

Transcript

Episode 34: "AV Deer Hunt on the 'Living the Dream Outdoors' Podcast with Bill Cooper"

Episode Intro

Andy Braams: This month's episode of *Biblical Perspectives on Aging* is rather different. In fact, this episode actually originated on another podcast called *Living the Dream Outdoors*, which is hosted by Bill Cooper. Now, why would we borrow from another podcast for our own podcast? Well, it's because two of our staff, Dr. Rodney Harrison and Spencer Hutson are a part of this interview that Bill Cooper does. There's also one other person from the National Deer Association that is on there and your question might be, "Well, Andy, why are you talking about Deer, and [the] Deer Association, and such, on the *Biblical Perspectives on Aging* podcast?"

Well, perhaps you've seen in the papers, in the state papers, and what not, perhaps you haven't. But Baptist Homes has recently held a couple of senior deer hunts, one at our Ironton facility in September, and a second one...by the time this one airs...will have taken place near our Ozark campus. And these are senior deer hunts where we have been able to have senior adults, our residents, to be able to come out and to participate in a deer hunt, some of them perhaps for the first time, others for the first time in years and or decades.

So this podcast, again, originally aired on another podcast, *Living The Dream Outdoors*. It is hosted by Bill Cooper, and what you will hear is the unedited version of that particular podcast.

You will also hear...you can also review the transcripts, which we have made available as we typically do on our podcast...you'll also hear a couple of references where they take commercial breaks, and we did not include their commercials. That was not a part of the podcast, and our podcast is not commercialized.

So, when he says, "We'll be right back in a couple of minutes," as soon as you can blink, you're probably going [to hear], "Well, welcome back," or, "Well, welcome back to the podcast." But I do hope you enjoy this podcast. Again, it's unique, it's different, but so is the event, and so are the smiles and the joy that was had by everyone from staff to those who were participating in the hunt, to the volunteers that all made it happen.

So, this is a little longer than usual, but sit back [and] enjoy it. See what kind of blessing that God laid upon Baptist Homes through the ministry that this deer hunt allowed for so many to be involved [in] and to be a part of.

Transcript

Episode 34: "AV Deer Hunt on the 'Living the Dream Outdoors' Podcast with Bill Cooper"

AV Deer Hunt, Segment 1

Bill Cooper: Welcome to [the] *Living the Dream Outdoors* podcast. I'm your host, Bill Cooper, and I'm happy to say I've had a new outdoor experience this weekend. I'm over in

Arcadia Valley to Baptist Homes to the Arcadia Valley building for a Senior Hunt. I've been in hundreds of camps all over from Alaska to the Yucatan, and I gotta say, this is one of the coolest hunts I've ever been in on my life.

I'm 73 years old so I can identify [with] these guys. A group of volunteers are actually taking residents of [a] Baptist nursing home on a crossbow hunt for whitetail deer. Now, that's just a wonderful, wonderful activity. But I've got some real experts here with me today, and I'm gonna lean on [them] pretty hard.

And I have Rodney Harrison. He's the President of the Baptist Homes & Healthcare Ministries. I have Spencer Hutson. He...Hutson?

Spencer Hutson: Hutson.

Bill Cooper: Yeah. Everybody knows Spencer Hutson. He's been around for decades. He's a Church Relations Specialist with Baptist Homes & Healthcare Ministries. Then now, boy, here's a mouthful. I hope I pronounce this correctly. It's Cheyne?

Cheyne Matzenbacher: It is Cheyne.

Bill Cooper: Matzenbacher?

Cheyne Matzenbacher: Matzenbacher.

Bill Cooper: Matzenbacher. Is that German?

Cheyne Matzenbacher: Very German.

Bill Cooper: Very German.

He's a Deer Outreach Specialist with a National Deer Association. So we've got, oh, I figure about 200 years or more worth of experience sitting right here at this one table. So, I expect this to be one of the most fabulous programs I've ever aired.

Well, Rodney, I wanna start with you. I've listened to you for just a few hours last night and today. It's been pretty fascinating to listen to the inspiration that you have for this hunting program. And I think it was kind of your idea to start this program. And it was cause of previous inspirations that came your way. Share that story with us, how it all began.

Rodney Harrison: Well, it all began when I was watching *Growing Deer TV* with Grant Wood and I've been following that now probably for about 12, 13 years. And some of the most memorable episodes were when Grant would go hunting with his father. In fact, he'd called him, "Pop."

And I just noticed [a] progression from the time that Pop would go into the tree stands, or they would go into the tower stands. And then, pretty soon, he was hunting from a ground

blind. And later on, because of the weather and the seasons, the final hunts were [with] the crossbow from a ground blind.

And, of course, not too long ago, a few years ago, there was a tribute episode because Pop went home to be with the Lord. And I started thinking about my own journey. My father took me deer hunting, whitetail hunting, when I was 16 years old. We also went when I was 17 in California at the time. We never saw anything. But you know what I found out is my dad had done the same thing. His father had taken him whitetail hunting in California when he was 16 and 17, and kind of the same result. They really never saw anything. In fact, back in those days if you saw deer tracks, that was a really memorable event.

And so, years later, I'm here in Missouri and 10 years ago I was blessed to have my parents move from California to Missouri. And so we went deer hunting and we started off with a managed deer hunt over in Smithville Lake put on by the Corps of Engineers and went hunting on our little 20-acre property once and really never did have great luck and my father never did harvest a deer.

