

# Curling up by the Fire



JEFFREY MILLER  
Musings from Cottonwood Bend

there is no better place in the world to read a well-loved book.

As child, when other kids were reading comic books or playing video games in the winter, I was delving deep into books written by Peter Hathaway Capstick. *Capstick* is credited with revitalizing the African safari, as he wrote wonderful stories about his time as a Professional Hunter (much like a guide here in North America). His hair-raising tales of Cape Buffalo, Elephant, Lion, Leopard and Rhino, among other game, transported many a hunter into the tall grass of Africa. A good start to the world of Capstick is *Death in the Long Grass*.

Years back I had to build a custom bookshelf, as the cheap

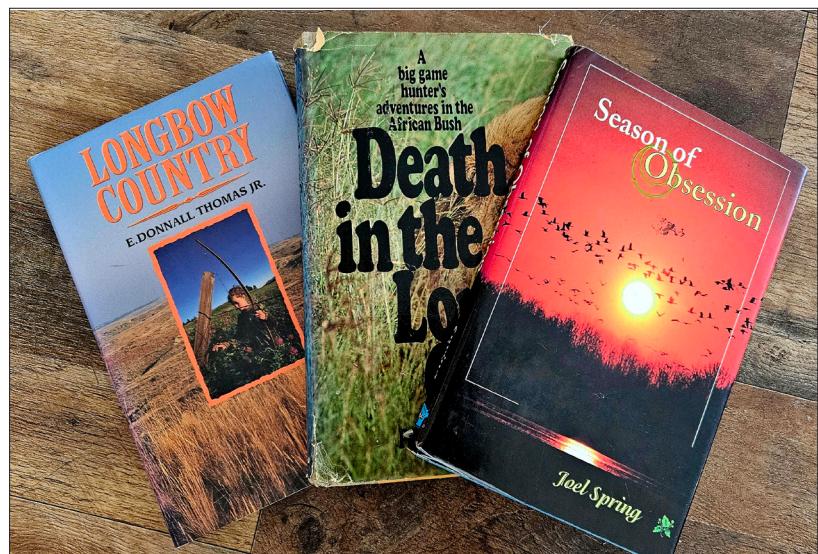
pressboard ones from big box stores continued to sag under my collection of outdoor literature. Though there are plenty of how-to books, the winter is the time to read well-written literature from the outdoor world.

Good outdoor writing transcends the simple act of catching a fish or a shooting a deer. Joel Spring, an outdoor writer from upstate New York that I'm fortunate to call a friend, is one such writer. His books are not that of an "expert," always catching a limit or shooting a giant buck. Though he does those things, his prose speaks of spending all day chasing a pheasant, sitting in an empty wood, or heading home with a single teal on the duck strap. Capturing the ups and downs of a day afield is not easy to do. All his books are treasures, but *Season of Obsession* holds a special place in my heart. Make sure you have a box of tissues nearby when you read *Strong Is the Current*, his treatise on the traumatic loss of his youngest daughter to cancer. Thoughts on grief, loss and sadness intertwine with the healing powers of the outdoors and fishing. It's a profound work and should be required reading

for anyone dealing with loss.

This past fall I had the pleasure of working with Barry Wensel in bringing his hunting memoir, *Once Upon a Time*, back on the market. Barry, along with his twin brother Gene, need no introduction to archery enthusiasts. They have harvested absolute monster bucks, all with traditional recurve bows. Barry was instrumental in producing one of the first outdoor videos, "Bowhunting October Whitetails." His memoir, first published in 2010, is filled with stories and experiences from decades in the field. It was a joy to collaborate with him on putting together the second edition and making it available once more for a new generation to read about the experiences of one of bowhunting's finest.

Our driveway snakes near the Sheyenne, and when she is slumbering under the ice it's hard not to dream about warm days, cool breezes and catfish. Though Doug Stange, editor in chief of the *In-Fisherman* magazine, generally is a how-to writer, his book, *Life and Times in Catfish Country* is a collection of wonderful stories about the rise of modern catfishing. No



COURTESY PHOTO

matter how cold a winter's day is, the stories instantly transport me to the dog days of summer.

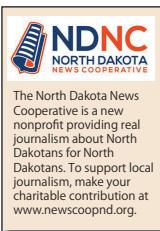
E. Donnell Thomas, Jr., a MD from Montana, is one of today's premier outdoor writers. Far from the modern pandering to gear companies and outfitters, Thomas writes thoughtful, reflective stories about the heart of hunting and fishing. Every single one of his books is outstanding, but I reread both *Longbow Country* and *To All Things a Season* to not only enjoy the stories but also to attempt to glean a little about writing from the one of the best.

Dr. Kenneth Czech, a teacher from Minnesota, collected historical writings on hunting in distant lands in his book *Hunting Trips in the Land of*

*the Dragon and Hunting Trips in the Land of the Czars*. Even though I'll never get to experience hunting in either China or Russia, it's interesting to read about pursuing tigers in the jungles or sheep in the lung-searing mountain heights in the days of yore.

Of course, there are many more outstanding writers. Mike E. Neilson, M.R. James, Chuck Adams, Jim Zumbo, Ron Rohrbaugh, Rollie Johnson, to name a few, are worth visiting each winter. Though it's easy to get ephemeral nonsense online today, deep, meaningful writing is in short supply. It is worth the effort to find works that can be enjoyed by the hearth and will stick with the reader.

