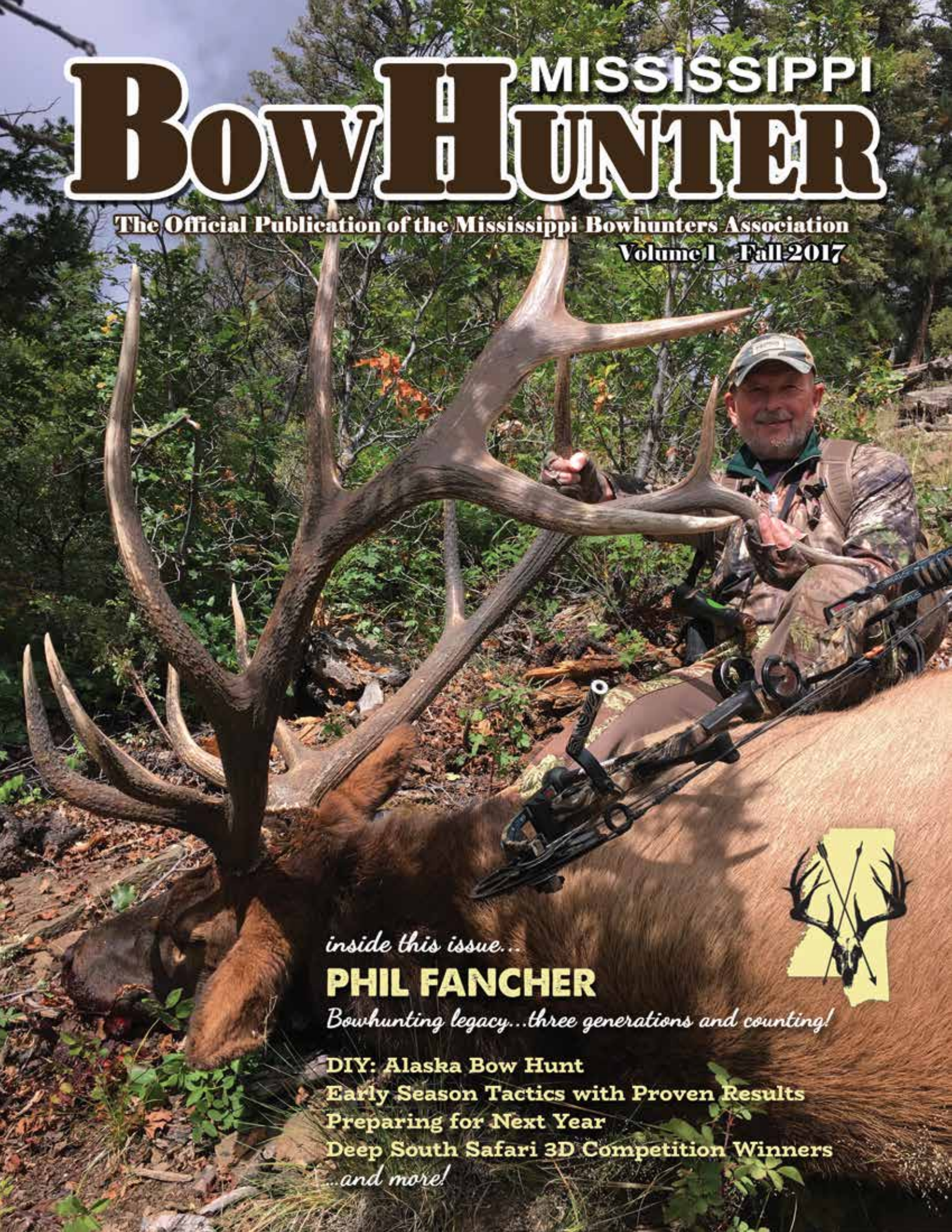


MISSISSIPPI Bow Hunter

The Official Publication of the Mississippi Bowhunters Association
Volume 1 Fall 2017



inside this issue...

PHIL FANCHER

Bowhunting legacy...three generations and counting!

DIY: Alaska Bow Hunt

Early Season Tactics with Proven Results

Preparing for Next Year

Deep South Safari 3D Competition Winners

...and more!





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A photograph of two bowhunters, a man and a woman, standing in a forest. They are both wearing camouflage clothing and caps. The man on the left is holding binoculars to his eyes, and the woman on the right is also using binoculars. They are holding bows, and a quiver with arrows is visible on the woman's back. The background consists of large, textured tree trunks and a soft, hazy light filtering through the trees.

Mississippi Bowhunters Association

DEDICATED *to the* **PROMOTION and PROTECTION** *of our* **BOWHUNTING
HERITAGE, HUNTING ETHICS, and WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**

Photo courtesy of 4 Corner Properties, LLC

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
BRIAN MONTGOMERY

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
MELANIE STARNES

GRAPHIC DESIGN
SHEILA L. CLINE

PRINTING
SERVICE PRINTERS, INC.

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The Mississippi Bowhunters Association is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of our bowhunting heritage, hunting ethics, and wildlife conservation.

| MISSISSIPPI BOWHUNTER |

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662-588-4495 Brian Montgomery or 662-418-6753 Steve Brown

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Cover photo by Slade Fancher

The official publication of the Mississippi Bowhunters Association is published as a service to our members who contribute at least \$30 annually to the Association. The purpose of the "Mississippi Bowhunters Association" is: (1) to foster, expand, and perpetuate the practice of hunting with bow and arrow in the state of Mississippi, 2) encourage the use of bow and arrow in hunting of all legal game and predators, and (3) to improve and increase the privileges of the bow and arrow hunter.

The editorials and commentaries in this publication do not necessarily reflect the mission or position of the Mississippi Bowhunters Association.

The Mississippi Bowhunters Association welcomes stories, art, and photographic contributions. We will consider, but assume no responsibility for unsolicited proposals, manuscripts, art, photographs, and transparencies. Contact the Association for guidelines.

Additional inquiries should be directed to the Mississippi Bowhunters Association, P.O. Box 773, Starkville, MS 39760 601-906-9899 Email: melstarnes9@gmail.com

MBA does not assume and financial responsibility for errors in advertisements that appear in this publication. If notified promptly of an error, we will reprint the corrected ad.

What does the Mississippi Bowhunters Association (MBA) mean to the archers of Mississippi? My name is Brian Montgomery and I follow some of the best this state has to offer as the President of the MBA. Most recently Brad Martin served the organization as President and I supported his role as Vice President starting August 2015. The question of what the MBA means to you, a fellow archer in our great state, is answered in many different ways, but I'll tell what it has meant to me. Growing up in Washington County, only 20 miles from the infamous Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge, I was very influenced by the cover of the MBA magazine being occupied by the "Bowhunter of the Year", Bobby Woods, and others with big public land whitetails. I could see myself on that cover one day and I worked hard to become better by shooting, scouting, and hunting harder.

The MBA's primary purpose is to promote bowhunting and archery throughout the state. It's my desire to do that by publishing information in the magazine, having events that bring fellow archers together, and engaging in the political process where it's needed. I want to help bring the Mississippi Bowhunters Association back to the level it once was, when it was in its prime and very influential, as I am sure many of you remember.

Back to the original question, what does the MBA mean to the sportsmen of Mississippi? The vision of the Mississippi Bowhunters Association is to be a platform for others to dream

just like I did as a young archer. Dreams of what the next outdoor adventure would be, or of that big buck slipping through the swamp, or traveling out west to hunt screaming bull elk, or who the next tournament

archer would be to become a nationally recognized competitor filled my nights with imagination. The MBA is about allowing us all to dream and hoping those dreams become reality, mine sure did!

ON POINT

with MBA President, Brian Montgomery





From left to right are Jake Beck, Brian Montgomery, Steve Brown, and Walker Montgomery

RELIGION, POLITICS, & *Crossbows?*

STORY AND PHOTO BY BRIAN MONTGOMERY

*T*he topic of crossbows hanging in trees during archery season in Mississippi is a sure way have a contentious conversation all across the state. I've found that there is no particular demographic that has any particular predetermined view of the subject, but almost everyone is passionate about how they see it. I want to discuss how we got here and how to go forward with open minds and open arms.

July 1, 2013, the law that made crossbows legal during archery season was passed with lots of opinions on each side of the argument. The primary opposition was from hunters who viewed crossbows as a closer cousin to a rifle than a bow. The primary argument in favor was from

hunters who viewed compounds in the same light and thought they were not much different than compounds. Regardless of your opinion, it's legal to hunt with a crossbow in Mississippi during archery season and the two camps have one thing in common, both groups are hunters. I want to bridge that gap between those with different opinions by the fact that we are all hunters in this argument. Hunters don't need any additional enemies and where there is anyone willing to go into the outdoors in pursuit of game animals, there is common ground.

The needle measuring the degree of difficulty related to any activity can always be moved in both directions by decisions to use certain equipment, location of activity, and time applied to the activity. You will hear some say "I only use traditional equipment" or "I bowhunt exclusively" or "I only shoot a rifle long range". What we are really saying is "I'm one or 10 steps ahead of my buddy or peer". That's not to say we don't truly love the challenge of choosing how we go into the field. I want to discuss the positives of crossbows in Mississippi and how they are being used to recruit more people to go outdoors, as well as challenge some to migrate to what others revere as more traditional equipment.

