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Texas Bowhunters' Journal
Michael Middleton
Houston, TX
Journal@texasbowhunter.com
www.TexasBowhunter.com

TEXAS BOWHUNTERS' JOURNAL

Reflections

By Michael Middleton

Another deer hunting season has come and gone, but left behind are the memories that will last a lifetime. I will long remember the 1999 season, as it was a special one in so many ways. Besides taking my best buck to date, a 140" P&Y class whitetail, I also will remember 1999 for all of the hunters that I had an opportunity to meet through this newsletter and the website.

It was special because I was able to share several of my most exciting hunts with you through our Live Hunt updates on the website. A 5 day trip with Casey Morris to Kickapoo Caverns SNA in November highlighted a Live Hunt schedule that included trips to Batesville, Uvalde and East Texas. We were also faced with challenges such as an aborted Thanksgiving hunt

outside of Encinal because of no phone availability.

I was also overwhelmed by a genuine outpouring of love and support, as I experienced both personal triumph, in the birth of my second daughter, Courtney, in August, and tragedy, as I lost my only remaining grandfather in December. Would you believe that the only flowers my wife received in the hospital after Courtney's birth came from my internet pals?! And your words of encouragement were comforting as I said goodbye to a loved one.

So even as I look forward to the first weekend in October 2000, I am careful to thank God for providing so many blessings as I reflect on the season just past. I thank each of you for allowing me to share my adventures with you, and for sending in your stories, pictures and emails so that I could experience a taste of your accomplishments as well!

Be sure to visit our website and new discussion forum at www.texasbowhunter.com to keep current on group hunting opportunities, get-togethers and just plain fun!

Lunch Time Buck

By Glenn Lemke

Every deer taken in our great state has to have a story behind it and the buck I took on Saturday, January 8 is no exception. This particular buck has been around our Kinney County lease for at least the past three seasons. He always shows up around the third week in November. That's when the pre-rut starts. He has stayed in the general vicinity of a dry creek bed that runs the length of the long valley that comprises the major part of our ranch. He has been photographed and videoed a number of times. This past spring I set up a Game Tamer tree stand and a filming stand in a large oak that bordered the creek. A feeder was also placed there. I was able to take some excellent pictures and video of this buck throughout this season. I shared some of those pictures on the web site under the discussion threads, "Check out this buck? -Dec 26" and "Add your own images to the site-Dec 26". I had decided on trying to take this buck when I started seeing two other super bucks. One a great eight and the other a wide, heavy beamed ten.

Michael Middleton and I hunted all three of these bucks after Christmas, but only had one opportunity to take one of them. On the morning of December 31, while hunting from a tent blind, with Michael filming, I blew the shot on the ten. (See video clip on the website). During the period following Christmas, it appeared that the buck I had filmed in the valley had vanished.

I arrived at our ranch around 8:00 on Friday night on January 7. I had the 3000 acres to myself and as I started setting up camp, I caught myself looking around at sounds in the distance several times. I was sure I heard men talking! Maybe not! My plan was to get up early, get to the top of the mountain and set up the Lucky's tent blind well before daylight. I was hoping that my intrusion would have time to settle down and maybe one of the good ones would show. By 5:30, everything was in place and I settled into the blind ready to make a day of it. I had already decided that, since I only had limited time left in the 1999 season, I was going to hunt all day. At 11:00, I had only had one fork horn and a herd of cattle grace my site. I decided that I needed to move and look

at some different scenery. I have another tree stand on this same mountain top and I have seen numerous deer at this location. I had never hunted this area during the middle of the day, but I felt it was as good as any place to set for an hour or two, before going back to the tent for the afternoon.

I went to my feeder, set it off and started up into the tree. Before I was situated, three yearlings came running out of the brush. They had heard the feeder. I started taking pictures. Between 11:30 and noon I had four bucks and three older doe come into feed. It looked like the local greasy spoon at lunch! A minute or so after 12, another doe came running from the area above my feeder. She did not approach in a cautious manner as most mature doe do. I felt either she was real hungry or she was being trailed. Very shortly, I caught glimpse of horns coming through the brush. At fifty yards I had already decided that I was going to take this buck. At this point I was not aware that this was the deer from the valley. The buck moved to my left, away from the other deer and the feeder. He could not make up his mind as to what he wanted to do. He started toward the doe he had been chasing, but then suddenly swapped ends and started back in the direction from which he had come. He stopped at what I guessed was 30 yards. I drew and released the Goldtip Carbon Hunter arrow. The arrow hit him a little high, but I felt it was a

good shot. The buck jumped slightly, and then slowly started back up the outcropping trail from which he had entered. He never made it to the top. He was dead in less than 25 steps. I was not absolutely certain this was the same deer until I returned home to match the pictures. I grossed scored him at an even 130 inches and he field dressed at 120 pounds.

This buck was the final chapter of my 1999 Texas whitetail season and I am very proud of being able to take him. By the way, on the way back down the mountain at about 1:30, I had to pass the tent blind, and what do you suppose was there eating corn, not 15 yards from the blind? You guessed it, another lunch time buck, the big ten. I'm already making plans on how to take this one in 2000. Pack a lunch!



Glenn Lemke with a nice, 130" buck taken on January 8, 2000!

Equipment and Conditions

Bow :	Jennings Buckmaster, 70 lbs., 30"
Arrows:	Gold Tip Carbon Hunter
Broadhead:	Gold Tip Gladiator 100 grain
Blind:	Lucky's Tent Company
Time:	12:10 p.m.
Temperature:	60°

Venison Filet Mignon

Ingredients:

Venison backstrap (or tenderloins)
Bacon
Steak seasonings

Slice the backstrap across the grain of the meat. Wrap each piece with bacon using toothpicks or skewers to hold the bacon in place. Season like you would a good steak. I use generous portions of seasoned salt, pepper, Lea & Perrins and sometimes a little meat tenderizer. You will know if you need the tenderizer. Start with a fairly hot grill. Keep the meat in the heat and turn often being careful not to burn it. Cook to the way you eat it. I like mine just a little pink on the inside. Serve with your favorite side dishes.

Hunting Healthy: Wild Game Food Safety

This is a topic that will probably hackle more than a few feathers. This is mainly because most hunters feel they know all about this; however, they do not. I will preface this section by stating that all the methods that are discussed here are the industry and health department “accepted” methods of taking an animal from freshly killed to the hanging meat ready to butcher. These methods focus on preventing meat from becoming contaminated with hair/dirt/feces, followed by rapid chilling.

But before we delve into that subject, we are going to mention a few things that are actually where food safety begins. This is the shot and recovery. Great care must be exercised in order not to contaminate the meat with the shot. Severe quartering should be avoided in favor of broadside shots due to the increased possibility of Rumen/Intestinal puncture. The animal should also be recovered as fast as possible. While I am a fan

of the “30 min” rule, on days where the

will usually follow up a solidly hit deer immediately and stalk the trail with great stealth. Now that I am using Wasp Jak-Hammer broadheads, I rarely have a deer run more than 100yds.

Ok, so you have made your shot and now have a deer (hog, ram, etc) on the ground. Well, in most places in Texas, an animal does not have to be “Field Dressed” because the animal is either close to a road (within 1/2 mile) or a vehicle can be driven right up to the animal. We will make the assumption that this is the case (I will cover what to do if you have to field dress an animal later), and that you have now loaded the animal in the vehicle and are headed back to camp.

The items that you will need are up to the individual, but here is what I use and recommend. At least 3 sharp knives, 2 coveralls, and either string or wire ties (which is what I prefer).

The first things you need to do are put on a set of light coveralls and then hang the deer. I usually suggest hanging the deer by the hock. Take great

care in not contaminating the knife or your hands with the tarsal glands. Now that the deer is hung, it is time to get started. Look at the deer’s rump area. You will see the anal opening and either the vaginal opening or a penis. Grab the skin around the anal opening and make a small incision, being careful not to cut the rectum. With the knife in one hand and the skin in the other, cut all the way around the anus (if female also cut around the vagina keeping the anus and vagina attached) keeping the knife against the inside of the pelvis. Pull out about 2-3” of the rectal/vaginal tube and place the wire tie around it and pull it tight. With this done, the feces and urine will not contaminate the meat. Continue to cut/pull until about 4-6” is out of the body then stuff all this back inside the pelvic canal.

Now, it is time to skin the deer. Start by cutting a line from the anal opening to the neck along the belly, **ONLY CUT THROUGH THE SKIN!** Then make a cut in the skin, up each leg from the center incision to the hock (if this is a male, make the cut on the head side of the penis). Now skin the hindquarters and cut the tail off. Do not touch the meat, only the hide. If this is a male, skin the penis off with the hide and cut it off at the base, which is near the anus. The rest is just like normal with one exception: do not touch the meat, only the hide. Skin the animal all the

way down and cut the head off. At this point, the animal should be cleaned to remove any hair or dirt that got on the deer. REMOVE THE COVERALLS AND PUT ON A CLEAN PAIR PRIOR TO STARTING THE NEXT STEP! The coveralls that you were wearing should be considered contaminated, as should the first knife.

Now we need to eviscerate the animal. You will need a clean knife. Start by locating the place where the abdominal muscles attach to the pubic bone. Cut this attachment with an incision that is perpendicular to the midline of the body. Now, place 2 fingers inside of the body cavity and push back the viscera. Using the fingers as a guide/protector for the knife, make an incision up to the ribcage. At this point you are past the areas that could contaminate the meat. Using both hands, cut through the cartilage that joins the ribs to the sternum all the way to the neck. This should take a little force but a sharp knife will cut right through it. Now reach up inside the pelvic cavity and grab the rectum/vagina. It should pull right out, since you already cut it loose. note that by doing this you

do not have to split the pelvis and risk contamination. The entire viscera should pull right out to the diaphragm. You will need to cut out the diaphragm, again being careful not to puncture any of the organs. Then the rest will pull out, except that you will need to cut the muscles that are on the bottom of the neck in order to pull out the trachea/esophagus.

At this point the carcass should be inspected and any feces/hair/dirt/ blood shot areas that are discovered should be cleaned or cut out. The animal should now be allowed to air cool to room temperature, then immediately quartered and put on ice to reduce the body temperature to as close to 32° as possible. This will keep the bacterial contamination that did occur from multiplying.

If you have to field dress an animal, the process is basically the same except that you will start with the evisceration process, as described above. Of these 2 methods, the first is far superior in terms of overall food safety.

Now that this has been done we will look at how to put up the meat, and store it as safely as

possible. To do this you first need to cut out all the visible contamination. This includes boneshot or bloodshot meat, dirt, hair etc. Once this is done, the meat should be left in the “meat bundles” that the muscle membranes form until it is ready to be cooked. This will help protect the meat from contamination.

The last steps are the easiest. The first is to freeze your meat. By freezing your meat at 5°F for 30 days, you will kill the lions share of bacteria and parasites. The last step is to cook your meat thoroughly; that is all parts to 165°F. This will kill ALL contaminates. The rarer you eat your meat, the more important all the earlier steps are.

Stay Safe and Hunt Healthy

Kevin Johnson, M.S. Ph. D., works as an Infectious Disease Epidemiologist at the Harris County Health Department and is an Adjunct Faculty member at the North Harris College Microbiology and Pathology Department.

Boselaphus - The Blue Bull

By Bill Bahr

“... five years ago a Houston, Texas father and his son were killed by a bull Nilgai when they approached it too soon after the father’s ineffective first shot ...”

Veteran bowhunter and Four Arrows outfitter Wayne Pepples tells this story and it usually makes a lasting impression ... not exactly one I wanted to think about while bumping into brush-falls in the pre-dawn darkness, lost somewhere on the King Ranch earlier this month.

GPS owners are not supposed to get lost because it results in major embarrassment.

Humiliation aside, being lost isn’t much fun either, particularly when it happens to be pitch dark and in the middle of rattlesnake country – without the benefit of snake chaps. Admitting that you’re lost is the first step to being found, so I finally swallowed my pride and sat down on a fallen tree, trying to make the best of a bad situation.

The dark morning sky slowly eased from purple to light pink and revealed a very unfamiliar clearing in the oak-mot forest; nowhere near my Swivel-limb tree stand set up the previous afternoon. “Oh well, one place is as good as another when you’re hunting Nilgai”, I lied to myself. The tree trunk seat seemed to be in a good spot, located in a pile of blown-down live oak branches.

As the sun crept over the horizon a tiny sound to my left alerted me that I was not alone. A whitetail doe was carefully making her way behind me, barely twenty yards downwind of my position. After being undetected, I was convinced that my new “ground blind” offered everything a bow hunter needed.

The morning sun’s warmth and peaceful forest sounds had the same effect as a sleeping pill. My eyes were nearly closed when suddenly a quarter-ton of bull Nilgai came charging out of nowhere, crashing through the fallen brush surrounding my little hiding place.



Nilgai or “blue bull” as they are called in India.

He stopped directly behind me only 15 yards away, breathing heavily, looking back and forth, ready to carve notches in anything that moved. You can bet your inheritance this lost GPS owner didn’t move.

The next minute seemed like an hour before he finally stepped to my right, just enough for me to see him clearly out of the corner of one eye. He was magnificent; a huge dark- gray animal with a white throat patch and white trimmed ears and cheeks. A second later he was gone.

Less than a quarter mile away my hunting partner, Kevin Johnson, wasn’t having any better luck. Nilgai bulls and cows had been walking past his tree stand on both sides, just out of range or obscured by brush. When a trophy bull finally stopped long enough for a shot, Kevin’s only shooting lane was almost completely blocked, and he wisely passed up trying to “thread the needle” through a three-inch hole in the brush.

Gun and bow hunters both agree that it's not his looks or horns that count, but rather the challenge that hunting *Boselaphus tragocamelus*, (his Latin nomenclature) presents. Much like the whitetail deer, Nilgai have incredibly good vision and hearing. Their sense of smell is not far behind either. Unlike their distant deer cousins, however, Nilgai possess no curiosity but rather a highly paranoid personality about anything that looks, sounds or smells like a threat. This paranoia translates into an animal that is constantly on the move, one of the few consistent aspects of Nilgai behavior.

The Nilgai, often referred to by its nickname "blue bull" ('*nil*' is Hindustani for blue while '*gaw*' is Persian for cow) is a native of India, Pakistan and parts of Nepal, with a total Asian population of about 10,000 animals. Imported to the Norias division of the King Ranch in the 1930's, the Nilgai now thrives in the hot, dry south Texas coastal plains and is estimated to number above 15,000 animals.

In its native Asia the Nilgai's only serious animal-kingdom predator is the tiger. In south Texas coyotes are responsible for

a small amount of predation on Nilgai calves; however, by age three when full body size is attained, the "blue bull" has no natural enemies, thus accounting for its success in our state.

In addition to their marvelous defense mechanisms, Nilgai are very big and very tough. Mature females average between 300-400 pounds, while big bulls will shade 700 pounds and stand over five feet tall at the shoulder.

In 1993, Winchester Arms ranked the Nilgai next to the Cape Buffalo as one of the toughest animals to puncture with a frontal quartering shot. They even sent a shooting team to the King Ranch that year to test out their newest big-game bullet, the Black Talon. At a range of about 50 yards it took American Hunter magazine's associate editor, John Taylor, three shots from a .338 Win. Mag. to drop an average sized bull while it tried to exit into the next county.

The Nilgai's reputation for being bulletproof comes from its massive neck and shoulder construction and very thick skin. A "shield" of even thicker skin, much like one found on a wild

boar, also covers the shoulder area. Sufficient bullet or arrow velocity and downrange kinetic energy are critical for successful shots made to this area of its anatomy.



Author with a "small" female Nilgai

That same shield and overall thick skin also allows for very little, if any, blood trail. Before I became a serious bow hunter I shot several "blue bulls" with a 7mm Rem. Mag. and failed to find any blood trail, much less a dead animal. The only Nilgai I downed was with a lucky brain shot, executed at 150 yards on an average sized female.

Right about now you are probably wondering "what are the secrets to success when bowhunting Nilgai?"

To get the answers, Kevin and I booked our hunt through Jerry (Doc) Pedersen of Paris Archery & Outfitters (903-785-6471). "Doc" has recovered four out of the last five he has shot during three trips to south Texas - quite a record when you consider the odds. Doc focuses on three things when "blue bull" hunting ... method, location and patience. Doc feels that tree stands or

ground blinds yield better results than still hunting because they allow you to stay hidden until ready for the shot. We used Swivel-limb lock-on stands that were well suited for the small twisted live oaks that seem to dominate the landscape.

Many hunters, including Doc, have tried the spot and stalk method but most find that they just cannot get inside the 40-50 yard range without being busted. Nilgai rarely stand still, so a shot taken over this distance will, more often than not, have disastrous results if the animal moves.

Another method for improving your odds is to hunt the Nilgai "rut" which starts in December and continues through March. During this time Nilgai bulls trade in some of their customary caution and solitude for more amorous adventures. Doc has hunted during both periods and highly recommends the rut hunt.

Proper stand location for Nilgai seems to be one of the more hotly debated topics. Young and old



"Triple treat"

animals alike all have a habit of using communal fecal piles, and it's hard to ignore these tempting spots. The problem with setting up on only one of these locations is that Nilgai don't use the same pile on a regular basis, and there are so many piles that picking the correct one is difficult. Nilgai however do use a series of travel "lanes" between bedding, watering and fecal piles, and if one can find a convergence of these lanes the probability of getting a shot will increase substantially.

Using the methods and locations just described, Kevin and I saw twenty-three Nilgai in two days, eighteen of which were within 60-70 yards or less. We both had shot opportunities and were at full draw several times but elected to pass up on shots that were not what we wanted. This is where the

patience part comes in handy, and the longer you stay in the field the higher your odds of getting the shot you want.



Al Rodgers is a happy man tonight.

Even though Kevin and I were not lucky enough to fill our 136-quart ice chests, quite a few of the twenty-eight bowhunters in our camp did. Seven Nilgai were shot and four were recovered. Al Rodgers and Wendell Hoskins of Paris, TX both shot their first blue bulls, as did Tim Dean from Cameron, LA.

We selected Four Arrows Outfitters (210-497-5848) for their location and excellent reputation. Wayne and Jarred Pepples started Four Arrows and formed a relationship with the King Ranch in 1995. They now manage between 16,000 and 75,000 acres of prime Nilgai country. Wayne and Jarred, avid bowhunters, understand bowhunters' needs as well as the tough business of hunting Nilgai.



\$40 extra gets you this view

Four Arrows provides all the necessary ingredients for successful south Texas hunts. In addition to Nilgai, they also offer opportunities for trophy whitetail deer, turkey, feral hogs and javelina.



Tim Dean says, "Make sure to bring lots of help!"

Their prices for Nilgai start at \$100 per day from February through July, and that price includes one

javelina, one feral hog, one turkey (in season) and barracks style lodging per two days booked. You also have the use of their walk-in cooler. More upscale semi-private lodging is available for \$40/night. Hunting the rut will cost you an extra \$50 per day but we thought it was well worth it based on all the action we saw.

A few final words of advice are in order. Although you can drive on some of the ranch roads with 2-wheel drive vehicles, 4-wheel drive is necessary to get to many locations. A laser range finder will come in very handy for shots over 30 yards, and even after you've made a good shot, expect very little blood and lots of tracking. And last but not least, try to remember that the best Nilgai to shoot is the one closest to the road. Good luck.

Come Hunt the Blue Bull with TexasBowhunter.com!

That's right, come join us for an exciting Nilgai hunt on the King Ranch, outfitted by Four Arrows Outfitters! You are invited to join fellow TexasBowhunter.com and Texas Bowhunters' Journal subscribers on a three day hunt for the awesome Blue Bull! The hunt will take place on March 10, 11 and 12. You may join us for all three days, or if you prefer, only two. The cost is \$100 per day, with a 2 day minimum. Barracks style lodging is included, or you may upgrade to semi-private lodging for an additional \$40 per night.

Log onto www.texasbowhunter.com for more information regarding the March hunt, or email me at Michael@texasbowhunter.com. For more details on what to expect on a Four Arrows Nilgai hunt, check out the Four Arrows website at <http://www.huntinfo.com/fourarrows/dayhunts.htm>.

Space is limited, so get your reservation in quickly! It should prove to be an exciting hunt, as Bill has just illustrated in the article above. We look forward to seeing you there!

