



Fullfilling a Child's Dream

Story and Photos by Stephanie Rainey

BOBBY CLARK AND HIS SISTER SUSAN ARE 13 YEARS OLD, THEIR YOUNGER BROTHER LOGAN IS NINE. ALL THREE CHILDREN WERE BORN WITH CYSTIC FIBROSIS. JORDAN ALBRACHT, AGE 19, HAS A BRAIN TUMOR, AS DOES JIMMY JAGUSIAK, AGE 12. LUKE SWANSON, AGE 17, HAS BONE CANCER. BRANDON LOOKINGBILL, AGE 17, HAS RHABDOID TUMORS. WHAT DO ALL THESE YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE IN COMMON BESIDES A LIFE-THREATENING ILLNESS? THEY ALL HAD A WISH TO HUNT ELK. WITH THE HELP FROM AN ORGANIZATION CALLED HUNT OF A LIFETIME, ALONG WITH MANY KIND AND CARING STRANGERS, THEY WERE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH THEIR HUNTING DREAMS.

Hunt of a Lifetime is a non-profit organization that fulfills fishing and hunting adventures for children and young adults (21 and under), who have life-threatening illnesses. Tina Pattison created the organization after her stepson Matt was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. Matt desperately wanted to go on a moose hunt, but Tina and her husband could not afford such a hunt.

After contacting numerous agencies without success, Tina finally located an outfitter who would help. The outfitter, Clayton Grosso and his wife Hilda, from the tiny village of Nordegg, Alberta, Canada, not only volunteered their guiding services but opened their home to Matt. In fact, after hearing about Matt's situation, the entire community of Nordegg graciously chipped in to cover the costs of the hunt. Because of the kindness of the Nordegg townspeople, Matt was able to fulfill his wish to hunt moose before suc-

cumbing to his disease at age 18, six months after his trip.

Realizing how difficult it was to accomplish Matt's dream, Tina Pattison formed the Hunt of a Lifetime organization, so that no other parent of an ill child would have to go through what she'd endured to fulfill her stepson's wish. Since starting the organization over five years ago, Hunt of a Lifetime has fulfilled over 174 hunting and fishing adventures.

And so begins their stories, the stories of six valiant youngsters, who journeyed west for their hunt of a lifetime. They traveled from Kansas, Mississippi, New York, Oregon and Nebraska to begin their adventure in Springerville, Arizona, a small rural community near the New Mexico border.

Bobby and Logan Clark arrived from Belle Plaine, Kansas with their father, Robert. Their sister, Susan, was too sick and couldn't travel with them. All three Clark children were born with Cystic Fibrosis, a

disease that affects the pancreas and invades the lungs.

Nine-year-old Logan was the first to take an elk. His guide, Lolo Hernandez of Amigo Outfitters, spotted a 3x3 bull, standing 140 yards away, near a thick stand of ponderosa trees. Logan steadied his .270 rifle and took a shot and the bull fell to the ground immediately. After Logan's shot you could feel the excitement in the air. Smiles were readily available on each and everyone's face, especially Logan's.

The first thing Logan wanted to do was to tell Gary Kiehne about how he shot the elk. Kiehne donated the elk permit for the hunt and provided other services through his businesses, Centerfire Outfitters and the Rhode Inn Hotel. Kiehne's response after learning Logan had shot an elk was an exuberant, "Congratulations Buddy!"

With only a 37% lung capacity brought on by the disease, Bobby Clark, struggled to stay healthy throughout his hunt. Lolo Hernandez was also Bobby's guide and on the fourth day of his hunt, Hernandez spotted two bulls running through the snow about 80 yards away. Little Bobby took aim and fired. The wounded bull darted off and headed down a snow-covered hill.

Since Bobby's illness made it difficult for him to walk long distances, Hernandez carried Bobby on his back. The terrain and snow made it difficult for Hernandez, but finally after going nearly a mile, Bobby was able to take his last and final shot at the bull. His trek came to an end as the bull went down for good. He marveled at the bull and stroked its hair while examining its features. There was a twinkle in Bobby's eyes, one I hadn't noticed before. He and Logan had done well. They never gave up on their quest even when their illnesses made it difficult for them. They were determined to succeed and succeed they did.

Jimmy Jagusiak was a nine-year-old when he was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Surgery was performed to remove the tumor from his brain stem. After the surgery, Jimmy had to re-learn his hand-eye coordination and motor skills as the surgery left him with stroke-like symptoms. He endured countless surgeries along with radiation treatments, followed by months and months of physical and occupational therapy.

