

Fishing & Hunting

By Richard Seale



Happenings

Two months ago, I reported my saga of finding the boss for whom I worked in 1964-65—that's right, 57 years ago. I have been calling Tom Kelly pretty much weekly since then, and we are having a lot of fun sharing our life histories between back then and now. As I mentioned in that article, Tom is about to turn 95 in May. I have entertained a bit of a dream to try to share a turkey hunt with Tom in Beaufort County, and I am still working on that. There are, however, some serious complications to be dealt with.

Linda is one of three Duke School of Nursing alums that I call "My Steel Magnolias." In the mid-1960s, graduate forestry students were housed in the Duke men's graduate dorm, which was across the street from the nursing dorm. To my knowledge, this was the only men-women dorm in close proximity to each other at Duke. Back then, the Duke undergrad men lived on west campus, and Duke undergrad women lived on east campus. Not so anymore. I can personally attest that a disproportionate number of foresters married nurses—and I was just one of them.

In March, Linda and two of her friends, one from California and the other living in southern New Jersey, put together a week-long gathering. My job was to drive Linda to the event. The California couple flew to Philadelphia and were to be picked up, and the New Jersey nurse set up a place for all of us to stay near the Ocean City, NJ boardwalk. All of that worked out, except the weather greeted us with low 20°F mornings, high winds and sporadic rain.

My devious mind set to work on the fact that I had learned Tom Kelly now lived in Bethesda, MD. I contacted his daughter, as well as Tom, several times, and we set up a lunchtime meeting at Tom's residence on Saturday, April 2. I brought the books Linda had given me for Christmas so Tom could autograph them. We made confirming phone calls the day before to be sure all was still a "go." Recall, if you will, that Tom does not buy green bananas anymore (as he jokingly says, because of his advanced age). All I had to do was get My Steel Magnolias up in the morning and packed so we could start the journey by 8 a.m. That all went very well. Then our car had to get the California couple to the Philadelphia airport for their flight. That, too, went incredibly well, considering traffic and accident concerns.

The only way to truly understand what the driving conditions are like on I-95 north of Richmond, through Washington and Baltimore, and on to New York City is to drive it. Words simply cannot describe what it is like to be in four lanes of traffic, as far as the eye can see, at 85 miles an hour, 20 feet from the car in front of you, with a car on your rear bumper and no openings left and right of your car. To me, that puts my life at a risk over which I have no control. It was in these conditions that I had to get from the Philadelphia airport to Bethesda. Though I earned more white hair due to driving conditions, we arrived at Tom's condo right at noon. I certainly would not want to face those driving conditions every day.

Tom answered my call from the lobby with "Come on up!" He did not want to go out for lunch, so we opted for a quiet bachelor pad sandwich and reminisced about the past and caught up to the present. Tom put his turkey call "mouth

yelper" in and gave us a sweet serenade. My memories of driving the roads of Alabama and Mississippi with him as he tried to teach me how to mouth yelp flooded into my mind. This man was much more than my boss. He was a sort of quasi-father as I stepped out of college into the real world.

I brought him a copy of the gobblers and hens photo that was in my April *Shoreline* article, signed it with comments, and he autographed the books Linda gave me last Christmas.

Our visit lasted an hour and a half, and the smiles on both of our faces in the photo are the best evidence that it was a very special meeting to both of us. We both experienced a "Happening."

Tom's books are fun to read, and the topics within are varied and spiced with his special humor. They are not just about turkey hunts—and a few of them can be ordered through our Bogue Banks Library as loaners from NC counties west of us. Look up Col. Tom Kelly on the internet, and take time to read one or two of his books. You will be glad you did—and you will understand my good fortune to have had this person in my life. Tom, Happy 95th!

The speckled trout bite remains exceptionally good in the upper estuaries while using MirrOlures in the 17 and 18 classes. In early April, Bogue Sound is not very active, to be honest. The sea mullet are coming into Beaufort Inlet and the turning basin, and a few are also moving along our ocean beaches, as are dogfish sharks. Both are good eating. Hopefully, some warm and sunny days will have our sound waters getting a good supply of trout, flounder, sheepshead, cobia and drum come May.

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Tom Kelly (left), Richard Seale's boss at Scott Paper 57 years ago, and Richard with two of Tom's 24 turkey story books during a recent visit in Bethesda, MD

—Photo by Linda Seale