# Newspaper groups seek giving hearts gifts



Dakota Newspaper Association Education Foundation (NDNAEF) and the North Dakota News Cooperative (NDNC) are among hundreds of worthy local charities seeking gifts in the lead up to Giving Hearts Day, Feb. 12.

"This has been the largest public-facing appeal NDNAEF has ever made," said Cecile Wehrman, Executive Director of the North Dakota Newspaper Association.

NDNAEF each year awards tens of thousands of dollars in grants to support activities that benefit local news reporting across the state, journalism education, and literacy through support of Kid Scoop News ND. Partnering with NDNC, which grew out of the association several years ago to increase the amount of quality content available to newspapers, the two non-profits together are appealing to people who believe a free press is essential to a healthy society.

A series of newspaper ads, articles and social media posts have been circulating over the past three months, all with the aim of making more people aware of the work the organizations do behind the scenes to support quality local reporting. From the North Dakota Spelling Bee, to internships for young journalists, the appeals have included people sharing how the state benefits from NDNAEF programs.

"When you support NDNAEF, you're insuring North Dakota students have a love of language and a love of learning – skills they will carry with them the rest of their lives," said Miranda Streifel, ND Spelling

Bee director.

Zachary Wieand and Ann Estvold are two young journalists who have had reporting internships supported by NDNAEF.

Estvold was the legislative reporter during the 2025 Legislature, feeding weekly stories to dozens of newspapers that otherwise would not have the resources to carry reports from the Capitol.

"I learned the importance of government reporting and also the importance of sharing what is happening," she said.

Today she is managing editor of the Morton County News Journal, which serves New Salem and Mandan.

Wieand's internship at the Bismarck Tribune in 2022 ultimately led to a full time job there – something that may never have happened if not for the internship program.

"That internship was the first time I had really been in a professional setting," said Wieand.

"In both cases, we were able to keep young people who grew up in North Dakota, reporting in North Dakota," said Wehrman, a pattern that's been replicated at newspapers across the state each year, with newspapers large and small placing interns supported by NDNAEF.

One of the greatest contributions NDNC has been making in recent years has been to conduct the ND Poll – the only regular, non-partisan poll of North Dakota voters. For instance, a recent NDNC poll surveyed North Dakotans on their desire for free school lunches, a statistic that was mentioned by multiple legislators during North Dakota's recent special legislative session.

Though he had previously voted against free school lunches, "Where I changed my

mind is by looking at the polls," Rep. Pat Heinert, R-Bismarck said during the floor debate, even though the bill was ultimately defeated.

"The purpose of NDNC polls is to provide government leaders in the state with an understanding of the will of the people," said Steve Andrist, co-chair of NDNC's board.

NDNC also funds a reporting position that feeds dozens of stories per year covering issues North Dakotans care about to the state's 71 local newspapers. In addition to the stories that appear in print, each week NDNC produces the "Back Story" podcast to take readers behind the scene of news-gathering.

"I think it's helpful to get that background and just the process of it," said Michael Standaert, NDNC's lead journalist.

Prior to this year, NDNAEF used only its own investment funds to support projects like the spelling bee, internships and organizations like the news co-op. This year, NDNAEF and NDNC are asking local newspaper readers to lend a hand in making sure these valuable programs can continue.

People wishing to support either organization with a Giving Hearts donation simply type in the name "Giving Hearts" into a web browser to be taken to the online platform where donations are received. After clicking "donate" enter the name of the non-profit you wish to support: North Dakota Newspaper Association Education Foundation or North Dakota News Cooperative, or both.

The Giving Hearts portal will be open through Feb. 12. Both NDNAEF and NDNC also have giving information on their websites, [ndna.com](http://ndna.com) or [newscoopnd.org](http://newscoopnd.org).

## ARTHUR CITY COUNCIL

The Arthur City Council was called to order on January 19, 2026 at 7:30 p.m. Mayor Greg Nelson with Council members Olson, Lautt, Floan, Engelke present. Also, present Auditor Keller, Joe Lautt, Travis House, Brent Floan, and Bob Sager.

Olson made a motion to approve the minutes. Floan second. Passed.

Engelke made a motion to approve the financials. Lautt second. Passed.

Lautt made a motion to approve the bills. Engelke second. Passed.

Lautt made a motion to approve the paid year end bills. Engelke second. Passed.

Utility bills were reviewed and past due accounts were discussed.

Olson made a motion to approve the various monthly transfers. Floan second. Passed.

Reports were read from Cass County Dept. and Community Coordinator.

### Old Business:

No update on the SFN 3473 Burning Variance or SFN 19534 Permit by Rule.

No update from Moore Engineering.

Email Implantation is completed from Midnight Solutions.

Discussion on City Employment.

### New Business:

Discussion on getting a 2024 Cash Financial Audit – Government required. Keller has reached out to two firms to for quotes and availability.

Lautt made a motion to pay Arthur Township for road maintenance. Engelke second. Passed.

Olson made a motion Arthur Volunteer Fire Department Gaming Permit. Engelke second. Passed.

Chris Murch discussed the impact and future of the Northern Cass Health and Wellness Center.

Discussion on unlicensed vehicles in yards, and the city ordinance.

House & J. Lautt discussed the Gaming Permit, annual Arthur Fire Dept meeting, and keeping hydrants cleared from snow.

Meeting was adjourned by Mayor Nelson at 8:30 p.m.

Natalie Keller, Arthur City Auditor (February 4, 2026)

