

A Hunt Not Forgotten

Hunts are remembered for what went right, what went wrong and for the special people who were there along the way. Taking a nice animal is memorable, but nothing creates memories like stumbling backwards into a cactus patch on a 15-degree morning or almost being run over by a doe that's being chased by a buck with your rifle leaning against a tree 20 feet away. Good friends create good memories regardless of how forgetful we can sometimes be.

I spent Thanksgiving weekend of 1989 hunting with my brother, Sedrick Sutton, in the Texas Hill Country. Sedrick and I weren't blood kin, but we were brothers just the same. We had been "marched" through the Big Brothers and Big Sisters program when I was in school. When we were first matched, we didn't have money to do much of anything except hang out together, but we did a lot of that. One of the many things we talked about was hunting together some day. Our match officially ended when I finished school and moved away to take a job, but we remained "brothers" even though we lived hours apart. My finances improved with employment and we began hunting together some. I was at his side when he first fired a gun, first went hunting and when he took his first animal.

Sedrick was 16 when I picked him up on the way to my hunting lease. We had a couple of hours in the car together during which time we caught up on his school, my work, girls and how our families were doing. We talked about shot placement and gun safety. I teased him about his new earring and reminded him to be on his best behavior around the landowner, a sweet country lady in her 80s who had hesitated before giving me permission to bring Sedrick to hunt on her land. I bet Sedrick was the first young black man she had ever met in her life. I swelled with secret pride when Sedrick removed his earring before meeting her

and quietly said he was doing so to make her feel more comfortable. The introduction evidently went well, as she did something the next morning she had never done before: She brought a huge country breakfast, complete with a big hug for Sedrick, to the converted chicken coop we used as our hunting cabin.

The weekend was great. Good weather, no television, just a couple of guys catching up and enjoying the opportunity to hunt together. We saw lots of deer and turkeys and we took a nice 8-point buck. Sedrick even tried to teach me how to "moon walk" (the latest craze) the last night in camp, with hilarious results.

Then a problem occurred as we were packing to leave. Somehow in the excitement of it all the keys got locked in the trunk along with the deer. There was nothing we could do; the landowner was visiting her grandchildren and staying overnight, and we were literally in the middle of nowhere. The deer had my keys, and we couldn't blame him for refusing to help us. Finally, I took a crowbar and pried open the trunk lid of my first new car. It worked, but it was a very painful experience and it put me in a very bad mood. The weekend was in danger of being ruined. As we began to drive back, tension filled the car. Instead of filing away the memories of our hunt, our time together and the fun we had, my jaws were clenched in disgust as I wondered how I was going to afford a new trunk lid, and how I could be such



an idiot. Then I felt a hand on my shoulder. I looked over at Sedrick. He looked at me seriously and said, "Bruce, I know it's bad right now, but we'll laugh about this 10 years from now." The tension evaporated immediately and we laughed together right then. Sedrick saved the trip. The drive back was filled with stories of what we had seen and done, how much fun we'd had and when we'd be going back. I also swore Sedrick to secrecy regarding the "moon walk" lessons. We joked about our \$1,000 deer (unfortunately an estimate which later proved prophetic) and how the buck refused to help us out of our jam.

The only real problem was that 10 years later we didn't get to laugh about the episode. Sedrick died in a car accident at age 19. I miss him still. But I have pictures of him and pictures of our hunt, and even more importantly, I'll always have the memories of a special hunt with my little brother. Unlike the car keys, I'll never forget it.

A participant in the Big Brothers program, the author has many fond memories of his "little brother," but none are as special as the time they went hunting.

Photo By Author

Do you have an exciting, unusual or humorous hunting experience to share? Send your manuscript (800 words or less) to *American Hunter*, Dept. MH, 11250 Waples Mill Road, Fairfax, VA 22030-9400. Please include your NRA membership number. Good quality photos are also welcome. Authors will not be paid, and manuscripts and photos will not be returned.

American Hunter (ISSN 0092-1068) is published monthly by the National Rifle Association of America, 11250 Waples Mill Road, Fairfax, VA 22030-9400; 703-267-1000 for the benefit of its members. Membership dues (U.S. and possessions) \$35 a year, \$85 for 3 years, \$125 for 5 years. \$3.75 per year is designated for a magazine subscription. For foreign postage add \$5 a year in Canada and \$10 elsewhere. Membership inquiries only 877-672-2000. Copyright 2005, the National Rifle Association of America. All rights reserved except where expressly waived. Periodicals Postage paid at Fairfax, VA, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to the American Hunter, c/o National Rifle Association, P.O. Box 420648, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0648.