The Longest Day

By Michael Middleton

I took one last drag on the straw, trying to filter out any remaining caffeine from the melted ice and what was, many miles back, a Dr. Pepper fountain drink. As I exited I-35 for that final 12 mile stretch to the ranch road, I needed all the supplemental energy I could find in order to keep my eyes open until I made my final arrival at our South Texas ranch. It had been a long, emotional day. A long, emotional week, for that matter. My maternal grandfather was called Home to be with our Lord on Tuesday night after having suffered a sudden stroke only two days prior. The shock of suddenly losing one of the most health conscious individuals I know to a stroke had, earlier in the morning, been replaced by the reality that I would never see my only grandfather again. We paid our last respects at a funeral service that had Bo Pilgrim as a guest speaker. That in itself told me how much of an impact “Daddy Gene”, the person that I revere as the greatest man I’ve ever known, had on an entire community, and an entire industry, in addition to his own family. Time and again, his closest

friends and former coworkers commented on how they never heard Gene Biddle utter a lick of profanity, nor say an unkind word about anybody.

Following the emotionally draining funeral and lunch at the church, my wife, two kids and I made the three hour drive back home, where I had my gear waiting to load into the pickup to make the six and a half hour drive to the ranch for a weekend of hunting. By the time I arrived, it was just after 2:00 am, and all I could do to keep my eyes open as the events of the morning, along with the knowledge that my wife was not happy with me for leaving, was finally taking its toll.

Still, I managed to wake up on Saturday morning in time to slip into my tripod stand under the cover of darkness to await what I hoped to be the buck of a lifetime. With the rut just beginning in South Texas, I hoped to have plenty of action. I hunted most of the morning, but did not see any bucks despite having four does around my stand from shortly after daylight. At 9:15, I finally decided to take the opportunity to get some meat for the freezer and shot a doe. I was also able

to capture the shot on video, which you will soon be able to view on TexasBowhunter.com.

I recovered the doe and went about the chore of skinning and quartering her to put her on ice. The 172 quart Igloo dwarfed the doe, and I hoped that I would either shoot another deer or a hog to take up a little additional room. By the time I finished that job and then tended to some other responsibilities of maintaining the cabin and the ranch, it was time to shower and head out for the afternoon hunt. I had been uncertain which of my four prominent stand locations I wanted to hunt. Three of the areas have feeders, including one that I had set up two weeks earlier, but the feeders seemed to attract the attention of the hogs more than the deer. Because of this, I decided to hunt an area at which I had no feeder, but where I’ve seen a lot of activity in the past.

As I approached my stand from downwind, I saw that there was already a group of javelina feeding on the corn that I had strategically scattered earlier in the morning. I intentionally ran them off before climbing into my stand. The stand setup I have at this site is a Strong Built chain on treestand, set in a Mesquite tree that is about 25 yards off a sendero road. How do you hang a chain on type stand in a Mesquite tree, you ask? Well, the platform of the stand is a mere 4 feet off the ground in the trunk of the tree.

It doesn't seem that it would provide much concealment, but I've had a number of deer within 5 yards of the tree that had no clue that I could just about reach out and whack them on the head with my bow!

After settling in, it wasn't long before the javelina came back. Not wanting them to eat all the corn, I was determined to run them off again. I grunted loudly a few times with my grunt call, and it did the job. . . for a while. They soon returned again, however, and never gave the grunt call a second thought, no matter how hard I blew on it! I watched them for a while, and then contemplated shooting one to capture another shot on video until I decided that I just didn't feel like messing with cleaning a javelina. I thought I would try one last strategy in scaring them off. I removed my rattle bag from my pack and began clashing it together violently. Although a couple of the javelina were only about 10 yards from my tree, they didn't even acknowledge the loud crashing sound of the fake antlers. Resigned to the fact that my efforts were futile, I sipped the rattle bag back into my daypack,

and got some video footage of the javelina.

As I was tooling around with my video camera, which was on a 6 foot camera tripod that extended just about to knee level as I sat on my stand, I stood up and could see the figure of a deer walking toward me on the sendero road, about 75 yards away. As soon as it cleared the brush, I saw that it had, what appeared to be, a pretty respectable set of antlers. I reached back down to quickly turn on the video camera, keeping one eye on the buck as he approached. Just as I was reaching down, a couple of the javelina scuffled briefly in front of me, grunting and scraping the brush. At the sound of this, the buck immediately began running straight toward the javelina, which were obscured to the buck by the brush. I had no time to adjust the camera. I quickly straightened up and leaned in as close to the tree as I could get. When the buck poked his head through the brush, he was within 6 feet of one of the javelina, who had continued feeding on the corn. The javelina and the buck startled each other, and the javelina ran a few steps to the left, while the buck ran quickly through the opening to get by the

javelina, which lead him straight toward my tree! He stopped less than 7 yards away. My heart was thumping, as I now realized how impressive the buck's antlers were! I made the decision that I wanted to shoot this buck. All I needed was an opportunity!

The buck began feeding on the corn, while I continued to lean in toward the tree. I was standing, and my feet were already in a good position for a shot. My bow was ready, and I had my release aid attached to the string. The javelina slowly walked back to his original position, which was about 6 yards on the other side of the buck from me. The buck, preoccupied by the javelina, was unaware of my presence in the tree behind him. He was standing broadside, but because of a branch from the mesquite, I would either have to wait for him to take a couple of steps forward, or lean away from the trunk of the tree to get a shot.

While I was waiting, I remembered my goal to video the hunt. I glanced down at the camera and saw that I would have to turn it on, and rotate the tripod head 90 degrees to the right to get to the buck. I took the release aid off the string and slowly started bending at the knees so I could reach the camera. The buck looked up, but still didn't see me. I decided at this point that the buck was just too good to risk spooking him while trying to turn on the camera. At less than 7 yards, it

would be next to impossible to turn the camera on undetected.

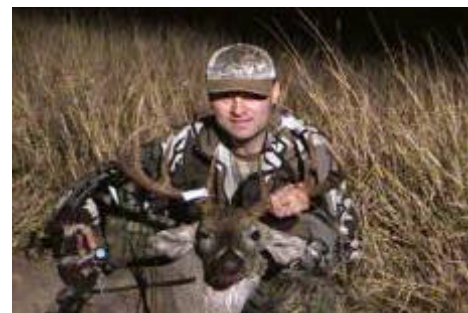
As the buck returned to feeding on the corn, I decided that the next time the buck lifted his head to look at the javelina, I would take the opportunity to draw and lean forward for the shot. Moments later, as if scripted, the buck did just that. I slowly leaned away from the tree while simultaneously drawing my bow. My Beman ICS Hunter shaft slid noiselessly across my rest as I came to full draw. Apparently, however, the javelina detected movement and shifted, causing the buck to begin trotting quickly to my left, which now had him directly in front of my stand. I followed him with my sight pin tucked behind his shoulder. I whistled sharply, which caused him to stop. Now quartering at fifteen yards, with the pin settled behind his shoulder, I applied pressure to the trigger on my release. In a split second, I saw the white vanes spinning toward their target. As the broadhead entered the ribcage, the buck whirled around and ran back into the brush to my right. I knew that it was a good hit, but I could still see the shaft of the arrow protruding out his ribcage

as the arrow did not pass through the offside shoulder. I could see blood flowing from the point where the shaft had entered. As I glanced at my watch, I noted that it was 5:18.

I knew that I had to give the buck plenty of time to bed up and die, but I also gave consideration to the fact that I was alone and didn't want to be tracking in the South Texas brush by myself after dark. I decided that I would wait 30 minutes, which would provide me an additional 30 minutes of daylight with which to search. That was the longest 30 minutes I have experienced in quite some time, despite the fact that I could only wait 23 minutes! I climbed (jumped!) out of my stand and quickly found blood. Although there weren't large pools of blood, the drops were close enough that the tracking was easy. As I came to a clearing, I looked up to see the antlers protruding from the buffle grass 20 yards away.



The trophy was mine! I approached the buck with camera running, and quickly took advantage of the remaining daylight to pose the buck for some pictures. What an awesome buck! As I knelt over the buck, I said a prayer of thanksgiving for the opportunity to provide food for my family as well as a trophy for my wall. I realize that in a time when it is so difficult to find a quality place to hunt at an affordable price, I am fortunate to have a place with the potential to produce quality bucks.



I am truly thankful for the opportunity to harvest bucks like this!

I had already decided, even prior to my evening hunt, that I would return home, as my wife had become really ill. However, before I left, I knew I had to get the buck on ice, so I skinned and quartered him, then placed him in the ice chest to accompany my doe for the ride back home. By the time I left the ranch, it was 9:30 pm. I arrived home at 4:00 am, and by the time I joined my wife in bed, I had been operating for 22 hours on 3 hours of sleep the previous night.

It wasn't until the next afternoon, after taking my wife to the doctor, that I was able to finally score the buck. I must admit that I had originally misjudged him in the field. I assumed that he would probably be right at or just below P&Y standards after deductions. Having spent the entire trip home reviewing the video tape, and running through calculations in my head, I suspected he might be bigger than I had originally figured, but it wasn't until I finally put a tape to him that I confirmed he was an even better trophy than I had thought. With main beam measurements of 22 inches, a spread of 20 5/8 inches, 9 inch G3's, 7 inch G2's and 6 inch brow tines, the buck grossed, by my unofficial calculation, 143 7/8. He netted 136 1/2 Truly a trophy by anyone's standards!



Click on www.texasbowhunter.com to see a video clip of this scene!

Equipment and Conditions

Bow : Hoyt Striker Carbonite, 70 lbs, 29"
Arrows: Beman ICS Hunter 340
 (417 grain total arrow weight)
Broadhead: Wasp Jak Hammer, 100 grain
Stand: Strong Built Chain On
Time: 5:15 p.m.
Temperature: 60°
Moon: Waxing Crescent

Beginner's Luck?

By Jeff Jaynes

I arrived at the bowhunting party late--after 23 years of hunting exclusively with a rifle. I grew up in the company of my hero. He is an incredible man, accomplished outdoorsman, outstanding hunter, teacher and role model. I have been immeasurably blessed to call him my father. Like many sons who are fortunate enough to spend countless hours in the deer woods with their father, I was strongly imprinted by his opinions and I naturally adopted his way of hunting. My dad has always been a rifle hunter, and so have I been. Well, not any longer! This is the story of my transformation

and my father's joy at watching it happen.

