

range. I had to twist behind me to grab my bow and I believe this mature buck spotted the movement even though I moved as stealthy as I could. The buck stopped in his tracks on alert. I thought to myself "it's now or never". I assumed the buck would bolt if I attempted to draw my bow but knew I would never get a better shot at this buck. The big buck took a split-second to glance at the young doe; this gave me the opportunity I needed to draw my bow. I settled the pin and released. I lost sight of my arrow in the dwindling daylight but heard a solid hit. The buck ran about 15 yards and to my amazement just stood there. He walked a few more yards and again, just stood there. I knew I had not made the perfect shot and quietly left the stand after dark.

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The next morning at daybreak, a good friend, Mike and I took up the trail. We were soon joined by my parents. My mother found the beautiful buck not far from where we began. My mother is not a hunter but I told her she would have to accompany me on any future deer tracking jobs.

Well it was October 26 (my oldest son's birthday) and I had one of the largest bucks I have ever taken with my bow (167 6/8) and a birthday party to prepare for.

On November 2nd I headed for another piece of my father's property located in Missouri. This piece of land is where I was raised and an old friend from High School, Loren had been trying to get me to bow hunt with him for several years. It had been about five years since I had hunted these familiar woods; typically I am still bow hunting in Iowa this time of year because the odds of tak-

ing a trophy class buck are much greater – that may be about to change. Between my father and my uncle, I had about 1,700 acres to hunt in Missouri; most of which is big oak timber with a few crop fields sprinkled around. Loren and I helped my father and uncle put in some Imperial Clover food plots on this property about five years ago when I shot an amazing buck with my muzzleloader as he stood in the middle of one of these fields. This buck scored in the 140's. I had not been to the

property since then. However, my uncle had continued to groom his clover plot and had enlisted my help in getting some "Pure Attraction" this year. Loren had shot a big buck in the "Pure Attraction" field during late October and I helped him look for this buck. We

were unable to recover this deer; from the amount of blood left, I don't believe the arrow caused a mortal wound. Loren told me this buck had entered the field checking some does and he believed the buck to be in the 150's. I was a little skeptical of this, not sure of how well Loren could judge deer; but more due to the fact that a buck in the 150's had been pretty rare in that neck of the woods for many years. I think I had been pretty spoiled by the property in Iowa, but thought it still might be possible to have that quality of bucks on this property since my uncle had continued to food plot with Whitetail Institute products and manage for quality bucks during the last five years that I had been absent.

I hunted on the Missouri farm with Loren up until rifle season began on November 10; we stayed in the old double-wide trailer that was once my home. Now don't get the wrong idea, we were not "roughing it". The old double-wide has been refurbished and is even equipped with satellite

television. I had a blast down there. Hunting where I was raised brought back many great memories and I did see many nice bucks and even turned down an eight pointer and a ten pointer that would both score in the lower 140's. I was really pleased to see such deer on this farm; I had not seen that quality of bucks in this area since I lived there seventeen years ago.

When I left the farm, my father and a couple firefighters from New York were there preparing to hunt the rifle season. I spoke with my dad on the phone a few days later and discovered he and one of the firefighters had shot nice bucks that scored in the 130's and 140's.

I made plans with Loren to return to the Missouri farm after rifle season ended and before the muzzleloader season began. Typically bow hunting after the rifle season is difficult at best, but I had such a good time there earlier in November and still had my bow tag to fill; I wanted to go back. It was kind of my get away - on the cheap. After getting married and having three kids, I have been forced to learn to hunt more on the cheap.

I met Loren at my old house on November 21. My uncle was still staying at his "hunting camp" which is 200 yards up the road and used to be my grandmothers place – the place where my father and uncle were raised. We made plans to cook dinner and get together every evening as we had when I was there in early November. That evening it began to snow heavily. I love hunting on a fresh layer of snow and was really looking forward to getting out there in the morning. I had to leave the next afternoon for a Thanksgiving dinner in Iowa, but planned to return that evening and spend the rest of the week there.

