

endorsements

An autobiography of growth, change, determination, and beliefs of an amazing woman. To me this is not a “hunting book” but a book on life and transitions that far exceeds the target audience of hunters.

—Jerry Barnhart, shotgun instructor

Educational and thoughtful, and the personal stories made me laugh.

—Eris Audette, hunter education instructor

This is another great book by a terrific author. Dr. Obrecht has a gift of relating to her reading audience and vice versa. I’m not a hunter, but found this to be entertaining and thoughtful.

—Jamie Fitzgerald, pistol shooter

I thoroughly enjoyed reading these hunting stories and find it fascinating to learn how the author went from vegetarian to hunter.

—Rena Sebold, lifetime hunter

Dawn is a master at helping us fully understand information. If you are anti-hunting, do yourself a favor and read this book. You will learn that hunters are indeed the true conservationists that keep our habitat and land healthy. If you are a hunter, you will be introduced to some fabulous recipes and information you can share with your family. And this book makes a wonderful gift. My husband and I hunt; he introduced me to this wonderful aspect of the outdoors. I am forever grateful to my husband and to Dawn!

—Marsha Petrie Sue, speaker, coach, author, www.MarshaPetrieSue.com

A great book on exploring the world of hunting for women! I am not a hunter, but have always been on the “hunt” in getting started. This book, written by a female hunter for women, is a wonderful way to get started and will motivate you to learn more, as well as anticipate your first hunt. Easy and delicious recipes for your catch and for filling your freezer, with many options for your dinner table. A must-have book to add to your hunting and cookbook library!

—Vincenza (Vinni) Carey, NRA-certified instructor, TWAW leader for CT

A refreshing and enlightening look at one woman’s inspiring journey into the world of hunting. Dawn’s storytelling is powerful and entertaining, and her tips and wisdom are insightful. Immerse yourself in this fun and meaningful adventure.

—Tracy Barnes, Olympic biathlete and founder of Check Outside, www.checkoutside.com

Always remember to be a mentor in all you do. What you’ve discovered is worth sharing. There are so many reasons why we hunt, but being strong and self-sufficient, and reaping the rewards after a hard season’s hunt makes the time around the table more important and the fellowship and meals more savory.

—Mia Anstine, owner of MAC Outdoors LLC, hunting guide, freelance writer, podcast host, commentator, public speaker, instructor. www.MiaAnstine.com

Yes, I HUNT!

One Woman's Hunting Adventures

~ Includes Recipes ~

© Dawn Obrecht, MD 2018

Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022

Toll Free (844) 2REDEEM (273-3336)

Redemption Press is honored to present this title in partnership with the author. The views expressed or implied in this work are those of the author. Redemption Press provides our imprint seal representing design excellence, creative content, and high-quality production.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior permission of the copyright holder, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Scripture taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*. Copyright © 2000; 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-0-9861998-9-9

978-0-9861998-7-5 (ePub)

978-0-9861998-8-2 (Mobi)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2018946791

Yes, I HUNT!

One Woman's Hunting Adventures

~ Includes Recipes ~

Dawn V. Obrecht, MD

REDEMPTION
PRESS 



dedication



To Erik:

Thanks for being my partner in hunting and in everything else for the past thirty years.

I'm signing up for the next thirty!

acknowledgments

Thank you to everyone who has helped me enter, embrace, and enjoy the world of hunting—especially, of course, Erik.

To the people who have allowed us to hunt on your land, I am so appreciative. We have pulled elk and deer off Peroulis, Wurgler, Guthrie, and Sebold properties for many years. Nancy and Mick, I appreciate the introduction to eating elk and the concept of hunting you offered the girls and me so long ago.

Thanks for the chainsaw work, Loren, and for consistently helping us when our animal was down in absolutely obnoxious places.

Thank you to both Toms for all your help over the years.

The first people we met when we bought our Steamboat land were the Sebolds, and we connected immediately when we told them we had just filled our antelope license. Thank you for becoming life-long friends.

We have had so many wonderful meals and evenings together with all of you. Our conversations about hunting, our children and grandchildren, how we think God wants us to be of service, and many other topics have added a valuable and unexpected dimension to my hunting. I am grateful for this part of my life.



contents

Part 1: The Makings of a Lady Hunter

Chapter 1	The Vegetarian and the Hunter.....	15
Chapter 2	Family Roots	19
Chapter 3	Setting the Table.....	25
Chapter 4	Checking It Out.....	31
Chapter 5	“Let’s Do It”	35

Part 2: On the Hunt

Chapter 6	The Day I Bought a Freezer	45
Chapter 7	Preparation	47
Chapter 8	“I Got One—I Really Did!”	51
Chapter 9	A New Way of Life	59
Chapter 10	So You Married a Hunter	63

Part 3: Stories to Tell

Chapter 11	Becoming a Real Hunter	75
Chapter 12	Wild Company	87
Chapter 13	Ghosts of the Forest	97
Chapter 14	Wrong Side of the Fence	117
Chapter 15	Hunting Naked.....	121
Chapter 16	Ethical Dilemmas.....	127
Chapter 17	Reading the Tracks	133

Chapter 18	Gifts	137
Chapter 19	Duck, Duck, Goose?	149
Chapter 20	Friends and Fun	155
Chapter 21	What a Season!.....	161
Part 4: From Forest to Freezer		
Chapter 22	After the Kill	167
Chapter 23	To Cut or Not to Cut.....	175
Chapter 24	How to and How Not To	181
Chapter 25	Hunting Safety, Tips, and Wisdom.....	185
Part 5: Sharing the Bounty		
Chapter 26	On Cooking Game	197
Chapter 27	Everyday Recipes.....	203
Afterword.....		239

part 1

The Makings of a Lady Hunter



The Vegetarian and the Hunter

"You want to do what?" I looked over at Erik, the man I was dating. *Is he kidding?*

"I want to have my rifle sent out from Minnesota and start hunting again," he repeated calmly but with a determined look in his eyes.

Momentarily silenced, I thought, *That's crazy—I'm a vegetarian. How's this going to work?*

I was a thirty-nine-year-old vegetarian who ate from my garden and truly liked tofu, beans, nuts, and eggs—all good protein sources. The word "hunting" was not in my personal vocabulary, at least not in the same sentence as my name. Killing an animal to eat sounded different . . . foreign and interesting . . . not something I had ever considered making part of my life. But I'm open to almost anything not illegal, immoral, or destructive, and typically don't reject new ideas without some thought.

How should I respond? It wasn't that I hadn't been exposed to eating wild game. A few neighbors were hunters, and I had eaten elk on at least one occasion. But to actually kill an animal to eat? While I had never considered doing it myself, the concept sounded oddly pure and clean, unlike the store-bought meat I had avoided for years.

Erik had told me stories of his fond memories as a teenager of hunting deer and waterfowl with his father and brother. In northern Minnesota's Iron Range where he grew up, hunting was a part

of life. On the first Monday of deer season, school was closed for “Deer Day.” His dad, a retired pastor, talked about hunters coming to church on Sundays during deer season in full hunting gear—cold, muddy, and tired—but taking a break to attend his tiny rural church, perhaps thanking God for safety and for success, or maybe praying for success or just getting in out of the cold.

I saw the gleam of excitement in Erik’s eyes and thought, *I’m going to have to do some processing of this idea.*

We were both living in Denver and had begun dating in the summer of 1988. Erik was clearly the love of my life. We were getting to know one another’s likes and dislikes, and both strongly encouraged each other’s passions. As Erik talked enthusiastically about the prime hunting grounds for elk, antelope, deer, and other game that awaited him just a few hours away in both the western mountains and eastern plains of Colorado, I wondered, *How can I discourage him from doing something he really wants to do?*

I respected Erik’s new-to-me interest and wanted to be supportive, but I have never been good at sitting on the sidelines, and I just don’t do well with spectator sports. How would we work this out?

I had some real soul-searching to do. Not morally opposed to killing any living thing, as many of my vegetarian friends were, I had avoided most meat for several years for health reasons. I had a distaste for fatty foods and genuinely liked vegetables. The idea of eating fatty, antibiotic- and steroid-adulterated chicken, beef, or pork made me cringe. I did still cook a turkey at Thanksgiving and ate meat on the rare occasion it was offered at a friend’s home without an alternative, but I never chose it if there were options.

Even before I became vegetarian, I had stopped eating veal after learning about the cruel way calves are raised to keep the meat tender. Overcrowded feedlots for cattle and chickens are just not acceptable to me. Yes, nature is cruel and wild animals don’t have easy lives, but the brutal treatment of domestic animals is much more repulsive to me than the quick death of a hunter’s bullet, sparing that animal possible death by starvation or disease during severe Colorado winters.

The Vegetarian and the Hunter

If Erik started hunting, what would that mean for my predominantly vegetarian lifestyle?

While I had eaten meat when visiting family and friends during childhood, and also after leaving home, I had been through several phases of nutritional choices—mostly vegetarian as a child and in the past few years. Technically, I was an omnivore, especially if averaged out over my lifetime.



