

QUACK
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Death of outdoorsman sad conservation loss

MISSOURI OUTDOORS suffered a great loss this week with the death of Pete Shouse — conservationist, hunter, fisherman, wood carver and a charter member of the “good old boys” group.

Pete led winning teams, from his football and track days at St. Joseph Central High School to wielding a strong conservation-constructive hand in building many of the state’s vital outdoor programs.

The 80-year-old bushy-browed outdoorsman was instrumental in founding the Missouri Conservation Federation, longtime watchdog of the state conservation department, and was one of the “four horsemen” of the Northwest Missouri Sportsman’s Association.

He launched, and won, many conservation battles — from molding Missouri’s excellent conservation department to dredging his favorite crappie fishing waters in his backyard at Big Lake, near Mound City.

His accomplishments are legend, his friends range from tobacco-spitting philosophers to conservation leaders and governors.

“Never met a person I didn’t like — a couple that I didn’t care to crappie fish with — but most folks have a lot of good in them, it just has to coaxed out a bit,” he said.

Pete and other conservation-minded people got together back in the 1930s to form the Missouri Conservation Federation.

The private group, now with a membership of some 40,000, became the big brother of our Missouri Conservation Department.

The federation, with strong public support, got the conserva-



Photo by BILL BENNETT

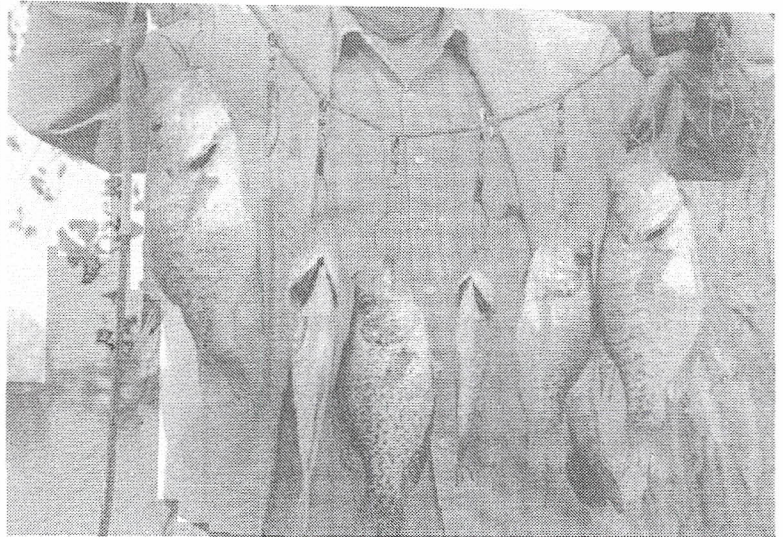


Photo by BILL BENNETT

Pete Shouse with a day's catch of his favorite fish.

tion department established as a non-political state agency in the mid-1930s. Both groups worked to steadily build Missouri's outdoor program into the finest in the nation.

The federation again came to the department's financial rescue in the mid 1970s with a conservation tax law proposal. The two groups received another solid vote of public support with citizen approval of conservation taxes.

That tax set a national precedent — citizens voting a tax on themselves and authorizing a government agency to do as they pleased with the money with the federation keeping tabs on the merchandise and expenditures.

Shouse and several other concerned outdoorsmen spearheaded the former Northwest Missouri Sportsman's Club, based at the old Chamber of Commerce Building in St. Joseph and across the street from the former Hotel Robidoux.

Some conservation benefits were planned in the chamber building, while others took place at the Elk's Club bar in the hotel.

Pete, Roy Hatfield, Ben Gordon and Pat Olmsted was the quartet that spearheaded conservation programs, such as releasing quail to restock that popular game bird in Northwest Missouri.

The years took no toll on Shouse. He just shifted from high to second gear during his latter years. He and his wife, Helen, retired to Big Lake, where they helped the Big Lake Association improve the lake through dredging and well-water pumping.

Helen was always at Pete's conservation side, serving as one of the women board members of the federation and as secretary of the Big Lake boosters group.

"We settled a lot of problems and needs in smoke-filled rooms with ample applications of whiskey and back pats," Pete said — his formula for oldtime politicking.

He took up wood carving as he gracefully moved into his 70s, blending carving of duck and geese mobiles — those intricately-balanced works of art that are nudged into motion by the slightest breeze — with fishing in Big Lake.

Crappie fishing was a Shouse creation.

It was well known in angling circles that crappie didn't bite until Shouse went crappie fishing.

He was a master at working a crappie jig lure among brushy areas. Seldom a fishing day passed that Pete didn't present Helen with crappie fillets for dinner.

They'd sit in the backyard after dinner and Pete would whittle ducks and geese for his mobile creations.

He'd tell you where to catch fish, even take you to his favorite spots, but Shouse did not share his crappie fillets.

Even his son, Bob, had to catch his own crappie when he came to visit.

It was Pete's way of telling folks it's your outdoor right to keep what you earn when you earn it right.

We will miss that familiar grin as he patiently listened to others before adding the appreciated wisdom he gained from experience.