Archery hunting done right requires a time commitment, both in the field as well as in preparation with practice and equipment setup. If you are not committing time you will inevitably be disappointed either by lack of opportunities or opportunities that result in wounded game. There are three groups that utilize the crossbow to bridge the gap either in time requirements, physical requirements, or opportunity.

The first group that crossbows

has appealed to are young future hunters that are too young to be proficient with a compound bow. I have personally seen the benefits of the crossbow first-hand. I have four children and my oldest two have been successful in the past two archery seasons with the crossbow. In years past I would bowhunt during archery season alone and start taking them when rifle season came along. Nowadays I set double loc-on sets and they are right there in the shooter stand. It's just more fun to harvest a deer at 20 yards with a crossbow than have to wait until rifle season. There is no way they could have started enjoying the early fall at such a young age without the use of a crossbow. For one reason they would have had to use a compound with extremely low poundage and energy and potentially have been disappointed with wounded animals. The sport of archery should be fun and I didn't want to set them up for disappointment their first time out. The other factor is time to practice. All of my children are also very involved in athletic sports. Between academics, athletics, church, and hunting, time passes quickly. Because of the ease of using a crossbow, especially for youth, our family has been able to hunt together early in the season when the possibility of using a traditional compound was out of the question. That's my goal and I want to encourage others to focus on that as well, TIME with family and friends.

Another demographic drawn to the crossbow are those aging adults that may not be as proficient with the compound bow any longer. Many senior adults that want to be outdoors hunting but lack the physical strength to draw and shoot a bow can pick up the crossbow and they are off to the woods for a good hunt. Along with

this group are those with shoulder or other injuries that make shooting a traditional bow difficult. The theme here seems to be repetitive, we want more folks enjoying the outdoors in pursuit of game animals.

The last group I want to discuss are those regular old, able bodied, physically capable, good ole boys/gals that want to shoot a crossbow. Let's be honest, they are just fun to shoot. A good friend of mine who didn't have the time or interest to be a serious bowhunter once told me I was just one of those "bow snobs". I know the archery community wants to promote archery for others to enjoy but we sometimes find it hard to see that everyone doesn't love it as much as we do or they may have other obstacles that prevent participation. For the outdoorsman that works a 6-day week and long hours, the crossbow is a perfect tool to be proficient in harvest and allow him to go afield with confidence. This group of hunters are my favorite. They are our "target audience" for archery. These sportsmen are able and have an interest in archery and may, in the near future, choose to use more traditional archery equipment such as a compound or long bow. Each member of the Mississippi Bowhunters Association should look for and recruit these archers into becoming bowhunters.

As the President of the Mississippi Bowhunters Association my goal is to bring together those who enjoy the pursuit of game animals and the lifestyle we live. It matters little if you shoot a rifle, shotgun, bow, crossbow, spear, or sling shot if you enjoy this great outdoors that God has given us to preside over. Let us not look for ways to be divided but rather seek areas of common interest.

DIY:

Alaska Bow Hunt

STORY AND PHOTOS BY GREG VIRDEN



We arrived at the Little Rock airport around noon. Apprehensions were high, all of our stuff had to get through, there would be no way to replace any of it, and every last item was critical. We were about to be dropped by super cub in the remote Alaskan wilderness for 21 days on a moose/bear/wolf bow hunt. There would be no possibility to resupply. And our total weight was limited to 80 lbs. apiece.

We made it to Anchorage at approximately 4 am with hardly a wink of sleep. The larger than life moose, grizzlies, and polar bears in the lobby were intimidating and surreal. The flight from Anchorage looked like something straight out of *National Geographic*. Below were glaciers and snowcapped mountain ranges that probably hadn't melted since the last ice age. We landed in a small community on the Kuskokwim River in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta where Rob was waiting. We had hired Rob as our air charter to get us in and out of the river we were about to go float. Air is the only way in, by super cub.

We grabbed our stuff, jumped on the back of an ATV, and within a few blocks, we were at Rob's place. I guess it was about 1 o'clock. We had already logged over 24 hours without sleep and so many miles that it really didn't matter anymore. We were on schedule for the drop today. The first flight was leaving in 20 minutes. There would not be any time for dillydally.

We were ushered into his den where he checked all our tags and licenses. He gave us a couple of maps that designated several problem areas on the river we were about to float, as well as tentative pickup location. From there, we went to a packing room filled with water proof bags and an electronic scale. Everything we had was to be inspected and packed into 20 quart size bags (this size fit into the cub better) and weighed. Rob told us to pack what we would need for two days and put it in a separate pile. Our drop-off point was on the side of a mountain

with a very short landing area; we would not be able to go in there with a full load. He would have to make multiple trips to get all the gear in. And he may only be able to get one of us in today—it would just depend on the conditions. I was about half way done with my two-day pile when Rob announced that Weathers, my son, looked ready to go, to which Weathers immediately acknowledged, gleefully, I may add. I told Rob I was to go first, but in Alaska you fly whenever the opportunity exists. When a bush pilot says go, he means now, period. I guess I had been dillydallying around and just got left.

Rob finally make it back. Forty-five minutes late. Needless to say, I was not in a favorable mood. I was informed that the flying conditions were too bad to get to our drop so he took Weathers to an old mining site that was relatively close as an alternative. That is where I was headed. But you never can be sure in Alaska. I guess it was about 4:30 or so. We took off, and the cub settled in at about 700-800 feet elevation, cruising around 60 mph due to a fierce headwind. Rain squalls were everywhere, but the visibility was good. It didn't take long for the total remoteness of this strange new territory to set in. There were no telephone poles, roads, or houses anywhere, just a seemingly infinite sea of untouched wilderness, mile after endless mile. As we approached the mountains, Rob tapped my shoulder and pointed to the pass we were about to go through. I tapped his shoulder back and expressed my concern. It looked like a death trap to me. The passes of opposing mountains disappeared into the fog layered clouds that were peppering us with rain. That cloud ceiling couldn't have been more than 3 or 4 hundred feet high. He pointed to the clear area between the mountains and beneath the clouds and announced, with stern confidence, "there is plenty of room in there to navigate." It didn't look like enough room to turn the plane around to me.

I said, "OK then," and cinched up my seat belt and gripped the plane's roll cage a little tighter.

The scenery was so spectacular with all the colors of the mountains, streams and creeks, spruce forests, alder and willow thickets, open meadows, and the sheer endless expanse of pristine wilderness that I temporarily became lost in the moment. The plane climbed, twisted, descended, weaved over here, ducked over there as Rob carefully picked his way through the rain and fog covered mountains. Finally, I spotted a tiny little landing strip cut out along the top of a ridge, and we were lining up right on it.

Ooh-wee I made it! About the time I stepped out of the plane, I could see Weathers' hat bobbing up and down in the alder thicket headed our way. Apparently, he had found it necessary to scout out the perimeter. He was soaking wet. He said it had been pouring, and that he didn't think we were coming back. In the Alaska bush, once you get wet you never really dry out again. Rob asked if we wanted to try to make it to the final drop, it was just over that last ridge in the distance. I responded with a resounding no. We had already been up over 36 hours with little food and it appeared to me the conditions were steadily deteriorating. Anyway, it was late. Does it ever get dark up here? He jumped back into his plane and told us to be ready to go first thing in the morning. All I could think of was I hope he makes it home.

After the buzz of the plane faded into the distance, the silence became deafening. There were no birds, squirrels, or critters of any kind. Nothing. What kind of a place is this? Is it so harsh nothing can live here? I hope we even see a moose. My brain was too tired to contemplate it. We heated up some water and poured it into our military surplus long range patrol rations (LPRs) dehydrated meal bags. Actually, Weathers ate two. It was seafood chowder. He loved it,

especially after he amped it up with a couple of shots of olive oil. He was already eating up all our rations. I just went to sleep. It rained all night.

The next morning the fog was so thick you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. I really didn't care. We had plenty of time ahead of us, and it felt great to finally be in Alaska, even though we weren't where we were supposed to be and had very limited supplies. About mid-morning, the rain started breaking up and low and behold a grouse flew across the runway. Weathers was on him like a bird dog and flushed it up in a tree and popped him with a little .22 rifle he had slipped in his bag. Things were already looking up. We had scored on our first protein of the day.

Conditions had improved to the point around noon that we could see some of the slopes on the surrounding mountains. About that time, we could hear a familiar buzz back toward the pass. We looked at each other in amazement. No way. Focusing our eyes on the noise in the far distance a tiny black spec pops out of the clouds. You guessed it. It's Rob. The final flight in was uneventful and delightful, other than the fact that the landing

strip was no strip at all but just an opening on the side of a mountain.

The last load in was the raft. A 120 pound roll of rubber. We loaded our packs and started hauling everything down to the river, or more appropriately, a small stream at this point. By the time we had gotten everything down to the stream, it was late. The water level looked OK to me, so we decided to make camp. It was going to take us a while figure out how to get this raft blown up and assembled properly. It was a first for me.

Upon awaking that morning we pumped the raft full of air and put the parts together in a way that made the most sense to us and loaded her up. We got in it but it didn't move. There was not enough water to float it over the rocks. So we got out and started dragging it. I was up front pulling it around the first little bend on a small stretch of sand. There, in the sand was a grizzly track so big a wash tub wouldn't cover it up. It had just rained a couple of hours ago, meaning this bear had just left. I was packing a 45-70 lever action with iron sites in case we were attacked, and understandably, after I saw this, I was wearing my gun like a pair of underwear.

