthy level for the population and ecosystem. An entire paper could be written about the ethics of bear baiting but for now, it's important to know that there are still arguments for and against it but it's a good example of how hunting legislation can change over time, especially when certain groups feel strongly one way or the other.

Another aspect of Maine hunting legislation and regulations that has seen numerous changes over the years are those surrounding the activity of deer driving and how many people you are allowed to be hunting with at one time. Driving deer is when multiple people work together to move through the woods and push deer in a certain direction toward another hunter who is waiting for the deer to come to them. Driving deer is prohibited and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife states “a person



may not participate in a hunt for deer in which an organized or planned effort is made to drive deer. Four or more persons working together with more deer constitutes such an effort” (Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, *Deer hunting*). That means that if you are a member of a group of four or more people actively attempting to move deer then you are breaking the law, but groups of three or fewer do not fall under this rule. When talking about this with my father he let me know that driving deer is legal in a lot of states but they only just passed this legislation sometime recently in Maine.

After learning this I went looking to see when this legislation was passed, the deer driving regulations we have now took effect in 2013 from what I can tell based on legislative documents (Maine Legislature, 2023). The language of the deer driving regulations changed between 2011 and 2012 as can be seen by looking through the Maine Hunting and Trapping Laws & Rules for 2012-2013 and 2009-2011. The wording in the 2009-2011 text is “driving deer or taking part in a deer drive is unlawful, except that 3 or fewer persons may hunt together, without the aid of noisemaking devices. Driving deer is an organized or planned effort to pursue, drive, chase or otherwise frighten or cause deer to move in the direction of any person(s) who are part of the organized or planned hunt and known to be waiting for the deer” (Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, 2009). The altered language in the 2013 legislation seems to imply that a deer drive is only possible with four or more people and therefore it would be lawful to essentially drive deer with three or fewer people because it does not necessarily go against the wording of the rule.

The deer driving rules were more strict in 1998, the language of that summary states “driving deer or taking part in a deer drive is unlawful. (Driving deer is an

organized or planned effort to pursue, drive, chase or otherwise frighten or cause deer to move in the direction of any person(s) who are part of the organized or planned hunt and known to be waiting for the deer)” (“Summary of Maine Hunting & Trapping Laws & Rules, 1998,” 1998). As is clear through the numerous changes in wording throughout the early 2000s the legislation around deer driving has changed a few times in the last 80 years. In 1969 and 1970 it was stated that “it is unlawful to drive deer by use of horns, whistles, or other noisemaking devices. It is unlawful for more than six persons to participate in a joint hunt for deer wherein an effort is made to drive deer” (“1969-1970 Hunting Regulations Summary,” 1969). In 1969 you were still not allowed to drive deer using noise-making objects that could scare them but a group of six or fewer people could coordinate their movements through the woods to drive the deer without the use of noise-making tools. Sometime between 1970 and 1975, this rule was changed as the hunting summary for that year reads “it shall be unlawful to participate in a joint hunt for deer, wherein an effort is made to drive deer. “Driving deer” is defined to mean the intentional act of pursuing, driving, chasing, or otherwise frightening or causing deer to move in the direction of any person or persons known to be waiting for the deer to be pursued, driven or chased” (Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Game, 1970). This wording is slightly different but essentially the same as the 1998 regulations.

At some point, the allowance of having six people or less hunting together was taken away and deer driving altogether was prohibited regardless of the number of people that would be attempting it. My grandfather remembers this change in regulation; people were upset because they had been driving deer for years. Driving deer used to be a Thanksgiving tradition, where the family would gather and six of them would go out into

the woods and work together to drive the deer and then they would all share in the venison that they worked together to get. Sometimes they would have more than six people out in the woods working together for the drive but they would space themselves out just enough so they could claim they had nothing to do with the other people out in the woods driving. The changes in deer driving regulations are a great example of how hunting legislation changes over time and can even be proactive or reactive to what's happening in the broader community.

