

# Weekend to Remember

The love of the outdoors is a part of all of us. Whether it's the beauty of a clear lake, full of fish, or the excitement of a huge buck summing into view at sunset, the attraction of the outdoors is undeniable. When you are battling a life threatening illness, the natural beauty of the



outdoors has an extra appeal. Such is the case of 18 year old Bryan Sutton, who has been battling Ewing Sarcoma, a type of cancer of the bone. Hailing from Alpeana Michigan, deer hunting is a longstanding tradition, and Bryan wanted to try his hand at the great sport of deer hunting, but opportunities of that sort are often hard to come by. That is when he decided to call United Special Sportsman Alliance (USSA) to find out what opportunities there were for aspiring hunters like him.

After receiving Bryans phone call and application, I felt the right place to take him was the trophy deer area of northern Wisconsin. Both body size and antler development is often exceptional. ThieX Whitetails from Birnamwood Wisconsin has been a longtime supporter of hunting opportunities for challenged hunters. Numerous USSA hunt recipients have benefited immensely from their family generosity and Bryan was about to experience firsthand.

Acres upon acres of mixed hardwoods, cedar swamps and other assorted rough terrain make hunting with the ThieX a real challenge for people of good health, so Bryan would have his hands full traversing the rough countryside in search of the trophy buck of his dreams. Accompanying him would be a new .30-06 Savage model 111 deer rifle that he had just traded his old rifle for. Anticipation ran high for the Sutton family as they closed in on their big adventure, while the ThieXs waited for the arrival of some very special guests that Friday evening. That night at supper, The Suttons anticipation intensified as they imagined at what tomorrow would hold for Bryan. For the time being, the answer would have to wait!

Early the next morning, Bryan, his mom and Shannon ThieX were headed out to the deer stand for the morning hunt. The weather was quite cool that morning, and a blanket of snow covered the dense rugged ground around the stand. Cedars provide excellent cover from harsh elements and hunting near known bedding areas can often produce results when no other strategy is working at all. Considering the weather, deer were spotted on a fairly regular basis, including a couple smaller bucks were seen, that looked real nice to Bryan, but at Shannon's advice they passed on the shot. A nice variety of deer of all ages were spotted like the morning sit, and time seemed to fly by and before they knew it, it was time to get some lunch.

After a delicious warm lunch, the hunters felt invigorated and were ready for an afternoon in which they would match wits with one of our nation's greatest game animals. Shannon's father Michael was to be the guide for the afternoon, and he suggested they head back to the same area where they saw real good deer movement that morning. The afternoon

went real well and deer movement was again pretty good. All 3 felt that they were in the right place and it was just a matter of time before the right buck would come along.

Again, deer were on the move. Time and again deer would appear and disappear back into the thick cedars, so paying attention was of the essence. The afternoon sun was making its way down toward the western horizon and shadows were filling the woods rapidly as they do in the Northwood's late in the year. While deer were still leaving their bedding area and heading off to browse, a slight twinge of doubt spoke softly in Bryan's subconscious, as he held his new deer rifle close by in case it was called to action.

Well, "action" was closer than anyone thought; and the hunters could make out the form of a real large deer moving through the bottoms. An instant later a beautiful trophy whitetail buck, bigger than Bryan had ever seen in his life stood looking towards the blind. Initially, caution was of utmost importance as the pair of hunters didn't want to spook the huge buck while he was suspicious of the blind and its occupants. The surreal scene seemed to last an eternity, but in reality, thirty seconds was more realistic. As the buck resumed his browsing, Mike and Bryan carefully positioned the new 30-06 towards a steady rest.

Bryan thought his heart was going to jump right out of his chest at the sight of his day dream centered squarely in the rifle scope. Mike whispered reassuringly while Bryan steadied his rest. With a squeeze of the trigger, the 30-06 Savage instantly "jumped" into action; and the huge buck "jumped" as well. Mike told Bryan he thought the shot was true, and the buck went down an instant later. Mike and Bryan shortly afterwards approached the downed buck and they were both ecstatic! A 9 point, 17 1/2 inch lay in the snow awaiting them in the evening shadows of the cedars. After some heartfelt congratulations, the two hunters just soaked up the gravity of the moment, with one of nature's real trophies at their feet.

Part of life dictates to us that all good things must come to an end and it was time for the Suttons to return home. After thanking the Thiexs for the wonderful time, they headed back to their home in Alpena. The carefree time of recent past was relived during the entire return trip. When times are tough and our health is in question; the beauty of the outdoors and fellowship with friends and family are so very important. There is no doubt that this hunting trip created new lifelong friendships and forever touched lives. The public service that these opportunities provide cannot be replaced, and to all our donors and sponsors, we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude.