

TEXAS BOWHUNTERS' JOURNAL

Success!

Michael Middleton

The premier issue of Texas Bowhunters' Journal went off without a hitch! Okay, I mentioned in last month's newsletter that I am neither a professional writer nor a professional publisher. Did I forget to mention that I'm not much of a computer expert either?! I'm still learning. But I won't let a few obstacles prevent us from publishing at least two issues of The Journal!

Hopefully, opening day was a success for you! I didn't see much on opening weekend, but the fact that the season finally arrived allows me to consider it a success, nonetheless! It was hot, the mosquitos were bad, and I got lost heading out to my favorite stand on opening morning (can we add that I'm not much of a woodsman to the list?!) I saw a total of three deer the entire weekend, and none of them came closer than seventy-five yards of my stand. But what a wonderful pleasure it was to be in a tree knowing that it was finally here! My favorite day of the year!

Thanks to all those that have contributed stories, photographs and recipes to the journal. Once again, without contributions from the readers, there is no newsletter to publish. Thanks also to those who sent encouraging e-mails with regard to the first issue. Knowing that the newsletter is worthwhile makes it worth the effort to put it together!

As I began to put the November newsletter together, editing the pictures and the stories, designing the layout and reading the articles, I was pleased to reaffirm my notion that hunting is about much more than just killing an animal. I think it is something that only we, as hunters, can recognize and fully

appreciate. I sometimes get frustrated with my nonhunting co-workers that every single year at about this time, hit me with their Bambi-killer jokes and comments. "How can you shoot poor, cute, little Bambi?" Or, "Watch out, the Bambi-killer is on the loose again!" and "You should be ashamed of yourself for shooting a poor, defenseless animal like that." It's the same stuff every year, and before every trip, for that matter. I've learned to suppress the urge to make inappropriate comments back or to fuel the fire with a response. Most of them are joking, I suppose, but it's still irritating, just the same.

In the past I've tried to convince them with facts and figures about how many dollars that hunters contribute to conservation efforts and parks through license fees and taxes. I've tried to combat their argument about shooting "defenseless deer" as they ate a big juicy hamburger made from a corn-fed cow that was bred for the express purpose of ending up on a bun. And I've tried, too, to explain the joy and excitement that I feel as I get up before daylight on a cold, rainy morning and sit in a tree and have a young buck within 5 yards of the stand, feeding for hours, with no clue that I am a mere 15 feet above, and have drawn and let down twice, only to let him walk away because I'm in search of something better. But it's no use. I've concluded that only a hunter, who has actually experienced the thrill for himself of herself will ever understand. Perhaps it's better that way. Give me the ones that want to see it, feel it and experience it and let me *show* them. Then, I can simply laugh off those with no desire to learn, and not waste my precious time trying to explain something that they are incapable of understanding.

I hope you enjoy this months Journal!

TBJ

Be a Student of the Game

By Michael Middleton

Have you ever watched a baseball game and heard the announcer say about a player "He's a student of the game?" In every sport, some of the great players are called "students of the game." Larry Bird, Cal Ripkin, Jr., Jerry Rice. . . And it's often not the greatest players that are students of the game. Often, the less physically gifted athletes are the true students of the game. Remember Steve Largent, late of the Seattle Seahawks? He set NFL receiving records in spite of not being the tallest, fastest or most athletic player on the field. These are the athletes that achieve stardom, not because of their ability, but because they learn the finer aspects of the game. They learn the tendencies of the opposition to gain an edge. They spend hours reading, practicing and studying to learn the fundamentals of their sport. They set goals and do whatever it takes to achieve them.

Bowhunters have an opportunity to become students of their game, too. Being a student goes beyond crawling in a tree stand, waiting for a deer to walk by and flinging an arrow at it. Being a student of bowhunting starts with setting goals for the season and then reading, watching, observing, practicing and learning everything you can that will allow you to achieve those goals. It takes commitment, to your sport and to the animals you hunt. It also takes discipline. It is easy to practice in the off season for a few hours per week. But it's easier not to. Becoming a student involves forming habits that will make you a better hunter. Numerous books, cassette tapes and videos have been published by such authors as Earl Nightingale, Jim Rohn and Steven Covey on how to be successful. Some of these same principles can be adopted by bowhunters to increase their odds for success.

Set Your Goals

Many of us make annual goals for business or for our finances. We may make family goals, spiritual goals, health goals and other personal goals but we fail to write down our goals for what we want to accomplish during the hunting season. Hunting without goals is like practicing without a target – you might just hit something, but it might not be what you want!

Setting goals is easy; just write down, on a piece of paper, anything you want to accomplish during the season. Before you do anything else, including finishing this newsletter, go get a piece of paper and a pencil and begin jotting down some goals! Do it now. . . I'll wait for you!