I went to work for my current employer three years ago and met two hardcore bowhunters. They began to encourage me to bowhunt, but I just hadn't been ready to take that step. The breaking point of my resistance came in September when they invited me to join them and four other bowhunters on a hunt in Bandera County. I was asked jokingly by one of the guys, "You bowhunt don't you Jeff?", to which I called their bluff and responded, "Hell yes. I'll be hunting a bow this afternoon!" It began.

This hunt was to be "bow-only", targeting strictly mature 8-points as "management" bucks and mature does. I had barely two months to get from absolute ground zero to proficient with a bow. I immediately called a friend who is a very accomplished bowhunter and

told him my situation/predicament. He basically spec'd out all my equipment, tuned my bow, and taught me how to shoot. I spent every evening for those two months practicing in my back yard (under the watchful eye of my three year old son) and began to gain confidence quickly.

The afternoon of October 28th (the first hunt of our four day trip) was the beginning of a true, hardcore addiction. I had decided to try to take a doe first. I didn't want my very first shot at a living animal to be at a large buck, and I was the only rookie in our group. Forty-five minutes into that first hunt, I had seven does and yearling fawns inside of 30 yards from my "shoot-through" ground blind. After about ten minutes of heart-pounding analysis, I had picked out a mature doe. I went into my "zone", calmed my heart rate and waited for my best opportunity. She was relaxed with her head down, broadside at 18 yards when I released my arrow.

None of my bowhunting mentors had prepared me for the sound an arrow makes while passing through the chest cavity of an animal. Wow! She ran,

then walked, then wobbled, then fell dead within sight 50 yards away. My first bow kill. I was overwhelmed, instantly humbled, and shaking like a leaf.

The morning hunt of the 29th was spent watching in frustration as four bull elk parked under my feeder and kept all of the deer well out of range. At the guidance of the ranch foreman, I hunted the afternoon of the 29th in a ground blind in a classic funnel area about 200 yards from a green field. My hopes were very high when I got to my spot at about 1:30 pm. Well, I saw nothing at all, not even a bird, until ten minutes before dark.

Two young, non-shooter, 8-pointers came to the feeder at 7:05 pm. Just as I resigned myself to the fact that I was through for the day, I heard a heart-stopping sound--a rather large, mature 8-point crashing through the brush 40 yards to my left. I immediately glassed him with my binoculars and realized he met all the criteria we were operating under as a very impressive management buck. I quietly set down my binoculars and readied myself for an opportunity.

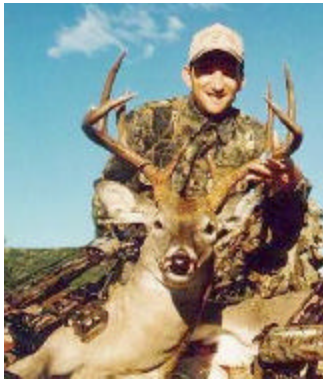
He walked in without hesitation and immediately ran off the two younger bucks. He was at 25 steps, broadside facing to my left and totally relaxed. I honestly don't remember drawing my bow, or tripping my release. My brain kicked back into its "cognizant" gear after he had taken about three really good bounds back up his escape route. I could see a few inches of fletching protruding from just behind his left shoulder as he disappeared into the brush. A few seconds and about 100 yards later I heard him fall as he obliterated a cedar tree. Another count to ten and I heard him breathe his last. I decided that there was no need to wait, and I approached the location where I'd heard the "train wreck". I walked straight to him and he had already expired.

I took one glance at this gorgeous animal in the waning moments of daylight, on the side of a rocky hill in Bandera County and was once again, for the second time in two days, overwhelmed. I called my dad that night and he was elated at my report of success.

My father had also spent many evenings in my back yard with my son watching me shoot my bow at that silly block of foam. At 76 I'm afraid he has also contracted the bow-fever (much to my mother's dismay) and has become quite a proficient archer himself, although he's really not interested in shooting anything other than the target.

Beginning to hunt with a bow has taught me many things in a very abbreviated period of time. It has taught me about practice, patience, practice, attention to the smallest detail, practice and of course Luck. Having pursued deer for over two decades, I feel as though I've discovered something for the first time—I have renewed my passion for the hunt. I find myself at the starting point of what will be, God willing, a journey to becoming an accomplished bowhunter and fulfilling my dream of the hunts to come with my young son Chandler at my side, bow in his hand.

What a blessing it has been for me to have practically stumbled into one of the most invigorating pursuits I could have ever imagined. September, 2000 will find me, my father and my oldest brother (who has become a bow convert as a result of my enthusiasm) in Edmonton, Alberta bowhunting together. Could it possibly be any better? I don't think so.



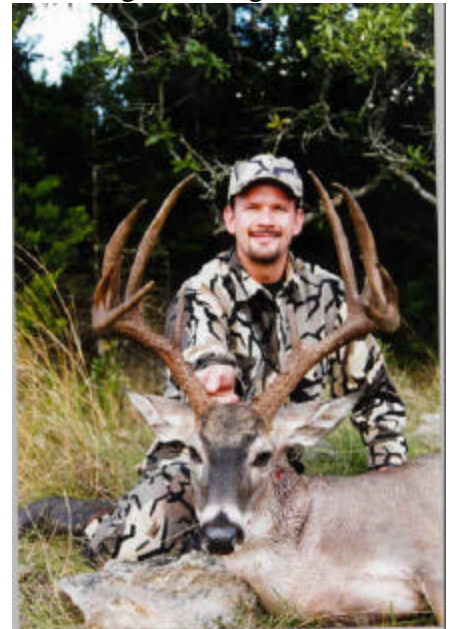
The buck unofficially grossed 138”.

The South Fork Adventure

By Timm Getts

This adventure began last year after my friend, Sterling Shepard, showed me the pictures of his awesome buck that he arrowed off this ranch. I was immediately impressed with this 170-class whitetail from Kerr County. I inquired if I could join him next year and Sterling directed me to the South Fork Ranch web page and introduced me to the ranch manager Mark Walter. Mark and I talked and the dates were set. I immediately started saving my money and getting ready for my adventure. It was nine months away and I wanted to be sure everything was right. Nine months sure do go by fast!

I was all ready for my trip and I was in my back yard shooting at 35 yards. I nicked my brand new Zebra twist bow string with a broadhead. I cut three strands. I thought I could make it work, but that little voice in my head wouldn't leave me alone. I was 9 days away from leaving and I had to get a new string. I spent the next 8 days shooting and stretching the string.



After seeing Sterling Shepard's 170" South Fork buck, the author quickly inquired about a hunt of his own!

Well, November 3rd rolled around and the truck was all packed. I went to bed early and set the alarm for 4:00am. I called Sterling and Mark to let them know I would be at the ranch around noon. It was a six-hour drive, according to Mapblast. I left the house at 5:00am because anybody that lives in the Dallas area knows that Highway 75 can be a nightmare at anytime of the day. Guess what? I came upon an

accident 30 minutes after I left the house! That set me back 35 minutes. No problem, once I got South of Dallas I would make up the time. I did and I arrived at the ranch around 12:15.

Standing outside the main lodge were two of the guides, Chad and Casey. They helped me unload my gear, and boy was I impressed with the Lynxhaven Lodge. Shelley Walter does an extraordinary job keeping this lodge in perfect working order. "Granny," the lodges cook, was the best. Lunch was being served when I arrived. Too bad I stopped in Kerrville for some fast food. As lunch was being served the rest of the hunters started to arrive.

I went outside to meet Mark McQueen and Jimmy (Sterling's brother-in-law). They drove in from the Houston area. Sterling, Jack and Mark Walter were on their way back from Kerrville. They went to the local Wal-Mart for hunting supplies. After lunch I was assigned to a guide, Chad Butler. This young man is a college student from Stephen F. Austin University. He didn't talk much, but after awhile he figured out I was a talker and he opened

right up. It was getting close to 3:00 pm and we all started getting ready for my first afternoon hunt. The name of my stand was "Jody". Two young kids named Jody both shot huge bucks from this stand. Now, was I excited about hunting this stand. This ranch is huge. It took us about 40 minutes to get to my stand.

Once we got to the stand, Chad made sure I was able to climb up into tree and made sure I was all ready to hunt. I gave him thumbs up and off he drove. This stand has two shooting lanes. I sat patiently waiting for these monster bucks to appear. Nothing showed up for an hour and half. I decided to do some rattling and grunting. Nothing appeared. I sat back and enjoyed the sunset. About then I caught movement to my left about fifty yards away. I was a nice ten pointer. I got the binoculars out to see if my eyes were playing tricks on me. Nope, it was a nice ten pointer, but he was too young. He would have raw scored about 120. The sun was gone and so was the buck. I headed back to the lodge for a hot meal and reports from the rest of the gang.

Sterling and Jack had both

seen some nice young bucks. Mark McQueen saw a few little bucks. Jimmy got skunked. Everybody reported that the bucks they saw were chasing does. Dinner was excellent and the bed was perfect. I went right to sleep. Jimmy bunked in the same room because somebody thinks we snore. Now I know Jimmy snores, but it didn't bother me until he started talking in his sleep. (So much for a good night sleep!) Jack was our alarm clock and camp comedian.

The 'alarm clock' went off at 4:30 in the morning and I was up in a flash. Granny was up and breakfast was ready. This time Chad was taking me to a stand overlooking a food plot. A hot wire protected it. This ranch has Long Horn cattle and this field is for the deer. It was cloudy and the wind was really blowing. I sat there in the dark waiting patiently. Since the wind was blowing so hard I really didn't expect to see much movement. About seven o'clock a doe entered the far side of the field to my right. She didn't stay very long because the cows had some how found their way into the field. I wasn't very happy about this because Chad had insured me that this field was protected. I even videotaped the cows so Chad would believe me. I put down the camera to try some grunting and rattling. It couldn't hurt since this was my only second hunt out of eight.