But then, a couple years ago, actually it was the '20-21 season, we went with some friends down in the Ozarks and my father harvested his first deer 70 years after his first deer hunt.

Bill Cooper: Wow. That's incredible.

Rodney Harrison: And the emotions... the joy... the stories... Before long, the story is being shared among folks in their church, in the community, the family's talking about it...the kids and the grandkids and the great-grandkids are all talking about the fact that Grandpa harvested his first deer. And I'll never forget when they came down to our cabin down in the Ozarks, and he was able to see that deer mounted and just how emotional it was.

Well, my father's at a point where he can no longer be out in the woods. But I thought, you know, here he was in this season of life that most people think, "Well, you're pretty much gonna stay home." And the reality is that's not how God has created us. He's created us to be out in his creation, and as long as possible.

So my inspiration for this came from my dad. And I thought, "Wow, Lord, you have put me in a position where I am overseeing a network of senior care facilities. Let's make sure people understand you come here to live, not to die. You're coming here to live."

Bill Cooper: Wow. Tremendous story. And I can identify with that a bit 'cuz I wrote a story [a] couple years ago titled, *My Dad Never Killed a Deer*. Absolute truth. I was raised in [the] Missouri bootheel. I can remember it making the newspapers when somebody would find a deer track over on an island in [the] Mississippi River.

Well, Spencer Hutson, Church Relations Specialist,. I don't know what that means, but you've been involved for decades. I knew your father before you [were] heavily involved in the Baptist Association. But what's your relationship to all this hunting program that's going on?

Spencer Hutson: Well, Rodney and I know that we both like to hunt and we actually deer-hunted together at Deer Camp last year. Dr. Harrison and I, and oh, my brother, and we both harvested deer and had a great time.

When he brought this opportunity up, we just thought it was a great idea. We began thinking about how we might involve volunteers across the state from churches, and so forth. And, of course, you go to our church and you were one of our volunteers, and...

Bill Cooper: ...I got my arm twisted pretty much.

Spencer Hutson: You got your arm twisted and we twisted the pastor's arm and another layman's arm and [had] a great group.

But, I've been out doing the annual meeting circuit where most of our Baptist associations have an annual meeting where they elect their officers and approve their budget for the year, and all that kind of thing. And they invite the entities to come in and share about our ministries.

And so, there's a lot of things going on with Baptist Homes. We're expanding rapidly and there's a lot of things to share. But the last two nights I was out Monday night and Tuesday night and both nights I closed out with telling them about this deer hunt. And it was almost like we were getting cheers out in the audience. They just thought it was the greatest thing.

Then after the dismissal, the old men wanna come up and talk to me about it. And it's just really neat for them to see that the Baptist Homes, like Dr. Harrison said, is not a place to go to die, but a place to live.

And so, we want to improve that quality of attitude not only in our homes, but across the state and even in our churches.

I think the message will be that, "Hey, we've got some people here that need another chance. We need to really figure out how we can help them do some of the things that they thought they couldn't do anymore." So that's kind of...we're the cheerleader for that in the churches.

Bill Cooper: Well, I gotta commend you. I mean, like I said, I've just been here a day and a half so far, and it's just been a tremendous circle of people who are contributing to this event. I think the volunteers are more excited than the participants.

But we also have Cheyne Matzenbacher. Did I get it right that time?

Cheyne Matzenbacher: You got it right.

Bill Cooper: Getting closer, huh?

Well, Cheyne, you're with the National Deer Association. And how in the world did you, ...somebody's doing a good job somewhere. You got coupled up with these guys and kind of

ramrodding a program here. You and your sidekick just put on a tremendous presentation this morning.

I've been deer hunting for over 50 years and I learned some things and [I] thought, "This is going to be all the same old stuff if I've heard a hundred times over." But [I] loved the presentation. Very well done. I didn't hear anybody snoring. No. Pretty grand. But great information. But tell me how you gotten involved in this program.

Cheyne Matzenbacher: Well, I'm a Deer Outreach Specialist. And that's a fancy way of saying I work with private landowners working on their property to manage deer. And essentially, they're wildlife cooperatives or groups of neighbors working together because a deer's home range is gonna be bigger than just one person's property, usually.

So, when all those landowners work together collectively on their properties together in that cooperative, they can manage the deer herd a little better than they could just by themselves on their own piece of property.

Long story short, I cover the southern half of Missouri, and my counterpart Carly, Dawson, Gill now...it was Dawson...Carly Gill, she works in the northern half of the state. We form new wildlife cooperatives all the time, you know, across the state here. And in Missouri, we've probably got close to 30 cooperatives across the state that we cover. And one of the new cooperatives that she formed this year was with Dr. Harrison.

And so, they got together and he kind of pitched the idea to her, and then she said, "That sounds awesome. Let's try to work something out. Let's get some details." And so, they started talking about it. And he said, "But we really would like to do this on the property at our flagship campus in Arcadia Valley, which is, you know, down here in the southern half of Missouri."

And she said, "Well, I need to get you in touch with Cheyne. He's in the southern half of the state. That's gonna be his area. But it doesn't matter because we're kind of partnering on this deal." And she's here as well on this deal and helping out with all kinds of education and mentoring and things like that.

But that's kind of how it all came about was it was actually starting a co-op and then it turned into, "Hey, what about this opportunity?" And really, we thought it was gonna be a great fit for our Field to Fork Program. And what that is, our Field to Fork Program, it kind of covers what we call R3 and that's recruitment, retention, or reactivation of new hunters.

