

...ANNOUNCING

Randall L. Eaton's
**From Boys to
Men of Heart**
Hunting As Rite of Passage

PRESS RELEASE

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Is Hunting Good for Kids?

Is hunting good for kids? Why do they do it? Is it sport or is it instinctive? Does hunting encourage violence or does it teach empathy and compassion? Would it be a more peaceful world if more men hunted? These are some of the questions addressed in a new book entitled *From Boys to Men of Heart: Hunting as Rite of Passage*.

Award-winning author, Randall L. Eaton, Ph.D., is a behavioral scientist with an international reputation in wildlife conservation who has been studying hunting for 35 years. While producing "The Sacred Hunt" in the mid-1990s, he interviewed scores of recreational hunters as well as Native Americans. Eaton was surprised to discover that they all used the word "respect" to describe how they feel about animals they hunt.

That prompted Eaton to conduct questionnaire surveys on thousands of mature hunters who described their attitude toward animals they hunt as "respect, admiration and reverence." Over 80% of the hunters claimed they prayed for the animals they killed or gave thanks to God.

Eaton's survey also asked hunters what life event most opened their hearts and engendered compassion in them. The choices included death of a loved one, death of a beloved pet, becoming a parent, taking the life of an animal, and teaching young people. The women hunters overwhelmingly chose "becoming a parent," but nearly all the men selected taking the life of an animal.

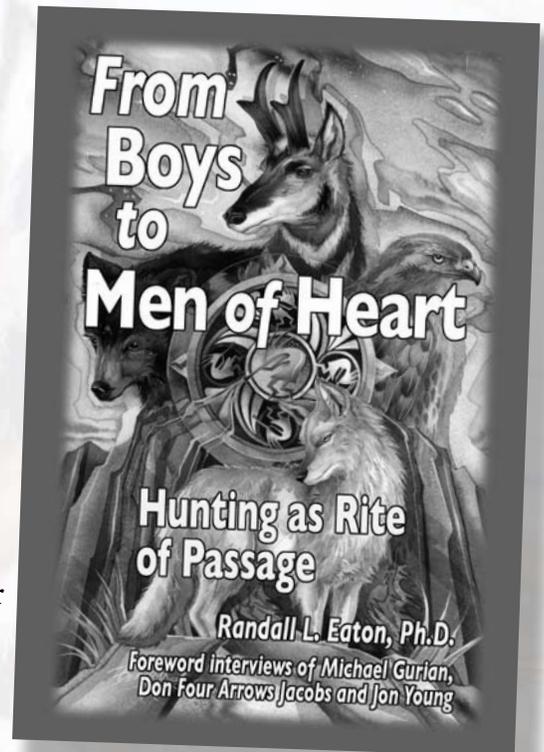
"These results indicate the fundamental polarity of human life. Women are adapted to bring life into the world, but men are adapted to take life to support life," Eaton said.

The same survey asked respondents to choose those universal virtues they learned from hunting. The top three choices were inner peace, patience and humility.

Eaton's book contains interviews of leading authorities in several fields who corroborate his research. One is Michael Gurian, family therapist and best-selling author of several books on how to properly raise boys. Gurian agrees that hunting does teach men compassion, and that it would be a more peaceful world if more men hunted. The Gurian Institute recommends Eaton's book to parents.

"Hunting is counter-intuitive," said Eaton, "because people who haven't had the experience can't imagine that it opens the heart and awakens a moral sense."

Taking calls on a national radio show, a distraught woman told Eaton, "You're just teaching kids



violence!” He responded, “What do you think Jimmy Carter and Nelson Mandela would say? They won the Nobel Peace Prize and both are avid hunters.”

Also mentioned in his hunter’s hall of fame are Teddy Roosevelt, greatest conservationist in the history of the world, and other exemplary Americans such as Thomas Jefferson, Audubon, Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, John Steinbeck and Jimmy Stewart. His list includes contemporary celebrities whom he considers worthy role models for youth, among them Morgan Freeman, Kurt Russell, Ted Turner and Shaq O’Neal.

The book contains an interview of Dr. Don T. Jacobs, professor of education and author of *Teaching Virtues Across the Curriculum*. Jacobs concludes that, “Hunting is the ideal way to teach young people universal virtues including courage, fortitude, patience, generosity and humility.” According to Jacobs, “humility is discovering that you’re part of something greater than yourself,” which Eaton considers an apt definition for spirituality.

The book presents evidence that hunting is an inherited instinct in boys. A German scientist who investigated 62 different cultures around the world found that in all of them boys start throwing rocks at the age of 4-5 years. Eaton said, “My survey of older hunters indicated that almost all the men spontaneously had killed a small animal before the age of ten, but women hunters rarely had. Typically the boy cries, as 8-year old Jimmy Carter did when he threw a rock and killed a robin.”

Eaton believes that for boys at least, hunting definitely is not sport but an instinct. He compares hunting to sex. “Sex drives a young male towards a sexual encounter, but a surprise awaits him. Sooner or later he falls in love. The instinct links up with the heart. It is a transformative experience with enormous consequences including marriage, parenting and providing. The instinct to hunt propels a young man to pursue the animal, but a surprise comes when he takes its life and his heart is opened. That is how males fall in love with nature and why they are the leaders in conservation.”

He added that, “If sex is the bicep of love, hunting is the bicep of conservation.”

The book presents compelling evidence from numerous disciplines that adolescent males need rites of passage to become responsible adults. Eaton argues that the original rite of passage was hunting because it proved that a male could provide and qualify for manhood and marriage. He believes it still is the ideal path by which boys may become men of heart. He also recommends wilderness survival and vision quest, always with appropriate mentoring

“Without transformative rites of passage that open their hearts and connect them to nature and society males may become egotistical, self-centered and materialistic,” Eaton said. He added that untempered masculinity is a factor behind the global social and environmental crisis, and it also promotes delinquency and gangs.

The book interviews Dr. Wade Brackenbury who for 13 years led groups of delinquent boys into the wilderness for two weeks where they had to survive on what they could forage. Brackenbury is convinced that it was hunting small animals for food that had the most transformative influence. Follow-up surveys showed that 85% of the boys did not get in trouble after their survival experience.

Eaton’s book claims that hunting also develops character, values and virtues in girls and profoundly connects them with nature. If it so good for youth then why are the ranks of hunters declining?

“There are many contributing factors,” Eaton suggests, “and one of them is fear of guns. How many parents and teachers know that hunting is the safest form of outdoor recreation?”

The book refers to the work of Dr. Helen Smith, author of *Scarred Hearts* and the world's leading expert on youth violence, who says that access to firearms does not cause youth violence. She believes that teenagers need boundaries and responsibility, which shooting and hunting provide when mentored by adults. She suspects that the Columbine tragedy never would have happened had the boys been properly mentored in hunting and shooting.

Adolescent neuropsychologist, Dr. Jim Rose of the University of Wyoming, is interviewed in the book. He says that shooting and hunting teach kids self-control, self-restraint and sound judgement.

Eaton is glad about the “No Child Left Inside” movement, inspired by Richard’s Louv’s book, *The Last Child in the Woods*. “It’s a good thing for kids to spend more time outside, but I doubt that the connection they make with nature is deep enough to promote a conservation ethic.”

In his opinion, “Not only are hunting and fishing better for kids, kids who hunt and fish are better for the environment.”

According to Eaton, hunting is justifiable in terms of its enormous economic impacts and benefits to environmental conservation. He said, “We all take life, but for those who participate directly in it, the food chain becomes a love chain. Look at Ducks Unlimited. They’ve permanently conserved over twelve million acres of wetlands throughout North America to the benefit of the entire living community. In just a few years, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has conserved over four million acres for wildlife and successfully reintroduced elk to the eastern U.S.”

He sees most of the environmental community engaged in rear-guard actions while the hunting and fishing community are on the offensive. “How many people are aware that hunters and fishermen are behind the National Wildlife Federation, largest conservation group in the world?”

Eaton concluded that the social justification for hunting lies in its positive influence on the development of our youth into compassionate, virtuous and responsible adults who respect life and defend nature.

The 336-page book is available from OWLink Media at a discount before October 1, official publication date.

For more information contact Dr. Randall Eaton at 513-244-2826 or at reaton@eoni.com. Visit www.randalleaton.com or www.owlinkmedia.com.

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