It took us all day to make it 4 miles down the river. So far, there wasn't much floating taking place. Mostly just dragging. But the water volume was improving. It had begun raining again. Sideways. We set up camp. Most of the tent stakes pulled out during the night, and I guess we were lucky the tent didn't blow away. It was horrible wind and rain. It must have been blowing 50 – 60 miles per hour.

The next morning, the water was deep enough to float the raft, most of the time. During the first few hours of our float, we were more like a pinball bouncing all over everywhere and everything, totally out of control. One of the first snags the oar got caught in spun the raft around with such force that when the oar followed, it took the iron sites clean off my 45-70. I had let go of the oar, barely in time, and ducked, before it took me out as well. We were on a steep learning curve with more to come. It must have been 2 or 3 bends downstream when we had gotten out of the raft and were trying to maneuver it around a steep, downhill, bootleg cut to the left. Within the whitewater of the belly of that hair pin turn was a 50 foot spruce whose limbs had been broken and stood out like 100 jagged spears jutting out in all directions. As I was attempting to navigate around this obstacle, walking on dry land towing the bow of the raft in hand, the back end of the raft caught the current, yanked me off my feet, and was headed with me into the inevitable. Somehow Weathers managed to jump in and grasp the trailing back rope and coax the stern back toward the rocks out of the current, just in time. He wasn't too happy with the non-volunteered ice water swim. That was his last set of dry clothes.

There were moose and bear tracks on every sandbar we passed. We just weren't seeing anything. Every day we went on more and longer patrols into the bush off the river. We climbed to vantage points, we called, raked trees, and glassed for hours, in the rain, day



We packed up before daylight and set camp after sundown daily.

by day, mile after mile. All the way from camp and all the way back again. And then we floated down to a new spot. We started each day about 6 am and finished about 10:30 pm. Then one day out of the blue it happened: a love sick bull came right in on us bellowing threatening and aggressive grunts-- ouuahhhh and unghhhh. One big problem though, it was 4 am, and we were in the tent. And it was pitch black outside. Weathers wanted to wait a couple of hours until daylight and shoot him. He was so close every time he grunted the walls of the tent would shake. I grabbed Ole Betsy, even though her sights were gone, jumped out the tent, and prayed that bull would run off and not charge. He did, whew! A strange fact, but in Alaska moose kill more people than bears.

We had almost completed our first week and had added fishing to our repertoire. The salmon and grayling fishing was unbelievable. We had been supplementing our meal plan with the occasional grouse, which was fabulous, but could not compare to a ridiculously fat 8 lb. silver sautéing in olive oil over a crackling fire in a cast iron skillet. We generally kept a legal stringer of live fish with us at all times. One unusual morning, I say it was unusual, because it wasn't raining, we were restocking our stringer when I saw a bear cross the river a couple of hundred yards downstream. Weathers let out a predator call and that bear broke out of the bush and was standing on his hind legs looking at us from 28 yards in what seemed like seconds. Weathers was at full draw waiting for

a double lung opportunity. The bear decided he did not want anything to do with us, so he made a quarter turn, and that's when Weathers stuck him. That bear took off into the bush like a bolt of lightning.

The four blade Magnus had found its mark. The bear had piled up stone cold dead in the neighborhood of 34 steps from impact. Good thing too. The last thing I wanted to do was blood trail a bear in that jungle. We caped the bear out and at the last minute decided to take the straps. Our freeze dried meat was barely edible. Had I known how delicious the meat was going to turn out, I would have taken all 4 quarters. The bear fat tasted like blue berry jam. They call these bears blueberry bears because they gorge themselves on blueberries this



Weathers Virden with a nice Alaskan bull moose.



Greg Virden with a silver salmon. Deliciously cooked in a cast iron skillet in olive oil, garlic, red pepper flakes, salt and pepper, over crackling coals.

time of year. It was a beautiful, healthy, fat animal. The fur was blue-black, super thick and luxurious.

Moose hunting up to this point had been a considerable disappointment. Two weeks into the trip, and we had seen only one cow. Little did we know what was about to unfold. The cows were going into heat, and their calls were ringing out across the forest. We finally had a bull come within 20 yards and he was looking for a fight. It was a magnificent sight; he was bigger than a horse with horns galore. Best we could tell it wouldn't make the 50" antler restriction, so we let it walk. This general area was on fire.

Our plan that night was to leave before first light and set up in one of the most promising spots we had scouted out. The dawn broke to a still, clear, blue bird day, probably in the high teens. It was perfect. We started our calling routine by raking a huge spruce first, breaking limbs as big as possible, and just making an awful amount of racket. This seemed to make the bulls the maddest. The first bull showed up after about 90 minutes of calling and raking. It was an unbelievable experience. He came

in grunting, horns everywhere, stood broadside at 30 yards, destroyed a couple of pines, checked us out and left. Then another one came in. And another. We had studied all the literature and watched videos on how to judge antler size but they are so huge. We just couldn't be sure. We didn't have to wait long to see another one. The fourth bull was coming in fast, and he was really pissed. He had so many brow tines that we didn't have to worry with width minimums. Four brow tines on one side makes a bull legal.

My heart sank when the bull stopped in a cluster of small pines about 15 yards out. The wind was beginning to pick up and was blowing right to the bull. He stood there for what seemed like an eternity, then shook his head, and made a beeline straight to us. He stopped at 5 yards and looked at me eyeball to eyeball. I could see the blood vessels in his eyes. I was about to pass out from an overdose of adrenaline wondering why Weather's hadn't shot. The bull decided to leave; he turned and took a couple of steps. Weathers finally had the shot he was looking for and

released. Point blank. That 1,500 lb. animal took out of there like a runaway freight train.

At almost one ton the big bull went down in 52 steps, literally seconds after he was hit. Now the work began. We were three-quarters of a mile from the camp as a crow flies. We had waded across creeks, around beaver ponds, through mud sucking muskeg, fought our way through alder thickets, and crawled over green timber deadfall to get to the hot spot, in hip boots I may add. It was typical Alaskan terrain. The first order of business was to cool the meat down. It took us about 2-3 hours to quarter and remove all edible meat, ribs, neck, etc. (it is a \$2000 fine and a year in jail for failure to do so). We bagged all of it up and moved it one-quarter mile to get it away from the gut pile and bears. All 600+ back breaking pounds of it. Plus the horns and cape. The hindquarters weighed in at an estimated bone crushing 160 pounds apiece. In this unit, only the ribs can be boned out.

It was September 18, and there were two days left of the moose season. We had been there since the 2nd. Now it was my turn to kill. I was going to take mine with a custom made recurve. But this was not my time. We were busy packing the bull out when Rob did a fly over in the cub. We turned on the handheld VHF radio. Rob gave us a new pickup point and pickup date. All suitable gravel bars for landing had gone under due to the endless Alaskan storms, except one. It was a two-day float away. We were to leave immediately and hustle. Hunting was over.

The cold wind and rain pelleted us continuously, unmercifully, daylight to dark. Hypothermia was an ever-present concern. We had started rowing, in addition to floating, because we could pick up an extra 2 mph, and it would warm us up. We switched positions every hour, one rowing and one resting. It was all about getting out now. We made it to the new pickup point ahead of schedule.



Weathers Virden with his bear. The fur was in prime condition, thick and luxurious. Shimmering blue-black in color.

Unfortunately, we were too late, the rising waters had swallowed up the last gravel bar. Thankfully, Rob had talked me into getting an inReach, a satellite texting device, before we left for the trip. I sent him a text message describing our predicament. A couple of hours later he responded back with a new set of instructions. We were to go to the confluence of this river and another larger river where we would be picked up by float plane the next morning. Jubilee! Great news.

The whole trip we had been plagued by rising water. With this in mind, we picked the highest spot on the river point available before setting up camp. True to Alaskan form, we awoke the next morning with everything floating around the tent. The water had risen several feet overnight during a God awful storm.

We had hunkered down in an alder thicket and the tent had held. It had sounded like jet engines outside that night. Miraculously, we had not lost anything. And the water was still rising. I immediately grabbed the inReach and sent Rob a new message detailing the urgency of the developing situation.

About an hour later he dropped the bomb on us. The southwest portion of Alaska had gone under a state of emergency due to the storm. All available float planes were being diverted to emergency situations. And our situation was not deemed an emergency. There would be no plane. Our only option was to paddle out. The next pickup possibility was 50 air miles away. I shuttered at the thought of how many endless meandering, turning, and twisting river miles it

would be. We had pretty much gone through all our supplies by this time, and were living off what we had killed and caught.

To make a long story short, we made it out eventually, including all the moose meat, no worse for the wear, maybe a little leaner and mentally tougher and considerably more experienced. The extra float was challenging and demanding, but more than worth every single hard earned mile. It was spectacular. Had an opportunity on a wolverine, saw more bull moose (season closed), and floated through hundreds of tundra swans, all manner of other waterfowl, and countless bald eagles – no people though... unimaginable.

Currently, I am busy planning my next Alaskan adventure. I can't wait to return!

PASSING



IT ON

PHOTOS AND STORY BY TODD HAYGOOD,
MS S3DA Coordinator and USA Level 3 Instructor



Children usually look up to an older student or an adult to influence them in things that they do. Whether it is baseball, football, softball, hunting, archery, golf, or any other sport, mentors help guide young children in the choices they make. Adults who have been taught the love of team sports or the love of hunting as a child, should continue the tradition and pass it on to the next generation.

