

**By BRIAN ACKLEY**  
**WIN Columnist**

I was having a pleasant chat with a friend two time zones away last week when the conversation came to an abrupt end.

“Gotta go,” she offered. “I told my daughter I would take her shopping this morning.” And with that, she was as good as gone, quicker than a Bush visit to Baghdad. Didn’t even have time to ask her why in the world shopping the day after Thanksgiving has become as commonplace as “please pass the gravy”.

Happily, sanity reigned in my world on that day. I can’t say the same for the hundreds, yes, hundreds, who were lined up at one Amherst store at 4:30 a.m., yes, 4:30 a.m. There wasn’t even enough time for said gravy to congeal. I mean, what in the name of five-dollar coffee makers is going on here?

Actually, guys have little or no room to complain. In fact, it’s just a few days prior many of us go through much of the same silliness. We call it the first day of deer season.

Mind you, I’m not against either. I like shopping. That deserves qualification actually. I’m far from ready to make shopping the centerpiece of any holiday. But given the choice, I’m also not one who would rather clean a barn stall floor with a pair of tweezers than boogie on down to the Boulevard Mall. Elmwood Avenue can hold almost as much appeal to me as a grove of undisturbed Elms. One has wild life, the other wildlife. Both can be good.

And, while I don’t do it anymore, I was a hunter. That, too, deserves qualification actually. I would walk a short distance to a carpeted, heated tree stand – the only thing missing was the 60-inch flat screen wall TV – and hope that something might mosey on by.

What I’m really against, I think, is doing either at a time before I can actually walk inside and up to a Tim Horton’s counter for my daily mandatory large double double.

Still, there are remarkable parallels between the two phenomenons – which stroke the most primal of human instincts of hunting and gathering -- that shouldn’t pass without at least a mention.

**The week before** -- Hunters lay out battery operated socks; target practice. Gatherers lay out coupons; Target practice.

**The training** -- Hunters take firearms classes, must get licensed, are required to tag and report their success. As dangerous as the Friday after Thanksgiving has become, come to think of it, these might become good ideas for gatherers too.

**The garb** -- Hunters: Blaze orange. Gatherers: pair of jeans and sweatshirt from the floor nearest the bed.

**Mandatory equipment** -- Hunters: shotgun, thermos, hat with ear flaps. Gatherers: scissors, pen with adequate ink supply, Dr. Scholl’s air pillow inserts.

**The night before--** Hunters congregate, reminisce gaily, eat and drink heartily. Gatherers call neighbors and friends for extra JC Penney inserts.

**Needed skills** -- For hunters, a sharp eye and steady hand. For gatherers, a sharp eye and a steady hand. One never knows where another bargain may lurk, and signing of credit card receipts can get tiring if not properly paced.

**Critical mass** -- For hunters, bad. Must be adequately spaced to insure safety and respect. For gatherers, good. Indication of boffo bargains, safety and respect be damned.

**The reward** -- Hunters: displaying kill for all motorists to see. Gatherers: Mercifully placing kill in private confines of the trunk.

**Three months from now** -- Hunters: Tasty venison filets on the grill. Gatherers: Did I remember to water the Chia Pet today?

*(Brian Ackley is a columnist for the Weekly Independent Newspapers (WIN) of Western New York. WIN is a consortium of 19 community weekly newspapers in Erie and Niagara counties with a combined paid circulation of 75,000 homes, providing collaborative advertising and editorial support for member publications. For more information on WIN, or to provide feedback on this column, visit our website at [www.wnynewspapers.com](http://www.wnynewspapers.com). Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)*