Bill Cooper: Which phase are we in here?

Cheyne Matzenbacher: We're, you know, honestly, I think for this one we're hitting all of them. There's some hunters, some new hunters. So, we're recruiting new people with our education. People that aren't, might not be the ones that are behind the sticks there, you know, shooting today, but they might be somebody that's come in for part of the education. They're learning things, they're getting, you know, kind of interested in [it] saying, "You know, maybe I want to do that."

That's a whole idea. We want to get new hunters out there. I mean, we're losing hunters across the board at an exponential rate. And you know, they, not everybody grew up like we did hunting and fishing out there in the woods. But we want to get those folks out there that have always maybe had an interest or thought it might be neat and given that opportunity to get out there and hunt.

But in this particular case, we're targeting seniors and a lot of these are what we would call reactivation. Maybe it's been a few years now. The gentleman that I get to mentor today, he's 91 years old and he's been hunting and fishing his whole life, but it's been a little bit since he's been out there hunting. And from what I understand, you know, once he came here, I think he's been here at Baptist Homes for about seven years, that he thought that that was pretty much the end of his hunting career. And we're actually giving him the opportunity to do that where he lives.

So, this property here, if I'm not mistaken, is 160 acres and they've got all kinds of great habitats surrounding the property, but it hasn't been hunted in a very, very long [time]. So the deer know that this is the place to hang out. So we're gonna do some deer management on the property here at Baptist Homes and hopefully take some of these seniors out that maybe have just not had that opportunity in years to hunt.

Or maybe it's a whole new game. The great thing about the guy I'm mentoring today...his name is Fred...he's never killed a deer with a crossbow. And so, he's gonna get out there today at the range. We took him out there, taught him how to shoot with the Crossbow. Man, he was just bulls-eyeing that thing, every single shot.

[It] kind of surprised me at how good of a shot...he actually...he surprised all of us. And so, I'm not worried about anything except for the deer. The deer is in trouble. There's a trouble comes out to that. So, I'm excited to...hopefully we get that opportunity. Tonight, we'll take five of those new hunters, those senior hunters out, and try to give them an opportunity to harvest a deer on the property here.

And I think this is hopefully gonna be the first of many across the state here with Baptist Homes at some of their other campuses.

Bill Cooper: Well, I'd say this campus has been a tremendous success already, and we haven't actually gotten into blinds yet. We may have to...Spencer, you and I may have to...do a later segment after we get home, a wrap-up on this thing, you know. But what a tremendous program, man. But you mentioned co-op. Just briefly tell us what a co-op is, really.

Cheyne Matzenbacher: Yeah, it's farmers and neighbors and landowners, anybody that has property. And a lot of times, it can even be someone who's leasing the property. It doesn't have to be the actual owner. But get all those neighbors working together in cooperation with each other, with the same goals for deer management.

And we always say, “Quality deer management.” And, of course, the National Deer Association used to be the Quality Deer Management Association before we merged with the National Deer Alliance a couple of years ago. And, we want to teach people about herd management. We wanna teach ‘em about herd monitoring.

We want to just give them the basic tools they need to succeed in deer management for their properties. But like I said earlier, you can’t do that if you only have 20 acres. There’s no way all the deer are gonna be staying on your property. They’re gonna roam around. Their home range is bigger than your 20 acres.

It’s bigger than your five acres. But we get all of those neighbors working together with those same common goals. And so, hey, “We’re gonna pass those yearling bucks. We’re gonna let them grow up. We’re gonna let them get in the gene pool in a breeding population. We’re gonna give those little button buck fawns a chance to actually grow some antlers.”

“And we’re gonna take a fair amount of antlerless deer or does so that way it makes our buck-to-doe ratio correct. It makes sure we don’t have overpopulation problems with our herd. But the co-op is essentially just neighbors coming together for the common interest of deer management on their properties collectively.

Bill Cooper: And it’s good for everybody concerned?

Cheyne Matzenbacher: Pretty much.

Bill Cooper: Yeah, sure sounds like it. Well, guys, you know, time flies [when] you’re having fun. We’re through the first segment already. Seemed like we only spent a couple minutes here, but we’re all talking about a subject very near and dear to our hearts. So folks, don’t run away.

We don’t care if you’re driving down road carrying the groceries in or singing to yourself. Stay with us. We’ll be back in just a couple of minutes.

Transcript

Episode 34: “AV Deer Hunt on the ‘Living the Dream Outdoors’ Podcast with Bill Cooper”

AV Deer Hunt, Segment 2

Bill Cooper: Welcome back to *Living the Dream Outdoors* podcast. Oh, we’re having a good time here today. I won’t say in the studio, but we’re actually in a nursing home. I’m afraid they’re gonna keep me, Spencer.

Spencer Hutson: Oh, they might. They might.

Bill Cooper: I don’t think I’d be too afraid. You know, I’m 73 years old, not far out. Yeah. You know, thinking about this kind of stuff, but what a wonderful place to be.

Dr. Harrison, this is [an] absolutely beautiful campus. I've never seen anything like this. Nursing, you know, the term, nursing home...is that what you call it? What do you call this facility?

Rodney Harrison: Long-term care facility.

Bill Cooper: Long-term care facility. You know, that always kind of scared me, but I've told them, man, if, you know, if they had room and I would like about a 10 acre fishing lake. Can you swing that?

Rodney Harrison: We have one here for you.

Bill Cooper: Oh, I brought a crossbow. I didn't bring my fishing gear, but I can have my wife bring that over. But Dr. Harrison, I know this is near and dear to your heart, but this event that's taking place over the next couple of days, what does it really mean to you personally?

I know you've worked long and hard on this project, but still all of us kind of have those little secrets inside, you know, and sometimes we don't wanna talk about it cause it gets a little emotional. But you're a heavily-experienced gentleman, and I think you can probably handle it.

Rodney Harrison: You know, in Psalm 71, in the Scriptures, it says, "Do not cast me off in time of my old age and forsake me not when my strength is spent."

That is really the reason Baptist Homes was founded 109 years ago.

Bill Cooper: 109 years.

Rodney Harrison: And, so often, when we think about growing old, we think about everything that we've lost. Think about the autonomy, just being able to make the decision, "I'm gonna go into the deer stand today." That may not be possible. And you start hunting maybe a ground blind, but pretty soon, that doesn't become possible.

There comes a time when we all need a little bit of help. And the Bible talks about the fact that, during those times, we help one another. And that is what is so beautiful about this event. And I'm hoping and praying that this event will be a catalyst, not just for Baptist Homes and our campuses spread throughout Missouri, but for other operators, other communities, other retirement centers that they start thinking about how can we help our neighbors, our communities, be involved in God's creation.

And so, you know, this is much bigger than just Baptist Homes. This is really about quality of life. It is about being the hands and feet of Jesus and being able to help people enjoy God's creation. So that is what gets me excited about waking up every morning and being able to look forward to each and every new day.

Bill Cooper: Oh, boy. I'm telling you, it's just a great inspiration to hear that story. I think you could talk for days about it. I really do. You need to write a book or start working on a book.

This would just be a tremendous asset to people. And sometimes, you know, as human beings, we get an idea like that and we think, "Well, that wouldn't mount to hill of beans."

But I can tell you about a true story. [A] college professor of mine, Dr. Glenn Weaver, came from Houston, Missouri. [A] little kind of hole in the road, but Dr. Glenn managed to finagle a baseball scholarship for the University of Missouri. And after all [is] said and done well, he hung around and became a professor, assistant professor in a parks and recreation department and a storytelling fool.

I mean, he just mesmerized us [with] stories. Some of the first stories I ever heard about turkey hunting...you know, just an incredible individual. But the department was growing pretty fast and he got a master's degree and they, of course warned him to get a doctor's degree and we had to call him Dr. Weaver.

Well, they added tourism to the department. They didn't really have any tourism experts, so Dr. Weaver got appointed [as] kind of a tourism director and was charged to write a book about tourism. He said, "Bill, I didn't know how to spell the word." He took off and wrote a book that became the Bible of tourism around the world.

He had, I don't know how many, foreign countries offer him jobs to be their national tourism director. Just cause he wrote a book, you know? So the challenge, Dr. Harrison, [is] I think there are good things and you've got dreams of this expanding and becoming something. We're finding out already that there's a need for this, there's a desire for this.

And as we watch today some, there's people shooting those cross bows. You see the twinkles in the eyes? Oh yeah. Yeah.

Rodney Harrison: And you know, the greatest part, much like my dad's story, these individuals that are out there hunting, these seniors, are inspiring their children, their grandchildren, and their great-grandchildren.

So as Cheyne was saying, we're really hitting all three R's of what it's going to take to have a sustainable conservation strategy for our state and other states. And that's, that's important because we all value the land that we have. And we need to make sure that we preserve those rights, that we don't give them up, but that we sustain quality harvest quotas and, and goals.

And this is really a big part about doing that. I'm blessed with 10 grandkids.

Bill Cooper: Wow.

Rodney Harrison: I can guarantee you they're talking about this because this is innovative, but it is exactly what I think each one of us wants, and that is to not feel that we are being cast away in our old age. Those very words of that psalmist so many years ago resonate with truth to my heart, [at] this very moment.

Bill Cooper: Oh, it means more to me every day. And I just can't imagine what's really going through the heads of the residents here. You know? It's a first for, as we know, all of us, it may be the first event of its kind. They, at least it's been promoted. There may have been other programs, you know, cause there's all kinds of outdoor events going on across the country anymore.

But back to you, Cheyne. Man, I've watched you and I listened to you talk. It's not just a job to you.

Cheyne Matzenbacher: Mm-hmm. No, this, this goes way back. I mean, I grew up in a deer's stand. I told the story earlier this morning with everybody in the group and I said this earlier, one of the things that I really enjoy about, you know, how we promote these field-to-fork events is we try to get personal. We wanna make this a connection. We want more than just to hunt. We want to make memories and we wanna get people connected to the outdoors, whether they get to kill something or not, that's just part of it. That's a cherry on top if that actually gets to happen.

But more than that, and I had most of the participants and a bunch of the volunteers already come up to me and shake my hand and say, "Boy, thank you for doing this." I'm like, "Well, it wasn't just me." I can't take the credit for everything, but we're just as excited about doing this event as any of them that we've ever done. And like you said, [I] don't know that it's been one that has really been done very much, if at all, targeting the seniors. Usually, we're targeting youth hunters and trying to get new youth hunters out there. Nothing wrong with that, right? Or, you know, some of our other field-to-fork events are targeting new adult hunters that just don't know where to start and how to hunt.