My father and uncles took time to teach me the love of the outdoors and the love of archery. Back in the 1970's we would take a gum sapling and put trotline string on it for a bow. Milk weeds made great arrows to shoot out of the homemade bow. To advance to a more sophisticated bow, one uncle made me a homemade hickory recurve. Later in my childhood, my parents gave me a Herter's recurve, and then as a teenager a compound bow.

Watching my uncle shoot his recurve getting ready for bow season lit a fire in me that has burned for more than 40 years. When I was working as a young coach, Mr. Bob Lambuth, a member of Percy Quinn Archery club, taught me to make bow strings. He also introduced me to field archery. Bow hunting friends introduced me to 3D tournament archery in the late 1980's. While there are children out there who love the sport of archery and bow hunting due to someone showing them the way, there are many other children who have not yet been introduced to this wonderful sport.

2008 was the year that I got involved with an archery program taught in the schools and started teaching children the love of tournament archery. This a great basic introduction to the archery program and is offered in most states. There are also many after school programs that are really good. One of my daughters competed in the school program, but also hunted and shot some real

archery competitions. Along with her good grades and her love of archery, she was able to pursue archery at the collegiate level. Four years later, after watching her achieve an individual national championship, several team championships, and many top three finishes, I realized that there are more children who need to be introduced to my passion of archery.

One reason that I have been introducing kids to archery, is the hope of getting them into bow hunting. There are several great archery programs out there, but the one that I foresee growing bow hunters is Scholastic 3D Archery, or S3DA. This program started as a tournament 3D program, but has expanded to also include both indoors and outdoors. This more closely follows the college archery format. The things that have really caught my attention is that their numbers are doubling every year and this program allows kids to shoot

real bows. S3DA does not require any specific equipment, but follows a standardized tournament format. Children can choose any equipment they want, as long as they are within the rules. There are compound classes, Olympic recurve classes, basic bow classes which include both recurve and long bow. S3DA not only teaches tournament archery, but promotes ethical bow hunting. In 2016 kids participating in S3DA where polled and 86% said they planned to start bow hunting. 45% of the students said they used a separate bow for bow hunting, which means more dollars to shops. Many children in this program have been able to attend college on archery and academic scholarships to continue the passion of archery. In 2016, S3DA National Tournament archers saw well over \$4 million in college archery scholarships received. 2017 has introduced the S3DA program to even more states like Mississippi. There

have been scholarships received at the state levels also.

Whether it is to just shoot a bow for competition or hunting, there are children out there waiting for someone to introduce them to the sport of archery or bow hunting. If we want to see more hunting licenses sold for archery season, or bows sold for target archery, it will not happen if we as adults don't take the time to show them. Haley, who is my 22 year old daughter, told me towards the end of her 4 year college undergraduate degree and college archery career that when she finishes Physical Therapy School, she plans to stay involved in archery. She plans to compete some as an adult and maybe teach archery as a coach on the side, passing on what she has been taught to other children. This is truly a beautiful sport or outdoor passion that needs to be passed on.



EARLY SEASON TACTICS

with Proven Results

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHANE SAXTON
EDITED BY BLAKE REESE

We could all agree that the old saying “I’d rather be lucky than good any day” has a great bit of truth to it, mainly because sometimes merely being a good hunter doesn’t always pay off if preparations aren’t made beforehand. Also, one must give credit when credit is due, and when a hunter seems to have repetitive luck time and time again, one must wonder if the term luck is indeed more of a preparation meeting opportunity than a blind hog finding an acorn every now and then. Shane Saxton, whitetail enthusiast, management expert, and developer of Saxton Food Plot Blends, shares 5 tactics that are discussed below and the results, well they speak for themselves. Here are 5 simple tips



that are certain to aid in harvesting your trophy this upcoming season.

FIND THE FOOD!

If there's one thing all hunters agree on, it's that food sources are vital to the success, or lack thereof, of harvesting whitetail deer. When September arrives the local feed stores will be flooded with traffic from hunters rushing to get seed in the ground. The roadways will echo the hum of mud tires and four wheel drive trucks. Trailers loaded down with tractors and implements with frequent almost every two lane road as hunters make a dashing sprint to ready their property for the upcoming season. Like most of us, busy with life, we rush to our

property in Mid-September, and the race is on to clean those roads, check and hangs stands, prepare food plots, and the other necessities to assure a pleasurable hunting season. And most have pretty good luck in that approach come November once the plots are up and the deer are acclimated to the disturbance of their once quiet summer time living quarters. Great fall and winter food plots are essential to attracting deer and providing them with the habitat to allow them to reside on and around your property. But for the avid bow hunter who yearns for early season success, could there be more? The goal, or intent, is to figure out a way to bag that early season buck, and that's hard to do when the acorns aren't falling yet and you have no food on your property.

Insanity, it has been said, is doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results. If you want to change your early season luck, change how you prepare. Planning to kill big bucks doesn't start a month before hunting season. It starts when you realize that you are creating year around habitat and take action to enforce it. It's pretty simple actually; food, water, cover. We've all heard it, but somehow we often fail to enforce it. Maybe you're one of the few that are fortunate enough to have access to hunting agricultural fields in the early bow season. If so, you're well on your way to a potentially successful archery season.

For the rest of us, a plan needs to be taken to ensure food is readily available throughout the summer months and extending into the fall. A great route for this food source is a good stand of perennial clover that will provide abundant grazing for local deer, thus lessening the need for them to travel large distances in search of more desirable vegetation. Hunting in an area with minimal pressure, great management practices, thick cover, and add to that year around food sources, you've got a recipe for success that can't be beat. Shane has been

an avid hunter all of his life and has carried his knowledge and experience to aid in providing great food sources to keep deer on your property and give them not only the food they crave, but also the nutrition to make great gains each upcoming year. Shane has developed several food plot blends that if planted in the fall, will provide a food source within 14 days (assuming rain cooperation) and will continue as a perennial food source as long as it is maintained properly. While most are scrambling to get food plots in the ground in mid-September, you will have provided your bucks with a food source they've been feeding on all summer. And since they have been there feeding frequently during the summer months, your chances at success the first few sits of the season increases dramatically. Check out some of the results from the Saxton Food Plot Blends below.

SCOUTING

Assuming you have been proactive and made a positive step in establishing a year around food source and you've maintained it properly, or have access to agricultural ground, you're now in the game. It's time to be smart, to start strategizing, planning, and making preparations to aid in potential success. It is true that scouting by foot is a good tool to learn new terrain and find travel routes. However, try to do this as early as early as possible. A mature deer will reside in an area that he feels safe, and if he's bumped from his area numerous times, he will likely exit the area and find somewhere with less human activity. The less disturbed your area is and the less you make your presence known, the greater your chances are of seeing your trophy in daylight hours.

If possible, take advantage of scouting from afar. Glassing fields from long distances have a huge advantage for patterning travel routines of deer on your property. In early season when days are long, mature bucks will still be frequenting food sources in the daylight hours so take advantage of this opportunity. It is no secret that when





deer lose their velvet, their patterns change. Adding human scent to their afternoon café will drastically hurt your chances. Try to avoid lots of cutting and obvious disturbance of the area. Deer, especially mature deer, will notice even the slightest changes. So hang that set as early in the summer as possible, or at very least prep (trim, etc.) early on to give the deer time to get back accustomed to the change and then stay out as much as possible.

Trail cameras have made leaps and bounds with the advancement of technology and reliability, providing great scouting opportunities with minimal disturbance of your area. They have changed the scouting world and are one of the best ways to locate and monitor deer in your area. However, this should be done carefully as well.

Avoid checking cameras during potential feeding times and try to limit those scouting trips to mid-day when deer are bedded if at all possible. When accessing to scout, try to be as scent free and quiet as possible. Again, the less your presence is known, the more relaxed and comfortable a big deer will be in the area and the likelihood of him staying there for a longer period of time will drastically increase. It only takes a few times of alertness to make him change his pattern.

TIMING IS KEY

You've done the physical work. You have provided a great food source for the deer you are hunting; your stand is set, and all scouting measures have been taken. All is in order and you have many deer frequenting your area. So, when do you hunt it? I've heard it

said that the best time to hunt is any time you can. I get it. Any time to be in God's creation is a great time to be there. However, factually speaking, if it is opening day and the wind is dead wrong and you go anyway, you are asking for failure. Sure, there have been many times I've heard of situations where people have a trophy deer come in downwind. However, more often than not, way more often than not, you are going to get busted and mess your honey hole up for period of time. Be smart. Hunt it when the conditions are favorable and you'll have a much better experience.

Also, if you've got your target buck on camera at 6:00 A.M. consistently, that's great. But chances are when you walk into that area at 5:45 A.M. you're going to bust him out of there. Remember, you hunt deer at their destination, or in route to it, not at their present location.

You cannot kill a giant buck if a giant buck doesn't exist in your area

The simple fact of the matter is that it is impossible to kill the buck of a lifetime if the buck of a lifetime doesn't exist in your hunting vicinity. How to grow big bucks? Well, that's a totally separate discussion, but to hit on the high points you need age, genetics, and a well-balanced habitat with everything a whitetail needs to want to stay there and have an abundance of protein rich foods to help grow him to full potential.