Family Roots

The two people who became my parents were both born into poverty, but neither seemed to notice. My dad, born in 1900 in Baltimore, told stories of pulling his little red wagon as an eight- or nine-year-old from his row house in the city to the corner icehouse to buy blocks of ice for a penny. The young businessman dragged them in his wagon to his “customers” and sold the blocks for two pennies each.

Dad’s parents purchased a small farm on the Severn River in Maryland in the late 1800s. The city where they lived most of the year was sweltering hot during the summer, absent modern air conditioning and good insulation. Most women and children migrated to either the ocean or a river, while the men remained in the city to work.

My grandfather established a feed mill that sold animal feed and hay to farmers in the Maryland countryside. His sons, my father and his two brothers, went to work in the mill the day after graduating from high school. Uncle Charles attended law school at night, and his sons, both lawyers, are known as the “Obrecht Boys” in much of South Baltimore. Uncle George and Dad worked in the mill their entire lives. The Obrechts were German immigrants with a strong work ethic and commitment to frugality and simplicity.

One of the mill's products was Ken-L Ration dog food. I had lamps, a cookie jar, salt and peppershakers, and other products with the yellow Ken-L Ration logo. My dad made enough money to support our family of four and put my brother and me through college and medical school on the proceeds from sales of dog food.

Growing up, I climbed on the 100-pound sacks of feed and the bales of hay in the warehouse, hid behind the feed sacks stacked over a dozen high, and chased the cats and kittens kept as mousers in the mill. When I was old enough, I learned how to call my dad at work. He always came to the phone and was proud of being available to me.

Grandmother Obrecht died when I was two. One day in the front room of his town house, my ninety-four-year-old grandfather gave me my grandmother's wedding ring, which I have worn ever since. At twelve, the youngest of several granddaughters, I knew I was being honored with this special gift of the ring he had given the grandmother I didn't remember, sometime in the late 1800s.

Grandpop was not a cuddly, huggable kind of man, and the physical contact we had was confined to perfunctory hugs upon arriving and departing, so the gift of my grandmother's ring was a solemn occasion. With German reserve, we expressed quietly with our eyes and soft voices as much love, admiration, and appreciation as a perhaps more effusive Italian family would convey with waving hands and high-pitched exclamations. I wore the ring only on very special occasions, until becoming engaged to Erik, when I began to wear it full time. We chose wedding bands to match the antique ring, and I frequently reflect on where this ring was before it came to me.

Sharing Our Meals

During World War I, the captured German prisoners of war were put to work, as there was a shortage of both prison space and farm and factory workers. Many POWs were trustworthy and eager to have something to do. My father recalled the young men who came to their farm to work during the day and seemed to be happy to work

Family Roots

on a farm where the owners, my grandparents, were from Germany and spoke their language. My grandmother invited them into the family home for a midday meal and served familiar food from her farm kitchen. How comforting this must have been to young men so far from home! Yes, they were the enemy, but they also were people just like us. The prisoners sat at the table with my dad, his siblings, and my grandparents for midday meals and were treated with respect. I'm sure they were thankful and found comfort in sharing meals with people who spoke their language.

The tradition in the family of inviting anyone in the vicinity to join us for a meal has continued. Weekends were often the times when we worked in our yard, offering extra work to my dad's week-day laborers. Several of his men liked coming to our home to help in the yard, with its three-quarters of an acre of trees, flowers, and vegetables.

When Mom had our typical midday meal ready, she would call all of us, including the workers, whatever their skin color, shabby work clothes, or poor command of the English language, to sit together at our kitchen table and eat. Mom was born in the South in 1910, and was a writer and an English teacher; yet being kind outweighed her need for racial or class separation.

Years later when I was a medical resident in a downtown Baltimore hospital, one of Dad's workers, Shorty, was a patient on my floor. I was not his doctor, but found out he was there. Late at night, long after visiting hours were over and after I had finished my paperwork, I went to his room to say hello. Exhausted, I flopped down in a chair at the foot of his bed to talk about the old days in the feed mill and in our backyard.

One of the nurses came by and said, "Visiting hours are over; you'll need to leave." When I told her I was Dr. Obrecht, she laughed, embarrassed. She hadn't realized this elderly, illiterate black man was my friend, someone with whom I had grown up eating lunch!

