The Upper Peninsula of Michigan is a rugged land with an interesting history. In the mid 1840’s, iron and copper were discovered. Thousands of European immigrants streamed into the Peninsula looking for economic opportunity and a better life for their families. The golden age of the rugged land started around 1880 and lasted roughly thirty-five years. Although the heydays were gone, people continued to travel there looking for opportunity.

Nineteen year old Chris Davis, his father Todd, and his brother Nathan were also looking for an opportunity in the Upper Peninsula; not treasures of the ground, the way the Europeans did a century earlier, but their opportunity and treasure roamed the surface. This treasure inhabits the toughest, remotest areas of the forest and rules with its razor sharp ivory weapons. Yes, our threesome was looking for a different type of “treasure,” one with an attitude.

Bear Mountain Lodge located in Negaunee, Michigan is home to this unique treasure with an attitude: “The Russian Boar.” Greg Johnson owns and operates this jewel of an operation set in the present North Woods.

When Greg Johnson was contacted by Brigid O’Donoghue of United Special Sportsmen Alliance [U.S.S.A.], and was asked to host a hunt for this very ill young man, he jumped at the opportunity.

Chris suffered brain stem glioma, a disease in which malignant (cancer) cells form in the tissues of the brain stem. The brain stem is the part of the brain that controls breathing and heart rate, and nerves and muscles used in seeing, hearing, walking, talking, and eating. Having brain stem glioma, made Chris’s outlook on life on the slippery side of a mountain.

Since Chris lived only one hundred miles from U.S.S.A.’s headquarters, Brigid and her thirteen year old son were able to attend and film the hunt. Walking was a major chore, so stand hunting was the method of choice for Chris. A blind called the “Sugar Shack” had been productive of late, and they decided to give it a try.
Rolling hardwood ridges dotted vast areas of dense cedar swamps, which surrounded the hunter in the Sugar Shack. A balmy 78 degrees seemed to agree nicely with a healthy bug population, but the prospect of a trophy boar kept our hunter’s eyes glued to the underbrush. Chris thought his 7mm Mag Model 700 would be fine hog-medicine if the opportunity presented itself.

A small hog came slowly through the brush and provided our hunter with a glimpse into his future. Later, a doe and an eleven-point buck came down the trail toward the Sugar Creek. Everyone admired the buck, which would look nice mounted on anyone’s wall.

As time passed, Chris’s thoughts drifted to the NASCAR battle of points. “Can my favorite driver Dale Earnhardt, Jr. catch Matt Kenseth by the end of the season? That would surely make my day!” he thought to himself.

As it turned out, his day was made soon enough! A nice tusker came feeding down along the hardwood ridge headed towards a cedar-filled impenetrable looking area adjacent to the Sugar Shack. Chris’s bottle of Northland Cranberry Juice was exchanged for his 7mm Remington Mag.

Faster than Dale Junior’s pit-crew can change four tires and 76 racing fuel, Chris leveled, aimed and fired! A solid hit! The beast bolted, but soon collapsed in a heap of rough hair, beady eyes and shiny ivory.

Chris was about to retrieve his first hog, and what a hog it was! A 275-pound Russian with a dandy set of weapons up front. Numerous scars isolated his willingness to “mix it up” with whatever he encountered.

Chris’s young brother Nathan was also allowed to try his luck. He harvested his first tusker, while he was spotting and stalking with Greg. Two nice brothers and two nice Russian Boars; that is truly the stuff from which memories are made!

After an evening of outstanding food, warm fire and reminiscing about the hunt, the boar hunters retired to their warm beds to dream of tuskers, cutters and cedar swamps.

An emotional good-bye was said the next day, and it seemed as though everyone wanted to make it last as long as possible. Greg reflected, “Boys have become men, men have become heroes and now the heroes become legend. Remember the legend of Bear Mountain clearly states that any day you hunt or fish will not count against the days of your life. I know father and sons will remember and cherish this weekend to the end of time.”

A few weeks after returning to his home in Onalaska, WI, Chris lost his battle with grade-four brain stem cancer. A copy of the video footage shot of Chris’s hunt was given to his family, and is the only footage ever taken. Good-bye, my friend, we will all miss you. Your memory will be etched in the Bear Mountain Lodge for all time!

We at U.S.S.A. would like to thank all those who helped make this hunt possible, Northland Cranberry, Matthews Solocam, Bear Mountain Lodge and Greg Johnson. Your acts of kindness and compassion are outstanding.

In loving memory of Chris Davis, July 26, 1983 to July 30, 2003. May the Lord reign on Chris’s family and friends and grant them serenity.

God bless you all.

U.S.S.A.