Management practices have grown exponentially over the past several decades. From early management practices of 6 point or better to 8 point or better to 16 inch spread or better, all the way to aging deer for quality standards. Knowledge of these characteristics have improved trophy potential dramatically. Where three year old bucks were once considered mature, now that age has moved into the 4, 5, and even 6 year old class animal (though older than this is difficult to determine on the hoof). There was a time when it was thought that a 4 year old buck had reached his





ultimate potential, but now we are seeing bucks continue to grow into true giants at 5 and 6 plus years of age.

One must know that a trophy is truly in the eyes of the beholder, but if one desires to hunt for a 5 year old animal, he must restrict himself from harvesting younger bucks.

ENJOY THE PROCESS

If you're anything like me, creating and maintaining a comfortable habitat for the animals we pursue is more of a hobby than a job. Sure, it takes a lot of work, but the rewards from a hard day's work make the end result much more appreciated. I will also add that maintaining a continuous food source (clipping, spraying, etc.) once every few months are actually much less stressful than the September Sprint. I urge you to enjoy the process and the

give thanks to our Creator that you are healthy enough to get your hands dirty and make a place better than you found it. That's what it's about. The antler score will one day be forgotten, the pictures will fade, but the memories

made will last a lifetime. May your hunts be measured by the size of the memory, and know that all your hard work culminating in an arrow being launched that finds its mark is icing on the cake. Good hunting and God bless!



For more information on Saxton Food Plot Blends Contact Shane Saxton by phone @ 601-540-5040, or Email at Saxton21@yahoo.com



BOWHUNTING LEGACY

Three Generations & Counting

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PHIL FANCHER

The Bible in James, Chapter 4, Verse 14 says, "Life is like a vapour that appeareth for a little while and then vanishes away." Time flies. It seems like it was just yesterday I was blowing air into my old Larry Jones flute-like elk bugle. Now, forty years have passed. Where does the time go?

I often describe myself as a pharmacist by trade, a Baptist preacher by calling, and a hunter at heart. I've been blessed many times, but one of my fondest memories was when I was hunting elk in Colorado. That cool, crisp morning in the Aspens of Colorado changed me in ways I could not fathom. I remember vividly how he walked, like a tough teenager who just got his driver's license. With reckless abandon he came, testosterone pumping, pushing him forward. Soon, a small piece of metal and a shaft of aluminum, the broadhead, would stop him in his tracks.

It is truly impossible for me to convey the enjoyment the sport of archery has given me. From the early age of ten with my fiberglass bow, I was Fred Bear. Then a friend of mine, Curtis Pounds from Bellfontaine, Mississippi, built me my first real bow. From this point forward, the hours I spent with this bow were truly uncountable and I believe made me the man I am today, a lover of archery. I could be happy on the range or in the woods with any bow; a Mathews or a custom built hybrid from Acadian woods. What really fascinated me was the simple flight of the arrow whether made of fiberglass, aluminum, carbon or switch cane crafted by me. The one thing all had in common was each arrow was being pushed by a bow I was holding.

Now as three generations of Fanchers head west to hunt together, I feel myself slowing down. Actually, it is the pace that is slowing, not the enjoyment of each adventure. My son, Slade, and his son, Aiden, are now my

hunting partners and we love to go elk hunting. It wasn't that long ago my best friend of twenty years, Tim Smith, was always by my side. One never had to ask if he wanted to hunt. He was always ready to go and a faithful friend. I remember sitting around a campfire about thirty years ago in the mountains of Meeker, Colorado where we both agreed we should do this every year until we can't! It was a promise we both kept.

Just as memories fade, so do precious souvenirs. Three years ago an EF4 tornado hit Louisville, Mississippi. God spared our lives. As I look back on the experience, we may have lost all material belongings, but the priceless memories still remain. I remember countless hours creating our hunting picture albums. There were pictures of white-tailed deer, mule deer, turkey, hogs, pronghorn antelope, caribou, bear and elk, most of which are now gone. Many of the sixteen elk racks survived because they were at my son's house. The tornado may have taken my photographs but it couldn't take

away my love of archery!

A true hunter of any kind hunts as a way to help feed his family. While the sport is enjoyable, the hunter carries a huge responsibility of accountability to the resource and the sport. There are those who would prefer we not use the word kill in association with hunting. However, to hunt and be successful, one must kill. The Bible gives us many references to this. Read what it says about two brothers in Genesis 25:27. I hope you are like Esau and not Jacob. Why? The Bible tells us Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field, and that Jacob was a plain man. God also spoke to Peter once and told him, "Arise Peter, kill and eat". That is what hunters do. I can relate this to gardening. I am an avid gardener. I harvest the things for which I have cultivated, planted and worked. It is the same with hunting. I scout for the best place to hunt, set-up my stand and with any luck, I will harvest my prey.

A big bull is a majestic sight for sure. Yet the sounds they make seem to penetrate you like a splinter or thorn.



A bull's scream cuts deep into your senses like very few things. Have you ever watched water flow in a stream or creek? It flows over massive rocks and through deep valleys. Terrain and distance to water is simply irrelevant, just as travel is to elk. I once hunted a herd that was traveling 8-10 miles a day between their food source and bedding area. I relate it to a trip from my bed to the kitchen, although quite different, the comparison is quite similar. Elk can walk faster than you can run and steepness of the terrain is of no concern to them.

As I grow older, memories fade. Things I used to do for fun; hunting on a twelve or thirteen thousand foot mountain; sleeping in a one man tent

on un-level, rocky ground; being hungry, wet tired and cold; suffering through blisters, shortness of breath and pain; isn't what it used to be. I guess my sixty-eight years have softened me. I can remember a time when nothing was too far, too high, or too steep if I heard a bull elk. I'm reminded as I write of a hunt years ago in the Gila Wilderness Area. This area covered 1.5 million acres and 600,000 acres were accessible only by foot or horseback. I spent seven days deep in the Gila Wilderness only to emerge with nothing except great memories of close encounters with big bulls and lots of blisters.

Several years ago, Slade left me in New Mexico and drove to some really

rough country in southwest Colorado. He backpacked for a few days, while I tried to fill my New Mexico tag. A text from him read...battery about dead, hungry, sore, cold, wet, tired, and no bulls. And, so goes bowhunting elk out west. It was great fun!

Last year was very special for me in several ways. I called and watched as Slade killed a tremendous 6X6 bull on our first morning hunt. Then, I was blessed again. I shot and killed the bull of my dreams. Who could have imagined! It was a cool beautiful September morning like so many others. The early shivering cold had given way to a pleasant and perfect morning. The sun's warmth on my back was nice and the spotlight it threw in front of me was great. The wind was perfect. Earlier upon arriving, I had heard a very distant bugle at daybreak, but only once and nothing since. All was quiet now so I eased along an old logging road. It wasn't long before I saw her. Maybe it was the flick of an ear, or her head as she lowered it to feed that caught my attention. I am not sure. The Rockies were really wet this particular year and the grass was tall and thick under the tall pine and spruce. She was to my right front about sixty yards out. I stepped off the trail and next to a small tree to help camouflage myself. Where are the others? Then, from far down the mountain I heard him bugle. It was a deep, thick old man sound, more like a cough than a scream. Then, just as if I were reading a newspaper, it all began to unfold. Cows began to mew and although I couldn't see them, I knew they were calling for him. Then he bugled again, only much closer. My heart began to pound. A second bull bugled just past where I heard the first. The monster elk I was waiting on just ran the smaller bull away from his heard and was now on his way back! I pulled an Easton ACC 360 out with a slick trick viper on it, nocked it up and waited. I was ready! I joined the





conversation. With my diaphragm tight against the roof of my mouth, I said “remember me?” And he came. My first glimpse of him left me in awe! He was headed straight for me as if I were reeling him in. But about forty yards out, he stopped, spun and began destroying a small tree. As he pushed and tore it apart, I drew back and the muscle memory of simply thousands of shots took over. The arrow was on its way. The next visual I have is of the orange nock and vanes disappearing in this last rib on the left side headed for the front shoulder on the other. He spun, looking toward where I was. Stood there a few seconds and as I’ve seen so many times before, his tall majestic head began to lower. He then turned, took a few steps and fell. There is a tremendous crash when an 800 lb. animal falls. I walked to him, looked, started shaking, knelt, prayed and wept.

I wonder how many reading this will remember the true “old days” of the Mississippi Bowhunters Association (MBA). My first tournament was held at Haystack Landing just off Highway 49 on the shore of the Ross Barnett Reservoir. Many of the targets were simply hay bales with animal pictures on them. One great memory I have is of the “bonus target.” Most tournament participants needed the points if they could get them. The bonus target was a black hog with the 10 ring cutout. It stood in front of hay bales like all the others. Yet, it was made of steel. The ping we heard all day was made real by all the arrow carnage lying around the steel hog. For me, the MBA was my first true connection to competitive archery. A State Championship and Top Gun became a priority for me. With hard work and study, I began to win. I have fifteen championships

and seven top guns under my belt at last count. These competitions led to traveling and shooting in the Archery Shooting Association (ASA). Many in our state were more productive at these than I. Yet, I have never traveled as much as most. Most of my serious shooting was at home with the Mississippi Bowhunters Association. I have been blessed to win three national shoots and placed top ten multiple other times. The MBA has always been there for us as Mississippi bowhunters. We owe the older and more dedicated founding fathers of this organization for establishing an institute that promotes the sport of archery in Mississippi. For years on the sleeve of most all my shooting and even hunting shirts you can find a MBA patch. It is a proud symbol of our sport, and the many that are a part of it.

