



PAM DORÉ PHOTO

# Wide Awake & DREAMING

BY PAM DORÉ

## A Mother and son take bucks almost simultaneously

**I**n our life there are things we dream about happening, but then rarely are there things that happen that feel like a dream. This story is about the hunt that was the latter of the two.

To me, hunting is not only a sport, but a passion, and a passion that I share with my husband, Greg. Your normal PTA-soccer mom I'm not. To put things somewhat into perspective, I'm a woman who goes to the spa to get my hair highlighted and proceeds to show everyone pictures of my trusty rifle, a gun I affectionately call "Dixie."

I am a native Texan, and Greg is originally from Louisiana. Being born and raised in the South, we both have a fond love and appreciation for the outdoors. We take great pride in instilling the same values that we have in our children. Our twin sons Dalton and Dylan are 10 years old and our daughter, Lexi, is seven.



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Dalton, who is the older of our twins, started showing an interest in hunting about a year ago. Our excitement and joy was also mixed with uncertainty, though, because both our sons have Cerebral Palsy. Both boys are unable to walk and use wheelchairs, and Dalton has only limited use of his left arm and hand. (Dylan's physical capabilities are far more

Charlotte, Texas, had generously donated a dream hunt to Dalton. After speaking with Michael on the phone, the date was set for December 27, 2006. It would be an extra special Christmas to say the least.

The days leading up to Dalton's hunt were spent target shooting and marking off the days on the calendar. We were all

visiting around the campfire and enjoying all of the sights and sounds of the magnificent Texas night sky.

The next morning I awoke at 4 a.m. and everyone else an hour later. The early bird gets the buck (I think "buck" sounds much better than "worm"). We were out the door an hour later and in our blinds before dawn. Once again, it

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restricted than Dalton's and he is also profoundly deaf, so sadly enough we are unable to share our passion for the outdoors with him.) But we have always made it a point to never tell them they cannot do something, so the minute Dalton started talking about hunting, I was determined to find a way to make it happen.

I started searching the Internet and found an amazing organization called United Special Sportsmen Alliance (USSA; 800-518-8019; www.childwish.com). I immediately wrote a letter and was extremely surprised to receive a phone call from USSA's president and founder, Brigid O'Donoghue, just hours after submitting it.

### Angels Bearing Gifts

Brigid is a true angel on Earth. We share many of the same passions and goals for the outdoors and for getting special kids active in the outdoors. I now proudly serve on the advisory council for USSA. I talk about the joys of hunting and proper management to anyone who will listen and even to those who do not want to listen. To my family and me, hunting is so much more than to most. When we are out hunting, Dalton's disabilities disappear just like he does in his Mossy Oak camo.

Several months ago, Brigid called to inform me that Michael Traugott, owner of the Lone Star Whitetail Ranch in

breathless with anticipation. Christmas came and went and two days later we left Katy, Texas, and headed to Charlotte. After a beautiful, scenic drive, we arrived at the ranch early in the afternoon, greeted by the smiles and hugs of Michael Traugott and ranch manager Debbie Chisholm. There was an immediate connection—it felt like we had all been friends for years.

After quickly settling in at the beautiful ranch house, we all changed into our hunting clothes and headed out to the range for some quick target practice. To my surprise, I was given the opportunity to hunt, too! I was ecstatic, but naturally, inside I was praying for Dalton to get a deer, not me. After all, this was Dalton's dream hunt, not mine.

We left the range around 4 p.m. and headed out to get settled into our blinds. Dalton, Greg, and Michael went one way, while Lexi, Debbie, and I went another.

Shortly after settling in, deer started to come out to feed. There were beautiful whitetails in every direction. We watched with wide eyes, taking in every sight and sound. "This is heaven," I said to Lexi and Debbie.

As wonderful as the afternoon had been, the mature buck we were looking for never appeared, and as dusk drew closer we knew it was not meant to be that first night. After all, it's never quite that easy, and the saying, "All good things come to those who wait," could not be truer. The evening was spent

with the girls in one blind and the guys in another—and everything from that point on is still like a dream.

### Pinch Me

After settling in, we sat and waited. Lexi, Debbie, and I were all glassing out of different windows, and there were quite a few deer already out. I was especially glad that Lexi was with us. I am real big on passing it on to the next generation, but especially getting more girls involved in the outdoors. To see my seven-year-old daughter so into hunting really touched my heart.

After about 30 minutes, Debbie spotted my buck and handed me the binocular to check him out. I liked to have died when I saw him! Debbie said whenever I had enough light and was ready to go ahead. I positioned "Dixie," my Ruger M77 Mark II in .30-06 and waited. I watched him through my scope and marveled at his beauty and mystique.

