

Jared Andrews  
Age: 17  
Denham Springs High School  
22970 Greene Acres Blvd.  
Denham Springs, La. 70726  
225-664-6712

## My Dad, My Hero, My Friend

I was almost nervous, as I sat in anticipation, waiting for the sun to rise and warm the air. It was a cold November morning, and I was about to embark on my first deer hunt alone. When it was time to go, the man who sat quietly next to me like many times before spoke and said, “let’s go.” I listened to his words with undivided attention and took them in, making sure to interpret every one correctly. The two of us stepped from the truck, grabbed our gear, and I followed the man down the riverbank, walking quietly, making sure not to step on anything that lie in the path. As we rounded a bend in the river, the man stopped, turned around and said, “good luck,” then before leaving, softly whispered, “remember everything that I taught you.” The man turned and walked away, his outline disappearing into the darkness. I began to walk in the opposite direction, towards my very own deer stand. As I walked slowly, I could not help but wonder, who was this man that I followed so cautiously, and listened to so intently? This man was my father, and he had just let his son go for the very first time.

That very morning, I killed my first deer, a doe. I sat impatiently waiting for my dad to come and get me from my stand, my hands shaking wildly from nervousness. Shortly after I made the shot, I saw the gleam of hunters orange slowly moving down the ridge, and my heart leapt because I knew it was my dad. When I climbed down, he quietly asked, “well, what did you shoot?” My reply was not nearly as calm as his question.

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**by: Jared Andrews**

My voice squeaked as I managed to get out the words, “a...a doe.” That morning, I learned about the art of trailing a deer. This time, I was in front as he nudged me through the briars, making sure to point out every spot of blood that I missed. As the briars opened into a small clearing, I felt his hand grasp my shoulder, and saw him point as he said, “there she is.” As I approached her slowly, I felt as though I were going to have a heart attack. I sat beside her, and felt the elation that every hunter feels at that moment. I thought no one could be happier than I was at that time, but I was wrong. I looked up at my dad, standing beside me, and could not help but stare at his smile. The look of pride I saw on his face that morning will forever be etched in my memory. There was a man happier than I was at that very moment, and that man was my father.

Throughout my life, my father has been responsible for planting thousands of strong morals and values into my heart, and at times he was forced to sit back and watch them grow. There seems to be an unbroken bond between a father and his son in times like this. There were times when I remember thinking that my father was going overboard trying to teach me the importance of these values, but I still listened intently, almost afraid to miss any word, because I knew their importance. There are no other more important times in my life than the ones spent with my father learning how to become a good outdoorsman, and simply just learning to be a man. The values he’s passed on to me, were also passed on to him by his father, and one day, I in turn hope to pass them on to my son. The values that I learned in the woods are the building blocks of my character ... a character that will shine throughout my lifetime, and a character that I owe to my father.