

A Quiet Warrior

You could say it began in 1991 for Ken Young when he attended his first Elk Foundation banquet in Tooele, Utah. But that would be only half the tale, as this man's journey starts from home.

Raised in Grantsville, Utah, Young grew up in a hunting family and dreamed of the day when he could go elk and deer hunting with his father and two older brothers, Jim and Rich.

"When the time finally came," Young says, "it was one of the happiest times of my hunting life—being able to go out with my brothers, my dad and his hunting partner and experience what I've always dreamed about." From that time on, hunting played a significant role in Young's life.

When he moved to a suburb of Salt Lake City, his cousin invited him to his first RMEF banquet, and he started down the road of a lifelong commitment to the RMEF's mission. It wasn't long before Young became active in the Salt Lake City Chapter, which he's been involved with ever since.

"Seeing small towns growing and elk losing their winter grounds and quality habitat, I thought anything we could do to make a difference was good. The Elk Foundation was set up to do just that," Young says, "and that's why I joined."

Since then Young, a 46-year-old insurance broker, served as the Salt Lake City Chapter chair for five years, Utah State Chair from 2000 to 2007, and on Utah's State Leadership Team for the past 10 years. Even today, Young attends 8 to 10 banquets a year and countless meetings.

Luckily, his wife Julie supports his passion. In the beginning, when he failed to bring home an animal, Julie didn't understand. She thought the point of hunting was to bring home meat every time. But Young



Ken Young with his 2007 Utah duck hunt haul.

taught her that hunting was more about being out in good country with people you love.

"Now I just love to go along because he likes doing everything when we're outdoors," Julie says. "I basically think of it as a vacation for me because he does it all."

Hunting and the Elk Foundation pervade the Young household. Both of their sons, Skyler (24) and Hayden (20), enjoy sharing the hunt with their dad.

Bill Christensen, Utah regional director, met Young in the mid 1990s. "Right off the bat I could tell he had great leadership skills," Christensen says.

And he was right. Aside from Young's duties as a chapter chair, he took over for Christensen when he fell ill in 2001 and 2006, filling in at banquets and acting as Christensen's alternate on the Utah Wolf Working Group when needed. The "wolf group" was charged with devising a management plan, and Young represented the RMEF on multiple occasions at those meetings. Young's quiet demeanor and willingness to see everyone's perspective, while keeping his own eye on the goal, served him in good stead. He says that was the way he was raised—to try to create a positive relationship

with everyone you come into contact with.

"It was fun to try and understand where the pro-wolf groups were coming from. They couldn't convert me, though," he says.

Young started bowhunting in the early '90s, but it was 1999 when he killed his first bull while hunting with Christensen on his family's ranch.

"He was quiet and beaming the biggest smile I've ever seen," Christensen says. Young had the bull made into a European

mount, and the five-point hangs in his office to this day.

Despite his time serving as state chair, chapter chair and all the other activities he's participated in, Young isn't one to seek the limelight, says current state chair, Ron Camp. Young would always prefer someone else to get the kudos.

"As state chair, Young's hardest thing to deal with was standing in front of a crowd and talking," Camp says. "He'd rather speak through his actions and what he does for the Elk Foundation."

But there've been a lot of "paydays" in his work with the Elk Foundation, says Young. He's especially proud of when the Salt Lake Chapter was named Number 1 in the nation in RMEF Chapter Net for 2006 and 2007.

"It also gave us a bit of pride knowing we were bringing in 700-plus attendees to the banquet and getting people to catch the vision," Young says.

But for him, September in elk country is the biggest payday of all. "I'm a small-town boy living in the suburbs of Salt Lake City," he says. "For me to get away every fall, recharge my batteries and get back to my roots just keeps me sane."

—Tim Kukes, Bugle Intern