This one is more along those lines of his reactivation of getting those hunters out there that maybe didn't think they'd ever be able to hunt, you know, and I can relate to this story a lot in my own personal life and watching my granddad. He got up there in his late seventies and, you know, watching him go through shoulder surgeries and everything else going on and, you know, before dementia and everything hit and we lost him a few years ago.

But watching him in his progression with hunting is, like you said earlier, he used to be a tree stand hunter and he had a compound bow and he would rifle hunt and he would black powder hunt. And he, you know, he did everything and he taught, you know, him and my dad both taught me how to hunt.

[They] got me out there when I was three years old and a big platform stand between three trees that dad nailed up there with the hammer and nails. And I pretty much slept the whole time, but I still remember getting into that tree. I could take you to that tree today.

Bill Cooper: Wow.

Cheyne Matzenbacher: And to where that was at. And you know, fast forward a few years, when I was 14 years old, I actually killed a nice 10-point buck out of that same spot.

It wasn't in the platform because it wasn't safe anymore, right. But I had a hang on stand right there next to it, in the same tree. And I killed a nice buck out of there when I was 14 years old with a muzz loader. And you know, it just moved on from that. And you know, now, I have such a love for the outdoors and, and hunting in general.

That was a way of life for us. I mean, we didn't grow up very well off at all. And I told the story earlier that, you know, we grew up with very humble beginnings, but we just didn't know it because we had family.

Bill Cooper: Yeah. I was in the same boat, man, but it...hey, we evidently had some good teachers.

Somebody inspired us, you know, and we found out, we went through, [what] seemed like a cycle here when all the outdoor education programs and everything started. I remember doing lots of volunteer work for the National Wild Turkey Federation and everybody started outdoor education programs, you know.

When I was on the State Turkey Board, their idea of teaching outdoor education was [to] have a Saturday event, have 500 kids there, we're gonna teach 'em to let 'em shoot a BB gun, shoot a bow, blah, blah, blah. You know, I said, Really? How many people were [we] gonna retain out of that? And we finally convinced 'em.

We started a hunter apprentice school, [a] three-day event. And just limited to 20 children. And I still hear from some of those kiddos and I think we've retained, you mentioned, an 80-something percent. Yeah. Retainment. That's phenomenal. I think we had close to that in hunter apprentice school.

But Spencer, I don't wanna leave you out of this segment. Now Spencer, I'd say, is the real hillbilly of the group. You know, he comes from Crawford County and believe me, there's some deer hunting goes on in Crawford County. And Spencer, what were your feelings today when we're out there on that range with, I can't call 'em my elders, our...well, what were your feelings out there?

Spencer Hutson: Well, you know, I started going deer hunting when I was a kid. First time was with a BB gun, you know, and my grandpa went and my uncles went and my dad went and I got involved in that. And then, I got older and got into motorcycles and girls and college and got married and moved outta state and all that kind of thing.

[When] I moved back to Missouri, I started hunting again and got to hunt some with my grandfather, but my dad was the main one and he and my brother and I would hunt. And, and I've kind of come full circle when my grandchildren, I have six now and when my oldest grandson, who will be 12. No, he'd be 13. I think I better ask my wife.

Anyway, in January, when he would come to see me...they always lived a long ways away...he'd always want to know who killed that deer on the wall? Who did that one? Well, your daddy got that one and I got this one and all this kind of thing. And tell the stories and he'd wanna ride on the four-wheeler with me.

Now this is what I used to go hunting and all this kind of thing. Mm-hmm. But I never knew that I was planting seeds. So, a few months ago my son calls and he said, "Hey, Jude wants to go deer hunting this fall. Is there any chance of that?" And I said, "Yeah, you're gonna have to check into getting his hunter education."

And see, I think there's a reciprocity with Texas and Missouri. And he checked all that out. And last Saturday, he passed a hundred percent his hunter safety. And they're coming up the weekend of October 29 and 30, whatever that Deer Hunt is. And my brother and I are gonna make sure that he has a Deer Camp experience.

We're gonna go a day or two before and we're gonna camp and we're gonna cook and we're gonna play, and then we're gonna hunt the deer season. And I really think that's, that's grandparents. This gonna be the fifth generation that I know of, you know?

Bill Cooper: Wow.

Spencer Hutson: When you do it that way. And I think, I think there's gonna be grandpas talking today, after this event.

And even David, one of our coworkers, Dr. David Sundeen said, "You know, I haven't [hunted] in 32 years, but he's gonna be in the blind with us. And I can tell he's getting the itch. He's gonna be reactivated. And so, this is just great what it's doing.

And the enthusiasm of men in the church, when you tell that story, they all of a sudden think, "Well, this isn't just about women's things. Men can do some things." And I know that's not just the gospel, but I mean, getting them interested in what we can do in the church and how we can reach men, I think is really neat.

Bill Cooper: I think it is too. I think you hit the nail on the head there where...of course we're all just eat up with it, you know?

I consider all [of] you sitting here, high quality professional people, but we've been there in the beginning phases. We've gone through, most of us, except for Cheyne there, he's pretty young. We've gone through those stages, Cheyne, where you don't remember when, boy, you just wanna get out in the field with a gun.

A lot of things were in danger, you know? And then if it was a deer, you just wanted to kill a deer. You didn't care what it looked like, or if it had antlers or not, or how big they were or whatever. And then you kind of, you know, you start getting a little more serious about it. Those big antlers look pretty nice.