Welcome back! Don't worry, you didn't miss much while you were gone. ☺ The first step to establishing your goals is to brainstorm for a few minutes anything and everything that you might want to accomplish during the season. You can also set long term goals for the future, such as a dream elk hunt in Colorado, but for now let's just focus on the current season. Where do you want to hunt? How often? What do you want to see? What do you want to shoot? How big? How many? What do you want to learn about your game? About your bow? About yourself?

Once you have a preliminary list, rank them in order of importance to you. Is shooting your first deer with a bow more important to you than shooting the next state record whitetail buck? Is filming your son shooting his first deer more important to you than bagging your own trophy? Keep in mind, they're your goals and can be whatever you want them to be! However, there are a few things to keep in mind. Make sure your goals are specific. Don't just say you want to shoot a big deer. How big? 125 Pope and Young inches? 10 points or better? 18 inch minimum spread? Also, make sure your goals are measurable. How will you know when you have achieved your goal? Finally, make sure your goals are attainable. I'd like to think that anywhere I hunt in Texas, I have an *opportunity* to shoot the next

Camphouse Fixin's

Spuds & Onions

By Jason D. Clayton

I have a recipe that I have been using for years in hunting camp with many a meal. It is called "Spuds & Onions". It goes great with any type of meat, whether it be venison, elk, dove, etc.

Ingredients:

Potato
Onion
Butter
Cavender's seasoning
Lemon pepper,
garlic powder
foil.

Instructions:

Wash the potatoes and peel the onions. Slice the potatoes and onions into thin slices. Place the onion slices between the potato slices and put lots of butter on them. Season them with the seasonings. Be sure to wrap them TWICE with foil. Cook on the grill for about 45 minutes. Check with a toothpick to see if ready. You can tell if they're ready if toothpick pushes through the potato very easily. Unwrap onto plate with other food and ENJOY!

**Keys to Success:

1. Thin slices of potatoes
2. Lots of butter.
3. Double wrap the potatoes/onions.

This is a great recipe that I have used in many different deer camps and has satisfied many different hunter's' bellies!

Good Hunting!

Jason Clayton

state record whitetail, but I doubt that I will shoot a Pope and Young class elk in any of the areas that I hunt. Set goals that will challenge your ability, but also that you have a real possibility of achieving.

Become a Better Bowhunter

The beauty of reaching your stated goals goes far beyond getting something that you want. It is what you must become in order to achieve your goals. To get your first buck with a bow, you must develop skills that will allow you to determine when and where to find your prey, get within your effective range, draw your bow undetected, and have the confidence to make the kill. The excitement of the kill is only the climax to the pursuit. In order to achieve your goal of getting that first buck, you must *become* a bowhunter in the process!

For how many of you did it take more than one season of hunting to get your first deer? For most of you, I'll bet it didn't take near as long to get your second. Most people agree that the first is the hardest. Does it then become easier to get the second? Absolutely not! You become better!

Know Your Equipment

To take the next step of becoming a student of bowhunting, you must develop an intimate knowledge of your equipment. Learn your bow. How many pounds do you draw? What is the draw length? Know your bow's brace height and axle-to-axle length. Learn basic tuning procedures to learn proper knock placement and center shot. How many grains is your arrow? Are your arrows properly spined for your draw weight? Where is the proper front-of-center balance for your broadheads? Learning the intricacies of your equipment allows you to develop a feel for how you and your equipment will react to all of the variables that could possibly occur while hunting. How does your bow shoot in the rain? Does even the slightest moisture in the air cause a creak in your cams? Does extremely cold, dry weather create

added friction and noise as your arrow slides across your rest?

Developing a knowledge of your equipment will enable you to make repairs and adjustments when inopportune equipment failure occurs. A broken string doesn't have to end a hunt if there are no archery shops to set it up, if you have the knowledge to install a new string and tune your bow. This is assuming, of course, that you are prepared with a backup string and portable bow press!

Don't be lazy in learning. It never hurts to know too much, but it can create a problem if you know too little. There are many books and instructional videos available that can help you learn how to properly set up your equipment. Observe your local pro-shop owner as he (or she!) sets up a new bow. Ask questions of the owner and the customers. Many times the customer is more knowledgeable than the owner on certain aspects of equipment. And don't discount the things you can learn from yourself. Disciplined, consistent practice in all weather conditions and at various angles will help you identify weaknesses, in both your form and your equipment, that could prevent you from reaching your written goals.

Study Your Opponent

Perhaps the most important aspect of hunting, especially bowhunting, is developing the ability to get within range of your quarry. You may be able to stack a dozen arrows in a Skoal can at 40 yards, but unless you can get within an effective range of an animal and draw undetected, you will never be successful as a bowhunter. Just as Orel Herschiser, pitcher for the San Francisco Giants, studies the tendencies of opposing batters, consistently successful bowhunters learn to pattern the opposition's tendencies.