Despite the deer driving legislation being relatively the same for the last 20 years people still gather in very large groups in an attempt to drive deer. My father once stumbled upon a group of about 20 hunters attempting to drive deer that were being busted by the Wardens Service. There were helicopters and everything and he watched a few people get cuffed before he made his leave from the scene as he wasn't a part of their party and didn't want to get into any trouble.

A great example of hunting legislation that changes every now and then is the number of deer someone can shoot. When my grandfather first started hunting you could shoot a deer of either gender but you were only allowed to shoot one deer regardless of the gender. There was a time in Maine when you could tag more than one deer; an effort to maintain the population of deer lowered the number of deer someone could tag to one. The antlerless deer permit was introduced when my grandfather was already an adult and as he explains it:

T: In order to shoot a doe or antlerless deer you had to get a permit that had to be drawn and I say antlerless because there are some male deers that don't have antlers so you have to be able to see antlers unless you have a permit and occasionally a doe will have antlers. Often they're shot and if you should shoot a doe with antlers that's okay because it has antlers that's why they call it antlerless

deer permit because you could theoretically shoot a doe with antlers or a buck without antlers.

Many people call the antlerless deer permit a doe permit because does are usually the deer that don't have antlers but as discussed with my grandfather this isn't always the case. I found this super interesting because as someone who doesn't hunt, I just thought the permit was a doe permit because that's what everyone calls it and I didn't realize that does could have antlers sometimes and that bucks may not grow antlers sometimes.

In the 2022 hunting season, there was a new rollout of the antlerless deer permit. In the past, you used to only be able to shoot an antlerless deer if you had the permit, but in 2022 if you were chosen in the lottery you had to purchase the permit to be able to use it or you could purchase a permit if there were any left over after the lottery ended. Having a permit you could then shoot an antlerless deer and go on to shoot a deer with antlers later in the season. This new rollout appeared to be a bit confusing for many as some people believed that if you shot your buck before your antlerless deer you could no longer shoot your antlerless deer but that doesn't seem to be the case. The Maine Hunting Laws page says "one and done: It is unlawful to hunt deer after having killed or registered one during the open season of that calendar year, unless you are participating in the expanded archery season on deer or possess a valid antlerless deer permit or Super Pack Antlerless Deer Permit" (Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, *Deer hunting*). Based on this rule anyone who was chosen to receive an antlerless deer permit and paid for it was entitled to two deer during the season, one antlerless deer and one deer with antlers. Along with confusion about how many deer one was allowed to shoot this year, there was also confusion about how people got their permits, some people didn't pay for their permits because they didn't know they had to pay for them. When tagging

his doe my dad heard from the person working at the tagging station that people would see they got a permit and shoot a deer thinking they were fine until they attempted to tag it and then they would run into some troubles there. There's nothing the tagging station can do so they just call the warden service and have them deal with it. My dad said it sounded like they were being nicer than usual this year if people were genuinely confused because they are testing out new rules for antlerless deer permits.

The regulations for how many deer you can tag and how many antlerless deer can be shot and by who every season is something that is frequently evaluated based on the number of hunters and population of deer. In the past, those who have antlerless deer permits received them through a lottery system and those permits take the place of their regular deer permit so they can only get one deer it just has to be antlerless. 2022 was the first year in a while that multiple deer were allowed to be tagged by those who had a permit, disregarding the bonus and superpack permits that have allowed hunters to get multiple deer in the past. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife decided to look into this new way of antlerless deer permitting because it would provide hunters with more opportunities to harvest deer. It would simultaneously allow the department to control the deer population "more actively" because, over the last few years, the department has been struggling in achieving the levels of doe harvesting that they have desired to be seeing (Haskell, 2022). The department believes that by allowing hunters to get both a doe and a buck they will be more likely to take a doe than if they had an any deer permit that would force them to choose between a doe and a buck. With an any deer permit, many simply choose to wait and get a buck even if they could get a doe. The proceeds from permit fees went to help fund the purchase and management of deer

wintering areas in Maine that are critical habitats for white-tailed deer living in the northern reaches of their habitats (Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife. *Information about Maine's antlerless Deer Permit*). This use of the permit fees was decided to aid the management of deer populations and also encourage people not to be hesitant in paying it because the money is going to a good cause that will benefit the deer and therefore the hunters (Haskell, 2022).

