

THANKSGIVING

As I pen this article, I'm finalizing my hunting plans for the Peninsula State Park special Black Powder hunt with my brother-in-law. Weather forecast is favorable with temperatures in the 30s. The WI Gun Season means the Holidays are here; Thanksgiving and Christmas, and time with family and friends. This article will be about those things I am so very thankful for.

I'm thankful for my family's patience and support of my meanderings with the WMLA, Wisconsin Traditional Archers and hunting in general. These pursuits do not come without a cost whether monetary or in time away from the family. My granddaughter kind of summarized it best when she asked the following question this weekend; Grandpa when are you going to be done so you can play with us?" I would wager that all of us have been the subject of such an inquiry during our years. My only response is to remember that family is first and maintaining a balanced life is key to a long and happy experience on both fronts. Family extends beyond our spouse, children and grandchildren. The WMLA, WTA and WI Hunter Safety Instructors are an extended family and provide enrichment to our lives. Thank you all for enriching my life.

I'm thankful for this incredible country and state that we live in and The Declaration of Independence, The Constitution of the United States and The Bill of Rights. The following lines are shared over and over again and deservedly so: "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." There are other famous Amendments that continue to be challenged and the founding fathers knew that our republic would be challenged. Each of us will need to assess our own situation to defend or go silent. When considering your immediate situation, think about the future generations. Our grandchildren might not experience the excitement of walking into the woods carrying a flintlock or percussion piece. I personally find that thought repulsive and unacceptable. I will continue to share the aforementioned documents with you over the next year.

I'm extremely appreciative to everybody that made 2019 a very favorable and positive experience. Thank you to Christopher Thulien for his efforts on the Badger State Muzzleloader and Norm Hotz for stepping forward as the WMLA Sectary and keeping his family life in balance. There are some couples like Charlie and Carolyn Brown, Chuck and Mary Baum and Gary and Lori Lang that provide incredible support to the WMLA effort. And I would be remiss if I left out the District Representatives and Committee Chairpersons. These folks are the frame work of the WMLA and could use

assistance throughout the year at various activities. Those activities are listed in the Badger State. Please contact these folks and offer your assistance. You will be happy you did. They have so much incredible knowledge and they love to share. Also, think about sharing that hunting picture with Christopher. Make sure to put some sort of caption. A good hunting experience doesn't necessary have to have a carcass in the foreground. A picture of your camp with everybody sitting around a fire or standing with your muzzle loaders is excellent.

One final note for 2019, I read an article from NPR, National Public Radio, A new U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey shows that today, only about 5 percent of Americans, 16 years old and older, actually hunt. That's half of what it was 50 years ago and the decline is expected to accelerate over the next decade. What are you and I going to do about that trend? Offer to take a person hunting or to the range and experience the sights and sounds of firing a black powder muzzle loader.

Thank you again for the honor of being your President. All of you make this one superior organization. I wish each of you a safe and enjoyable Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas. Be careful, I want to see you in 2020.

Your Humble Servant
Mark A. Conklin
WMLA President/Merchandise Chairperson
Black Irish