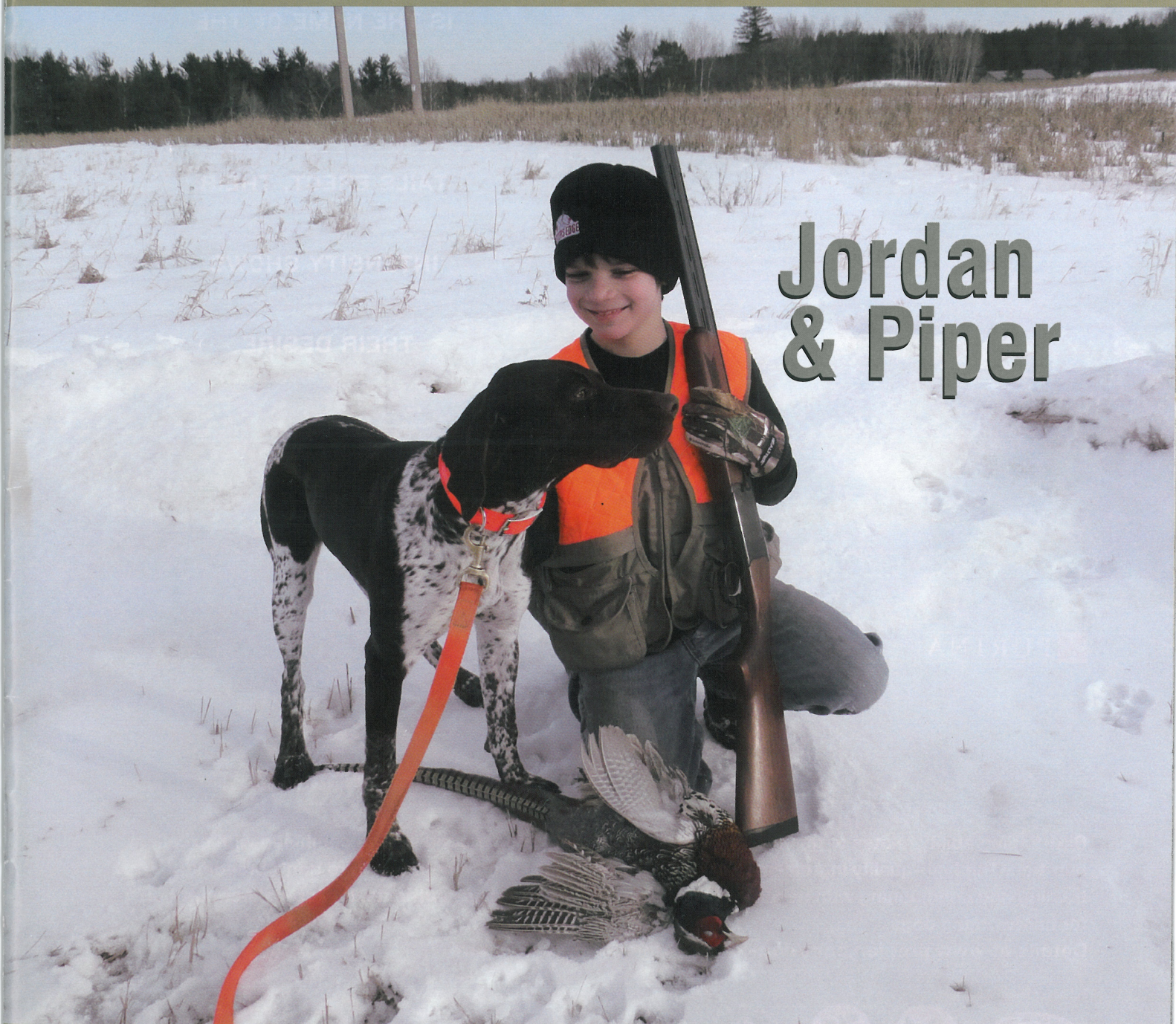


VERSATILE HUNTING DOG

A Publication of The North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association • Volume XLIV • No. 8 • August 2013



Jordan
& Piper

Special Issue: NAVHDA KIDS!

THE IDAHO “DUCK BOYS”



As a grandparent, I have had to donate considerable time to the grandparenting role that I inherited following the marriages of my two children and the births of their children.

