

**SEE NO  
EVIL**

Conceived in the hatred of war. Ignorant of the truth. We find the children of Bosnia's rape victims

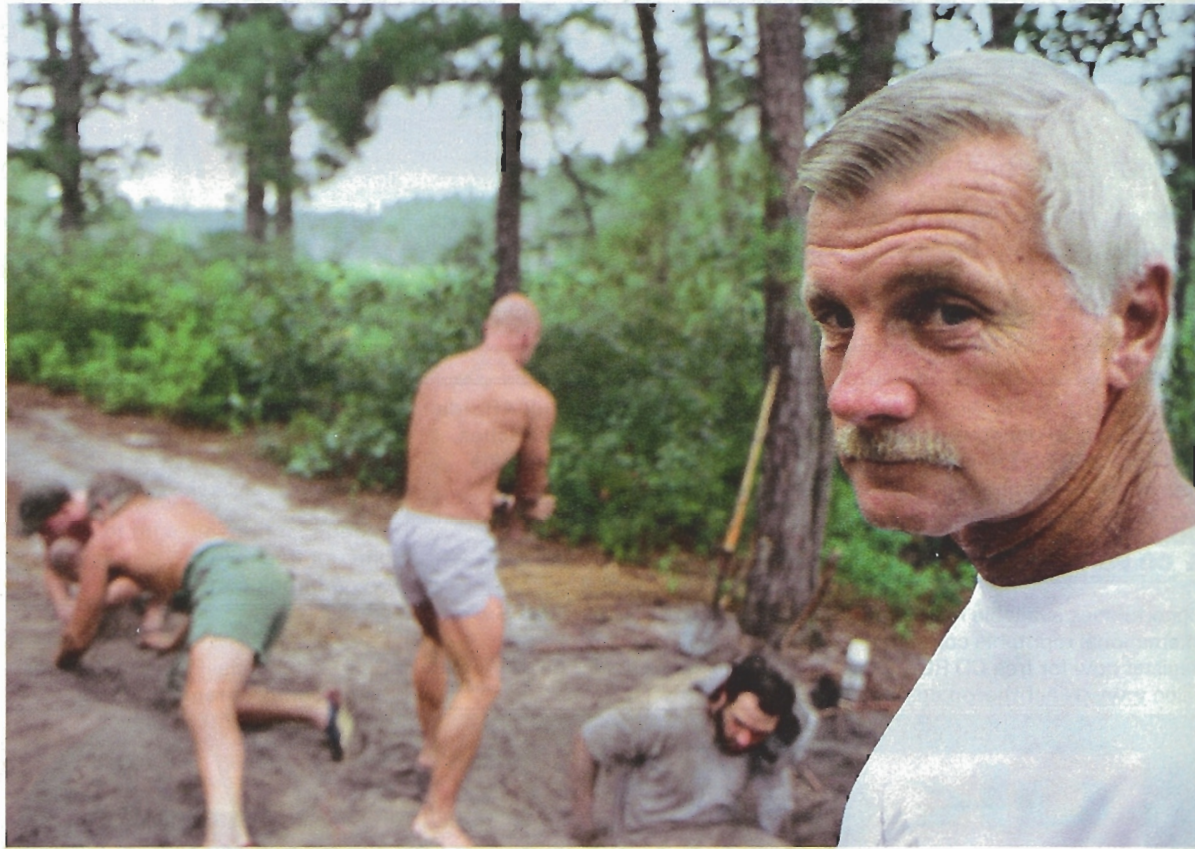
**TOM BROWN Jr, 53, runs a tracking and wilderness-survival school in the New Jersey Pine Barrens, where he lives with his wife, Debra, and their sons, Coty, 10, and River, 8. By Paul Sullivan. Photograph by Gigi Cohen**

**W**e live in an almost pristine forest wilderness. Just before dawn is one of my favourite times — the light, the smells, the symphony of sound, especially the birds. Blue jays, chickadees, mourning doves... They have a beautiful language — it can tell you what's moving in the forest, what predators are about. It's like the morning news. If I'm teaching I'll get up and drive the eight or so miles to the school for 7am. But if I've been called in to track a missing person, especially a child, I probably won't have slept at all. Speed is vital.

