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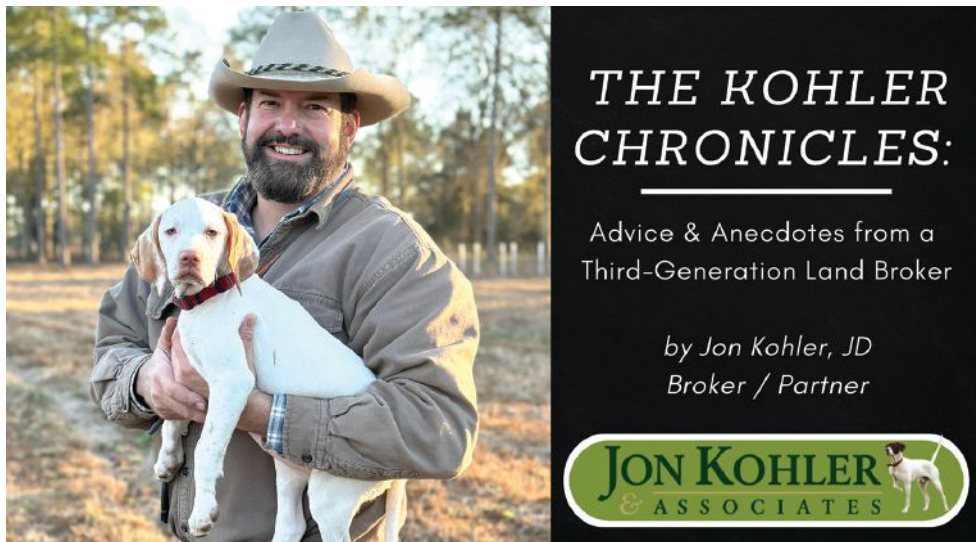
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THE KOHLER CHRONICLES:

Advice & Anecdotes from a Third-Generation Land Broker

by Jon Kohler, JD
Broker / Partner



Some words of wisdom from the hunting youth

by Jon Kohler

We've all seen it – our children and grandchildren preferring to stare at their electronic devices, watching YouTube shorts, TikTok or playing games that entice with “just a small subscription fee.” The modern world is full of distractions that take us away from the present – and away from God’s great outdoors.

How much we enjoy the outdoors today comes down to our own youthful experiences. Quite simply, someone we

admired shared with us an experience and from it grew a lifelong reverence. If you closed your eyes right now, I bet you can picture that person and the small, shared moments that instilled that sense of reverence in you. Imagine your life now if that one spark hadn't been lit.

While that nostalgic sense of loss and longing for a simpler era is important, there's much more at stake with waning interest (reverence) for the outdoor lifestyle. As hunting participation



RAEGAN SHERMAN SHOWS OFF HER LATEST TROPHY WHITE-TAIL, harvested in south Georgia during a December hunt in 2023.

declines and the general population becomes more disconnected from the land, politics and priorities change, resulting in less support and funding for issues near and dear to an outdoorsman's heart. It's a scary proposition indeed to consider how shifting politics can challenge our freedoms and open spaces.

This month's installment of the Kohler Chronicles reminds me of the scene in “Lord of the Rings” where they looked into the future for hope and saw only incoming ships with ominous black sails. We are going to look, not into a crystal ball, but hear from someone we trust about what exactly is going on with today's youth and how it may impact future generations of us who love the outdoors.

You will get to know Raegan Sherman, a student majoring in real estate with a focus in business management at Florida State University's College of Business, avid outdoorswoman – and famed four-time winner of the annual

Tall Timbers Florida Georgia Turkey Invitational. At age 21, Raegan already possesses a “real life experience graduate degree” in land management and conservation. Her passion is contagious. She is also a Jon Kohler & Associates marketing assistant. So, when we wanted to know what bad the future holds, we knew this future leader would candidly tell us the truth. Perhaps, we didn't want the whole truth but here it is.

Raegan is of this important “younger generation” that will one day be influential on policies and politics – to be honest, that influence has already started. Jon Kohler, sat down with Raegan to get her personal views on hunting and the outdoor lifestyle, in addition to her take on how this lifestyle is viewed by her peers. As an active student at FSU, Raegan walks a large campus where she participates in classroom discussions with hundreds of this same group. Who better to provide an insider look at how

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We must preserve the traditions

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hunting and the outdoor lifestyle is being looked upon?

Jon: What should the older generation know about young people – their outdoor experiences, their views on hunting – that they don't know? What concerns should we have, if any?

Raegan: To those who do hunt and have been immersed in the lifestyle, they are aware and genuinely care about passing these values on to the next generation, but they are not the problem.