The change in antlerless deer hunting regulations and permit rollout shows how the legislation and regulations surrounding hunting are always changing in response to what's happening in local environments and in hopes to make things better for the future generations of both hunters and deer. Hunting regulations have changed a lot since regulations were first established in Maine and they will continue to change as long as the populations of deer and hunters change. The changing environment and landscapes in Maine will also dictate the hunting regulations that are altered or introduced in Maine. It will be interesting to see how the new antlerless deer permit rules and rollout impacts the 2023 hunting season and the seasons following that. Did the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife see the outcome they were hoping to see and thus the permit rollout and regulations will remain the same? Or did it not go the way they were hoping and therefore they'll try something different next year or maybe go back to the system that was previously in place? In 2021 the total number of deer harvested in Maine was 38,947 according to the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, *Big Game Species Harvest*). The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife does not have the official number of how many deer were harvested in 2022 on its website but according to News Center Maine over 42,000 deer

were harvested (Bennage, 2022). That is a drastic increase in the number of harvested deer and many attribute that to the new regulations on antlerless deer permits. In an attempt to keep populations at a healthy level the permit system may be altered for next year but it's safe to say if the department needs to cull the population, allowing individuals to tag more deer legally is a great way to do that.

## CHAPTER 10: LESS THAN LEGAL

Hunting is a highly regulated activity to ensure the safety of those hunting, the fairness of the hunt, and to protect the populations of the deer living in Maine because no one can hunt if there aren't enough deer. As a reminder when we discuss people in this chapter only my Uncle and mother who have no criminal history in the Maine woods and people who have since passed will be named because they have nothing to fear from the legal system. In place of the original letters denoting individual identities the letter A will be used for everyone it is not used to denote any other identities in this paper.

The amount of illegal activity that my family members have gotten up to in the past was pretty surprising while also, somehow, not surprising at all. They all grew up in fairly rural areas and most of them grew up on farms leaving them ample opportunity to go against the law and receive no real consequences as they were not usually caught due to the locations and times they were hunting. While I was recording our interviews they were all shy about sharing their criminal activity but as soon as I shut off my recorder I began to hear all the stories about how someone shot their biggest deer at night the day after hunting season ended so they couldn't tell anyone about it and had to process it in the basement. A number of stories about how deer were dragged out of the woods at night and processed without anybody ever being told because they had shot too many deer came up; stories about deer being shoved through basement windows to be processed out of sight out of season also came up.

It's safe to say that my family are insatiable hunters sometimes taking more than they can get as is evident by the hunter who claims to have shot more than 70 deer in their lifetime even though there's no legal way for that to be possible, trust me I've tried



to do the math and it never comes back right. When asked why they chose to participate in these illegal acts the answers are usually shrugs and laughs, leaving me to assume they did it because they could and because they were successful at not getting caught. I did get one solid answer when I learned of the deer being shoved through the basement window outside of the deer season, that was apparently done because my grandfather's father "liked to eat venison." They didn't need the meat like my great-grandfather on my mom's side of the family did, they had just simply run out of the venison they got during the regular season and decided they needed more. I even heard stories about my great-grandfather shooting deer from the window of his house, although I'll likely never get a solid answer as to why he did that. I would assume it was because it was an easy way to take out a deer from a nice vantage point.

Something that came up multiple times when interviewing people was the practice of having someone else tag a deer you shot or allowing your tag to be used by someone else. As a "huge proponent of hunting etiquette," my Uncle has some very specific feelings on tag sharing that are not shared by all hunters:

C: I have never shot someone else's deer, some people will shoot a deer and have someone else tag it or they will tag someone else's deer and I don't think that's ever okay. In terms of the ethics of hunting, when the biologist puts together how many tags should be issued for the season it's not an assumption that 100% of the tags issued will be filled. So if people tag other people's deer or call someone, like what are people doing when they're in the woods and they see a buck and they shoot it but they don't have a tag for it. They're just hoping that they can "oh call Charlie (his father) he has a tag, let's call him and he'll tag it," what if Charlie had tagged his deer already? How would they know? I just believe that you should fill your tag and if maybe, just maybe the closest I could see is if you're hunting with your buddies but I still wouldn't do it. And I've had people say "hey can I fill your tag" and I always say no, you can't.