I started grunting and using my Primos rattling bag. To my

surprise it worked! A small, year and half-old eight point stuck his head up from the other side of the field. I played with him for about an hour. While this was going on a few turkey hens decided to show themselves. As most of you know, that didn't last long. They were gone in a flash. When I looked back at the young buck, he was gone. About ten minutes later I knew why. A very nice, 120-class 8 point showed up. I started getting excited because he looked like a possible shooter. I zoomed in with video camera and he was not old enough to shoot. At the South Fork Ranch you are looking for a five and half year old bucks. So this buck would walk, but not without me video taping him for about ten minutes. While I was video taping him, he started walking right towards me. He started grunting and there is no grunt tube on the market today that can produce this low of a grunt. When I turned around to continue video taping, him I saw three does standing about 20 yards behind me. He chased after them grunting softly the entire time.

About 10 minutes later, the eight pointer reappeared, followed closely by a very young six pointer. I spent

about 20 minutes video taping these deer. Around nine o'clock they both walked off to the East of me. Chad showed up at 9:30 to pick me up. As we headed back to camp, we listed to the two-way radio to hear if anybody else had shot anything. We also started planning for the afternoon hunt. Chad decided it would be best to come back to this stand this afternoon. I never argue with pros.

After another satisfying lunch and some fishing in the Guadeloupe, we headed back out to hunt the food plot. The afternoon hunt was not that exciting. The same eight pointer showed up and browsed around for about an hour. It wasn't until dark that I started to get excited. Three feral hogs showed. I was going to try and shoot one, but they never got close enough for a shot. I got my night vision binoculars out to watch the feral hogs. Even in the dark, these critters get the blood pumping. Chad showed up and informed me that Mark McQueen had killed a nice ten pointer.

Since I was not seeing any quality bucks, Chad said we would move to the windmill stand. It was located in the center of the

ranch. I was game for a change of scenery and this is a big ranch. As we headed back to the ranch, Chad told me all about this stand and explained that there was a nice eight pointer and a nine pointer that had been hanging around the area. The stand was a ladder stand about eight feet off the ground, facing the North, and it was tucked nicely in an oak tree. After a great dinner and listening to the events of day, it was time for bed and the anticipation of seeing some great bucks.

Jack, the 'alarm clock,' came in earlier and offered some words of encouragement. Once again, I rose to my feet with anticipation of arrowing a nice buck. Granny had prepared cinnamon roles and biscuits and gravy. I ate my share and out the door we went. It took about 15 minutes to get to my new stand. Once I got into my stand Chad sprinkled a little corn into my shooting lane. He also told me that Mark would be by to scatter more corn just in hogs and doe got there before any bucks arrived. As Chad was scattering the corn I noticed moved about fifty yards out. The lights from truck offered enough light in my binoculars that I could make out the shape of two deer. I didn't say anything to Chad for fear of speaking to loudly and scaring off the deer. After Chad drove off I could hear another truck heading my way. The two deer were now even closer, but ran off just as the truck headlights appeared in front of my stand. After Mark

scattered the corn, things started getting interesting. I could see all kinds of animals walking around me. Just as it was getting light, I could pick out several bucks feeding out in front of me. Most of them were not eating the corn. They were eating the acorns. A few bucks ate corn and came in to scent check the does that had come to the corn. None of the bucks were shooters. I sat back and enjoyed the view. However, that did not last long because a nice eight pointer made his way right towards me. I watched him feed for 30 minutes before making the decision to take this deer.

The situation continued to change every minute. I got to watch my first buck fight between two young bucks. One was a six pointer and the other was seven pointer. The way they were fighting would leave you to believe that these two bucks were the biggest on the ranch. The fight lasted for about 10 minutes total. After that they fed on acorns and corn. The eight pointer that I was about to shoot did not pay any attention to these little bucks. As the seven pointer moved within ten yards of me, the eight pointer turned broadside with his left shoulder facing me. I

came to 3/4 draw and the seven pointer looked right at me. I froze for what seemed like an eternity. I was committed to the draw and continued until I reached my anchor point.

Once I reached my anchor point I caught movement to my right. Two more smaller bucks were approaching the area. My buck hadn't moved and did not even know I was there. I found the white little patch of hair behind the shoulder and let go. I aimed low because every deer I have ever killed has jumped my string. Well not this time! I hit the white patch right on the mark. The buck ran little over 40 yards and turned around and looked back. I could see blood, but he did not act like he was hit hard. I quickly glanced down at the ground for my arrow. It was lying right where the buck had been standing. I looked back at the buck and he just fell over. I looked him over with the binoculars and he wasn't moving. Now I started shaking and just sat back and made sure the buck did not run off without me seeing him. Now, here is the strange part. The other deer came back and started feeding. I waited another fifteen minutes and I got down to look at my second buck

killed with a bow. Within a minute, I was standing over my buck. I knelt down and thanked God for this awesome adventure. I looked at my watch and it was only eight o'clock. Chad wasn't supposed to pick me until nine-thirty. I dragged the buck back to my stand and climbed back into my stand. About thirty minutes later a wide, but short tined nine pointer showed up. He got within fifty yards of my stand and did not like what he saw and left. I waited patiently for Chad to show up and enjoyed my surroundings. The South Fork Ranch is an awesome place.



Author with a tremendous South Fork 8 Point Buck!

When Chad arrived, I was standing in front of my buck with huge smile on face. We loaded up the trophy and headed back to the headquarters to put the buck in cold storage. Now the story doesn't end here. The ranch manager asked me if I wanted to shoot a doe and I said "yes." I shot a doe that afternoon. I hit her at thirty yards quartering away. She went about 75 yards out into a plowed up wheat field. I did not have to blood trail her either. What a hunting trip! I had such a blast over the three day trip.



This is Timm's second buck with a bow. He also shot a doe on his trip to the South Fork Ranch.

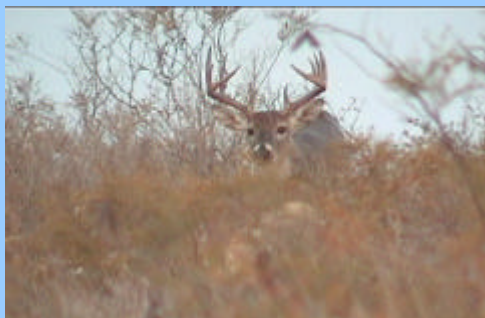
Mark Walter and his staff at the South Fork Ranch do an excellent job and I highly recommend booking a hunt with them. Everybody on this trip took a buck, and Jimmy took a buck and small hog. I will be hunting with them again in 2000. You will not be disappointed if you do too! Be safe Be kind and God bless and don't forget to take a kid hunting or fishing this year.



Brandon Hare shot this Edwards County 12pt. buck (approx. 112") with a Hoyt Striker bow, Beman ICS 400's tipped with Rocky Mountain Premier 100 gr. Broadheads. The buck was shot at 7:30am on October 9, 1999 at 44yds quartering away.

They're Still Standing

Photo's by Michael Middleton



Uncle Allen

By Louie Adams

The metal springs beneath the feather mattress made a creaking sound as I gently settled down on the bed in Uncle Allen's room. Not wanting to make too much noise, some of my weight was still held by my toes, which barely reached the floor. While giving the illusion of being totally engrossed in what my Uncle Allen was saying, I nonchalantly eased yet farther on the bed. At 12 years old and having not reached my full manhood, which at that time I knew would arrive any day, I took great care to give full reverence to the time and moment.

Now this room wasn't so much different from someone else's room, except in all my 12 years of life I was never invited in. There was an unspoken rule that no one, and I mean no one, went in that room, with the exception of my grandmother. It was her house, and Uncle Allen lived there since some time after World War II when he and his wife divorced. Granny made the bed every day, swept the floor, and most always, upon leaving, closed the door behind her. To a young

mind, an aura of mystery surrounded this place.

Uncle Allen was every young boy's dream. He was a quiet and solitary man with a warmth about him that escaped description. Summer after summer I spent with him and my grandmother. It was a trip of 200 miles or so, and once there no amount of homesickness would secure a trip home until summer was over. After a few days however, not a boy alive would think of going home. Each day was an unplanned adventure, starting around sunup with my grandmother's homemade biscuits, and bacon with the rind on from hogs raised on the farm. After that it was whatever Uncle Allen conjured up.

The one constant for whatever the day held was a little Stevens Crack-Shot falling block single-shot rifle. Wherever he and I went, that rifle was in one of our hands. Considerable bobwhite fell to the crack of a 22 short from that little rifle after they were called into range by a mouth call made from a Garret snuff can. It seemed no matter how much one of the calls was used, a small bit of snuff was always inhaled when sucking to imitate the call

of a bobwhite

Some days we walked to a sizeable creek where bluegill, catfish, and sun perch could be caught. The first wild strawberries I ever ate grew there beside our favorite spot. On some days we made the two miles walk to where an old fish hatchery had been. A tremendous rain flooded the place and the fish were loosed into a nearby creek with a sand bottom. The water was so clear you could see bass and sun perch swimming around. For that reason, one would have to squat down to pitch a line into the stream, baited with grasshoppers or whatever a rotted log might yield. The pole was usually nothing more than a young sapling, maybe of sassafras. We never carried food or water, but I don't remember ever going hungry. Usually, it would not be time to return home until sundown approached, and we would hear my great-aunt calling the cows. Yes, those were cherished times never to be forgotten by a small boy.

It did puzzle me once as to how Uncle Allen could maintain such a lifestyle when I never saw him work like my Dad did. Once when the reality of economics began to creep into my mind, and I realized everything costs money and the money has to come from somewhere, I asked my Dad just how Granny and Uncle Allen lived. He told me Granny drew Social Security

from my Grandad's death, and Uncle Allen drew disability from being wounded in World War II. With that and what they raised on the farm, they lived a comfortable life. That all seemed very neat to me because there was nothing visible about Uncle Allen's wounds, and I thought maybe when I got older, I, too, could get wounded and live as Uncle Allen did; it sure beat working.

On the occasion of my being invited to his room, something different had happened that would change my mind, not only about war, but about life. That afternoon, we three, Granny, Uncle Allen and I were watching T.V., and a program called "World at War" was on, hosted by Walter Cronkite. No voice could describe the agony of the foot soldier as did Walter Cronkite's. The inflection indicated a feeling of having been there and seen the horrors of war. As a kid, it seemed so glamorous. How bad could it be? Uncle Allen had been there, been wounded and seemed none the worse for wear. As the program progressed, a change came over Uncle Allen. While sitting there eating a bowl of Junkett, which is a stirred up ice cream mix

made in the deep freeze, he became visibly nervous and excited. As tracer rounds flashed across the screen, his feet began tapping the floor and his breathing grew heavier. At that point he got up from the rocker, looked at me and with a nod of his head, indicated for me to follow him down the hall.

