

Max A. Reitz  
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217.532.7846  
DOB: June 30, 1994

Dear Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Youth Hunter Essay Contest. I really enjoy your magazine because I enjoy bowhunting more than anything else. I have been a bowhunter now for three years. I killed my first doe with a bow when I was ten. That was an experience I will never forget. I killed my first buck with a bow when I was eleven, and last year I killed a small buck and a very nice nine-pointer.

I look forward to bowhunting all year long. The deer season has just ended here in Illinois, and my dad and I are already talking about what we could have done differently and how we will try to improve for next year. We will be getting some new stand locations ready soon before the trees turn green. We're also joining a summer bow league to stay in shape. The sport of bowhunting takes a lot of time and hard work, but I enjoy every minute of it.

I have turkey hunted the last two years with a gun, but haven't killed one yet. Someday I would like to take one with a bow, but for now I'd be happy just to take one. My dad and I have only been turkey hunters for the past two years. Dad says there is a lot to learn, just like when he started bow hunting. We will be watching many turkey videos in the next few weeks to pick up tips. I also learn quite a bit from the turkey articles in your magazine. I can't wait to start turkey hunting with my bow.

I have been interested in bowhunting for as long as I can remember because my dad is a bowhunter. I also have many other family members who love bowhunting. Bowhunting is something I will do and enjoy for the rest of my life.

Sincerely,

Max A. Reitz

(Hoyt RinTec XL, QAD Ultra Rest, Impact Archery Collector, Kwikkee Kwiwer, Easton ST Epic, Muzzy 3-Blade)

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## **SAFETY FIRST**

Safe bowhunting can be the difference between life and death. I know this firsthand because my cousin fell out of his treestand while hunting. Luckily, he is okay today, but that experience made me realize that safety is the most important part of a successful hunt.

I practice safe bowhunting in many ways. From the time I showed an interest in hunting, my dad has always preached safety. I have learned many safety lessons, from not dry-firing the bow to being sure of my target before shooting. I remember these lessons and practice them when I'm bowhunting in my treestand.

Before I get in my treestand, I put on my safety vest. I already have safety straps attached to the tree, so that as soon as I get in my stand I can immediately lock on. I then pull my bow up with a haul rope. I don't carry the bow up with me because I always have three points of contact when climbing up my stand. While hunting, I keep in touch with my dad by radio. I also have a whistle pinned to my safety vest in case I have an accident and don't have access to my radio. My dad always hunts within whistle distance. I think it's important to treestand hunt with a buddy nearby.

The most obvious reason for being safe is so that I don't injure myself or others. Also, when hunters don't practice safety, it sends a bad public image of hunting. By being a safe hunter, I can be a good role model for other young hunters and, hopefully, my excitement and success in bowhunting will encourage others to try this sport. Hunters can read and learn about safety, but they must always practice it to make a difference. Hunters should be concerned with safety all of the time, not just when someone gets hurt. Practicing safety gives me confidence and allows me to enjoy the experience of bowhunting.

Mark A. Reitz  
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Dear Committee,

I am proud to nominate my son, Max Reitz, as a participant in the Youth Hunter Essay Contest. Max and I are both avid bowhunters and enjoy reading your magazine. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

I have been bowhunting for the past 12 years. I grew up in Central Illinois primarily hunting pheasants and quail. My dad got me started in hunting at a very young age and I have offered that tradition to my sons. The pheasant and quail population in this area has steadily declined. As a result, my brother and I started bowhunting for whitetailed deer, which have become increasingly abundant. From the first time I bowhunted, I have been addicted. We had gun hunted for deer before, but had never seriously pursued it. We found out on opening morning of October 1, 1995 that there were MANY things we needed to learn to be a successful bowhunter. For example, we started the season with no thought whatsoever that we should even consider hunting from a tree stand. We had always gun hunted from the ground, and being in a tree never crossed our minds. Scent control?! But through the help of your magazine and watching videos we found success.

The definition of success has changed over the course of my relatively short bowhunting career. My first and only bow kill the first season (a button buck) was one of real accomplishment. Since then I've harvested many does and several nice bucks. But nothing can compare to the feelings shared when Max killed his first deer with a bow. He was only 10 years old at the time. I was hunting less than a hundred yards away. It was early October and the does were still feeding fairly predictably. I could hear the release of his arrow and then a WHACK! I reached for my radio in anticipation of his call. Words can't explain what we shared that evening as we followed the blood trail less than 75 yards and saw the mature doe he had harvested lying there in the timber. That was the most successful hunt I'd ever been on. This year at age 12, Max took a nice 9-pointer. Again I could hear him shoot; in fact, I'd missed that deer about 10 minutes earlier! Max was even more excited this time as he'd gained appreciation for how difficult it was to bowhunt and especially to harvest a nice buck.

Max and I have shared many great moments in the field. He is enthusiastic and dedicated. In all the hunting we have done, we have never had to come in early because he was bored, or he was cold, or he was hungry, etc. He is quite the hunter. Max is also a straight A student, on the Scholastic Trap Shooting Team and active in the Ringnecks program of Pheasants Forever (I'm the local PF chapter treasurer). I am very proud and fortunate to have a son like him. My wife and I both come from big hunting families and it's nice to know that this tradition will continue on for another generation. Again, I would like to thank you for this opportunity and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Reitz