The sentiment that everyone should fill their own tag and not tag other's deers is one shared by many people in the state of Maine including the Department of Inland

Fisheries & Wildlife. And while my Uncle has never given his tag away or taken anyone else's he does admit that he had a moment where he considered asking my grandmother if he could use her doe permit one year because it was the first deer he'd seen all season and it was the last day of the season; his moral compass checked in with him and he never even shot at it. There are many people who still share their tags and as was hinted at in my Uncle's testimony; Charlie, my grandfather, was notorious for agreeing to tag anyone's deer as he got older and was no longer able to hunt. When this was brought up to my Uncle all he had to say about it was "that's between Grampy and whoever he was doing that for." As a younger man, my grandfather would get other people to tag deer for him as my Uncle learned at his funeral:

C: When Grampy passed away, at his funeral one of his cousins who lived in the house in Gorham, Richard, shared the story that when he was a young man it was a Saturday or something and he was asleep. And all of a sudden grampy came barging into his room and said "Richard, get up I need you to come and tag a deer I shot," and it's like in the middle of the funeral recession and I didn't know what to do because I did not know that about grampy.

Grampy was a lover of venison and hunting and as a young man, I guess he would get the best of both worlds by using other people's tags to get more deer; in his older years as he became less able to hunt he would allow others to use his tag because he could still get the venison even if he couldn't go out and do it himself. While the argument against sharing tags makes sense based on the logic put forth by my Uncle about tags being based on not everyone filling them there are some people who either don't consider that or don't particularly care for that argument. When discussing the sharing of tags with someone who frequently got deer for Charlie they had this to say about all of it:

A: Your grandpa Charlie tagged a couple deer for us because he couldn't really get out so he'd always get a hunting license and a doe permit and all he had to do was show up. We literally did all the work for Charlie like loading it in the truck and he just got in the truck and drove it to the tagging station and then he'd come down and we'd cut it up and take a bunch of venison home and he'd take like half of it home at least. Because why not? It doesn't matter, they're gonna give the permit out no matter what, if they're gonna give a permit out and give you a license you don't really need to be out there doing it. The guy couldn't really get out into the woods and he was kind of limited to where he can go and what he can do and we're all fit and healthy so we would help him get his deer.

This sentiment is what I had grown up hearing and likely because of that reason I can still understand where they're coming from here. My grandfather had Polio as a child so his lungs weren't fully developed leading to health issues at an earlier age that left him unable to continue hunting. The people who would use his tag may have been ravenous hunters as my Uncle likes to call them but they always frame it as a friendly thing they did to "help out Charlie" because he loved hunting and he loved venison but couldn't get out there and do it himself. Sure the people hunting for him got something out of it as well and clearly the testimony here does not share the same concerns for the number of tags not reflecting the number of deer expecting to be shot but there is a stark difference between the ethics of my Uncle and the others I interviewed. I have not heard of the people who used my grandfather's tags using other people's tags as well, it's possible that they were only hunting deer for him but it's equally possible that they just weren't telling me because the tags they are using are those of people I don't know.

My mother also spoke about my grandfather allowing other people to use his tags for deer, her understanding of the situation is different from my Uncle's and more along the lines of the person who got deer for him:

CL: When his (Charlie) mobility really deteriorated he let some people know that he would share any venison they let him tag: there was always discussion about if he was still hunting for his own shot or wanting to tag out. He enjoyed being a

part of the group and enjoyed venison! He also knew the risk if a Game Warden ever was suspicious and questioned his having shot the deer himself. I never considered this a heinous crime, I know some deer were harvested and never tagged and he had the tag and the willingness to shoot the animal if he had the ability. I am glad he was never questioned though.