As we started down the hall, an extension cord lay stretched across the floor. He walked up to where the cord lay, put both feet together, then stepped over, one foot at a time, while never taking his eyes from the cord. I thought it all seemed rather queer, but assumed he had a reason. His breathing was still heavy and teeth clenched when we walked in his room. Obviously, as I sat down on the bed, there was something he wanted to show me. Walking to the closet, he opened the door and reached up to retrieve something like a hat box. I saw several old battery-powered radios in the bottom of the closet. For the first time I understood where the squealing noise of a radio would come from late at night as I lay in bed. Some years later, I found that he put the old radios back in service and had even built his own HAM radio. His

background came from electronics training received in the military.

He took the box and set it on the bed beside me. Inside were papers that he pulled out, one by one. As he did, a strange feeling overtook me. For the first time I was getting to see the man, not just the one that carried me hunting and fishing, but a glimpse at some of the mysteries that surrounded him and his room. What brought him to this type life and solitude? Then there was a sense that I was about to see something I would rather not see, something that would change our relationship for all time.

He pulled out each sheet while clenching his teeth and breathing deeply through his nose. It was as if it's contents caused him great pain. There was a sense of fright building in me. As he handed me a sheet, the only thing I could determine about it was that it was his discharge paper. On one side there was a block about 3/8" high and about 1 1/2" long. The block was filled and each of the four margins had been typed in. All through north Africa he fought only to be shipped to the European front instead of going home, through Italy and other such places till he fought in the Battle of the Bulge. I heard the names on T.V. but now in his face I saw they were places of great pain and suffering for him. His discharge papers indicated five years from the time he left

till he saw his mother again.

He pulled ribbons, badges and medals from the box and described each. He made short statements in incomplete sentences about what he saw, of soldiers cutting off their friend's fingers for the gold ring that was on death swollen fingers. At one point he grabbed me by the arms with a grip that hurt and said, "God dern the only thing I ever took was boots or a coat and maybe ammunition to keep from freezing to death or being killed." He told me of lying in the snow, covering himself with branches and then covering himself with snow to keep from freezing. Then for the first and only time, he told me of his wound.

During the thickest part of the Battle of the Bulge, when fighting was, for the most part hand to hand, a German soldier threw a grenade that ripped through his back. For three days he lay in the freezing cold with a part of his back blown out, left by fellow soldiers who were trying to save their own lives; he lay there wanting to die. Miraculously, he was found alive when the Allies gained control and was carried to a hospital where he recovered from

his wounds. Briefly he spoke of the pain, and as quickly as this began, he put the things in the box and put the box away. He stepped to the door with his hand on the light switch. He looked at me, and I knew it was time to go.

Granny stood down the hall and sternly said, "Junior, get your bath." You would have to know Granny but that was the most forceful statement she ever made to me. Promptly I gathered my things and went in the kitchen where the tub had been placed after being retrieved from the yard. We used the daytime sun to heat the bath water drawn from the well. It was noticeably quiet in the house, more so than usual, and after my bath, I crawled into the spare bed in Granny's room where I always slept. She was in bed and the light was still on in Uncle Allen's room. That was unusual because he was usually the first to bed. As I faded off to sleep, I heard the faint sound of a radio squealing as the tuner was turned. It seemed as if the voices were speaking a foreign language, but soon sleep overcame me and the noise of the radio was lost.

I was awakened by

shouting. The voice was angry and loud and frightened me. It was then I heard my grandmother shout, "Allen! Allen!" Jumping out of bed, I ran to the front room. My grandmother, in her duster, was being held and shaken by my Uncle and was being hurt. He was screaming things that didn't make any sense, but with the past events of the evening, I knew it was about the war.

Without even thinking, I ran up to him from behind and grabbed him by his right arm. Jerking his grip loose from my grandmother's left arm, I then pushed him back almost knocking him over against the sofa. Granny went down the hall and grabbed the phone, then stepped into her bedroom. Uncle Allen went down the hall, into his bedroom, and closed the door.

As I stood there, I cried. For the first time in my life, fear and anger overwhelmed me at the same time. Standing in the front room, I shook uncontrollably. My thoughts were so confused. I had attacked a man that I loved so much, almost hurting him. He had hurt his mother, my Granny, that I loved so much. In an instant, I decided to intervene in Granny's behalf, and a boy who wasn't ready had to react like a man.

Granny came from her bedroom and said "Uncle Buddy will be here soon." He was my Dad and Uncle Allen's half brother and

lived about 20 miles away. She then went back to her bedroom and I sat down on the sofa while my shaking began to subside. For some reason I felt compelled to get dressed. Going into the bedroom, I grabbed all my clothes and changed out of the feed sack pajamas I wore. Granny was sitting on her bed crying.

Uncle Buddy soon arrived, came through the front room and went straight to my grandmother's room. After a while he came out and she stayed. He then came in the front room sat in the rocker and looked at me. "What happened?" he said. With what little understanding I had, I could but recount the events as they happened. Then Uncle Buddy went to Uncle Allen's room and brought him to the living room. Uncle Allen sat in the rocker with his hands between his knees and a look on his face like a child being scolded. The more Uncle Buddy talked the angrier he became. In the frenzy he said "If you ever put your hands on Momma again, I'll kill you."

As all this was going on, I looked in Uncle Allen's face and got the feeling he didn't remember anything that happened and

therefore didn't understand what Uncle Buddy was saying. He never spoke a word, and I sat crying, listening. Uncle Buddy finally in exasperation with no response from Uncle Allen said "If this happens one more time, I'll throw your ass in a V.A. hospital, and you can stay there." Then it became apparent this wasn't the first time. Uncle Buddy went into Granny's room and shut the door. Uncle Allen got up, never looking as if he realized I was in the room, went down the hall and closed his door. A bit later Uncle Buddy came out and said "Son, I'm sorry you had to see this. Are you all right?" He knelt in front of me with one hand on the back of my neck. I started to cry again and he put his arms around me. He, too, began to cry, got up and walked out the door and left. Turning the light off in the room, I walked into the bedroom, changed back into my pajamas in the dark and faded to sleep, listening to the sobs of my grandmother.

The next morning when I awoke, it was later than usual. After dressing, I stepped into the hall and saw that Uncle Allen's door was closed. Granny was up and in the kitchen. As usual, she was making biscuits and listening to

gospel music on the radio. I stepped into the kitchen and looked at her, and to this day, remember how she looked. When she looked up at me, I stepped out the back door and sat down on the porch. The oven door creaked, and I heard the biscuit pan slide on the oven rack and the oven door close. She stepped out on the porch and sat down to my right. She put her left arm over my left shoulder and laid her head on my right shoulder. When she did, I began to cry. Patting me for a few minutes, she then got up without speaking and went back in the kitchen.

That morning on the back porch of my grandmother's house, listening to the quail whistle and the rooster crow, a twelve-year-old boy came to some conclusions about life. First, there are wounds people bear that don't show with marks on the flesh, but rather they are wounds of the soul. And the depths of the wound can only be seen through eyes of love. When you open your eyes to see those wounds, you also open yourself to see the pain of the person bearing that wound. Their pain becomes yours, in one way or another. No amount of wishing can make them go away for their depth is too great. I could not help my uncle, take his pain away or make him better.

I could not take away my grandmother's pain she felt for a son who traveled half way

around the world and saw life with all its meanness and was ill prepared to meet what he found. Nor could I ease the pain she felt for a grandson who was forced into a situation he didn't understand and to grow up before she was ready to see it happen.

Then I realized also that twelve year old boys have to grow up sometime. Ready or not. I also realized there is nothing glorious about war and what it does to those who fight and to those who love them. I knew there would be other fishing and hunting trips, but no more would there be the twelve-year-old boy who was a child on a great adventure. Being there would be escape from the reality of life rather than the reality itself. Then I understood why Uncle Allen lived here, this way, and I was a little angry that he had brought me into his world this way and in the fashion he had.

I got up and walked back into the kitchen. He was sitting at the table and Granny was standing next to the stove. She opened the oven door and removed the biscuits, placing the pan on the table. Granny sat down, we all bowed our heads, and she prayed as she always did. As I sat

there eating, I realized I wasn't angry at Uncle Allen really. I loved him, and I hurt for him. He did so much for me, giving me so much of himself. For that I was more thankful than ever. Because I understood the price he paid. And my grandmother, God rest her soul, had the kind of love that allowed the pain of her child to be more important than her own.

We never spoke of these things. Somehow, among the three of us, we understood that as awful as that night was, it was what brought each of us closer together. That night I saw the depth and pain of a mother's love, and depth and pain of scars on my Uncle's soul. And I saw that life can't stay the same for twelve year old boys. My grandmother passed away a few years later in that very house. My uncle lived there by himself for some years after and was killed when the house blew up and took his life.

Today, I own that piece of land and there are memories both good and bad. When I stand there, I can see in my mind the charred wreckage of not just a house but of two lives, my grandmother's and my uncle's. They loved and understood each

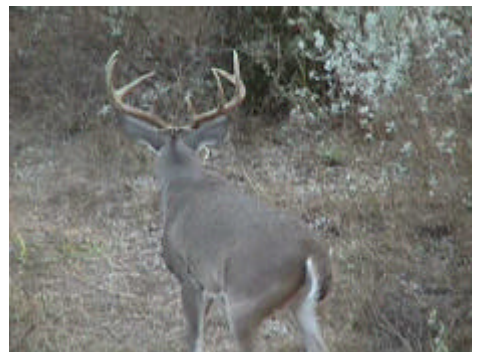
other in a way only a twelve-year-old boy will remember.



Brandon Hare with a Gold Medal Mouflon ram shot on the T-Post ranch in Laredo. Brandon shoots a Hoyt Striker bow, Beman ICS 400 arrows tipped with 100 grain Rocky Mountain Premier broadheads.



Glenn Lemke photographed this buck at his Kinney County lease several times during the 1999 season. See these and other exciting photographs on our website at www.texasbowhunter.com!



