

Six decades of deer hunting

MORE MEMORIES THAN DEER BUT THAT'S OK.

Frank Wyrwialowski

I was born and raised on a dairy farm north of Armstrong Creek, Wis. and believe it or not, I was the eighth child in a family of 17 children. Two of my younger siblings were twin sisters. All of my siblings learned how to work both with others and alone with some time for fun things, when time allowed.

At a young age, our parents taught us to be patient, persistent and always work to our full ability, which helped us to do well at school, with our hobbies and later in life. And most, but not all 17 of us, also took an interest in fishing and hunting with our dad, usually on Sundays.

Prior to opening day each year, our dad would help us sight-in our deer rifles. There were many rocks located near the bottom of a hog-back ridge that ran north to south through the pastureland of our farm. Instead of going to a rifle range, my father deemed us safe and ready to hunt after we managed to hit twice in succession a rock in that ridge.

I remember the first year that I hunted. It was with great anticipation and I spent most of the day wondering what was being shot at in the distance as I never saw or heard a deer on opening day. Later in the season, at a distance, I saw what I thought was a bear going through a briar patch. When it came out into the open, though, I confirmed it was a stray black horse and that was the extent of my excitement for the season. An older brother, on the other hand, did bag a nice buck that year.

The second year that I went deer hunting, our dad decided that we should hunt farther from home in the Nicolet National Forest. The fact we had to travel required that we wake up earlier to help with the milking chores before we could head to the forest. I recall that it was a calm, crisp morning with slight ground cover of snow. After seeing a pair of blue jays and a raven earlier that day, I shot my first buck at 10:30 a.m. on Nov. 22, 1952. I will never forget how fast it happened, and I was thankful to dad for deciding to change our deer hunting location.



The author as a boy with his first buck in 1952.



The author with his antlerless deer harvested in 2013.

Fifteen years later, on a rather stormy opening day when I could hardly see the low flying snow geese heading in a southerly direction, I began to wonder, "What am I doing out in these weather conditions?" Shortly after 8 a.m., the first deer came into view. I shot. It was a beautiful 8-point buck that field dressed at 210 pounds and I welcomed help to drag it out! It ended up being my "Biggest Buck" to date and was bagged on Nov. 18, 1967 near the Chequamegon National Forest.

After a fellow hunter, about 20 years older than me, died from a heart condition while hunting, I decided to hunt closer to home. Since then, I've shot most of my bucks near Baraboo in the scenic upper bluffs area just off Man Mound Road.

Although I've seen fewer deer locally in recent years, I was still lucky enough to harvest an antlerless deer on Nov. 26, 2013.

After six decades in the field I can still say that I enjoy going deer hunting. And when I do, I reminisce about the many good past years along with my dedicated, hard-working, loving, encouraging parents who helped me in so many ways. Although I've missed a couple of opening days over the many years, and I've sadly also lost five siblings in that time, I'm very thankful for having very good health and for places to hunt.

So much has changed since my dad first took me hunting 60-some years ago. Prior to my going deer hunting, dad retired his team of horses that were used to "break" new land, for a new tractor, then a used pickup truck and the list goes on. Most changes are for the better, while some are harder for me to accept. One such change is the going out of business of W.B. Place & Co. which made many a pair of fleece lined buckskin gloves and "choppers" that made great gifts years ago. Now gone but not forgotten.



Frank Wyrwialowski writes from Beloit, Wis.