

WILD NZ



DINGDONGS & OTHER BITS

a father & son chat

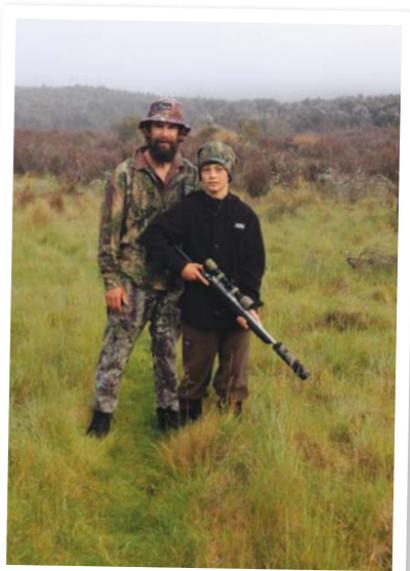
by Mike Cooney

The time had finally arrived. There was no point in denying it. My excuses had run out and my clever attempts at avoiding the subject had long become pitiful. And to make matters worse, I had my lovely wife nagging in my ear, telling me to ‘man-up’ and confront the issue. Now, when my manhood is called into question, it’s definitely time to act! But I’ll be honest with you. I was nervous. Maybe even a little scared ...
No, scrap that. Just nervous ...

There comes a time in every father’s life when he has to have that ‘talk’. You know the one I mean? The one you have with your sons when they ‘come of age’? It’s THE talk of talks. And it’s caused many a man to quiver with dread at the very thought of it.

If you haven’t figured it out yet, I’m talking about sex. Actually, not sex itself, because that’s super-awesome and certainly doesn’t cause men to ‘quiver with dread’. Quiver – yes, but not with dread. I’m talking about the sex-talk. The talk most parents have with their kids at the ‘appropriate’ age. What that appropriate age is, is anyone’s guess. Some people say around 10 years, others eight, and still others (if you heard the recent scandal), not long after they’re out of nappies. I, on the other hand, think 19 is appropriate, because hopefully by then your child is on their O.E. and ‘the talk’ will have to be cancelled. Then it’s up to their future wife to fill them in on the details ...

Thankfully, someone, some time ago, was thoughtful enough to call this talk, ‘*The Birds and the Bees*’ – which in my humble opinion, is a much better name than ‘*Genitals, What on Earth Are They For?*’ Although, I’m not 100% sure what the connection is between birds, bees and sex. If anyone can enlighten me, I’d



certainly be interested. Another description we heard recently came while watching the show *Duck Dynasty* with my family. On this particular episode, Phil, the grandfather, was talking with one of his grandsons while they were out ‘crawfishing’ (similar to our ‘koura’ or freshwater crays). He introduced the topic while holding a male and female crawfish and showing the young lad their respective ... um ... parts, which he famously called: “*dingdongs and vaginas.*”



Anyway, once my kids stopped laughing, I realised that dingdongs and vaginas actually had a nice ring to it – and is now (FYI) our official family title for ‘*The Birds and the Bees*’. You might rightly ask why I didn’t just use the proper name for the male bits. Well, have you ever tried saying the word ‘penis’ in its plural form? And what is it anyway? Penises or peni? And besides, telling my son “Hey, let’s go have a chat about penises and vaginas” would send him running for the nearest hills. ‘Dingdongs’ would give me a much better chance of nabbing him ...

So, at the behest of my wife and conscience, I made plans to give the boy the best sex talk ever given by anyone. Ever. And I figured we should make the occasion a good one – for *both* of us

– something we could both look forward to. So rather than popping into his room one evening for a chinwag about why our bull likes climbing onto the backs of our cows, I decided I’d take him hunting. And, even better, we were going by helicopter.

This would be his first ever chopper ride, and whatever concerns he had about the upcoming chat would be diminished by the excitement ... well, that, plus the fact that I didn’t actually *tell* him about the upcoming chat. I figured I’d spring it on him when we were deep in the bush ...

The day dawned for our hunting mission, and we were joined by three other boys and their dads, Will and Brendon – one of whom was also considering using my ‘dingdongs and vaginas’ approach. As they say, there

is strength (and bravado) in numbers. However, when confronted with the opportunity later the next day, that dad sadly wussed out. Now *his* manhood is in question.

The helicopter ride in the *Hughes 500* was hands-down the best ride I've ever had – and I've had a few. The sight and sound of my son whooping and hollering during our short flight was awesome and made my cunning plan totally worthwhile. I hadn't seen him that animated in a long time, and I knew this would be an experience he wouldn't forget ... in more ways than one!

After getting our gear sorted at the hut, we headed out for a look-around

– exploring a nearby river-flat for deer sign. There wasn't heaps around, and you could tell the place had had a fair bit of hunting pressure recently. But, despite that, we were simply happy to be there. The manuka valleys were in full flower – it looked like there'd been a dump of snow there was so much white around. The boys thought we were in paradise.

Our evening hunt was uneventful, but we found a couple of good spots worth checking the following morning. My mate Will and his boys had better luck, and shot a young sika stag while it was crossing a river. As you can imagine, the pressure on me to bag a deer had just grown exponentially ...



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The following day was going to be a big one for the two of us. We decided to head out first light and spend the whole day up in a beech forest, exploring the creek heads. It was pretty warm – summer had just arrived – and we were hoping to see deer close to the water.

After pushing through the tight manuka belt that ran along the tussock-covered river-flats, we made it into the beech forest proper and almost immediately spooked a deer. I couldn't get a clear shot, so let it bound away in peace. My son had seen a few deer with me before, but this was his first sika – and the sound of it whistling at us while safely hidden in thick scrub, showed him how vocal these deer can be – but also how wily they are.

We spent the next few hours stalking through the bush, with me using every opportunity to teach him some hunting tips along the way. Things like reading deer sign, the different types of flora they like to eat, the effect of wind, etc. Eventually, however, I ran out of tips ...

It was time, (insert *quiver* here), for me to 'man-up'.

It took a while to find the perfect spot for our 'chat'. I finally settled on a large beech tree overlooking some nice open bush, and the two of us sat down. I figured if I got halfway through my talk and a deer wandered into view, that'd be as good excuse as any to finish. But no deer came to rescue me.

I opened the conversation with a little light-hearted banter, which wasn't really



Well, my boy nearly choked on the creamed-rice he was eating – and I took the look of sheer horror in his face as a sign that no one (not even, heaven forbid, the internet!) had beaten me to it. Thank you Lord!

going anywhere – so I decided to heck with it, and leapt right in. Well, my boy nearly choked on the creamed-rice he was eating – and I took the look of sheer horror in his face as a sign that no one (not even, heaven forbid, the internet!) had beaten me to it. Thank you Lord!

Well, we spent an intimate (if not slightly uncomfortable) afternoon discussing dingdongs and vaginas and other such things in the middle of the Kaimanawa Forest Park. And it seemed fitting that,



soon after I finished, a shrill whistle emanated from the bush not more than 20 metres away. A sika deer. And an obvious sign, confirming nature's approval of my special discourse.

We put in some hard-yards that day – and my son didn't miss a beat. I was incredibly proud of him. I shot at and missed a deer in front of him later on (oh the shame!), and our last-dash effort to bag some venison the following morning had the chopper nearly leave without us. But all was well.

While walking back to the hut, I asked him what his favourite parts of the trip were: the helicopter rated highly, as did all the deer we saw, and our big day in the bush.

Sadly, our special father-son talk didn't get a mention ...

... until I asked him what the worst part was. ❁

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