You know, you might go through that trophy phase and then you, you get into this phase where it's about technique. We wanna make it more difficult. You know, we go from the 30-odd-sixes, maybe go to a smaller caliber rifle, or some of us are old enough, we used to recur and we got into compounds, fought that battle.

You know, everybody thought, “Oh, we got compound bows. We’re gonna kill every deer on the face of the earth.” And lo and behold, the crossbow come along and boy was forever some battles fought there, you know. And I fought some of those. I was dead set against crossbows when I first heard about ‘em, and I did.

And what really convinced me, you know, the Chinese used those things many years ago, long time ago. But then I discovered the English long bow one just wiped the Chinese out in the battle. Cause those guys were pretty accurate with long bow at 300 yards. That’s hard to imagine. But what a progression.

And then I got doing research, Arkansas, Ohio, couple other states that had crossbow seasons for 30 years and they had the stats. Guess what? Crossbow hunters didn’t kill any more deer percentage-wise than the compound hunters, both about 15%. But now our state has legalized cross bows for everybody. It was for the handicap. And here we are at a Baptist Home doing a crossbow hunt for the elderly.

Now Cheyne, you’re gonna laugh at this, but boy, I am so in favor of this.

I’ve made several recommendations to our Missouri Department of Conservation over [the] years, and I don’t think any of ‘em flew. But when the elk season came along, boy, I was on a stump now I was preaching in the elk-hunting gospel. It should only be for people over 70 years old. I thought that meant might increase my draw odds, you know, but I’m still drawing with everybody else.

Well, guys we’re gonna take another break here to hear from some of our good sponsors, but folks, don’t go away, please. We’ll be right back.

Transcript

Episode 34: “AV Deer Hunt on the ‘Living the Dream Outdoors’ Podcast with Bill Cooper”

AV Deer Hunt, Segment 3

Bill Cooper: Welcome back again to *Living the Dream Outdoors* podcast. We’ve been having a tremendous time. You know, guys, all that’s missing here is a campfire.

Spencer Hutson: Yep.

Rodney Harrison: Oh man. Absolutely.

Bill Cooper: If we had a campfire, the stories would be even better. You don’t get a little smoke in your eyes and you can’t see the guy across from you very clearly.

And you know, you can kind of tell some tall tales and you’re in that foggy environment you hope they don’t remember who told that to...

Cheyne Matzenbacher: ...but instead it’s 80 degrees outside. So, no campfire today.

Bill Cooper: No campfire today. Well, Cheyne you had quite a character that you were mentoring on the range today, and boy did that guy ever surprise us.

You know, I don't think I would wanna shoot competition either.

Cheyne Matzenbacher: Me either. Our Mr. Fred. He's 91 years old and he said, "You know, I've never shot a crossbow." And here, we brought out one of our crossbows that our partner, Mission Crossbows, actually got for us to use on our field-to-fork event.

And he was bullseye in that thing every single time. Didn't matter, you know, 10, 20 yards. He hit it every single time and he'd look at me after he'd shoot and he'd go, "How was that?" "It was perfect. I mean, you hit the middle of the bullseye every single time." So, like I said earlier, I don't think nobody's gotta worry about how he's shooting the deer just have to worry about if they step out because he's gonna put it on 'em.

He took his time. He was very careful, very cautious. I could tell that he's shot before, just not crossbows. It was a little bit different to him and he was getting kind of, you know, too comfortable in the chair and everything.

Bill Cooper: So, he still had the basics down.

Cheyne Matzenbacher: He has the basics and then some. He was really doing great out there, but you know, he said something that made us all laugh there this morning.

He said, "You know, I've never shot a crossbow, but I did get some really good advice one time." He said, "They told me just when you hold onto the crossbow, make sure you keep your thumb down or it'll just rip it clean off." And he was just as serious as he could be when he said that. So made everybody laugh in there and, and I'm looking forward to being out there in the blind with him tonight and maybe again in the morning.

And hopefully, the deer come out and cooperate and we can get one down for him.

Bill Cooper: Oh, I think we're gonna see some deer go down 'cause everybody shot pretty well, didn't they?

Cheyne Matzenbacher: Yeah.

Bill Cooper: Yeah. I just...and here, you know, I'm sitting there watching this and I guess being as mature as I am, you know, I've seen a lot of things happen over here.

You're talking about crossbow blowing up. I won't call a name, but I had a dear friend. He works for a very wealthy man. He, my friend, does PR work and he had borrowed a crossbow from his boss. [It] was, I don't know, [a] \$2,500 crossbow and he was up [in] North Missouri. My friend had bought a new 40-acre place cause it was basically a soybean farm and had a few fence rows and stuff at whopping big deer.

He's sitting in a blind 20 minutes, you know. This big 12-pointer comes out, you know, 25 yards and gets his crossbow up and pulls the trigger. It didn't fire. The deer runs off. Oh, he's redoing everything, you know, let it down, recocked it, put the bolt back in. 10 minutes later, little smaller deer, but still a whopping big buck comes out, pulls a trigger, it doesn't fire.

Now, most of us, I hope, I think, would try to kind analyze that situation. My friend takes a bolt off, pulls the trigger, and the thing fires. Oh no, he blew up a \$2,500 crossbow. "What am I gonna tell my boss?" I said, "I don't know, but I don't know where there's a job available."