Once again, there are countless books, videos, magazines and, yes, newsletters that can help you gain an understanding of how deer, or any other animal that you may hunt, behave during certain situations. How do the phases of the moon affect deer's feeding? Why?

What about changes in barometric pressure? When does the breeding season start for the area you hunt? Why? When are the best times to be in a stand? When is the best time to still hunt? Why? When reading an article or story, always ask why. And be careful not to always take what a so-called expert says as gospel. As Jim Rohn says, be a student, not a follower. Be sure to take into consideration how different geographical regions may negate a theory expressed by an outdoor writer in Michigan.

The most effective method for learning about the game in your specific hunting area is through observation. Become a sponge! Learn to absorb your surroundings. As you hunt or scout, try to make mental notes of parallels between deer movement and other factors. Notice everything! Do the birds chirp more when the deer begin moving? Do you typically see more deer during the morning or the evening? When do you see the most bucks? Does it seem that there are bigger deer when the sky is overcast than when it is sunny? Are the does more skittish when there are bigger bucks around? What about the smaller bucks? Why? Be aware of all your surroundings. Open all your senses. What do you see? What do you hear? What does it smell like? Have you ever sat on a stand for hours without seeing an animal, and then suddenly have a gut feeling and turn to see a deer that seemed to come from nowhere? I would contend that the reason you had the "gut feeling" is that somewhere in your subconscious, your mind picked up on a parallel to a similar situation that you may have experienced in the past. You can develop this "sixth sense" by paying careful attention to the sights, sounds and smells that you experience through observation.

To assist you in identifying patterns, keep an observation log and a journal. Orel Hersheiser keeps a log of all the hitters in the National League on a personal laptop computer. An observation log is simply a chart that helps you quantify and organize data. A journal on the other hand, will allow you to capture the feelings and emotions of

the hunt, as well as other information that cannot be easily quantified.

Pass it Along

Ironically, a big part of being a student of the game is also being a teacher. As you grow as a bowhunter, take time to become a mentor to someone else that has an interest in our sport. Pass along your experience and enthusiasm to a youngster, or even an older person that might need some guidance on how to become a better hunter. Even as you have a mentor of your own, to help stretch you and motivate you to become better and achieve more, also be a mentor to someone less experienced than you. You'll be surprised at how much better you become because of it. Imagine your mind being like a glass of water that has been filled up. As you pour it out, you expand your capacity to be filled back up. The more you pour out, the bigger the glass becomes! And remember, if you share an idea or experience with five different people, they each get to hear it just once. You get to hear it FIVE TIMES!

Become more than just an average bowhunter. Don't be satisfied with being typical. Stretch yourself to achieve more. When you accomplish one of your goals, relish in it for a while, but have a new goal to replace it. Take time to read, listen, learn, study, observe, and share. Become a student of the game! **TBJ**

Bowhunting Hot Links!

- Smith Ranch – www.hoghunting.com – come experience hog hunting at its best on the legendary Smith Ranch!
- Topo/Arial Maps – www.terraserver.microsoft.com/ - Click on your area to locate USGS maps.
- Steve Taylor Outdoors – www.tricountyi.net/~stocalls/huntingcalendar.htm – Deer/Elk Moon Hunting Tables 1998-1999.

My First Time!

By Bobby Davis

It was bound to arrive, although during the weeks prior I wasn't sure it would. My first whitetail bowhunting trip. Heck, this was my first bowhunting trip period.

Much to my wife's displeasure, I came home from a hunting trip one weekend with a new hobby, bowhunting. Several of my close friends have been avid bowhunters for a number of years and often extolled the virtues of taking game with a bow. "It is much more satisfying than killing an animal with a gun", and "Once you take your first deer with a bow you will never want to hunt with a gun again" were among the comments that I had heard for some time. I had expressed an interest, but did not have a bow, did not know the first thing about buying a bow, and really did not need something else to occupy my time. These guys, however, were determined to drag me into this sport kicking and screaming.

During a weekend turkey hunt this Spring, my buddy showed up with a barely used Hoyt Deviator that a friend of his had for sale. He acknowledged that this was probably not the best bow for a beginner like myself, but if I was interested I could take it and give it a try. Well, I wanted to give this a fair chance so I took the bow to my local archery shop and with a little tuning, some excellent advice, and a few arrows I was on my way. After a couple of weeks I was shooting 5-inch groups at 30 yards, and doing better than that at 15-20. During the learning process, I also read every book and magazine that I could get my hands on. The way I see it, you can never have too much knowledge on a subject, right? The bottom line is that I spent the summer learning about bowhunting and archery in general, and had a blast in the process.

Then the magical month of September arrived and it was time to get back into the field for my yearly dose of shooting (and missing) Mourning Doves. Everyone needs a weekend like this to

be reminded that those little guys can really move! But, it has been a long time since the last day of turkey season and it sure felt nice to get out again.