A QUALITY HUNT

By Thomas Langston

Someone once told me that one sure sign of growing old is evidenced by the fact that all you seem to value is a good nights sleep. I suppose that might be a sign all right, but a confirmation of it lies in the fact that you seem to spend more time trying to remember what has already passed, as opposed to dedicating your thoughts to what might lie ahead. In that regard, I would like to state that I can recall quite vividly all the lawns mowed, the hay stacked, along with the assorted odd jobs which added up to the fifty dollars needed to pay my share of our yearly deer lease. We hunted a five hundred acre pasture close to Hye, Texas. For fifty bucks we got the whole run of the place for the year and we spent most every weekend there from the middle of November through December. It really doesn't seem like that long ago, forty years.

Cliff, one of my dad's life long friends, was an accountant for some big cattle rancher down in the valley. He was always telling us about all the big

bucks he had seen around Edenburg and Cotulla. About once a year all the men on the lease would do a hunt down in that area, usually a day lease. We were all rifle hunters, and I really enjoyed building and setting up our own personalized box type blinds on the lease. The yearly deal between the rancher and the hunters was sealed with a handshake and usually, once a lease was secured, it remained in tact for years and years to come. A lot has changed with regard to hunters and hunting leases in the past forty years.

I am not real certain that all of the changes are for the better, but certainly some things seem much better than they once were. There are a lot more deer now then there used to be, and many of the deer are of trophy quality. In the hill country, where I usually hunted, the deer are about forty pounds lighter than they once were. I remember that the first deer I got was a year and a half old and weighed 86 pounds. Most deer in that same area today would be doing well if they field dressed 50 pounds. The rancher's idea about game management was to limit the total harvest and to plant his oat fields so the deer would have plenty to

eat in winter. His idea was that the deer are a cash crop and he intended to leave things in good shape for his two sons. He was successful in his endeavors.

The buzz words these days can be summed up in words like "Quality Hunt, Hypro, Game Management, and Food Plots." For the past ten years or so now, I have managed to travel back to Texas for at least one or two hunts per year. At the request of one of the outfitters, I purchased several of the tapes and books about game management written by Kroll and others. I am not trying to say that this makes me an expert or game biologist but it has helped me to form an opinion about what a bow hunter needs in the way of a good place to hunt. It just seems to me that the time is now right and the market is there, but the ranchers and outfitters are failing to get on the bandwagon to provide a quality hunt at an affordable price. At first, I tried to understand the situation from the rancher's point of view. These days, my quest is to try to find a three or four day hunt or a lease that proves to be a quality hunt.

With today's economy it is very difficult for the average person to make a living from the land as a cattle, sheep, and/or goat rancher. The state has made it very temping, via tax incentives, for the average rancher to try to make a go of it as a game rancher, in addition to all of the other options mentioned above. In spite of that fact, all the

Hypro in the world isn't going to make a dime's bit of difference in the quality of the deer heard if the property is small and is not high fenced. Nor is it going to help the deer to feed a substance that they don't like and will not freely eat. Mostly all of this "hype" leaves me to believe that all of the management in the "ranch management" part of it goes into managing to get about twice the money out of the hunter for the opportunity to shoot an average "hill country deer." Although many ranchers do limit their buck harvest to one eight point or better, very few are reluctant when it comes to reducing the total number of animals enough to produce a quality heard.

From everything I have heard or read about Jarred Peoples, 4 Arrows Outfitters runs a first class operation for bow hunters. If you get a record book deer it will most likely cost you about \$5,000. They have enough land on the place to allocate a small portion to each hunter to be bow hunted as that person sees fit. A large fee for a trophy buck is reasonable since without it, there would be no trophy deer to harvest. Trying to accommodate a large number of hunters does not

come without penalty. If the owner afforded everyone the opportunity to harvest a trophy buck then within about three years there wouldn't be any bucks left to harvest, even in that part of the country.

Without the habitat and price restriction however, finding a good place to hunt is difficult. Most day type leases are quite small when compared to 4 Arrows. On those leases, if they are hunted often, the number of deer rapidly declines and so the owners provide some other kind of incentive for the bow hunters. Addition of hogs and various exotics provides the rancher with the opportunity to provide year round hunting pastures. On most of these leases, it doesn't take long until the hogs overrun the place and eat and tear up most anything they come across. For the bow hunter who wants to hunt deer at an affordable price, the possibilities become even smaller.

There are a few places that allow bow hunting during the October time frame and then rifle hunt their pastures during the later hunts. These can be a good choice for a bower if the rancher or outfitter understands the special

needs of the bow hunter. I hunted one of these type places several years ago in south Texas but unfortunately the young man who was running the show carried an F-250 full of sacked corn along for the hunt. Before the first morning of the hunt he proceeded to corn the sendero for long strips about one quarter of a mile long. This practically ruined the hunt for the bowers. I guess this works fine for a rifle hunter.

Well enough said about that. I would prefer to concentrate on the more positive aspects of what a bower need in the terms of a good place to hunt. I would like to find a lease where the owner, outfitter or person running the show understood the special needs of a bow hunter. I do not believe that a bow hunter needs some kind of tree stand twenty yards in front of a feeder. In fact, I believe that that is one of the worst places and distances to try to harvest a deer with a bow. A bower does need a stand where they can, whether left or right handed, draw their bow without being seen. They also have to have the opportunity to shoot through several lanes without fear that their bow is going to hit an obstruction while the arrow leaves the bow. A person hunting with a bow needs mobility. One way to accomplish this is for the hunter to have several camo nets or mobile blinds that can be moved around to various locations and set up very quickly. Landowners need to allow this

to happen. This doesn't mean that the bow hunter is going to spend all his time tromping through the pasture and chasing all of the deer over the fence to the neighbor's property. They do need to move to a location that will afford them the opportunity to intercept the deer during their normal travel routes. Game trails leading up to feeders or bedding areas are the places that should be hunted.

I recently went on a quality deer hunt where there were tree stands strategically placed around feeders. There were a lot of nice deer on the place and after about three days of hunting I noticed that none of the mature deer were coming to the feeders. The deer two and a half years old and older would walk up to the feeders and from a distance of about forty to fifty yards they would look up into the tree where I was sitting on a ladder stand basically exposed. Afterwards they just bolted along their merry way. The deer that did come in to feed were never really relaxed and most assuredly would have jumped the string if a shot had been attempted. I think that this is a typical bow hunting setup as it is practiced at most hunting camps in the state. There

is little wonder that bow hunters get a bad reputation for wounding animals given this setup. As I mentioned in a previous article, at fifteen yards with a bow that shoots 266 feet per second, a deer has a tenth of a second in which to move out of the way of an arrow. Deer that come into a feeder have a heightened sense of awareness and are never quite completely at ease with the situation. A twelve foot ladder stand is the typical setup and it is not tall enough to insure that you can shoot down on the deer, so the deer jump the string.

It would be helpful to have some type of camo netting that hides the hunter's outline while in a tree stand. A type of netting that is made up of strips of cloth torn about six inches wide so it will move around in the wind would be nice. The deer would soon get used to seeing this movement in the tree. Some hunters place a dummy wearing a hat in their stands and this helps also. I do not necessarily believe that there is anything wrong with sitting on the ground. You can see so much better especially in heavy cover, but the mobility issue is the one that I feel is most important. A bower has to

be able to move enough to make sure that the arrow is not going to hit any obstructions between himself and his target. When you are on the ground you have the opportunity to move that yard or so that will afford you a clear shot at your target. That is much harder to do in a tree stand. Furthermore, when you do hit your deer, the chances are good that it is going to run away. When you are on the ground you can follow the general path of the deer during its flight. This is critical for the deer recovery since many shots do not produce any blood trail for the first forty yards or so.

Placement of the stands and blinds is of utmost importance to a bower. I keep reminding myself that most of the people who offer places to hunt are descendants from the rifleman's point of view. They haven't necessarily done their homework with regard to studying the deer's movements within their own pastures. As a result, there are always a few stands that are real duds. They may have been acceptable for a rifle hunter, but they really stink from the bower's point of view. Most often there is also at least one part of the pasture that is overpopulated with stands and yet another that is neglected. Blinds need to be placed where they can be accessed and exited with a minimum amount of disruption. The mature deer are quite good at patterning the hunter's movements.

So I am looking for a quality place to hunt where the owner understands what a bower needs in order to harvest deer. I want a place where the hunter can have flexibility and mobility. I am looking for a place where the deer population is controlled and healthy. I would like to find a place where some of the blinds are strategically placed and functional with possibilities for movable blinds when necessary. Is that asking too much?

If a hunter had their own yearly lease, then they could make all of the decisions necessary to have a quality place to hunt. Most people, however, do not now have the time or resources to make that kind of commitment, and therefore are willing to pay someone else to make all of these decisions for them. As I mentioned earlier, the time is now right, and the market is there for ranchers to start providing some quality places for bowhunters to hunt. The going rate for a "quality hunt" these days is about three or four hundred dollars a day. For that kind of money, I think it should be possible to find a quality place to hunt, although I haven't found one yet!

Why Do You Hunt?

By Tomme R. Actkinson

You're at work or a party. The talk moves to your favorite subject, deer and deer hunting. Then someone asks the question. "Why do you hunt?"

Someone else says, "Deer are so beautiful. How can you kill Bambi?"

Next thing you know you're on the defensive, trying to justify that you're not a heartless, vicious killer. Why do you spend all of that time, energy and money just to get a deer? Is it simply blood lust or is there a deeper reason? Why **DO** you Hunt?

Probably every hunter has been asked (or has asked themselves) "WHY?" and knows how difficult it is to put the answer into words.

Perhaps it's because the answer is personal and emotional. Emotions are hard to explain logically (If you don't believe this, try explaining to someone why you love them.). Difficult though it may be, you need a logical

answer. Your answer may well be critical to the future of hunting.

Eighty percent of the population are not hunters, nor are they antihunters. A good answer to a member of this group may gain us a supporter. A bad answer may create an antihunter.

As a boy growing up in central Texas, I assumed that everyone loved hunting. Later, as I learned otherwise, there was a tendency to become defensive. At times I have overreacted, automatically assuming that the questioner was against me and against hunting. I now know that this is often not the case and try to fit my answer to the motivation of the questioner.

John Lippincott, in a very interesting article which appeared in the August, 1987 issue of "Deer and Deer Hunting Magazine," wrote that there are three groups of people who ask the "Why do you hunt?" question. Some simply want to understand you better. They know you love to hunt and are trying to understand what motivates you. When a member of this group asks, "Why do you hunt?," they really want to understand you better. They are potential allies and deserve a serious answer.

