

“The Memory of Odors is Very Rich”
By Lex Shuler
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I picked up a copy of the rerelease of John Steinbeck’s East of Eden the other day and I turned to the very first page and one sentence caught my eye. “The memory of odors is very rich.” Those words made me think of my grandpa Shuler. Grandpa, or Lee to others, was a rugged individualist who never worked on public work in his whole life. He always trapped for bearing animals, dug roots, gathered medicinal herbs, truck patched and the like to make a living.

In the early winter when the leaves have fallen, and the faint scent of a fox or some other critter is in the air, I can literally see Grandpa in his overall jumper, walking out across the hill with both arms behind his back, carrying a toe sack half full of steel traps. That time of year Grandpa had that exact smell from being outdoors, skinning out and stretching pelts. When I breathe in that air I always remember Grandpa. He’s been gone over twenty years now but that odor can bring him back to me in an instant.