

The ELK I Didn't Shoot

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #6 —

“Did you shoot that big elk above the fireplace?” No, but I can tell you an interesting story about it!

We arrived in our New Mexico elk camp a day early, to allow for some scouting. The head guide said that he had flown over the area a few days earlier and there were elk everywhere. They even saw a dead bull in a small pond a couple of drainages to the north.

Thinking that the antlers might be a good souvenir of the hunt, even if we did shoot nice bulls, I inquired if we could recover them.

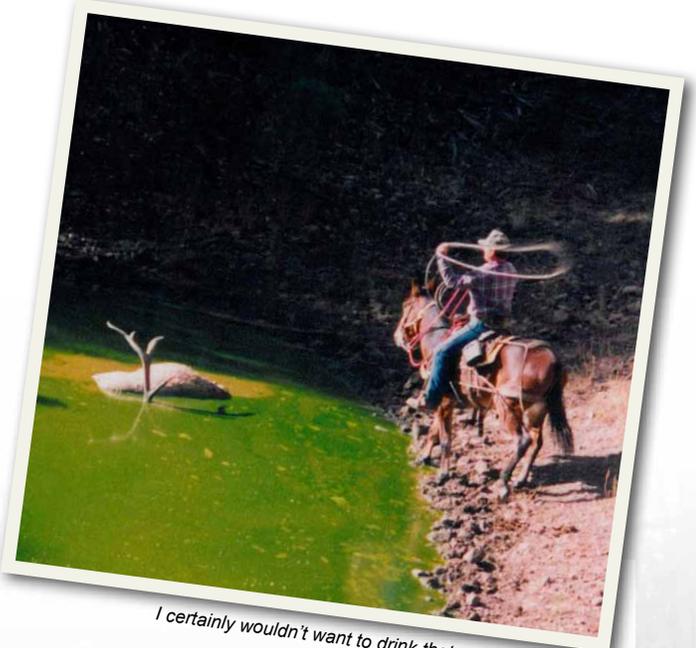
As it turned out, the guides wanted to pull the dead elk from the water, so we were all on the same page.

Early the next morning we saddled up and headed out for scouting, taking along a meat saw.

He wasn't far from the bank, lying on his left side with a little over half of his right antler sticking out of the water – just enough to get a rope on.

One of the guides had done some rodeo work, when he was younger, and was pretty good with a lasso; so getting a rope over the exposed antler wasn't a problem. However, pulling a mature elk out of the water was more than a one-mule job, so the other guide joined in and both mules pulled hard on the elk, getting it to the waters edge, but no farther.

You can imagine the excitement as we got both antlers out of the water and saw just how big this bull was. These antlers wouldn't be just a souvenir, they belonged on a wall.



I certainly wouldn't want to drink that water, would you?

I didn't shoot an elk on that trip; but one of the guys got a five by five that he had skull mounted, and gave me his cape. The taxidermist put the antlers and cape together to make the beautiful mount that has hung on the wall above the fireplace at Midway Farms ever since.

We measured the bull at 353 7/8", some months later. To this date, I haven't shot one that big.

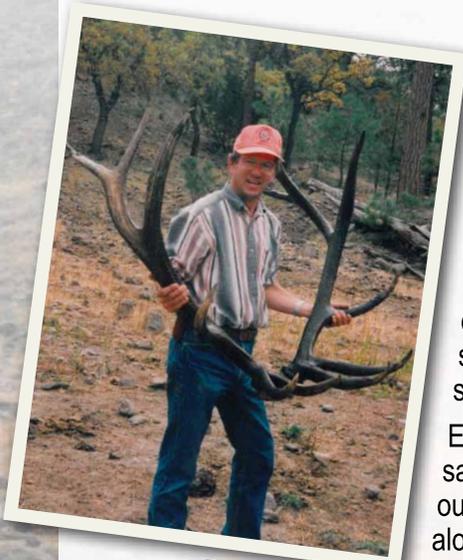
“We measured
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353 7/8”...”

So, that's the story of the big elk that I didn't shoot.

P.S. We found no evidence of what killed the bull; perhaps it was an archery hunter or maybe a fight with another bull.



Larry Potterfield
Gila National Forest
New Mexico
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The souvenir – 353 7/8"



Two mules couldn't get the bull out of the water.