This narrative of events goes directly against the concerns that my Uncle has for other people shooting deer for my grandfather to tag. There was always a discussion about if my grandfather was still hunting himself or if he wanted someone else to help him get his deer, no one ever shot a deer for him without knowing if he had the tag for it. My grandfather loved to be involved in hunting as much as possible, especially when he could no longer fully hunt himself. There were people who were glad to help him out and get a deer he could tag to have venison and to keep him involved in the sport and community he loved so much.

While I've never heard of anyone who was hunting for my grandfather getting caught while hunting for him I did hear about someone who used to hunt for their 91-year-old neighbor who also couldn't hunt anymore. A group of people were out hunting for deer for older folks who couldn't hunt anymore and everyone in the group had already tagged their own deer. They saw some Game Wardens and in trying to run from them they ran into a different Warden who asked what they were in such a hurry for. For being out after tagging their deer they lost their guns and got almost \$1500 fines each and there were nine of them in the group so they "toned it down a little bit after that" and had to go to court to get their guns back. Getting in trouble for breaking the law encouraged this group to begin following the regulations a little more than they had been previously.

It seems that those who break the law when it comes to hunting do it more frequently when they aren't caught for it, which is likely true of all crime, but once they

get in trouble for it depending on how big the consequences are they step back in line and follow the law. I do know for some it took more than one instance of being caught before they finally decided crime in the woods wasn't for them. My Uncle was raised to be very respectful of the laws when it came to hunting and to be very respectful of nature and the deer population which the laws help to protect. He was raised in a very "do as I say and not as I do" type of way as can be seen through my grandfather's and great-grandfather's less than legal actions. But the others who consistently share tags and act in less than legal ways may have grown up around role models who encouraged or exemplified this kind of behavior. As is put forth by the social influence effect, people's behaviors and beliefs are largely influenced by the preferences and behaviors of the people around them (Wei et al., 2022). The effect of social influence can likely be to blame for how and why my relatives conduct their legal and illegal hunting activities. Regardless of the role models those in this chapter had, they likely had environments that allowed them to easily act below the law with little to no consequences for a long time before finally being caught. Some were never caught but grew out of their criminal ways, as far as I know that is.

## CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSION

When I started this project I was looking to uncover the reasons why people chose to start hunting and what keeps them coming back year after year. I was hoping to answer some of the questions posed in my introduction, why do we hunt? Is hunting just about the food and survival aspect? Is there something more to it? Are there only two real reasons people choose to hunt? For food and for a trophy that shows off how good they are at hunting? In interviewing my family I was able to answer all of these questions. Strangely enough, none of the answers I received were really what I was expecting; hunters hunt for many reasons and not only for the two reasons of getting food or a trophy to show off how good you are at hunting. Hunting, at least for my family, doesn't appear to be about the activity of hunting itself. Sure my grandfather enjoys the sporting and adversarial aspects of it and I'm sure the rest of them appreciate that aspect of it as well even if they didn't say it but there's more to hunting than that. My family members enjoy hunting for the traditions associated with it and for the stories that people experience and share. They enjoy hunting because they enjoy being out in the woods and surrounded by nature, killing an animal for its meat or some type of trophy is all just a bonus. The goal of hunting is simply considered a bonus to hunting in my family members' viewpoints. When I began this project I thought that I would find people enjoyed hunting for the sporting aspect of it and for the fact that you get food out of it if you're successful but that's not the case.

Hunting is enjoyable for the traditions that surround the activity, the hunters' lunches and breakfasts, and the planning of the hunt with your friends and relatives who are participating in hunting. Hunting brings people together in a way that not much else

does. It creates a welcoming community that's eager to train the next generation and share all the stories collected by members of the community. The sharing of hunting stories is essential to the culture and community that hunters have with one another; as was discussed by my Uncle, those who hunt are able to speak a different language with each other that non-hunters simply don't understand. When I shared with other people that I was doing this project they immediately wanted to talk about hunting with me because I showed an interest and seemed to have some kind of knowledge about it. I was even mistakenly believed to be a hunter by one of my coworkers although I never claimed to be one.