Opening Day Persp

FROM MOTHER TO GRANDMOTHER

It's raining leaves again as far as the eye can see. Shades of red, gold, and brown seem to float like rainbows in the sky. There is a slight crispness in the air and you know it is almost time for hunting season to begin. The excitement begins to build. The illusive dream of getting the "big one" that has been just beyond your reach, may now become a reality. Your heart starts pounding with anticipation.

It's Friday night and like a scheduled train stop, here come all the children and grandchildren. The house roars with laughter as everyone clambers around bringing in all their hunting gear. Once settled for their weekend getaway, everyone gathers around the roaring fire eager to claim their "special spot" in the woods. Every one of them has a gleam of hope in their eye that this year will be "the year!"

Before we were blessed with grandchildren, our two boys were raised in the woods. If hunting season was open, they were hunting. As our children were growing up we made it a point to teach them about the outdoor world, how to hunt and fish, how much fun it is to camp and work in the

yard. Keep in mind the latter wasn't what they considered "fun," but they managed.

I believe deer camp is where our children learned more than how to hunt. They learned about friendship, a hunt isn't always about getting a deer, and probably what I consider to be the funniest, they learned how to be quick witted! They had to. As a lot of mothers can relate, the boys and their dads were usually shipped off to deer camp for the weekend and left to fend for themselves, a mom's weekend off! I know I took advantage of that many times. The guys at deer camp cut our boys no slack. They had to learn how to respond quickly and appropriately. To date, they can still hang with the best of them in a "gotcha" conversation.

Fast forward, I now look at their children. Time sure does fly. Most have girlfriends or boyfriends and the grandchildren are eager to include their friends in our hunting tradition. I am proud of what they have become and the way they lead. My job at the Mississippi Wildlife Federation (MWF) has made a huge impact on me. Before I started working for

MWF, I knew very little of our natural resources and the importance they serve or of wildlife. Because of this job, I've learned how important it is to conserve our natural resources and most importantly, how necessary it is we teach others to do the same.

My children and their children have had the opportunity to participate in most every program the Mississippi Wildlife Federation offers. They've had an "inside" view of why we do what we do. I remember one time my youngest son commented to me that his teacher was so impressed with him and his volunteer work. She noticed he volunteered almost all his free time to the Mississippi Wildlife Federation and asked why. He said, "You don't get it, do you? My mom works there. I have no choice!" Probably then, all the volunteering he was doing was what he really considered work. But now he sees and more importantly understands why the Federation does what it does to engage youth of all ages. Even the grandchildren understand. So, year after year at Granny's and Paw Paw's "hotel," reservations increase and so does the fun.



Photo by Wes Starnes



Photo by Wes Starnes



Photo by Brittany Starnes

pective

BY MELANIE STARNES

Life at our house is much different than at most. Here we ride in wheelbarrows, feed the chickens, pick wild blackberries, hang snake skins around our necks, hunt, ride four-wheelers, visit our “redneck beach,” which is a sandbar on Bayou Pierre, swim in a cattle watering trough, lay around in hammocks, remove ticks frequently, and go on survival adventures. If you’ve not experienced a survival adventure, you are missing the time of your life. Here you have the opportunity to camp on the land, kill your food, cook it over an open flame, and fight mosquitoes all night or weekend long. Keep in mind, Granny has been around long enough to know that “kill your food” meant sneak food from the house when no one was looking and say you actually survived by providing your own food. Now, on occasion I have heard of a few worms and a few other creatures being eaten during



Photo by Wes Starnes

these survival adventures, but as I write my stomach weakens so moving on...

It's the memories we've made that inspire our children and grandchildren to continue our traditions knowing that by doing so, they too make a difference in a young person's life and the environment. I remember the saying I've heard many times, "It takes a village." Whether you are talking about raising a child or teaching them how to take care of this wonderful place we live, it takes all of us, united.

Soon it will be 4:30 a.m. and hunting season will officially kick off! Everyone in the house wakes to the smell of fresh coffee brewing, bacon, sausage, eggs and biscuits cooking and slowly but surely, starts the process of dragging themselves out of bed to get the day started. As we sit around the table, laughter fills the air and drowsiness

is soon replaced by eagerness to get going. One by one we all disappear into the woods, creeping ever so quietly as to not disturb the deer. The walk is long but the reward is great and it really doesn't matter if you shoot a deer or not. It's about the journey and what we learn along the way. It's about the same tall tales we share over and over around an open fire under the stars at night, exaggerating each detail so that even the story teller starts to believe it's true. It's about the adventure and what tomorrow brings. The adventure lies in common experiences and memories shared over the years. It is excitement to what a new day can bring, knowing that I have my "village" by my side.

Soon a new day dawns with the alarm sounding reveille loud and clear. Each hunter scrambles to get out of the door first. One after the other we slip

off into the woods wondering what new adventure this day will bring. As the sun creeps over the horizon, a shot rings out for all the woods to hear. Paces quicken eager to get to their final destination. No one can predict the day, just dream of what could be.

Tonight, as many others, there will be a roaring fire and tall tells will abound. Each hunter exhausted and exhilarated at the same time. The smell of smoked pork loin drifts through the air indicating supper won't be much longer. Three generations gather around the table giving thanks for the food and the day each were able to experience. It's not whether a deer was harvested, it's that we all enjoyed each other and the beautiful world God opened our eyes to see.



To some, it's just a tree
To me, it's where I regain my sanity



THE MAC ATTACK

BY BRAD MARTIN

In 2016 Mac Mabry entered the Archery Shooters Association (ASA) 3-D archery scene with authority. He had shot a few of the local shoots in previous years and performed really well, but the ASA Pro/Am's are a totally different ballgame. It's not uncommon for there to be 2,000 competitors at a national event. That didn't scare Mac. Not only did it not deter him, he decided to jump into one of the "Big Boy" classes right off the bat. Most competitors shoot in one of the novice classes for their debut on the national scene, but Mac decided Open A was for him. Open A is a 50 yard, all unknown class, just like the Pro's shoot. It is one step below the Semi-Pro class.

His first ASA tournament was February, 2016 in Foley, Alabama. That was my debut in the Open A class as well and the targets were stretched out. We didn't get to set our sight under 40 yards but a couple of times all weekend. It was a very challenging range and Mac proved that he could shoot regardless of the stage on which he was performing. He placed 9th in that debut event and hasn't slacked up since. Metropolis, Illinois was the next ASA Pro/Am that Mac was able to attend and again, he shot really well and finished the





tournament in 8th place. The state championships rolled around and Mac brought home the championship buckles in both Louisiana and Alabama as well as winning the gold medal in the State Games of Mississippi. The only remaining ASA tournament on the Pro/Am schedule was the ASA Classic, the world championship. And yet again, Mac shot really well. Although this time he slipped a little bit and finished in 12th place. Top 15 is still very respectable in such a competitive class, but Mac was definitely not satisfied. That lit a fire under Mac that the rest of us Open A shooters have had to endure the heat from throughout the 2017 season.

With the 2016 tournament season over, Mac transitioned from shooting “rubber deers” to the real thing. And the Mississippi delta whitetails felt

the wrath of his honed shooting skills. Mac added several does to the freezer for the wonderful table fare that they provide, but also to do his part of herd management. The countless hours of practicing for the tournaments paid great dividends for shooting under pressure. On three different occasions throughout the season Mac had fantastic bucks present shot opportunities and on all three occasions, great Mississippi whitetails hit the dirt after short bloodtrails. The three bucks scored 163”, 157” and 148”. A one year total of 468 inches of antler on wild, Mississippi bucks is almost unbelievable. But to do it with a bow, makes it even more impressive.

With the phenomenal deer season that Mac had, we all assumed that he spent most of the winter in the deer stand and not on the practice range.

But with the opening tournament in Foley, AL, we quickly learned that he had either been practicing all winter, or he has an unbelievable God given talent to shoot a bow. I’m not sure which is the case, but either way, Mac started the season by stomping on the gas pedal and hasn’t let up since. Within the ASA once a shooter wins a certain amount of money and has a top 5 or two top 10 finishes for the season, they are required to “move up” to a more difficult class. Mac started the season with aspirations of winning out of the Open A class and possibly make a run for Shooter of the Year (SOY). In Foley he finished 5th with a score of 410, or “10 up” on a 40 target range, which made for a good start on both of his season goals.

The second tournament of the year was held in Ft. Benning, Georgia and

he really wanted to get on the podium. In typical Mac fashion, when it was time to get on the podium, he just jumps right up on top of it. He won the tournament with a score of 18 up, a 4 pt lead over the nearest competitor. This win also put Mac in the lead for the SOY. The next tournament on the trail had us headed west to Paris, Texas and again Mac finished in the top 5. He placed 4th with a score of 406. Mac and I are always joking around, and I have jokingly told him on several occasions that I was going to beat him in one of these tournaments even if it meant that I had to cut his bowstring halfway through the second day. Sometimes it feels like that is the only way I could beat him.

At this point we had shot 3 tournaments and Mac placed in the top 5 of all three. Goal #1 was complete. He had won enough money so that ASA would be inviting him to shoot in a more difficult class. At this point there are only 3 classes left for him to choose from Semi-Pro, Open Pro or Known Pro. And at this point he still hasn't made up his mind.