However, to those who are against our lifestyle, whether due to extreme political views and brainwash or just lack of knowledge, the ball gets dropped. The members of my generation who blindly maintain extreme opinions with no supporting facts need to be educated on the topic, but most have no interest in learning.

Jon: How out of touch with the outdoors are today's young people?

Raegan: Astonishingly so, and that is the problem with this generation and those to come. The more liberal agenda that is pushed on these kids, the less they are willing to think objectively and be willing to learn. It's really sad if you think about it. Unsettling. This generation is out of touch with reality. They believe eating plant-based chicken nuggets

and drinking oat milk instead of dairy is saving the environment. They believe we who hunt are all murderers, who only shoot for trophy and do not care about the animals we so ethically hunt.

To these individuals, hunting is a cruel hobby in which they see no necessity. The grocery store exists, so why on Earth would anyone choose to hunt? Whether these people want to learn or not, we must maintain our ground and our values. I feel no need to argue, but I will stand my ground when it comes to defending wildlife conservation and our practices. To the older generations, I will tell you now that today's youth would not know how to survive if technology, grocery stores or their plant-based chicken nuggets were to disappear.

Jon: Are there young folks genuinely curious about where our food comes from, how it is harvested and managed, even if they aren't necessarily interested in how to grow a trophy buck?

Raegan: To my knowledge, no. I cannot speak for my entire generation, as some of them do have a firm grasp on reality, but to those who live in fantasy land, they are clueless. Whether it's frozen dinners from Trader Joes or a \$300 organic grocery bill from Whole Foods, they do not worry about where their food comes from. They do not think about the



RAEGAN SHERMAN PICTURED WITH ALL WINNERS at the 2019 annual Tall Timbers Florida Georgia Turkey Invitational (L-R: Johnny Hester and Michael Ponder, Travis and Raegan Sherman, Shane Wellendorf and Chuck Williams).

farmers and their livelihoods or the necessary pesticides to grow the majority of their plant-based items. Most do not look beyond the grocery store.

Jon: Do your peers at FSU seem knowledgeable about the history of hunting in North Florida and South Georgia?

Raegan: Given that FSU has a very diverse demographic of students, and a traditionally liberal arts-based curriculum, avid hunters and outdoorsmen are relatively sparse. I know many hunters close to my age and younger, but realistically they are relationships I have made with locals or through mutual friends, but not directly through the FSU community. Most students and even professors are completely unaware that we are in the middle of the Red Hills region, one of the most prominent plantation and woodland communities in the country.

Looking beyond the hunting aspect, that many students disagree with or do not understand, discussing the history of our area tends to bring more interest to the conversation. It amazes me that historical information of our area such as this is not brought up in discussion during tours, orientations or lectures at FSU.

Jon: Do you think the overall view of your generation differs from generations before you?

Raegan: Of course. I think most would agree that times have changed significantly. Those of us who value the lifestyle are a dying breed. Previous generations had a much greater tie to the outdoors, as the technology and demographic we have today did not exist just a few decades ago. I am proud to spark interest in my peers, and I genuinely hope to see a change in my generation regarding reverence to the outdoors and our lifestyle, but it is going to take a lot of change and outreach.

Thankfully, FSU does offer a few hunting and outdoors-related organizations, such as the Leon County Varsity Ducks Unlimited Chapter. They are a great group of young students who do their best to spread information and inspiration to our peers, just as I do.

Jon: When you describe your up-

bringing and your reverence for the outdoors, what reactions do you get from your peers?

Raegan: I feel that when I tell my story it is much easier to receive more positive feedback and interest because my upbringing was such a unique experience. Whether you agree with hunting or not, growing up on 8,000 acres of land in this society is so rare that no matter what side you fall on, you either envy it or at least find interest in it.

My grandfather, one of the people who greatly inspired my reverence for the outdoors, was a small-town man from Crawfordville, Florida who made his living trapping alligators and selling hides and furs. My dad, my other mentor and role model, was an FSU football player who found his love for the outdoors through my grandfather and has since made a career for himself off the land.

My grandfather passed when I was 6 years old, but his and my dad's love for the outdoors and ethical management has inspired me and helped shape me into the woman I am today. All controversy aside, I believe the story of my upbringing and reverence to the outdoors provides a different perspective that my peers and professors do not see often.