But so many things. And Dr. Harrison, I mean, we could go on and on and laugh forever and tell stories, but you brought up a topic during the break about the people, the volunteers, and everybody that's made this happen. And it's been a wonderful mesh of lots of different disciplines.

Rodney Harrison: You know, it is just absolutely amazing. I mean, we have individuals who are retirees here. One of our hunters is in a wheelchair. We have others that are just here to be volunteers. Everything for making sure we've got cold water on a kind of hot day. I mean, this is September 15, opening day of white tail season here in Missouri, and we are out here and it is in the eighties.

And yet, you know, our volunteers, from the community, from the churches and other places are just making this such a memorable, memorable event. This morning in our training, we had our local agent from the Missouri Department of Conservation, the game warden. He was here and just, you know, doing everything from checking licenses to make sure we're all gonna be legal and make sure we know how to tag those licenses because, you know, some of the things have changed since some of these folks have hunted before.

And you know, I just want to emphasize the fact that we do so much more when we work together and cooperate. And this has been an amazing example of cooperation. I mean, from the fact that we're using crossbows that Mission Crossbows has provided, we've got a wonderful Can-Am ATV that Cowtown has made available to us to kind of move people around.

We have individuals who are staff members here at Baptist Homes that have been tracking the deer movement for us so that we could kind of have an idea of where to put up these stands and where the deer are gonna be at various times. And you know, like any good deer story, we could also tell the stories of some of the pretty good food we've been eating...more than good.

Oh, I mean, we had been fed and we had volunteer groups that put together snack packs so when we go out into the blinds or something to drink, something to snack on, and you know, the safety training. I just...I look at everything. From what the NDA has done, the National Deer Association prepping us and having Zoom meetings with the mentors and just getting everybody on the same page.

This has been an amazing story. Now what I'm excited about is this is just one of our nine campuses, and so we are hoping to replicate this. We've got some that are in the cities, but you know what? We've got buses. We've got vehicles that we can take folks out into the field, and, and I am hoping that this will be a challenge, not just to our Baptist Homes campuses, but to others.

You know, I'm thinking that there's probably listeners out here that maybe dad or granddad or grandma, you need to invite them to be out in the field again. Now it's gonna take some extra planning. You might have to go outta your comfort zone and might not be using that saddle or that tree stand. But I am hoping that we will encourage, this podcast is gonna encourage, our listeners to think about, "Is there someone who's getting up there in age, a neighbor, a friend, someone from church, a former coworker who, just the invitation may be what it takes to get them excited about life again?"

So, this has been just a wonderful event. The partnerships and the new friends I'm meeting, I'll tell you what, this is a highlight day for me. So, I am never gonna forget opening day of 2022, even though I'm not gonna pull the trigger today.

Bill Cooper: Exactly. And I think we all feel the same way.

Spencer Hutson: Right.

Bill Cooper: And you mentioned, I see a problem coming up in your future, though, I really do. You're gonna have so many volunteers, you're not gonna know what to do with 'em. We had people today here laughing and giggling. What are you doing? Well, I don't know, but I'll do anything.

Spencer Hutson: That's right. Yeah.

Bill Cooper: And that was the general consensus, the general attitude, but, and I like doing this, you know, you size people up. I look at you the first time and I went, "What's this guy really all about? You know, down deep. What's his real concerns? What does he care about in life?" Did the same thing with you.

We all do it to each other, you know, it's just kind of part of sizing each other up. But pretty soon in a crowd like this, you begin to see the talents kinda of outta the crevices, so to speak. That's amazing. I shared with Cheyne earlier, you know, I sat and listened to him talk, and I've heard this stuff a hundred times.

I made mental notes, at least a half dozen different things that I either hadn't heard before or new take on things. Very interesting discussion about the food plots. You know, I've never got, I don't, [I] only have 10 acres, so I haven't got into the, you know, huge fields of food plots, but it's just a joy of my life to be able to piddle with those little food plots. I even plowed a garden up this year. Made a food plot out of it. You know, I can see it from the kitchen window right across, that's a pond, about an acre food plot, and I've planted everything they ever invented, I guess. But I'm still an old farmer at heart, so I haven't bought a lot of the fancy deer mixes.

I like to go to the stores and look through the oats and the rice, and the wheats, and the clovers, and mix 'em all together. You know, and see what I, what I get. But just a tremendous time because of deer, whitetail deer. Mm-hmm. Just another great gift of God that he's put on this place, and I'm so proud of Missouri and Missourians.

We've done such a wonderful job over the last few decades. I never saw a deer 'til I was 16 years old. I was making a trip school trip to Jefferson City, Missouri, you know, and saw a deer and a turkey both on that. I thought, "This is amazing country." Here, we're sitting at Baptist Home. We can look out the windows and just see God's creation all around us.

But here we're privileged enough to get to participate in an event like this and bring some people back to hunting that haven't participated in decades. We heard your dad's story. 70 years later after his first hunt, he killed his first deer. Was that correct?

Rodney Harrison: That is correct. Harvested his first year, 70 years after his first hunt.

Bill Cooper: Wow. Well, we're gonna have all kinds of grand things to say about this event when it's over. I thank you guys so much for joining me for the podcast. This message will be heard all over the world, which is just...still flabbergasts me. You know, that's such things could happen. Cause you know, I had a grandfather that never believed that they put a man on the moon.

Now that's how far we come, you know? And remember, things go so quickly, you know, and we gotta pay attention, or we let things slide by us. I was in graduate school doing my research work and working on just a keypad. You know, the computer was, I don't know, 20 blocks away and one computer in a room about 30 by 50.