I awoke Thanksgiving morning to almost three inches of fresh snow! Loren made plans to hunt a tree stand where he had rattled in a nice buck in mid October, since it was on his way, I had Loren drop me off near a piece of my uncle's property, close to the "Pure Attraction" field. This was a tree stand that my uncle and I had placed in early November. I had hunted this stand only one time prior to this. My uncle hunted this stand soon after we had placed it and he had a very exciting evening. When I returned to Iowa before rifle season, I left my uncle a deer decoy. He placed this decoy near this stand one evening and rattled in a very large buck. The large buck locked on to the buck decoy and managed to scatter it into several pieces before my uncle could get a shot.

Well needless to say, I was very excited to hunt this stand with a fresh layer of snow on the ground on Thanksgiving morning. How could it get any better? This stand is set on a ridge top above the "Pure Attraction" plot. Between this stand and the food plot is the side hill of the ridge which is so thick you cannot walk through it, a deer bedding paradise and a deer sanctuary, which my uncle has made off limits to hunting. Not a bad idea if you ask me, since you could not shoot an arrow two yards through that kind of brush anyway.

The first hour or so went by and I still needed to see a deer. However, it was such a beautiful morning I was really enjoying myself. I had rattled once or twice with no results. At about 8:30 that morning I glanced to

my left and saw an incredible buck. He had long G2's and G3's with good width and average mass. He was about 100 yards from my stand. Then I noticed why he was there; along side him were two does that he was harassing. I did not waste any time and reached for my rattle call just as he followed the two does into the thick stuff. I gave my best buck fight imitation for about ten seconds. The big boy immediately emerged from the brush and stared in my direction intently, he was trying to find the fight. He was a gorgeous buck, biggest buck I had seen on this farm since I don't know when! It seemed like he stood there forever until he gave a single tail wag and committed. The big buck started trotting as he headed my direction. When he was about sixty yards from me he cut back into the thick stuff attempting to get on the down-wind edge. I started to panic. If he continued on that heading he would get down-wind of me before I could get a shot. Thank goodness he was as excited to find the fight as I was to get a shot. At about the fifty yard line he re-emerged from the brush and cut back straight toward me, then started angling to cut the wind again. I had a clear shot at 45 yards. The top of the ridge I was hunting had been bulldozed that spring. My uncle had attempted to grow some old winter wheat seed that we had stored at my former residence. The old seed just did not germinate. I dialed my sight pin to the 45 yard mark, drew my bow and made a horribly poor "grunt" with my mouth to stop the buck. He stopped and I released the arrow. I watched the arrow strike the big buck dead zero behind the front shoulder. The

big boy wheeled around and disappeared into the heavy brush. Even though no one else was around I had to give myself a very cheerful but quiet "YEAH!!!" I knew I had just made a perfect shot on the biggest buck I ever had the opportunity to harvest in Missouri; and believe it or not, even though I grew up on this farm, this was my first buck by bow in Missouri!

To top it all off my father and my oldest son had arrived at the old home-stead and I was able to share this excitement with them. After about one hour my father, my uncle and Loren gathered to recover my buck. After a hard walk (and sometimes crawl) through the thick brush we found my buck. He was a big nine point typical with a sticker point coming off the right G2. I could not have been more pleased. This buck just hit the 150 mark but I would not have been any happier if he had been a world record.

After the high fives, hand shakes, field dressing and pictures; I was still able to make Thanksgiving dinner in Iowa.

I cannot stress enough how helpful and important Whitetail Institute products have been to me and my family in the harvesting and management of trophy bucks in Iowa and Missouri! With a little effort to plant a few small food plots, your rewards could be enormous.

Contributed Story

Our family at Lockridge would like to welcome your family to the area. Lockridge has everything for your building needs under one roof. For the Do-It-Yourselfer, we have lumber, doors, electrical, plumbing, tools, and so much more. We also custom build new homes, decks, garages, and pole barns. On your request we have independent contractors available. Lockridge is conveniently located on Hwy 5 on the south side of Centerville. With three other locations, Promise City, Ia Unionville, Mo and Chariton, Ia. We are there for you.

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