I have four grandchildren so I've attended my share of school plays, birthday parties, and so many of the sports played by five- or six- year-old kids these days. I attended all the events I could; it was mostly making an appearance to please my children (the parents) more than the grandkids or myself when the grandkids were young. This has all changed, however, as the kids have come to the age to play sports at a much more serious level with the competitiveness needed to win. The boys are now old enough to take an interest in hunting, and now seem to feel the passion their grandpa has toward the outdoors. Our conversations usually have me asking about their sports and them asking me if I've been hunting lately. What I enjoy the most about grandparenting these days, however, is my time in the duck blind with my two grandsons, “The Duck Boys of Idaho” – Hunter Farris, age nine, and Brett Littrell, age 11. Both faithfully watch *The Duck Commander* weekly and Brett can face-paint every bit as well as Willie Robertson does before a hunt.

All a scheduled hunt requires for these two is a phone invite and a pick-up time. They never turn down a day of ducking with Grandpa. Both have their own dogs, so we have plenty of dog power. Hunter could be our dog handler because he is still a year away from being able to hunt. Brett, as always, would be the first gunner, and I get to do the calling. I'm like a kid the night before the opening of deer season when going to take these two on a hunt. I must have checked the clock 20 times before the alarm went off that morning.

Legal shooting time this morning was 7:41, and Brett's gun dropped the first of his seven-duck limit at that exact time, 7:41. I fired only one shot that morning and was rewarded with a scratch hit that sailed a widgeon to an adjacent pond several hundred yards away. I let the boys go for a hopeful retrieve and suggested a jump shoot on a new pond we had just built to obtain Brett's seventh duck for his limit. One lone shot meant there were some ducks on the pond, and I couldn't wait to hear of the sneak they had put on. They returned about 30 minutes later with two ducks: the widgeon I'd sailed and a monster drake mallard that was as large as a corn-fed, park duck. They both told the story of the masterful sneak (including belly crawling) to bag the trophy drake and the successful duck search Dixi had performed to recover my sailed widgeon. I sat back sipping my coffee and asking questions

as if I hadn't a clue about their adventure. I pretty well knew what had transpired as I could hear Hunter barking off his commands to the two dogs, and the news of the retrievers rang back from both boys' cheers all the way to my location. There were a lot of “dead bird Romo” and “Dixi fetch” commands echoing back to my blind, even though I was so far away. You see, Hunter was an experienced dog handler, having trained and handled his pup Romo in a May NAVHDA Natural Ability test. His coach that day, Senior Judge Steve Kane, had taught him that using his deeper/serious voice got better behavior results, and his commands this day illustrated that lesson.

Hunter's pup Romo (Hidden Acres Atlas) earned 108 points at his NAVHDA Natural Ability test. Hunter still talks about his and Steve's day in the field together and how good the pizza was that Penny Masar brought for lunch. Hunter and his dad, Bryce Farris, are huge Dallas Cowboy fans, so one can just imagine where they got Romo's name. Brett is my daughter Brooke Littrell's son. All in her family are huge Green Bay fans. Brett has watched Brett Favre play in both Seattle and at Lambo field in Green Bay, thus explaining his name.

I am truly blessed to be able to enjoy the “Idaho Duck Boys” at duck camp each weekend and again during Christmas school break. I watch as their hearts continue to fill with memories of a marsh life with Grandpa and his dogs. Sharing the passion I have for my dogs is starting to show in these two boys also. They have both graduated beyond the excitement stage of playing with puppies when visiting our kennel and are showing a mature interest in dog behavior, training, and the genetics making their dogs so much better at hunting than Grandma's Shih-Tzu, Paytn. Grandma is a Denver Bronco fan and damned proud of her dog's name, especially this year.

We end each day's hunt with a breakfast at the nearby Garage Cafe, because their pancakes can be ordered at any time of the day. Hunter considers them to be tops on his food priority list. He even requests this quaint little cafe for his birthday dinner and orders pancakes. At the end of our day, I'm probably more exhausted than the two boys combined and wondering if they enjoyed the outing half as much as I did. Ironically, both paid me off with a hug and “thank you” when I dropped them off back at home, thus answering my question. Later that day I learned that Brett had breasted his seven ducks, wrapped each in cheesecloth, and they were in the brine, waiting to be smoked. Again, my pride in a grandson put a twinkle in my eye as I watch a future hunter develop, possessing all the favors we want to see come into place.