When interviewing my family I learned a lot of interesting things about hunting itself but also about my family members and their thoughts surrounding the activity. In the "Less Than Legal" chapter I discussed the illegal activities that my family members were getting up to in their younger years. This chapter showed the duality of opinions on hunting ethics surrounding the sharing of tags and how some believe it's wrong because the people who plan how many permits go out know that not all tags will be filled while others believe that if someone has a tag it's meant to be filled even if the person who has the tag isn't the one to shoot the deer. While my family members participated in some unlawful activities as younger hunters they either grew out of these practices or got in trouble enough times that they decided the criminal life wasn't for them. They may have been spurred on to go against the law because it was easy for them to get away with it in their rural hometowns, not that that's an excuse but it does shed a light onto why they may have been so willing to break the law.

The rules and regulations for hunting have been altered countless times since their implementation in the 1800s and the hunters who live through the changes have to conform to the new regulations or do their best to avoid the authorities while they aren't conforming to the law. All of the hunters in my family have seen the laws change and had to ensure that they understood these new changes to continue hunting. My grandfather, as the oldest hunter, has seen the most changes and has been impacted the most by them for that reason. While there's no telling what changes will be implemented regarding hunting in the future it's safe to say that there will be changes and in the coming years we should keep an eye on recently changed regulations, like the antlerless deer permit rollout, to see how those rules change or stay the same to benefit both the hunters and the deer.

While I've been able to answer a lot of the questions I had about my relatives and why they choose to hunt I think I've also been able to answer the questions I've posed about why my sister and I don't have any desire to hunt even though we've grown up surrounded by it. We've been able to experience hunting culture and a significant number of the traditions associated with it that my family members claim are the reason they like to hunt without ever having to hunt. We've also been able to be out in nature frequently as children and adults which is another reason my family members choose to hunt. We have been able to experience the hunting culture because we have hunters in our family and we can experience the outdoors and traditions all without having to hunt ourselves. If, as my family has made clear, the activity of hunting isn't the main point of hunting and it's everything else that goes along with it; my sister and I have been fully involved in that since we were kids. We've never wanted or needed to go hunting to get the



benefits of hunting that keeps people coming back and that's likely why we have never shown any interest.

Hunting is an activity that humans have been participating in for thousands of years and continue to participate in today even with the advent of fast food and grocery stores. My original thoughts that hunting was purely for sport and food have been proven wrong, but thinking about it now with the advent of major league sporting franchises and grocery stores the appeal of hunting has to be something different than what one can get in their daily life. Hunting is about the community, it's about the guns that you get gifted when you first begin hunting and the guns that are handed down from one generation to the next. It's about tagging your first deer or shooting your first bird and even if it's not a pretty sight it's still an accomplishment that not everyone can say they share. Hunting is about the sharing of your favorite stories and even your not so favorite stories, it's for the sharing of knowledge and techniques to aid other hunters in their efforts. Hunting in Maine is so much more than an outsider would expect and it would be interesting to hear what others throughout the state and outside of my family would say that hunting is all about for them.

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## AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Elizabeth Tibbetts was born in Portland, Maine on January 25th, 2001. She was raised in Poland, Maine and graduated from Poland Regional high School in 2019. She began her time at the University of Maine studying Civil Engineering but realized after the first year that it wasn't for her, she then switched her major to a double major in History and Psychology with a concentration in Abnormal/Social Psychology. During her time as a student she was a member of the Pre-Law Society, she served as the Vice President and then President of the Women's Club Basketball team, and she served as the Historian, Continuous Open Bidding Chairman, Standards Chairman, Risk Management Chair, and finally President of the Delta Zeta Sorority.

Upon graduation, Elizabeth plans to take a gap year and work before applying to law school or grad school; she still hasn't decided which path she would prefer to take.