

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Comments and Photos from our Readers

PICKED UP TROPHIES

I read with great interest your article in the Fall 2003 *Fair Chase* magazine, "Trophy Talk: Picked Up and Unknown Trophies." I happen to be one of those "picked up" trophies for a whitetail deer, non-typical, from Will County, Illinois, with a score of 224 points from 2002 that Stan Godfrey proudly scored.

I'm delighted that this magnificent animal could be listed as a trophy buck as I watched him for nearly six years on my farm. I am a devout conservationist and have created many wildlife habitat areas on my 280-acre farm. "My Boy", which I have always called him, had 160 acres of my farm "hunter-free" consisting of 4 acres of wetlands, a sizeable drainage ditch, CRP strips and additional land that I took out of production and sowed down with gorgeous warm season grasses, as well as the old hedge tree property line, all intertwined with the crop land as part of his home.

As I farm my own land, I knew every area where "My Boy" would bed down or hide. I watched him move about in my wetland area as I cut hay, as well as seeing him hide amongst small bush clusters located in different areas on my farm. I observed him bedded down in the middle of my soybean fields or at a fence line while doing field work. I recall, with great fondness, the first time I saw him pursuing a large doe, as she ran out of the corn field that I was combining. As he trotted out of the standing corn field, he stopped and looked at me. I'll never forget that sight! He was stunning! My body was full of goose bumps! Then in the fall of 2000, after a couple of hours of splitting wood behind my old barn, I needed to walk about to get some kinks out. Unbeknownst to me, "My Boy" was lying in a swale within 75 feet of where I was splitting wood. As I walked about 40 feet south of where I was splitting, "My Boy" stood up. Needless to say, I was startled because I thought I was alone. He hon-

estly stood there, looked at me, took a couple of steps away, looked at me again and slowly walked off, tail down, not excited at all. I was thrilled once again by his beauty, let alone his comfort zone with me.

This farm was his turf until his natural demise in late October 2002. While combining corn on October 31, I couldn't help but notice areas of corn trampled down. I observed these trampled paths for a three and a half hour period. Soon after 8 p.m., as I was heading north, I saw a big black hole off to the left of the combine. As I approached this area, peering over the standing corn stalks, I found these two huge bucks, antlers locked, and lying motionless.

I could hardly stop the machine fast enough to see if one of them was "My Boy." My legs trembled as I stepped down from the combine. I knew they were both dead, as the coyotes had already gotten to them. After I observed this, I got onto my knees for a closer look and sure enough, one of them was "My Boy" as I saw his big drop tine! I had tears of sadness run down my face as I recalled all of those wonderful memories of observing this beautiful animal that I was truly blessed with. He died defending his turf from another huge-bodied buck that I had never seen before.

My tears of sadness soon became one of overwhelming joy as I realized what I had lying before me. Without ever taking one shot! I could hardly get home fast enough to share the news with my husband and friends. The other buck was about 340 pounds with a typical rack scoring 154 points. "My Boy's" four-inch drop tine, on his left side was impaled completely into the eyeball of his opponent and it was very apparent that he died first as his hide was green and it was sloughing off. As Tim knelt down to start his cut on "My Boy", I pulled



ABOVE: Rita Luedtke with "My Boy" who scores 224 points. **LEFT:**



The two deer as she found them in her corn field in 2002.

his hair back and discovered that he indeed died last as his skin was white. Tim eagerly removed his cape and he also guessed his weight at 270 to 280 pounds. Tim happens to be an avid bowhunter of 25 years and he was sad to see that they died like this. "My Boy" certainly won the battle but lost the war. He proudly wears his own cape that clearly shows his battle scars, as Dale Schwab made him come back to life with his mounting artistry.

Thank you very much for accepting "picked up" trophies. It just makes the memories that much sweeter! I have no problem with sharing him as the story certainly gives this "picked up" trophy a lot more meaning than just "finding him dead."

Sincerely,

Rita O. Luedtke
B&C Associate



LEFT: 12-year-old, Jake Schellhardt, who is perhaps the Club's youngest B&C Associate, with his first buck. This 13-point buck was taken with a Ruger .243. Photo courtesy of his godfather, Ted Vitali CP, B&C Professional Member. **RIGHT:** B&C Official Measurer, Glenn E. Anderson with a muskox taken on Nunivak Island, Alaska, in March of 2003.



IN THE FIELD