While we were sitting around the lease discussing national politics and other heavy issues, the subject of the opening day of deer season came up, and it was then that it dawned on me, an extra month of deer season! While my rifle buddies are crossing off the days on the calendar in anticipation of November, I will be in the field deer hunting. Man, this is going to be great!

A business trip kept me out of the field during opening weekend, so by the time the next weekend rolled around I was fit to be tied. I hardly slept the night before as I went over all of the details for the umpteenth time in my head. Based on what I have read, I decided that I could expect to take my first deer sometime well into the next millennium. Some folks evidently try for several years before shoot their first deer with a bow and arrow. But, no time like the present to get started

I arrived at camp about midday and shot my trusty bow a few times to loosen up. As I consistently shot inside of 3 inches at 20 yards, I thought maybe I won't have to wait through multiple seasons before I arrow my first deer (I know, I know, a target and a live animal are completely different, but I can dream can't I?). I was so restless during the afternoon that I would swear the earth had stopped revolving and time stood still.

Finally, 4:30 rolled around and I decided that it was time. I got dressed, grabbed my bow, grabbed my pack that has been checked, rechecked, and checked again, and started for the stand. After what seemed like an eternity since last year, I was sitting in a blind, hunting deer. It was almost too good to be true, an experience that I go through every year.

My choice of blinds was probably not the best, since it was built for rifle hunting. The location, however, was great. A quick test once I was seated proved that I could draw, aim, and shoot

through the open door pretty easily. I was set, now all I could do was wait. Several quail underneath the feeder were kind enough to keep me entertained with their wary playfulness. I was constantly reminded of why I love being outdoors. Nature is the best theater I have ever been in, and I had a great seat.

The moment of truth arrived, as two does and a yearling slowly walked into view. They headed for the feeder, which is a mere 15 yards away. Quietly I thought, "man, surely this can't be that easy." The fawn came directly into the feeder and started happily munching on the corn, while the two does were a little more careful. They hung back to make sure the scene was safe. One actually started to make a wide circle around the feeder and blind. When she got downwind, she stuck her nose up in the air, snorted a few times, and just like that they were gone. Oh well, not the first time I had been winded by a deer, and it probably won't be the last. But it was early in the afternoon so my chances of seeing another one were pretty good.

About thirty minutes later two more does warily made their way into the feeder. They were very skittish and I am sure that their "sixth sense" told them that something was amiss. One would eat while the other seemed to stare right through me. The last time I sat this still...well, to tell you the truth I don't think I have ever really sat this still. Anyway, they both finally settled down to the business of eating and I assumed that my luck was beginning to change. My biggest problem was trying to muffle the sound of my excited breathing. I haven't been this pumped in a long time!

One of the does presented me with a perfect shot. Broadside, head down eating, not a clue that I was 15 yards away with everything I needed to be a successful bowhunter, with the exception, of course, of experience. As I raised the bow and started to draw I learned an important lesson. Always make sure the heat-shrink on your arrow rest is not worn through! An aluminum arrow dragging across the steel rest with two deer at 15 yards sounds like open

muffler night at a monster truck rally. Immediately, both deer snapped to attention and I stopped in mid draw. I wasn't quite sure how to proceed at this point, but I knew I had to do something. I opted to continue the draw and see if they would return their attention to their dinner. Things were going pretty well until I hit my elbow on the back of the blind. Two white flags waving goodbye was all that I saw through my peep. Oh well, look at the bright side, I finally got the dang bow drawn, just didn't have anything to shoot at!

It took a few minutes for my heart rate to return to normal, but the smile on my face seemed to hang on for a while. As I returned to camp I had to think about what had just transpired. I have returned from the field more than once empty handed, but I don't think I have ever been this excited after not taking a deer. Maybe there is something special about hunting with a bow. I'll let you know because I will definitely be back! **TBJ**

East Texas Deer Hunting: Now and Back When

Anacholia Mt Man

I by no means consider myself an expert in the field of whitetail hunting or whitetail science, but I have pursued this great animal for years and have seen changes that have not only affected the deer but the deer hunter. My history of hunting in East Texas goes back to the late 60's. I attended Stephen F. Austin State University where I lived for several years on a farm west of Nacogdoches and then near Garrison to the North. During those early years it was not hard to find a place to hunt, but it was hard to find a deer! There were deer killed and I managed to collect a few, but they were few and far between. Between the dog hunters and the meat hunters, the whitetail had very little opportunity to grow and prosper. Very few "trophy" bucks came from East Texas during those years. I found myself among those who hunted with dogs and saw nothing wrong with it. It gave me an

November Calendar

Tuesday, November 3

Statewide

Don't forget to vote!

Saturday, November 7

North Zone

Opening Day General Season

Be careful, the gun hunters are legally entering the woods!

Saturday, November 14

South Zone

Opening Day – South Texas

Another opening day. . . another excuse to go hunting!

December

Your Upcoming Event

Send your event txbow@dtalaccess.com.

opportunity to hunt and hunting was what it was all about. We had never heard about deer management and probably didn't want to.

I remember spending numerous hours and walking hundreds miles in the heavy timbered canyons and draws near Garrison in search of squirrels and maybe chasing up a doe or two during an entire season. I would sit in a tree stand on some open sand pasture weekend after weekend always waiting and dreaming about that monster buck. Those that did were definitely not monsters, but they were put on the ground anyway. During those years there were a lot more hunters than deer, or so it appeared.

Game management and research had started to become university projects, working with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Several of my friends were majoring in forestry and wildlife and they had access to large tracts of paper company land. Much of this land was posted and off limits to Joe Public. It was on these "reserves" that I began to realize that there really were lots of deer in East Texas. The practice of clear cutting and allowing new growth to take over proved to be very beneficial to deer habitat. Planting of various types of cover crops and food plots also began in earnest. There was also strong movement to make hunting with dogs

illegal. This met with much opposition, but in my opinion contributed much to helping the whitetail recover in East Texas.

During the late 70's and 80's, the practice of private leasing began to grow in East Texas. Hunting clubs that for years had been only interested in killing deer began to work with the big paper companies to improve the deer herds. They were able to lease large tracts of timber and control who and how the whitetail was hunted. Game management and trophy deer production began with definite goals in sight. East Texas land owners began to realize what their Central and South Texas counterparts had known for decades. There was good money in deer.

One of my first paid deer hunting leases was near Martinsville. The owner had taken good care of his land, had planted good cover crops each year, limited timber cutting, and was very strict about what was killed on his property. There were lots of deer and we killed some good bucks. This had become a growing trend in the 80's.

As I grew older I began to seek other places to hunt and bigger deer to put on the wall. Places with names like Llano, Mason, Junction, Hebronville, Cotulla, Laredo, Maryneal, Batesville, Uvalde, Encinal, Freer, Carrizo Springs, and numerous others. I have both gunhunted and bowhunted these locations, but my heart always returns to bowhunting the timber of East Texas.

Today I am privileged to be able to hunt several thousand acres in Zavalla and Kinney counties, but my favorite is a small tract of land just southwest of Groveton. This tract consists of approximately 150 acres that is bordered by paper company and hunting club land on two sides and private nearly un hunted land on the other two. This little farm has been managed and fine tuned into a whitetail stronghold. It is not unusual to sit in a stand and see upwards of twenty plus deer. This is 150 acres that produces 140 class deer. Twenty years ago this was unheard of, but today there are hundreds of places just like this Groveton property. This is East Texas today!

TBJ

Directory of Texas Bowhunting Ranches

Compiled by Glenn Lemke

- Day Hunting South Texas** Whitetail buck, hogs, and javalina. No trophy fee, \$75 a day, 2 day min. Lodging available at no cost. **512-279-7007**
- Slator Ranch** 12,000 acres, 120-160 class deer, \$110 a day. **915-247-4217**
- South Texas Bow Hunt** **281-497-3964**
- Bug Scuffle Ranch** Vanderpool, TX, 2000 acres high fenced, whitetail, exotics and hogs. \$100/day, no trophy fees, lodging included. **830-966-5185**
- Cougar Run Ranch** New Caney, TX., Hogs and Exotics. **713-354-9339**
- Clark Ranch** Whitetail and Exotics, no trophy fees. **210-683-3111**
- 4x Ranch** South Texas, Whitetail buck, does, and hogs. \$75 weekdays, \$100 weekends, No trophy fees, lodging available at no cost. **1-800-615-5920**
- Black Creek Outfitters** Freer, TX Trophy buck and hogs, doe add. cost, \$100 a day, **512-394-7633 / 210-744-1677**
- C Ranch** San Patricio County, 13,000 acres, \$100 a day, lodging available at add. cost. **512-851-1161**
- Domino Ranch** Medina County, 2700 acres, Whitetail, hogs, and mouflon, lodging included. **210-363-3232**
- Lincoln Ranch**, Webb County, Encinal, TX, 5000 acres, Whitetail and hogs, \$100 a day includes lodging. **210-763-1743**
- Missing Spoke Ranch** Big Thicket area, \$80 a day includes lodging, whitetail and hogs. **1-800-871-0627 / 1-409-685-4549**
- Hill Country Hogs** Sabinal, TX \$50 a hog, Lodging available at add. cost. **210-363-7223**
- South Hills Ranch** Whitetail, **210-966-2369**
- Roberson Ranch** Devine, TX. Whitetail, hogs, turkey, and rams. **210-663-4779**
- Tri County Bowhunts** Fredricksburg, TX **210-997-0834 / 1-800-484-5682**
- Oran Hill Outfitters** Burnet, TX **512-756-4486**
- Forest Ranch** Bandera, TX. Whitetail, hogs, and exotics, **210-796-4470**
- Four Arrows Outfitters**, King Ranch, Nilgi, hogs, javalina, and turkey, Lodging available, cost varies. **210-497-5848**
- Kush Hog Ranch**, Pottsboro, TX \$75-\$160, Exotics available, **903-786-8976**
- North Texas Outfitters**, Bridgeport, TX., Exotics and Whitetails, **817-683-5174**
- Wild River Safari**, Liberty, TX, Exotics and hogs, Prices vary with species, **713-489-9001**
- Walton Farms**, Crosby, TX, Deer and hogs, \$65 a day, **281-328-2976**
- South Texas**, Albrecht Ranches, Year round and Day hunts, **512-572-4868**
- Smith Ranch** Centerville, TX, Approximately 1600 acres, Lodging available at add. cost, fishing, \$100 a day per 100lb hog, trophy hogs extra. **903-536-2505**