Now, when I finished, by the time I finished that thesis work, was ready to go into the military, the first thing they offered me, Cheyne, was 18 months of computer school. I said, "You guys are outta your minds." I said, "That's the biggest joke ever. They're never gonna mount to a hill of beans." [That] might have been a bad call, you know, might ask, but today, this week we've made, I think, some wonderful calls and I'm just overwhelmed at having had the opportunity to be a small part of this program.

I got to ride around that fancy ATV, you know, and gotta be a taxi service, but somebody's gonna use it. Doctor, you're gonna use it this afternoon. Take it out in the field. All your hunters out there and, and I'll tell you, you know, that thing's got a dump bed on it. You can raise it. So, you should kill the biggest deer out there.

And it's got a hoist on it. You can wench it right up into the bed and I got permission. It's okay to have deer blood in the bed of that.

Rodney Harrison: Well, we hope that we can make sure that that comes true. This has been so encouraging and thank you so much Bill for being a part of this and for making your time available to interview us on this podcast.

Bill Cooper: Oh, it was a great sacrifice. I could tell you, but closing thoughts here, Cheyne.

Cheyne Matzenbacher: You know, you say this is a way of life and honestly, sometimes I kind of think about...it doesn't really dawn on me where my work life and my personal life, they overlap so much I don't know where that line's at.

And this job has been a great opportunity working with the National Deer Association. Y'all [I] went to college for wildlife biology. I never dreamed that I'd be working for National Deer Association, getting to do events like this with great people. I think somebody said it this morning, "You know, anymore, it's not about the meat, it's about the people."

And this whole hunt has been mostly about the people. We haven't even actually been out to the blinds yet. Yeah, we already started, already [had] a success and we're really looking forward to it.

But, you know, that's the thing that's been going on with me is, I'm truly blessed to be able to get to do what I do and call it work. And I get to do this for a living. And it's just a big full-circle of coming from humble beginnings and now getting to do something I love and share it with other people.

Bill Cooper: And I might add doing a great job of it. But you had on a train I thought there that I love.

I've, for all of my life, had a difficult, I'm not sure it's bad at all...there's a line there between my spiritual life and my outdoor life, and I have a hard time separating them. Really do.

Rodney Harrison: Amen.

Cheyne Matzenbacher: Yep, that's true.

Bill Cooper: Spencer.

Spencer Hutson: Yes, sir. Well, I tell you what, the volunteers have been a real blessing to me when Dr. Harrison said, "Can you get some volunteers?" I began to think about where I could do that. But then our church is one that is made up of a whole bunch of people like that, and I mentioned it to our pastor, Tommy Miller, and of course he was willing to do, he's got two little boys. He calls himself a stay-at-home dad and his wife teaches school and he pastors our church.

And so, it took it took a lot of work for him to get placement for the kids, for him to be gone a couple days and be down here. But his wife and my wife were visiting a week or so ago, and she says, "I don't think Tommy's sleeping good right now, because he's so excited about that deer hunt."

And I mean, our volunteers are just so excited. When I called Dan Pitchers, the pastor over here [in] Annapolis, he had readily said he would do it. And he showed up here today with one of the deacons who's actually on our board and the guys didn't even know what they

[would be doing]. “We’ll just do anything.” And they’re just so excited because of what it is that we’re doing.

We got our county sheriff; [he] had to rearrange his schedule to get people to cover for him, and he’s down here to help us. And these are all guys that just have a love for this. A lot of it has to do with, you know, their upbringing and Tommy thinks about his grandfather that he wishes could be here, and all of us think those thoughts about what we’re helping people be able to do and it’s just a real blessing for us.

Bill Cooper: It really is. And boy, you know, you, I really hate to shut a podcast like this down cause I don’t...we probably bored people at some points, you know, but I think it’s been very exciting, that we know of. And we all got great aspirations about what this program can do and what it will be in the future.

But I always like to close a program out with telling people...and I get fantastic guests, you know...I tell all four of us sitting here are living our outdoor dreams. We really are. I mean, it is fabulous. It’s fantastic.

So, we’d like to encourage you as a listener [to] get outdoors and try to explore and enjoy your outdoor dreams.

I’m Bill Cooper.

Transcript

Episode 34: “AV Deer Hunt on the ‘Living the Dream Outdoors’ Podcast with Bill Cooper”

Episode Outro

Andy Braams: I truly hope that listening to that podcast was a blessing for you. It is something, again, that was very unique. No one involved has any knowledge that there [was] anything like this before. The Bible says there is nothing new under the sun, so perhaps it has happened. But whether or not it has happened, what truly happened on that day was the joy that was experienced at Arcadia Valley in preparation, what had taken place up to that point, but the preparation of what was to come.

And again, since that podcast was recorded, we have since had one at or near our Ozark campus which I can’t report on because I am actually recording this just before that actual hunt takes place as well. So, perhaps a deer did walk by and they didn’t actually get a deer at the Ironton location, but perhaps one will have taken place at Ozark.

So again, it’s an innovative way to allow seniors to know that life is not over, as one resident said, “I came to Baptist Homes to die, but now I know that I can live.”

May that be true of all of us as we experience life, as we experience the challenges of life; let us all know that God has a place for us, that we still have dignity because we are made in His image that we can truly live because that’s what He wants us to do.

So, until next month, this is Andy Braams, signing off.