We train police officers, rangers, the military from all over the world. I learnt about tracking from an Apache elder called Stalking Wolf, the grandfather of a school friend. I met him when I was seven and he was 83, and for over 10 years, every evening, weekend and holiday, I'd be with him, learning about the natural world. He said the important thing was being willing to learn.

He gave me a jar of ants and told me to learn to track them across sand. It took a while, but once you can track ants, most other things are easier. By the time I left high school, I could live in the wild and I'd grown apart from society. Stalking Wolf died when I was 21, and I was devastated. I took off, travelling across North and South America. It took me a long time to realise he'd put his knowledge in my hands so I could pass it on. He thought people were losing touch with the Earth, and that it was vital for the future of the planet that the old skills and beliefs were kept alive. So I came back to society to try and teach the things he taught me.

The school has grown enormously. Debra manages it now, and I have very good instructors who help me take the various classes — from basic tracking to extreme wilderness survival. Debra will often bring our sons over. They've learnt



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how to track, but if they choose not to go further, I'm fine with that. At least they'll always have a love of the Earth.

Lunch in the wild can be luxurious. There are edible plants — mouse-eared chickweed, plantain, acorns — all with enough nutrition to keep you healthy. I'm not a vegetarian, but these days I'll only kill for food if my life is on the line. At the school we'll have stews, things like that. The students are taught to cook what they gather from the wild, and to learn to hunt, kill and dress animals.

The other work I do is with the police or the FBI, tracking lost hikers or dangerous animals or missing children. That's a horrible part of my life. I've been involved in many hundreds of cases, and I've seen a lot of death. It's very stressful meeting parents and asking them for a shoe or a slipper so I can match the tracks. I'll usually get a feeling about whether a child is alive before I start. A few years ago, a little girl had gone missing. The police thought she'd been abducted. Most of her tracks had been destroyed by previous searches, but I found some eventually. She'd gone into

woods near her home. The tracks showed she'd got frightened and disoriented.

Tracks are like miniature landscapes. If you lift your arm, your body shifts to compensate. Those compensations leave "pressure releases" in your tracks. With experience, you can read if an animal has stopped, if it's anxious, if it's tired, even if it has a full belly.

I tracked the little girl to a small river full of garbage. She had fallen in, got entangled in rubbish and drowned. Stalking Wolf had said society was killing its grandchildren to feed its children. Well, people used this river as a dump, and that's what killed her. I told the divers where to look and left. I became depressed, but I realised I couldn't give up. If you care, you keep on fighting.

I pay my own costs when I take a case, and I don't seek personal publicity. They made a film based on me — called *The Hunted* — and they asked me to work on the script. It is important to me that the Apache skills are portrayed correctly, so I helped them out.

Dusk is my other favourite time. In the wild I'll have built my shelter and

collected food before the light fades. Then I'll meditate. The sounds are all different — the night shift is taking over, the hunters. It's a good time to listen. The school has long hours and I often won't be home before 11pm, but I'll have seen Debra and the boys during the day. If we eat together, it'll be conventional food. We have TV but I'll only watch the news.

I can relax any time I've got a patch of earth. Even at an airport, if there's a planter there'll be an insect to look at. I often dream of the Earth's destruction. I see how nature doesn't matter to people any more. It appals me that the stewardship of our planet is like a political game. But I'm an optimist or I wouldn't be teaching. I'd be back in the wild.

*The book *A Life in the Day*, celebrating 25 years of this column, is available at the Books Direct price of £10.39 (RRP, £12.99) plus £1.95 postage and packing. Tel: 0870 165 8585, or visit [www.timesonline.co.uk/booksdirect](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/booksdirect)*