

My Great Hunting Adventure MAG

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Image Credit: Todd V., Neoga, IL

All my life I've been told that deer hunting is hard. You get up early, drive out to the woods, and walk around all day in the blazing heat or freezing cold to maybe see a deer. If you are lucky enough to see a deer, it will probably be a doe, too little, or too far away. If you are lucky enough to spot the right kind of deer, you will probably scare it off because you smell like deodorant, shampoo, or sweat. Or, if it's hot and dry out, you will make too much noise stepping on dry leaves and twigs. If it's cold and wet, you will make too much noise stomping through snow or sloshing through mud. Either way, all the cursing because of how miserable you are is sure to scare any deer away.

To avoid scaring the deer away, you can spend a lot of money on items to make you look like a tree or bush. You can buy special boots to help you walk quietly. You can even use special detergents and scents to make you smell like a doe in heat. With all of that, you just might see a deer. Maybe.

That's what I'd always been told. But as a 12-year-old heading into his first hunting season, I was determined to get a deer at all costs. I was prepared to spend my birthday money and Christmas money on camouflage clothing. I was prepared to drench myself in deer pee and walk until my feet bled. Even more difficult, I was willing to walk for hours without talking. Just ask anyone who knows me: I normally don't shut up! I mean, I could talk for days without stopping, except to eat. Then again, I can talk while I eat. I talk so much because I'm kind of a big deal! Just ask me.

When my dad took me to get my hunting license and tags, I wanted everything in the store. I was even willing to spend the \$20 I'd brought if I had to, but my dad wouldn't let me. With that stern, fatherly look we all know, he told me to just relax.

Even though my dad was willing to take me hunting, he isn't much of an outdoorsy guy. He's tall and kind of fat from sitting behind a desk. He has a professional haircut and soft hands from not doing very much real work. He's a good guy, but he's definitely not what you would call a rugged outdoorsman.

The first dry morning of hunting season, my dad took me into the woods near our house just to try me out. I got up early to put on my hunting clothes. It began with my special no-blister socks, then my camouflage pants, shirt, jacket, hat, and face cover. I finished by putting on my special hunting boots. I looked like a gangly tree. I was prepared – but once we reached the woods, I talked constantly, stepped on every twig and dry leaf, and wanted to stop for a snack every five minutes. After two unsuccessful hours, my dad took me home.

That afternoon, I went to my grandparents' house to hang out with my cousins. My grandparents have many wooded acres in the mountains, but my cousins and I went straight to the game room to play Wii. Before long, my grandpa walked in and said, "There's deer in the yard."

My grandfather is a real outdoorsman. He is tan from being outside all the time, he has a bushy mustache he trims with his pocketknife, and he has a rugged, lumberjack's build. He's always wearing flannel shirts and suspenders to support his worn-out jeans.

My cousins and I ran to the front window. In a profound statement of the obvious, my seven-year-old cousin Rachel shouted, "Deer!"

There were three in the yard. The redneck inside me immediately began to look for horns. Lo and behold, one of them had horns – not impressive, but horns nonetheless. So I ran over to my grandpa and said, "Hey, you told me before you had a gun I could use for hunting. Can I shoot it?"

"Do you have your license with you?" he asked, running his thumbs up and down his suspenders.

"Of course!" I lied.

My grandfather got his gun from his safe. He put a chair by the front door and sat me in it. He handed me the gun, cracked the door open, and said, "Take your time and shoot when you're ready."

I will spare you the gory details, but it didn't take me long to become ready and for there to be one less deer in the yard.

I immediately called my father to ask him to bring me my license and tag. "Why?" he asked.

"Because I shot a deer!"

I couldn't tell if he was surprised, irritated, or proud.

To this day, I don't see why people make such a big deal about how hard hunting is. I don't get why they bother spending so much money and time trying to find deer. All they need to do is visit their grandparents once in a while.