The forth stop on the tournament trail was Augusta, Georgia. We don't want to talk about Augusta. Everyone is entitled to a bad weekend. I accused him of throwing the shoot just so I wouldn't cut his bowstring. But whatever gremlin Mac was dealing with in Augusta, he has definitely remedied the problem. The next two ASA shoots were in London, Kentucky and Metropolis, Illinois and Mac decided it would be a good idea to win both of those. He shot 26 up in London and only one other shooter was within 10 points of his score. However, in Metropolis, he didn't want anyone that close to him. So he figured a score 438 should do the trick. And it did! The 2nd place shooter shot 418, so Mac had a 20

point lead at the end of the tournament. He could have completely missed 2 targets and still won on 12 count.

The 2017 ASA State Championships rolled around and it was no surprise that Mac brought home the championship buckles for Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama in three consecutive weekends. And I believe he may have heard a few more threats to his bowstring. He also again brought home the gold medal in the State Games of Mississippi.

Going into the ASA Classic in Cullman, Alabama, Mac was well on his way to completing his 2nd goal of Shooter of the Year. He was leading the chase with a 33 point advantage over the 2nd place contender. And going into the Classic, things were stacking up where I was afraid he was going to need the cushion. Mac started having issues with the bearings in his cams on his bow. He ordered new cams and patiently awaited their arrival. As the days clicked by and the cams didn't show up, Mac began to get a little nervous. With a week before the tournament, he still didn't have the cams. Wednesday of the week of the tournament and the cams were still "scheduled for delivery". Nervous probably wouldn't be the right descriptor for Mac at the time. Full-fledged panic would probably fit the situation better. He did get the cams, at 6:00 pm on Thursday and the emergency bow rebuild began. He put it all together, in his terms, "good enough" and left for Alabama. Oh, and just to make the challenge a little more interesting, Mac picked a perfect time to contract pink eye. He showed up to the shoot on Friday and could barely open his eyes.

The top 4 shooters in the SOY standings were peer grouped on the first stake, so the pressure was on.

Luckily, the pink eye had cleared a little and Mac was at least able to open both eyes. At the end of the first day Mac was leading his peer group, but not in the lead for the tournament. He was sitting in third place, with the first and second place shooters only leading by 3 points. But that lead didn't last long. They say in ASA that you have to put two good days together, and that is a lot easier said than done. But not for Mac. He has a unique ability to not get flustered by the pressure and usually does manage to put two good, or great, days together. Mac will be the first to tell you that he did not have his best rounds in the Classic. I can tell you that the ranges that we shot were brutal. They were long and deceiving to judge. And although Mac didn't shoot great rounds, he did shoot better than everyone else in the Open A class and pulled out his third consecutive win. This also meant that he slammed the door on the other competitors for Shooter of the Year and successfully completed his second goal for the year. To say Mac had a great year on the 3-D Tournament Trail is a gross understatement. He had an unbelievable year! And according to Mac, now it is time to "shoot something that bleeds".

Throughout this article we have focused on Mac's shooting ability and the tournaments that he has won. But if you talked to Mac, that is the last thing that you would hear about. If you talk to Mac, you will hear a deer story of two or you will hear about his two precious daughters. Mac is just a good ole country boy that loves hunting and fishing and absolutely adores his wife, Julie, and their beautiful daughters. He just has an uncanny ability to shoot a bow that makes the rest of us jealous.



PREPARING FOR NEXT YEAR

BY MAC MABRY

With 3D season coming to a close and our thoughts are turning to shooting real deer not foam ones, this is a great time to incorporate some activities into your practice that will not only help you start out strong next tournament season but could also better prepare you for shooting that big buck.

EQUIPMENT/SETUP

Over the next several months all of the archery manufacturers will be releasing next year's latest and greatest products. Most of these you will be able to purchase this fall. The fall is the best time to research and start building next year's setup so that you're not in a rush trying to get ready next spring. Already being familiar with your setup can give you a definite edge over everyone when you walk up to that first target of the year.

FORM

There is no substitute for having proper form. This is the foundation for a good archery shot. One of the best ways to work on this is closer range practice or shooting indoors. There are several locations around the state that offer an indoor range. This allows you to escape the weather outside and shoot in a climate controlled environment. And most if not all of these places will have a seasoned bow tech that can help to guide you in the right direction to improve your shooting. One thing that you can do at home is blind baling. This involves placing a target a few feet away so you're not worried about aiming or keeping the pin in the middle and simply just learning what a good shot feels like. A good archery shot is something that is learned through repetition, and having good form is the basis for this.

LONG RANGE PRACTICE

Now this will definably vary from person to person. What some consider a long shot may be average for others. Most archery tournaments

have a 50 yd max range that we shoot. As hunters we have a set distance that we are comfortable with, and that we feel we can effectively harvest animals. Stretching our practice to beyond those distances can greatly improve how effective we are at executing a good accurate shot. So whether it's trying to hit a 12 ring on the longest target on the course or shooting an animal at your self-imposed max distance, this method of practice can make that shot easier and more doable for you.

DISTANCE REFERENCES

I still judge distance in the class in which I compete. One thing I have found that has helped me when tournament season rolls around is to set up yardage references that I look at throughout the winter when I'm in my yard shooting. I generally do a lot of my practice at 40 yds, I have flags set at 20, 25, 30, and 35 yds between me and the target. What this does is lets me develop a mental image of these distances. This way next spring when tournament season rolls around and I have to start judging targets, I will have a way to check myself on my judgment because I am able to find these yardages and gauge from there if I think my yardage I have judged for the target is correct or not. This has also helped me harvest a couple of my biggest deer. I always will range an animal with a rangefinder if at all possible, but several times I've had a buck running does or I have stop a deer to take the shot and they spook and end up at a much further distance away then I have ranged. Developing the ability to pick these distances out and quickly judge an animal at full draw has paid great dividends for me.

Hopefully some of the points noted above will help you get started off on the right foot next spring when tournament season rolls around. Or maybe even close the deal on a big deer this fall. In either case there is no substitute for practice and preparation.



sometimes
hunting

ISN'T ABOUT
hunting at all

Supplemental feeding is a relatively new concept for our state but the use of feeders to attract game animals isn't new to other areas of the country and around the world for that matter. In the fall of 2008 supplemental feeding was made legal throughout the state with certain limitations. It started with requirements such as certain feed rations, distance from hunters, and feed must be kept in an authorized feeder system to be legal. The next round of modifications was authorized in 2015 to allow the feeder to be within line of sight and to still be limited to 100 yards from the hunter or property boundaries.

Supplemental Feeding in Mississippi

Photo courtesy of Steel Outdoors

The current law reads:

1. Feed may only be provided from above ground covered feeders or stationary spin cast feeders.
 2. Any type of feed or food product may be used in feeders
 3. Feeders may be placed no closer than 100 yards from the outermost boundary of an area of sole ownership or exclusive hunting rights
 4. Feed may not be poured, piled, or placed directly on the ground
 5. Salt/mineral stations, blocks, and/or licks may be established. These stations, blocks, and/or licks may not contain any corn or grain products
 6. From February 15 – September 30, milo, grain sorghum, and/or wheat may be evenly broadcast at a rate not to exceed 50 pounds per acre
 7. Feeding of migratory birds is regulated pursuant to Federal regulations set forth at 50 CFR 20.11 and 20.21(i).
- D. Supplemental Feeding During Any Hunting Season: From the opening day of deer archery season to the close of the spring turkey season, hunters must be no less than 100 yards away from any feed, or a feeder which contains feed.

On August 16, 2017 Brad Martin and I were allowed to address the Mississippi Wildlife Commission to discuss the current law and how it affects archers throughout the state. Our position was that the Mississippi Bowhunters Association (MBA) is neither an advocate or critic of the use of supplemental feeding while hunting. Our position is that the current law allows for firearms hunting over supplemental feed stations with the line of sight removal and this unfairly discriminates against bowhunters who want to hunt over those stations. The commission was very welcoming regarding our concern and committed to discovery and research to potential change the law for the 2018 hunting season. During the meeting there was concern over the illegal act of placing corn or bait directly on the ground. This is an animal health concern to preserve our wildlife heritage for generations to come with the real threat of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) throughout the nation. The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (MDWFP) was clear that those proven to be taking part in this activity would pay a heavy penalty.

For all the archers taking to the field this fall, please know and follow the laws as currently written and know that the Mississippi Bowhunters Association will continue to engage in the process to support the archery lifestyle.



Photo courtesy of Star Tribune



BOW HUNTING

Off Season Opportunities

BY BARRY BRIGGS

This year's rising river waters, reaching flood stage back in May, brought new challenges to us bowhunters trying to hunt the MS Delta River Bottoms. On one such occasion, a friend and I, went to the hunting club to see if we could put a stalk on some hogs that have been roaming the lease. Little did we know what we were getting ourselves into.

It all started with a phone call and next thing I knew, I was hooking up to my boat that night getting ready for the next morning. After meeting up with Bob, we were on our way. Arriving at the club, with daylight breaking, we realized just what the mighty Mississippi had in store for us. Water! And a lot of it, with plenty of current to boot. But without hesitation, we got the boat put in and in no time, we were motoring down a club road where we normally drive our trucks. Looking at the bows laying on the front deck, I couldn't help but think they were going to have a rough day and us too.

