

## Hunting Tales

by Scott\_Staats

Itâ€™s that time of year again. Most of the leaves have fallen, Election Day is finally over and hunters full of adrenalin and testosterone head to the woods with the hope of bringing home something more than a hangover from cheap beer and indigestion from bad camp food.

Iâ€™ve been hunting since I was a kid but have noticed several changes over the years. First off, it seems that â€œhuntingâ€• has become â€œshooting.â€• Drive up into any forest and youâ€™ll be lucky to find a road sign not shot full of bullet holes. Look in any camp and youâ€™ll see cans and bottles and trees used for target practice. Plus, youâ€™ll also find very few deer and elk, another reason why there are fewer hunters and more shooters.

I believe there should be a law that â€œhuntersâ€• have to eat what they shoot. Theyâ€™d have to eat coyotes, ground squirrels, skunks, marmots, songbirds, road signs and beer bottles just to name a few of the intended targets. Iâ€™ve often thought about making some money during the hunting season by driving a beer truck up into the forest and stopping at each camp like the Schwanâ€™s Ice Cream Truck. Or just pull over and put up a sign and the road hunters will stop by.

Back in the good old days, real hunting meant shooting your deer or elk in the bottom of a deep canyon five miles from the nearest road and staying there with a fry pan and toilet paper until it was gone. Today, it seems you canâ€™t walk more than a quarter of a mile in any direction in the forest without hitting a road.

On a recent ride-along with the local game warden, we sat along a road only a mile or two out of town where he knew there was a herd of elk hanging out. A few minutes later we heard a shot and drove down the road to find a woman sitting just a few feet from the pavement across the fence where she just shot a bull elk. Apparently she did didnâ€™t break any laws but it didnâ€™t seem much like â€œhuntingâ€• to me.

Where were the blistered feet from hiking all day up and down mountains? Where were the sleepless nights spent in the wall tent with loudly snoring hunting partners? And how about getting more in touch with nature? How can you hear birdsong and squirrel-chatter when cars and trucks are zooming by only 10 feet away?

A â€œtough huntâ€• can mean different things to different hunters. For one it might be walking six miles in three feet of fresh, wet snow through two deep canyons before getting off a 450-yard shot and dropping the animal. Then getting back to camp at 11 p.m. with the 250-pound 5-point buck over his shoulder and crawling into the bag without supper.

For another it might be rolling out of bed at about 9 a.m. The wife makes him bacon and eggs then he loads the 4-wheeler in back the pickup and heads up into the forest, spending an hour driving roads and sipping coffee. After lunch he gets on the 4-wheeler and drives on 2-track roads for an hour but sees nothing. On the drive back into town, he sees a buck on the side of the road and shoots from the truck, tosses the deer into the back of the rig and is home by noon.

Camping is a big part of hunting for many folks. However, if there are three of you and only two tents, here are a few suggestions you might consider unleashing on your two hunting buddies as youâ€™re deciding who sleeps where.

â€œThis itchy rash is just about cleared up.â€•

â€œIâ€™m not sure I should have eaten that whole can of baked beans and the entire pot of chili last night.â€•

â€œYouâ€™re looking pretty slim there Bill. Are you on a diet?â€•

â€œWhen I get scared at night, I like to cuddle with my wife. Hey, what was that; did you hear that?â€•

According to the Oregon State Police Wildlife Officers Iâ€™ve talked with, game violations are on the rise. To prevent this, perhaps the state could install cockpit voice recorders in all 4WD pickups. At the end of the season, the game wardens can then analyze the recorders to determine if any laws were broken. Many hunters seem to disobey the hunting regulations as if they were a Halliburton contract.

As hunters of all ages head to the woods, I canâ€™t help but imagine listening in on the conversation of three teenage girls on their first hunt. It would go something like this:

Amber â€œSo, we were like, you know, I mean, itâ€™s like opening day or something â€œ like awesome! Like what are we gonna wear?â€•

Britney â€œWell, um, like letâ€™s head out. I mean itâ€™s like, you know, letâ€™s go.â€•

Ashley “ (at the end of the day) “It was like, a great day and we were like, you know, this is cool and the deer was like, out there and I was like, shoot Amber. And she was like shooting, and the deer, it was like taking off and we were like, let’s go and we found out that, you know, it was like, she missed.”

Hunting is sometimes too easy not to make fun of. For example, here’s a joke I heard a while back. I think it was voted one of the top jokes a few years ago: Two hunters are out in the woods walking side by side when one guy drops to the ground and doesn’t appear to be breathing. His buddy frantically grabs his cell phone and dials 911 and says, “I think my friend is dead, what do I do?” The operator responds, “Now just calm down sir, first you need to make sure he’s really dead.” After a few seconds of silence, a shot is heard. The guy gets back on the phone, “Okay, now what?”

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