Evening was drawing near as our young hunter patiently waited for a wary South Carolina whitetail to emerge from the heavy cover and present a shot. This was a shot Elizabeth was waiting for her entire life. Getting a chance to harvest a nice buck may mean more to this young lady of 15 years than to most of us.

Elizabeth has a severe case of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD) and has lost the use of almost all voluntary muscle groups. DMD is one of a group of muscular dystrophies characterized by the enlargement of muscles. DMD is one of the most prevalent types of muscular dystrophy and is characterized by rapid progression of muscle degeneration which occurs early in life.

Elizabeth’s dad, Tom Anderson, is the Chief Executive Officer at the Health Science Foundation located at the Medical University of South Carolina. I watched as Tom attached a Handi-Limb Carriage to the front of Elizabeth’s Quickie P320 wheelchair. He then set her Ruger M77 rifle chambered for 6mm Remington into the Handi-Limb and strapped it down, then attached the Sip and Puff to the trigger of the gun. In order for Elizabeth to fire a shot she must blow into a long, clear plastic tube rather than pull a trigger.

While her dad was attaching everything on the wheelchair I asked Elizabeth why she likes hunting and she said, “I think it’s fun. I love nature and I love being outside.” I asked her what advice she had for other handicapped hunters and she said, “They should just go out and try it. If they don’t get anything, its OK.” Her dad smiled and added, “Just give hunting a try and go for it!”

Without a doubt, special children like Elizabeth need a hunting situation not unlike that provided by many of today’s wildlife agencies where 750 thousand hunters hit the woods on opening day of deer season. All too often children with special needs are left out of a traditional hunting experience. That chance to be on a deer hunt was provided by Moffatt Burriss, owner of Granite Hills.

Moffatt operates a 350-acre preserve within his 900 acres of property. Granite Hill has been in operation since 1988. His farm is located thirty miles north of Newberry, South Carolina. Population and timber management along with food plots and supplemental feeding all join forces to produce an outstanding hunting experience.

Moffatt had built a wheelchair accessible blind in a strategic area overlooking a food plot known to draw some nice bucks. “Would this be the day to remember?” thought Elizabeth. Only time would tell.
Tom, Elizabeth and I were sitting on the bottom and Moffatt and his friend, Henry, were on the second floor of the stand. The early anticipation seemed to drag on us all as we sat in the stand searching the brush line for any sign of a “keeper.”

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As we sat there very still, I could not help but notice the tender love shown by Tom for his daughter. He stroked her right hand and whispered very gently, “Be patient Elizabeth, just a little bit longer.” They sat very close together waiting for a chance at a trophy buck. I was touched at the love I saw between them.

I could see an animal far to my right, but unfortunately after looking through the binoculars I noticed it was only a coyote.

As darkness began to spread its grip on the heavy Carolina cover, the temperature started to drop down into the low 50s. I could see the full moon shining through the haze above. I could hear birds as they returned to their nest from a day of plentiful feeding. Being the time of year it was, I knew there were numerous acorns scattered on the ground. There still was not a buck or doe in sight and this left Elizabeth’s chance of bagging her buck fading into the peaceful Carolina darkness.

As usual, it would seem as though luck had dealt this child one more blow in a series of lifelong problems. But this wasn’t the case – it was truly “a day to remember” for Elizabeth. The chance to meet a new friend, the land owner, who truly cared about her! It was a chance to experience God’s natural beauty that is exhibited
every time we go into the woods. This was her special
chance to share time with a very loving father and a
chance to bag a trophy Carolina Buck.

Hunting operations, both captive and non-captive,
have been providing wishes for these special terminally-
il and disabled children since “Hollywood” has put the
anti-hunting noose on fine organizations like “Make A
Wish.” What the Hollywood set forgets is the simple fact
that often these kids are on the fringe socially with their
peers. Dating, sports, dancing and amusement park
rides are seldom partaken and, for the most part, out-
door experiences are all that is left for these kids.

It takes many good caring people to put these hunts
together and we all can take a part in making these
dream hunts or fishing trips reality.

Charel Fashions, a division of Bio-Tec Research Inc.,
designed the camouflage hunting shirt that was worn by
Elizabeth. The buttons on her shirt were crafted from
whitetail racks donated by Back Achers Ranch in
Wisconsin. Doug Zieher specially cut and hand polished
the buttons for her shirt. Her name along with our
“Massive Rack emblem was donated by Golden Needle
Embroidery, owners of a deer farm in Wisconsin. A lot of
unconditional love by compassionate people who never
had the opportunity to meet Elizabeth took part in her
dream hunt.

Moffatt said, “Donating a hunt and seeing the posi-
tive effect it has on the child is quite rewarding.” He then
added, “I find myself getting as much, if not more, plea-
sure and enjoyment out of taking part in a hunt like
Elizabeth’s!” As good fortune would have it, Moffatt
Burris was able to grant Elizabeth “Round 2” in her
quest for the ghost of her dreams. Let's all wish her well
along with those who help make it happen.

Pictured with the author, Elizabeth shows the joy she
obtained from her South Carolina whitetail hunt.