Jon: The experts at Quail Forever and others in charge of "R3" (Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation) tell me that we are on the breaking point. That the hunting population is aging to such a point now that without a major influx of new hunters, our entire North American Model of wildlife conservation will collapse in the next decade and a half, and it will be impossible to bring it back. Few realize that hunters' (not bird watchers') dollars fund the entire system of state wildlife conservation agencies and wildlife management that we know today. Have you seen anything with youth today that you think will cause them to become outdoorsmen and women? Is there any hope?

Raegan: I believe it takes people like you and me, Jon. Organizations like Pheasants/Quail Forever, Ducks Unlim-

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Promote the outdoors lifestyle

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ited, Delta Waterfowl, and Tall Timbers Research. Land managers and owners.

We who are involved in land management and conservation everyday are the people meant to share our stories, teachings – and invite novice outdoorsmen to walk in the woods with us. As I mentioned earlier, some people are not willing to learn, but the more these issues are discussed and broadcasted, the more often we entice young people into the outdoors, the higher chance we have of changing the direction of the current and upcoming generations.

Outreach programs, guest speakers at universities and even social media influence provide the opportunity to bring education to our youth, as they are not going to actively seek this information from us.

Jon: Do you know anyone that is new to this sport? Someone who got into it, not like you and me, from our family, but someone that just said, “Hey I want to do this?” Conversely, do you know peers who grew up with our lifestyle, but technology and today’s distractions carried them away?

Raegan: I recently was introduced to a local girl from Monticello, who grew up seeing friends and family mem-

bers hunt, but never had the opportunity to learn directly from them. When she told me her story of simply going out by herself and learning the ropes on her own, I was genuinely inspired, as I don’t hear stories such as this often. She has successfully harvested fall turkeys and a few deer entirely on her own, which is an amazing accomplishment. On the other hand, I have many friends from Tallahassee and surrounding areas that avidly hunt and were able to learn from friends or family. They are true hunters who respect and love the outdoors.

To address the technological distractions, my peers do not fall in that category of this generation. I believe my generation is relatively split. Half cannot function without the instant gratification of their phones, whereas the other half can hold a conversation and perform without the presence of their devices.

I have a few friends who do utilize their social media platforms to promote hunting and our outdoor lifestyle, one of which has become somewhat famous over the past two years with her duck hunting and dog training videos. I am very proud to be associated with friends and other outdoorsmen and women who care about this lifestyle and take the time to promote it.

Jon: To someone addicted to instant gratification from some electronic advice, how are they going to handle the patience of sitting quietly in a deer stand?

Raegan: Realistically, they’re probably not going to be deer hunters. Whether due to a cell phone addiction or simply not having the patience to sit still, anyone with these personal struggles will either not hunt or will choose a different kind of game.

I know multiple people who would prefer to run dogs for deer instead of sitting in a stand because they can’t stay quiet or still, not because they need their phones. To those of you raising young children with the hope that they one day will sit in a deer stand, I would limit their electronic access. I know I will with my children one day as no child truly needs an iPad or screen in front of them. Let them go outside or find their own distractions to keep them busy. Supplying our youth with electronics only makes them less sociable and more impatient.

Jon: Are there any generational hunting traditions that you participate in or plan to carry on to the next generation?

Raegan: I was 6 years old when I killed my first deer. My dad cleaned it for me, of course, but he stopped halfway through to smear my face with the deer’s blood. I was so proud to have killed my first deer, and the blood on my face just completed it. I have witnessed this tradition with many other hunters and would love to carry that on for my children.

Jon: Just for fun, what is a modern-day piece of hunting equipment or technology that you use regularly that may not have been available for previous generations?

Raegan: Honestly, I don’t consider myself very technologically savvy when it comes to hunting. My gun, a pair of binoculars, camo, a pocketknife and either a grunt call or a turkey call is really all I use in the field. I will occasionally bring some powdered chalk to check the wind direction when deer hunting, but



COLBI KING PICKETT OF JACKSONVILLE FLORIDA SHOT THIS FINE DOE weighing about 95 pounds in Crawfordville, Florida. “All I wanted for Christmas was to shoot my first deer,” Colbi said. “My brother made that come true when he took me out on Christmas weekend and coached me through everything, from where to shoot her, to tracking her blood, to helping me drag her out of the woods. This was truly a priceless Christmas and one I’ll remember for the rest of my life!”

other than that I consider myself pretty old school. I know people are into new apps on their phones that show property lines, feed times, and the wind direction, but I have never felt the need to utilize them.

We at Jon Kohler & Associates would like to hear from you on this topic or, really, any other related to land management, conservation and land values. We’re out there every day working with landowners and outdoorsman like yourself. We’d appreciate the opportunity to answer any of your questions. Email questions to land@jonkohler.com.

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