More recently, my husband was spending a few hours one evening with our ten-year-old grandson, Alex, as otherwise he would

have been alone, and Alex offered to cook burritos from scratch for him. He cooked the meat, used a second pan to cook tortillas (frozen, premade but raw), then chopped tomatoes and peppers. When Erik offered to help, Alex responded, “No, Grandpa, I want you to feel welcome in our home.”

I believe what he said is due to influence directly from his dad, my son-in-law, as much as from my daughter. I am so happy the tradition of welcoming friends and family into our homes and to our tables is being preserved.

My son-in-law and I both leave cold drinks (I include cookies) out for the trash collectors on hot days. They don't have time to come in for a meal, but would be welcome in either home if they could.

My memories of communal meals are indicative of how I feel about food. I see meals and sharing food as a central part of my life. Not only am I a “foodie”—meaning I like different flavors and types of food and am always excited by trying something new—but I love to feed people.

Seventy years after my grandmother fed German POWs, I began the Thanksgiving tradition of inviting a group of friends to our home. For seventeen years, until the girls grew up and we moved away from Denver, we had anywhere from twenty-five to thirty-five guests on Thanksgiving. A core group attended every year, and there were invariably extra people who were stranded, had no family in town, or were in a difficult phase of their lives who joined us, often invited by one of our regular members and meeting me for the first time when they arrived at our home. I am so glad everyone felt welcome. I always cooked two twenty-five-pound turkeys with all the trimmings, and friends brought a variety of side dishes and desserts.

Crabbing on the Severn

On Grandpop's farm on the Severn River, many members of my family would choose to fish from a small skiff that had an outboard motor. I much preferred staying on the dock and attending to the slightly more active job of pulling in crabs and setting the pots.

Family Roots

I'd pull in those crabs, slowly, slowly, as they were not hooked, just holding on to the rope with front claws while they ate the bait. My cousins and I tried to pull them to within reach of the net, fooling them into letting down their guard and coming close enough so we could catch them in our bucket-type net at the end of a long pole. When we pulled the rope close, excitement would sometimes take over and our quick actions would startle the crab into letting go.

We would also fill the wooden crab pots with fish heads and chicken necks to attract them. The entrance to the box was structured so the crabs could get in but not exit. We threw the box, attached to a rope and filled with appetizers for the many crabs that lived on the river bottom, into the murky water. Watching it sink, we held our breath. How many would we catch? How long did we have to wait before pulling on the rope, just dragging the box close enough to the surface to check its contents? Some ten to twenty feet of rope allowed the box to drift that far from the dock, which made me aware that these creatures were in the water where I swam and on the bottom of the river where I waded. How much damage could they do to one of my toes if they were to mistake it for lunch?

Some days we would take a large net, about six feet wide and fifteen feet long, into the river. We would assign two of the tallest cousins to walk in the deepest water holding the net as widely stretched as possible, the lower end close to the sandy bottom of the river, the top just at the surface. The smaller of us, like me, would hold the other end and walk in the shallow water, stretching the net out as close to its full fifteen feet as the water depth would allow. It was always exciting to see what treasures we would discover: a variety of small crabs, as well as minnows, little sunfish, and jellyfish.

Sometimes we'd catch enough crabs. Sometimes we'd buy them from one of the many Baltimore crab houses. Mom would steam them with Old Bay seasoning, and we would devour them on an outdoor picnic table. They were a meal in themselves, although sometimes we ate coleslaw and corn bread along with them. Even Mom, who wouldn't touch meat, thoroughly enjoyed our crab feasts.

I guess I was really raised as a pescatarian, not a vegetarian. When we were finished, Dad would scoop up all the shells and bury them in the soil in our garden, where they served as excellent fertilizer for his enormous prized tomatoes and spurred some fascinating hues of hydrangeas.

By the age of nine, I had my own strawberry patch. Dad made it for me, building a raised bed in the backyard of our new-to-us 1904 home. We dumped bags of “good dirt,” topsoil, into my little box, and I planted strawberries. All summer I tended *my* garden, adding mulch from the corner compost of organic material that Dad added to each day.

Grass clippings, leaves, and food scraps, especially seafood such as fish heads and crab shells, made up a very efficient organic fertilizer. After one of our big crab feasts, shelling and eating dozens of freshly caught Chesapeake Bay crabs, some of the scraps would go to the compost heap and others would be buried a foot or more in the ground near some of his plants. He controlled the colors of the blooms by how much acidic or basic fertilizer he added to the dirt. The gifts were blue, pink, purple, and mixed blossoms.

As I learned about soil preparation, planting, watering, and caring for vegetables, fruits, and flowers, this became the roots of my hunting and gathering future.