There were other deer around him and a clear shot wasn't available, so I patiently waited. I watched as he slowly walked to the other side of the blind. Lexi, Debbie, and I then proceeded to play a quick game of deer-hunting musical chairs. After the chair switch, I got repositioned and watched as the buck causally enjoyed his last meal.

There was a young buck in front of him and another one behind him. My



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heart was racing like never before. Debbie calmly told me to relax and take my time. Her soothing words were much needed, and I softly thanked her. Her confidence in me was heaven-sent.

As the young bucks began to move away, I softly whispered to Lexi to plug her ears. I knew the second he turned broadside I was ready to take him. A few moments later he turned, and I was aimed and ready. I fired a single Hornady 150-grain bullet, hitting him right in the heart. He dropped right where he stood.

I put my rifle on safety as Debbie started shouting, "You did it! You got him!" and then Lexi jumped up and joined Debbie in congratulating me. She was so excited, and that made it even more special.

I couldn't believe I had just taken my first buck, so we gathered our gear and went to take a closer look. I stood there in awe and admired the exquisite, 10-point whitetail buck I had just killed. Although I was on Cloud Nine, I couldn't help but wonder how Dalton was doing. We hadn't heard a single shot fired other than mine.

We headed back to the house to get a few things and noticed Michael's Jeep parked in front of the blind the guys were hunting out of. Debbie turned to me and said, "I wonder why they're done hunting." I had no idea, but my excitement was put on the back burner for a moment and I instantly became a concerned mom.

We moved fast and got what we needed from the house and were getting ready to go get my buck when the guys pulled up. Dalton was smiling like never before, brighter than a bonfire on a South Texas

night. I was so hypnotized by the look on his handsome face that I didn't even notice the enormous whitetail buck tied to the front of the Jeep.

Once I realized he was also successful in shooting a buck, I went from worrying mom to jumping for joy in about half a second. I ran to the Jeep and gave Dalton a big hug and congratulated him on taking such a beautiful creature. "He's amazing," I said. "I can't believe you took a nine-point buck. I am so proud of you!" Dalton was so excited about his incredible accomplishment. But I must admit I was still a bit puzzled because we never heard a shot.

The guys still had no idea about my buck and I was dying to tell them. I turned to Greg and said, "Guess what I did?" I couldn't wait any longer to tell them. "I shot a 10-point buck!"

After a quick round of congratulations, I told Greg that we never heard a shot and we were concerned Dalton hadn't gotten anything. Well, it turns out that due to the direction of the wind, the guys heard my shot and knew it was a hit. Greg said my shot was still ringing when Dalton's buck turned broadside and gave him the opportunity he needed.

Dalton was hunting with Debbie's trusty Remington .243. He was ready for the buck when it turned, and he, to put it in his words, "hit him right in the bread basket." My confusion quickly turned into utter amazement. We'd shot our bucks at almost the exact same moment. The odds of that happening have got to be one in a million.

As I said before, everyone's goal was for

Dalton to be successful. I would later find out from Greg that minutes after getting in the stand, Dalton asked if he could lead them in prayer. He said Dalton prayed for me to get a deer, even if it meant he didn't. I couldn't believe what Greg was telling me. I was touched so deeply I could practically feel Dalton's tender words embracing my heart. My son's selfless wishes filled me with an enormous sense of joy and pride. I went over to my little hunter and gave him a kiss and thanked him for what he had done!

Minutes later, the guys pulled up and congratulated me on taking such an incredible buck. We loaded up my buck and headed back to the barn to do some side-by-side photos. Dalton kept saying, "You beat me mom. Yours is bigger." I must admit, I felt bad that mine was a bit bigger. But in fact, they almost looked like bookends. Dalton's buck was a nine-pointer and mine had 10 points. Dalton's weighed 163 pounds and mine 175 pounds. Then, finally, the Boone and Crockett scores were added up. Dalton's buck scored 134 and mine 131. He got me there, and I was thrilled. My G-1s and G-4s were bigger, but Dalton's G-2s and G-3s had me beat. What an amazing day!

The rest of our time at the ranch was spent visiting around the campfire, enjoying fantastic meals, looking for antler sheds, and watching the most beautiful whitetails we had ever seen. For those three days, Dalton was like any other kid and we were like any other parents. Simply thinking about it takes my breath away. Dalton's dream hunt became our entire family's dream hunt, and that dream became a reality.

To Michael Traugott and Debbie Chisholm, thank you from the bottom of our hearts for everything you did for our family. We are truly honored and blessed to call you our friends. We will forever cherish every moment of the three days we spent with you. To Brigid O' Donoghue and USSA, thank you for everything you did to make Dalton's wish come true and for your continued devotion to all special kids. 🐾

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