Around the Campfire

Vehicular Assault!

By Michael Middleton

I guess I just didn't notice it last night when we drove in because it was dark outside. But as Edward and I drove over the hill this morning in his 1973 Jeep that they call the "Red Goat", it hit me like a Thunderhead tipped 2315 squarely between the eyes! The contrast between the beautiful horizon of golden sunshine reflecting warmly off the prickly pear and mesquite trees, and the awful sight of rusted pickups and campers strewn across the clearing that we called camp was hard on the senses. I guess I've never really noticed it before, but today it reminded me of that filthy, Pick-Your-Own junkyard that I pass by every morning on my way to the office.

Each member of our lease has his own camper trailer and hunting vehicle. The campers, purchased by each hunter for the express purpose of setting up and leaving out on the lease, were pulled to the lease a couple of years ago when Mr. Raymond, the landowner and lessor, sold the old place just outside of Junction and purchased the new place in South Texas. Mr. Raymond agreed that he would make a "special deal" on our lease arrangement, since he sold the Junction lease just before the start of the season. The developer that purchased it made Mr. Raymond an offer that he just couldn't refuse, so that it could be divided

into smaller tracts and resold, at a much higher price, I'm sure! When the campers were originally moved to Junction, it was assumed to be a semi-permanent arrangement, and nobody anticipated actually having to move them once they were set up. It was quite an adventure for some of the guys just getting the campers, and themselves, to Junction in one piece! Having to subsequently move them to the new place caused more than a modest level of anxiety.

Once the campers were finally on the new lease, up the mountain and over rocky, bumpy roads, it was kind of a drop-em-where-you-got-em proposition. There's no real semblance of order to the layout of the campers.

Of course, the original plan when Mr. Raymond purchased the new property was to fix up the old camphouse that was already on the ranch so that everybody could stay there, and no campers would be necessary. We all drove down after Mr. Raymond bought the place to inspect it. The house was old and dirty, but aside from the bees that had made a hive in the wall, it appeared to be solid enough that it could be renovated enough for a camphouse. After sweeping the floors and piling up the old beds and other trash to be hauled off, the house didn't look quite so bad. Before we left, Mr. Raymond and Edward decided to spray the

hive to kill the bees. That went pretty smoothly, except for one bee that managed to escape and take out his anger on poor old Lloyd! Let me tell you, that was quite a sight, as one ticked-off bee attempted to take out the frustrations of his whole colony on Lloyd, as Lloyd waved his hat frantically trying to fend off the bee! Lloyd finally tried to get away from the bee, but as he opened the door to Edward's pickup and attempted to dive in, all in one less-than-fluid motion, he rammed his head into the still opening door! Stunned, he managed to get into the pickup and close the door, only to realize as he regained his senses that the window was down! I'd say the bee got the better of that exchange.

A few weeks later, I guess as Mr. Raymond was counting the money that was still left from the Junction transaction, he decided that rather than renovating the old camphouse, he would just have it torn down and have a plush, new cabin built. And boy was it nice. So nice, in fact, that Mr. Raymond asked when everybody was bringing their campers down, apparently "forgetting" about the previous discussions of all the hunters staying in the renovated camphouse. So all of the rusted, worn-out, ragged, old campers were brought out to the lease and dumped in the front yard of Mr. Raymond's newly constructed palace.

Similarly, all of the camp vehicles were salvaged from the old lease, as well, with the exception of the Red Goat, which was left in the old barn when Mr. Raymond purchased the property. Edward quickly laid claim to it, and soon had it running like a champ and rigged with a ten foot high-rack and a corn feeder. In addition to the Red Goat, the camp vehicles consist of Eugene's 1969 Willys Jeep, Lloyd's puke-green 1977 Suburban, Jeffrey's 1979 Chevy Crew Cab and, of course, Allen's Polaris 4x4 four-wheeler. Cain is quite content rumbling down the ranch roads in his '77 Ford with the glass-packs.

