

GENERATION NEXT: 50 YEARS IN THE MAKING

JOSEPH W. JOINER
NON-TYPICAL
WHITETAIL DEER
186-4/8 B&C Points



Joseph's brother Terry with the deer.



Joseph with his deer.



Joseph's dad and brother Randy skinning the deer.

In 1973, I was 15 years old and hunting with my dad during Kentucky's three-day, buck-only firearms season. I was the oldest of three boys, and Dad started taking me hunting with him long before I was old enough to carry a firearm. We had beagle hounds for as long as I can remember, and mainly we hunted squirrel, rabbit, and dove. When I was 10, I received my first shotgun at Christmas, an Ithaca .410 single barrel. I hunted with that shotgun until I was 14 when Dad bought me a Browning automatic 12-gauge. I used that gun on everything from deer to turkey to groundhogs.

BELOW: This is the last deer that Joseph harvested.



A 64-year-old deer hunter is an improbable award winner at the Jack Steele Parker Generation Next Banquet.

Joseph Joiner and his family with keynote speaker Clay Newcomb (far right). Joseph was recognized at the 31st Big Game Awards Generation Next Youth Banquet. Any trophy that has been taken by a hunter 16 years or younger at the time of harvest accepted during the 31st Awards period (2019-2021) was invited.



Dad and I carried our Browning automatic 12-gauge shotguns on our three-day deer hunt in 1973. Sunday was my only day off from work at the grocery store, and I had spent quite a bit of time talking Dad into letting me go on my first deer hunt with that gun. The other obstacle was Mom. She wasn't happy with the two of us skipping church to go hunting, but she knew how much it meant to Dad.

The farm we hunted was about 15 miles away. Entering the woods in the dark that morning, we sat down on the ground on the edge of a small creek. Our legs were dangling over the water.

After about an hour or so, I saw Dad turn around. This big buck stood in the middle of a downed treetop only 20 yards away. A single shot from the Browning put the buck on the ground right where he stood. It was a very lucky shot, though. I had shot over the deer's back and hit him in the neck as he was looking over his shoulder.

We had no idea what we had accomplished. At the time, we were harvesting meat for the freezer. After using the landowner's tractor to haul the big buck out of the woods, we loaded him into his pick-up truck for the ride back to town.

We took my deer to the grocery store where I worked. Everyone at the store was amazed to see the deer—not because of its size, but because we had killed a deer. Deer sightings were scarce in our area. A few years prior, my family was on our way home from church when we spotted a few deer in a field beside the road. Dad pulled the car over to look at them. Pretty soon, six more cars pulled over, too. That was the first time I had ever seen a deer in the wild.

At the store, the outside meat scales registered the buck's weight at 243 pounds, field-dressed. A deer's weight was a much bigger deal back then than

antler score. In conversation, we only talked about how many points a deer had. As life went on, I married and had two kids, a son and a daughter. I took them both hunting, and it stuck with my son, who now takes his son hunting for deer, turkey, and waterfowl.

Fast forward nearly 50 years. In 2021, my son's friend harvested a nice buck in Kentucky. He contacted an Official Measurer with Boone and Crockett and arranged to have the deer scored. He told me to bring my deer to get it scored, too. After scoring, we were contacted by B&C asking for more information about the deer. My son and I dug through a bag full of my old hunting licenses and deer tags (yes, I save them). We found the metal lock tag for my deer from 1973.

Dad passed away in 2018, and I wish he could have attended the 31st Big Game Awards. I was honored to be a part of it, and he would have been so proud. When I told Mom, she was excited and told everyone. She even started digging through old photos.

Even though my dad is no longer with us, I still have the gun and the knife we used to field-dress this great deer. I don't hunt any longer, trading my time in the woods for bass fishing. I don't doubt the old Browning and hunting knife will end up with my grandson. As for that deer, it has a prominent place in my man cave, along with what I consider other trophies from my hunting and fishing adventures. ■



TOP TO BOTTOM: Joseph took both his son and daughter hunting with him when they were little. Joseph's son and grandson now share a love of hunting deer, turkey, and waterfowl.