After a few minutes running the big motor, we came to some dry land and it was time to leave the boat behind. I looked down at the waders I had brought laying there in the bottom of the boat, thought about the long walk and wading ahead of me, and stepped out of the boat with blue jeans and tennis shoes on. I noticed Ol' Bob had done the same thing. After emptying our pockets of cell phones, range finders, binoculars, wallets and anything else that water might damage, we grabbed our bows and took off. Well that ridge didn't last long and next thing we knew we were wading water chest deep with our bows over our head. I was thinking, "Man we must be crazy." I looked over at Bob and said, "you know we're the only two fools out here." Ha-ha

Coming out of the water, at the next ridge, we spotted several pigs rooting just ahead of us. The stalk was on. We inched forward through the water a little at a time, getting closer and closer with arrows nocked, and as close as we dared to get for fear of spooking the only hog that remained visible from the group, it was now or never. I drew my PSE Carbon Air, thinking "he's forty yards," remember no range finder, I looked over at Bob and whispered, "How far?" Bob whispered back, "thirty-five yards." Well he sounded pretty sure of himself, so I put my sight pin on that hog and let her fly. And shot right up under that dang hog. I looked over at Bob and said, "How you kill all them Pope and Youngs?" Ha-ha so off we went, wading once more, looking for another group of pigs.

We didn't have to walk far. Coming up to the edge of the next block of woods we could see eight or ten pigs rooting around in front of us. The only problem was, at our feet was a big ditch, wide and deep, with current moving through it at a pretty good clip. I had been to this spot before, minus the water, so I knew how deep this ditch was. Bob whispered, "we got to get across this ditch." I said, "Bob, this ditch is every bit of 10 feet deep," not to mention at least that wide. We looked for a log to cross on but none were found, so now we're thinking about swimming across. I was about ten yards down from Bob when I heard him go in the water. Well, it's now or never I thought, so I throw my very expensive bow across the ditch. It lands in the reeds on the other side, but my bow being a carbon bow, is very light and I watched the reeds push my bow back into the ditch were it immediately started sinking in the water. I jump in the ditch, kick off on a tree and push myself across to where my bow sank. As my feet came down I felt my tennis shoe tangle in between the strings and riser of my bow. I raised my foot and grabbed my bow and heaved it up the bank while holding onto reeds to keep from getting taken downstream.



Photo by Barry Briggs

Thinking again, "I must be crazy." Pulling myself up on the bank, I hear Bob say, "I dropped my bow, what am I going to do?" I replied, "you're going to swim down and get it." Which I thought was funny by the way. His bow had gotten tangled in a vine as he swam across the ditch and had started to pull him under. Bob had to turn loose of his bow. Well, I was busy looking for the pigs, trying to see if we had spooked them with all the commotion, when I realized I wasn't hearing anything from Bob. Worried, I called out, "Bob?" No answer. "Bob?" A little louder this time. Still no answer. Now I'm about to panic thinking he's done drowned and started to head his way. One last time, "Bob?" He answers with a "Hey," and I see his head sticking out of the water in those reeds. He had went down three of four times to the bottom of that ditch before he found his bow.

Back on semi solid ground, after an equipment check, we take out after those hogs. They are on the next ridge over. We split up and Bob wades through the slough straight at them while I try to get in front of them. He's waist deep in water when he shoots and the pig squealed like you stuck a branding iron on him. All the pigs head out on a dead run, across water and ridges, and more water.

After losing their trail in the water, we found ourselves back at that ditch, that was between us and the boat. But that is another story, along with the snakes and the fire ants and the spiders and everything else floating on those flood waters. But I would do it again tomorrow, because its true what they say, "A day in the woods beats a day in the office any day of the week."

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and make you a **BETTER PERSON.**

...Fred Bear

Even though it brought much hardship and the personal family losses of my father-in-law and my aunt – both to cancer, 2015 is a year I want to remember positively. Instead of focusing on frustrations with the stock market, political candidate nonsense and sensationalized world reports, I will choose to remember 2015 for the successful hunts – particularly some special bow hunting moments with great friends and family.

Kicking the hunting year off in early spring, I was fortunate to take my 100th archery-killed turkey, an old Osceola Tom, in the swamps of Florida using my 53# Black Widow recurve. It was an incredible hunt because I accomplished a major hunting milestone and personal goal.



A YEAR TO *Remember*

BY STEVE BROWN





In early fall, I traveled to Alberta, Canada with a close friend, Brian Montgomery, and we shared a great week of fellowship, laughter, and celebration when Brian took his first mule deer buck – a very nice velvet-antlered, Pope & Young muley.

After much practice in the backyard with her bow that I gave her as a Christmas gift in 2014, my wife and I traveled to Montana to hunt antelope. We always have a great time together especially when we are able to get away into the Big Sky country from our daily schedules and pressures. This trip was special because I was once again reminded of how blessed I have been to be married to this patient woman, who not only supports me while I follow my passion of bow hunting but will occasionally join me. Together we have shared successful hunts through the years, and this trip was no exception when she was successful in taking her very first animal with a bow – a great antelope buck which qualified for Pope & Young.

As the Mississippi bow season

neared, I was excited to have game camera pictures of several nice bucks on my property in Noxubee County. One in particular, was a really nice 8-point that I had gotten pictures of in 2014 and had spent quite a bit of time hunting him but never saw him in person. Through the summer, I got pictures of him regularly and enjoyed seeing his antlers develop into an even better buck than he had then during 2014. He was a year older now, and I really wanted to get him – or at least catch a glimpse of him.

On opening day, October 1, I got my chance at the buck. Not expecting to see him at all, I was enjoying being back in a deer stand and had several deer feeding around me that afternoon. I certainly was not expecting the 8-point to come from downwind of me without detecting me, but I heard the snap of a stick and realized a deer had slipped up right behind me.

As I slowly turned my head just enough so I could see what was behind and right below me, I saw him – the 8-point I had hunted last year and had

been watching on camera all summer. He was 3 yards from the base of my tree – his antlers red and bloody from the velvet that he had obviously shed within the last couple of days. He didn't blow out, but he instinctively sensed something was just not right. Even with other deer near, he turned and slipped away never offering me a good shot. "At least I finally saw him," I thought. But the realization set in that we just don't get many chances at a mature buck like him, and I figured that I may never see him again much less get an opportunity for a shot.

The buck's appearance that day provided me some very valuable information for my hunting strategy. Based on the direction he came in, I had been wrong about where he was bedding and about how I was hunting him. I knew that if he was not spooked too badly and continued on his routine, I just might could get another opportunity.

Twelve days later, with a wind direction that I needed and the hope that he was bedding where he had been on October 1, I was back in the tree hoping for one more opportunity at this buck. The afternoon was beautiful with early fall sunlight bouncing off the leaves. I was excited to be immersed in the season. I patiently waited all afternoon and was thrilled when my instincts about his routine were spot on. About 20 minutes before dark, he came through the area in which I was hunting and gave me a 24-yard broadside shot, which I took and sent my Gold Tip arrow laced with a Rage Hyperdermic broadhead right through both lungs.

The arrow passed completely through and stuck into the base of an elm tree as the buck mule-kicked and took off on a death run. He made it about 65 yards, and though I couldn't see him, I heard him crash and take his last breath. I knew he was dead, but I tried to wait for 30 minutes just

in case; however, I could not stand the excitement and climbed down from my tree stand after about 10 minutes. I inspected my arrow which was covered in blood, and from there, I easily followed the blood trail to my buck. I was super excited to have gotten a successful opportunity at the buck I had been after for two years.

Quietly, I thanked the Lord for the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors and be able to pursue my passion of bow hunting. I picked up Jake Beck who was hunting with me on the other side of the property that day so I could tell him the story. We loaded up the buck, excitedly drove back to Starkville, and stopped by Brian Montgomery's house so that we could share the successful hunt with him.

Brian and I have shared many

successful hunts and assisted each other several times on the tracking and recovery of some really nice bucks. Brian loves to bow hunt mature whitetail deer and is always excited for his friends' successes. Over the last two years, Brian and Jake both had looked at a lot of game camera pictures of this buck with me. They both not only understood my obsession with the buck but also knew how hard I had hunted this particular deer so it was quite a celebration!

This deer wasn't the biggest buck I have ever killed, but he was a mature 8-point that was a solid Pope & Young, and I'd specifically set out to kill this particular deer and achieved success. I'm sure those who have had similar experiences can certainly relate to my enormous feeling of accomplishment which was enough in and of itself to make my Mississippi season one to

remember so vividly.

However, to make my Mississippi season even sweeter, thirteen days later on October 26, I took another much larger buck that is currently my best Mississippi archery deer in 40 years of bow hunting. Starting out the year, I had no idea I would mark the 2015 season with two Pope & Young whitetails in Mississippi in the same season all before I left for my annual Midwest bow hunting excursion!

I had some incredible hunting moments during 2015. It is a year like this one of bow hunting that seem to keep me focused, positive, and ever reminded of why I fell in love with this sport so many years ago. Thank you, 2015, for the hunting memories! I cannot wait to share the successes and disappointments of the 2016 season with everyone in the next magazine.



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Prize packages will be awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place in each division at each qualifying event.

ASA scoring rules will apply. The top 20 shooters (scores) from qualifiers will advance to the Mossy Oak 3D Archery Shootout Finals to be held November 4th.

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A man in camouflage gear is aiming a bow through a scope. The scope's viewfinder is in the foreground, showing the man's face and the bow's internal components. The background is a dense forest of tall pine trees under a blue sky with some clouds. The text "Hunting" is written in a large, white, cursive font, and "is not a blood sport" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font below it.

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