Jimmy flew to Arizona from Alden, New York along with his mother and father, Teresa and James. The first day of the hunt





it instantly. It was a fine 5x4 bull and Luke had accomplished his quest with one fine shot.

Nineteen year old Jordan Albracht has always enjoyed hunting. One of his favorite pastimes is hunting whitetail deer near his native home of Lindsey, Nebraska. Jordan has endured over four surgeries and countless radiation treatments in hopes of stopping the growth of the tumor in his brain. For the next five years, every six months, Jordan will have to have an MRI to insure the tumor hasn't increased.

Jordan arrived with his father and hiked the countryside for four days, looking for the right bull. Finally on the fourth day, a nice 6x6 bull was spotted over 330 yards away, clear on the top of a mountain. Undaunted, Jordan positioned his 7 mm rifle in the crook of tree and blasted away. Jordan's bullet found its mark and he ended up with a bull he was proud to call his own.

At the ripe old age of 13, Susan Clark has experienced more adventures in her young life than most people will ever realize in a lifetime. She's hunted Corsican rams, whitetail deer and even wild boars. Looking at Susan, you wouldn't think it possible for such a petite youngster. She stands proudly at four-foot, three inches and weighs all of 60 pounds. Too small to accomplish such feats some might say,

but don't tell her that as she doesn't know what the word can't means.

Susan has accomplished all this, while battling Cystic Fibrosis. Cystic Fibrosis causes such irreparable scarring to the lungs that people inflicted with the disease normally end up having lung transplants in order to survive. Susan can tell you in detail what it's like to have a lung transplant. She went through



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turned out to be a lucky one for Jimmy. His guide, Steve Hensen, spotted a bachelor herd of bulls eating berries from some juniper trees at the bottom of a small ridge. Hensen decided that the best way to get Jimmy near the bulls was to sneak up on them, so Jimmy, his mother and Hensen made the strenuous walk over the malapai-rock-filled ravine towards the bulls. Hensen positioned Jimmy under some trees and pointed toward the bulls. Jimmy took

one shot, then another and dropped a 5x5 bull. From Teresa's position though, she never saw the bull go down and didn't know if Jimmy had missed or not. All she saw were four other bulls running away. Within seconds though, she had her answer. When she saw the smiles on Jimmy and Hensen's face she knew that Jimmy had accomplished his dream. It was hard to tell who was more excited, Jimmy or his mother.

Luke Swanson is a quiet 17-year-old man who enjoys hunting and fishing for salmon and steelhead along the lakes and streams of his native home in Estacada, Oregon. Luke was diagnosed with bone cancer at age 15 and had to have his foot amputated up to his ankle in an effort to save his life.

"Luke doesn't make a big deal about his illness or having a prosthesis," stated Luke's mother, Cathy Hogenson. "He doesn't want anyone's pity." A day after Jimmy shot his bull, it was Luke's turn. A herd of bulls was seen, feeding on a hillside about 400 yards away, so Luke and his guide, Gary Kiehne, stalked 100 yards to get closer. Then they sat down and glassed for awhile. When Luke was ready, he took the shot and the bull went down. The bullet went right through the lungs and killed




a double-lung transplant close to two years ago, but true to her determined character, only 10 months after her lung surgery, and only one year after her brothers' hunts, Susan was hunting bull elk.

She arrived for this hunt along with her two brothers, father Robert, and mother, Tiffany. Susan passed up bulls throughout her hunt because in her words, "I want one bigger than my brothers." So it came down to the last day of the hunt and almost the last hour of daylight. Susan's guides snuck up on a herd of bulls, down near a rocky gorge. She positioned her .270 rifle, which had been lucky for both of her brothers, stead-

ied her aim, and fired. The bull walked 20 yards and fell. It was a perfect shot, right through the lungs. Susan's smile lit up the darkness. She had her elk and it was a nice 5x5 bull, one that was just as big as her brothers.

Brandon Lookingbill was 17 year of age when he ventured out from Olive Branch, Mississippi for the hunt of a lifetime. He was able to shoot a large 6x6 bull, but just eight months after his hunt, Brandon succumbed to his illness. His bull now hangs proudly in the Lookingbill home.

The future of all these young hunters is unknown as their illnesses are a constant concern. What is known is that they will continue to enrich and inspire all those fortunate enough to be a part of their lives. I thank them all for allowing me to be a part of their hunts of a lifetime. 

EDITOR'S NOTE

IF YOU KNOW OF A CHILD WITH A LIFE-THREATENING ILLNESS WHO HAS A WISH TO GO ON A HUNTING OR FISHING ADVENTURE OR IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP FULFILL A CHILD'S WISH TO HUNT, CONTACT TINA PATTISON AT

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