Hunting vehicles, by their very nature, became hunting vehicles because they were no longer fit for service on public roads. After all, nobody wants to drive their new Z-71 Silverados or Power-Stroke 4x4, Ford Dually Crew-Cab's through the mesquite brush and thorns! As such, I guess it only makes sense that all of the camp vehicles have been less than reliable at one time or another, but it always seems that they break down at the most inopportune times. Flat tires and dead batteries seem to be most common. Occasionally, there are larger problems, such as gummed-up carburetors, broken belts, oil leaks or brakes that go out. . . but let's not go there!

Over the summer, Edward and Lloyd went in together and bought themselves a "brand new" 1978 Ford Bronco four-wheel drive. It

was one of those that "needs a little work", but they got a great deal on it. After several days of sweating and swearing, they were finally able to get it working, and pulled it out to the ranch on Labor Day Weekend. We all came back a couple of weeks later for a dove hunt. Jeffrey, Edward and I all piled into the Bronco, eager to drive out to the newly planted cover-crop where the white-wings had been feeding. Soon enough, we were all piling out because it wouldn't start! After burning an hour or so of daylight trying, unsuccessfully to start the Bronco, we decided to bring the Red Goat out of retirement. We all piled in and headed out to the field. We sat around for a couple of hours, with little action in the field, but we saw plenty of doves flying up along the ridge at the top of the canyon. As the day was getting hotter, we agreed to drive on up to the top to see if we could blast the doves as they came over the ridge. It was a good thing that we were in the Red Goat, because it was the only vehicle that could climb the steep, rocky canyon road that had been washed out by recent heavy rains. Once at the top, we quickly got into some white-wings and even managed to knock a couple of them down. It took a few minutes to find one of the birds, but after a thorough search, we found it and headed back to the jeep. When we got back, we discovered that the Goat had a flat tire. What a chore it was going to be to have to change the tire in the hot, summer sun! I quickly went to the back of the jeep and

grabbed the spare tire, as Edward followed behind to get the jack and tire tool.

"@#\$\$@" I heard Edward mumble.

"What's the problem?", I asked as I carried the tire to the front, drivers' side.

"I took the jack and tire iron out of the Goat and put it in the Bronco!" he said.

Few words were spoken on the two-mile trek back to camp, through the heavy brush, down the steep canyon in the hot, morning sun. We were eventually able to work our way back to camp, dripping in sweat, where we got what we needed and hitched a ride from Eugene back to the top to change the tire.

Yep, those old, reliable hunting vehicles always seem to break down at the farthest point from camp. And it never fails that no matter which, or how many tools you remember to bring along, it's never the right one!

As we drove down the drive to the junkyard, err, camp, it was apparent that Mr. Raymond had noticed the same eye sore that I had seen coming over the hill. He had instructed all the guys to move their campers and vehicles at least 200 yards to the south side of his cabin, because those "pieces of %*\$" were blocking the view of the pond from his front porch!

I think I see a whole new story developing! **TBJ**

The Last Shot

By J.P.Davidsson

Well, from all indicators it looks as if we are in for a long, cold winter. Now for most of us this is a very good thing. Animals are more active in cold weather and something just feels right to be out hunting when it's cold outside. I love early bow season as well, but the critters just don't move like they do when the mercury drops. There is one tiny little problem I have with cold weather...IT'S COLD!!!! And why does it have to hurt? I know sunburn can be very painful but generally the sun and heat feel good. I somewhat like hot weather. Yes, you have to watch out for heat stroke, drink plenty of fluids and you should wear sunblock but there is no pain involved.

I must be getting wimpy in my old age because I get chilled easier every year and my feet seem to be the first to go. Does anyone else out there get cold? I mean really, really cold. Not the "yeah, it's pretty chilly out there" cold. I'm talking the bone-chilling, knee knocking type of stuff. The type of weather where there's no need to worry about your bow squeaking or your arrow making noise on your rest while you're drawing back. That huge buck just headed out at 60 miles per hour because all he heard was the chattering of your teeth.

I made a serious mistake when I started hunting; I was a duck hunter before I was a bowhunter and since then, my feet and I have never been the same. Duck hunters must be masochists by nature. They redefine the meaning of being cold. Why else would you get up at 3:00 in the morning in order to get to the lake, put the decoys out, and then proceed to freeze to death. We hunted with shotguns for ducks for about three years & then decided to try to hunt ducks with our bows. Case in point:

We arrived at our usual put-in spot on Cedar Creek Lake at about 4:00 am. It

was a very cold morning and I was hunting with three friends who were very serious duck hunters. We turned on our flashlights and noticed that the entire shoreline had completely frozen over out to about 20 feet. With not one of us being a brain surgeon, we decided to throw some large rocks and crack the ice so we could wade out to our blind. This ingenious idea surprisingly worked so we put on our waders, grabbed our bows and headed out. I made it about 15 feet when I unknowingly stepped on one of the previously tossed rocks, then stepped off of it and lost about six precious inches of lake bottom I desperately needed. The 32 & 1/2 degree water rushed over the entire top edge of my chest waders and proceeded to head south.