A second group is really asking "Why do you kill?" Lippincott notes that this group wants you to justify, or at least address, the killing aspect of the sport. I also

feel that this group has bought off on the myth of an idyllic natural existence. They picture "Bambi" and his family in an almost human home environment. An answer which simply addresses the enjoyment you take from the hunting experience, and doesn't deal with killing, especially of such beautiful creatures, will be regarded as a poor response. This group is sometimes open to logic and may be willing to listen. While you probably won't convert them to hunting, they may decide that it's O.K. for others to do so.

A third group consists of antihunting moralists, just waiting to label you a barbaric killer. They take a moral position that life is sacred and that all killing is wrong. A sport which has killing as its final goal, and that people enjoy, is enough to really get them going. You won't make any converts from this group. By their definition they are morally right and therefore you are immoral. What you can hope to do is show others that the "antihunting moralist" is a fanatic and that their position and tactics run counter to the principles on which our country was founded.

But how do you know to which group your questioner belongs? One good technique is to ask the questioner how he or she feels about hunting. This will let you know with whom you are dealing.

If you are dealing with an anti-hunting moralist, and are at a social gathering, Lippincott suggests you may simply choose to defer the debate. There is nothing wrong with saying "I believe that we both feel strongly about this matter. But this is not the time nor place to discuss it. Rather than bore these people and perhaps ruin the evening, I'll be happy to meet with you at a time of mutual convenience to discuss the matter."

Antihunters want an audience. Remove the audience and they often have little to say. There is nothing that says you must get into an argument on a social occasion. If you don't feel confident in your ability to win a debate; or if you simply don't feel that the other people at the party want to hear one, then there is no reason for you to argue. If the antihunter persists and you play this right, others present will be mad at the antihunter. It also gives

you a chance to make comments like, "I have said that this is not an appropriate time or place to discuss this, while I admire your passion, I deplore your fanaticism on the subject. As I said earlier this time is inappropriate, let's drop the matter now and I'll make an appointment to meet you later one on one."

At times you will feel a need to respond directly, but try not to say too much. Deer hunting is a subject I can, and often do, talk for hours about. Most people, however, do not want an hour long dissertation on the merits of hunting and I've undoubtedly bored a few to death. On the other hand I believe in an active defense when an anti-hunter tries to tar the entire hunting profession with disfavor. We don't want to surrender the floor simply because we're not ready.

If you choose to argue the issue directly, you need to be able to answer the question of "Why do you kill?". You may be told by nonhunters and antihunters alike, "All killing is wrong. Life is sacred." There are some obvious replies to this statement. You might point out that all humans kill many times each day. If you eat meat, it was killed, if not by you, then for you. Most vegetarians kill plants, as does anyone who weeds their lawn.

If the person says that plants don't count but animals do, you might ask, "Is the life of a

cockroach sacred? or a Termite?". These are both animals, yet most people would kill them without question. When we walk down the street, drive our car or build a house we make a decision which results in the death of many animals. The simple fact of our personal existence causes the death of thousands of creatures over our lifespan. Yes even antihunters kill. If they say, "Those don't count, those are insects," ask where they draw the line: fish, birds, mammals?" You might also add, "Oh I see, life is not sacred. It's only the lives of animals they choose. Those that they value." Ask, "What gives them the right to impose their values of what lives are valueless and what have value on you?"

You might also point out that people who label hunters simply as killers are engaging in simplistic thinking. I have caught a moth in my hand and carried it out of the house rather than kill it. I have also decided to kill a deer as one means of feeding my family. It is a value judgment either way. You might end by asking the person who says "Life is sacred," what they'll do the next time a mosquito lands on their face?

If they say they'd simply brush it away, nod, smile and say, "Sure you would." Most people will see anyone who says this as ridiculous.

If you wish to go further, you might borrow a question from Lippincott who suggested that you ask people wanting you to justify killing a deer the question "Is a Catholic wrong?" When they say that that is a ridiculous question, you are set to move the discussion about hunting from one of killing to the true question, one of values.

Ask them to explain how hunting is wrong, without using value laden words like beautiful, cute, gentle, mean, cruel etc. Then point out that America was founded on the idea that people with different values would be allowed to peacefully coexist. As Americans it is important that we understand and respect the rights of others to hold views different than ours. You may disagree with Catholics, Baptists, Moslems, etc., but as an American you must respect their right to hold a value different than yours.

I greatly value the hunting experience. A nonhunter

may not share that value, but in America, he or she has to respect my right to hold a different view. What I object to about antihunters is not that they hold a different view from mine, but that they feel that everyone must conform to it. Adherence to a single viewpoint is demanded by fanatical believers of any totalitarian regime, but its not the American way.

You may also want to share some facts about how hunting has contributed to the conservation movement. We need to point out that antihunters don't do much of anything for wildlife, while hunters have carried a major part of the responsibility for rebuilding game populations to an all time high. Unfortunately we have done a poor job promoting the idea that wildlife have been paid for in large part by the hunting and fishing community. We all need bumper stickers which say something like:

"IF YOU LOVE WILDLIFE,
THANK A HUNTER - WE
PROUDLY PROVIDED
THEM."

or,

"HUNTERS --AMERICA'S
GREATEST
CONSERVATIONISTS".

Those should provoke some discussion.

A person who is not an anti-hunter but who speaks of "Bambi" and killing those beautiful creatures could be met with a different approach. I've made some headway by smiling and saying "You know, in the real world a buck is not a proud stay at home papa like in Bambi, but more closely resembles a multiple rapist who abandons his pregnant brides without child support. You don't mind me taking out that sexual harasser do you?" What do you think about fathers who don't provide child support anyway?

They know I'm kidding them, but it also gives them a more realistic picture of wildlife than the anthropomorphic view that Bambi portrays. On a logical level you might also point out that you don't kill cartoon creatures. I've yet to shoot a talking deer, especially one with all of those cute characteristics the cartoonist put into Bambi.

You might ask, if they've seen "The Little Mermaid." If the answer is yes, ask if they've given up eating crab, shrimp and and those cute fish.

Perhaps telling them that you think that deer are beautiful too might be

helpful. Tell them how many hours you spent simply watching deer last year. Also tell them the other sights you saw, that you would have missed if you hadn't gone hunting:

"I've seen wildcat kittens playing pounce tag, a spider spinning a web in my tree against the background of the setting sun, a squirrel who couldn't quite figure out what was in his tree and who came up close to look."

Share your memories, your love of nature and how much you cherish each moment in the woods.

Ask how many hours they spent in the woods last year enjoying the beauty of nature? If they spent more hours than you did in the woods (doubtful), say you envy them. If they say that they didn't have the time, tell them that hunting is your excuse to make the time.

Those of us raised under a Puritan work ethic often find it hard to make time for fun. There's always work that needs to be done. We allow little time for leisure, and many of us work ourselves into heart attacks because of it. Luckily, I can fool my work ethic by saying I

need that low cholesterol venison. Chili and spaghetti just wouldn't be the same without deer meat and I have to go hunting to get that meat. Suggest that if they really love nature but can't find the time because of "work they need to do," that maybe they should go to work with you out on the lease.

Along the lines of heart attacks and dealing with stress, I've asked people if they like to climb trees as a kid? When the world got too much for me, I'd climb to the top of a big, old Elm tree in our backyard. There I was free from all the hassles of the world. I'd feel the breeze on my face, just look at the clouds and let my cares go. This works for adults too, except for one thing. As an adult if I go out into my front yard and climb to the top of a tree, people start to talk. I hear murmurs of padded cells and crazy as a bedbug. If I go deer hunting, However, I can spend all day in any tree I choose, and I'm not crazy, merely dedicated.

There are some other arguments you may want to use. You can point out that deer are overpopulating most of their range. This may work better with a rural audience. Farmers know you can only put so many head of livestock in a given pasture. Unfortunately, I don't think most urban nonhunters buy the overpopulation argument. They don't see many deer,

so the more the merrier. Some even believe that deer are an endangered species. It's worth setting them straight, but emotionally they may not be convinced. One argument that may work well with a younger urban individual is that venison is a health food. Point out that venison is about the lowest cholesterol red meat that you can find (and that it's delicious). This may get you through to the gourmet or health nut in the crowd. Invite them over for dinner.

Finally, for the person who really wants to understand you, you may want to give a more formal answer to "Why do you hunt?" Lippincott suggested writing this down and practicing it several times in front of a mirror. I realize that each statement is highly personal and many may be more eloquent than mine, but its a statement we all need to be prepared to make. Here's mine. It hangs on the wall in my office.

Why Do I Hunt?

I hunt because I love it. Just as the feeling of love is hard to explain, so is the love of hunting. I spend hours reading about deer,

thinking about deer and discussing deer with my friends. I know I am never so alive as when I am in the woods. Yet it's a time of great peace. One of the few peaceful times I enjoy in an otherwise hectic life. While hunting I feel at one with nature. I realize that I am a predator, much as God originally created man to be. I do not glory in the death of an animal, but do realize that animals will die that I may live. I take tremendous pride in my skill and ability to bring home meat for the table, much of which I process myself.

Yet I enjoy the challenge of hunting with a bow the most, where the odds favor the animal. I see many deer. I harvest only a few, but I have many memories. Memories of the deer and other wildlife I have seen and the experiences I have shared as I hunt with my friends and family.

Finally, I hunt because I know it's necessary for proper wildlife management. I know that I, and other hunters like me, have provided the funds to pay for the great resurgence of wildlife in this country. I know that I am a conservationist and a major tool of game management. I am proud

to be a sportsman! I am proud to be a hunter!

In the past when asked "Why do you Hunt?" or "How can you kill a deer," I have not always had a good answer ready. Often it's because the question came as surprise. I may have been at a party, at work or simply talking to a group of people about my favorite subject.

Unprepared, I've said too much or too little, and may have not represented hunting well. This is unfortunate. We all need to be prepared, for I know two truly dangerous "Why?" questions. The first is when your sweetheart asks, "Why do you love me?" The second is "Why do you hunt?" The answers to both questions are personal, emotional and difficult to put into words. For both, however, how well you answer may have a major effect on your future and the future of something you love.