I held my bow high and made the quickest 180-degree turn you've ever seen and started for the shore. I knew the water would eventually make it to my feet but I somehow forgot that it would have to pass a certain region of my body before it made it all the way down there. A few seconds later and... good morning everyone! My breath left me for several seconds and I let out a very strange sounding shriek when I could finally breathe again. While all of this was occurring I could hear everyone laughing behind me. I nearly jumped out of those waders when I got back to shore. There was only one problem, I couldn't get them off! The water had vacuum sealed them to my body. I sat on the tailgate of the truck for at least 15 minutes huffing and puffing until I finally got one leg out. Another 10 minutes and the other leg broke free. I then attempted to take my socks off but by that time my right sock had completely frozen solid onto my foot. Finally I got changed, bolted to the store, slammed some hot coffee and breakfast and sat

in the truck and prepared for the ribbing I was about to receive when the others got back. While I was waiting I looked up and saw a flight of mallards heading straight for the truck, so I jumped out, grabbed my bow, knocked an arrow and folded a nice fat mallard. I was having an absolute blast by then. I was nice and warm and I didn't get skunked! Low and behold another flight of mallards flew straight at me and I shot another one.

I looked out the passenger side window about ten minutes later and saw three small shapes off in the distance that were heading my direction. I got out the binoculars and the shapes I saw turned out to be 3 heads bobbing up and down and an occasional bow limb popping out of the water now and then. They got back to the truck and were all practically frozen. It turned out they broke through some ice when they were just getting to the blind and each of them had received a cold water cryo-vac that morning as well. I waited until everyone was warmed up to let them know they had kicked up two flights of ducks in my direction. Then I twisted the knife a little more and pulled out two nice greenhead drakes. It turned out I was the only one who didn't get skunked! I keep in touch with these buddies and one of the told me he still to this day does not have all the feeling back in his left toes from that trip.

I never again hunted ducks with a bow and I made a promise to myself that day that I would do whatever it took to never get that cold again. Now I prefer to sit in a tree stand or ground blind wearing my ridiculous-looking, rated-to-minus-300-degrees-with-12,000-grams-of-Thinsulate moon boots and my layered, thermal everything's on while waiting for a nice deer to cross my path.

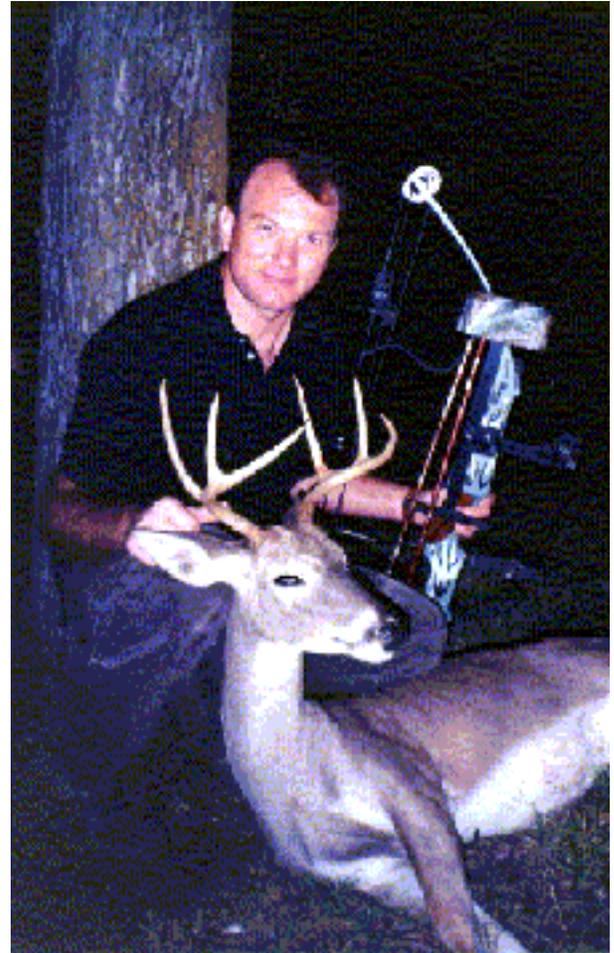
Stay warm and safe this season and best of luck. **TBJ**

Bowhunter's Album



Top: Casey Morris photographed this magnificent buck in January, 1993. This buck roamed freely at the Johnson Space Center, where Casey worked at the time. Nice job, Casey!

Right: J.P. Davidsson arrowed this nice buck on October 15, 1997 in Bosque County, shooting a Hoyt Extreme 28" at 65 lbs., XX78 2315's, tipped with Vortex 125 broadheads.



Below: Jason Clayton took this Javelina in Bruni, TX at 10 yards with a Hoyt Enticer, 80 lbs., xx78 2314's, tipped with Vortex 125 broadheads.

