

DEER CAMP

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #86 —

Nothing quite excites or satisfies like the anticipation of opening morning of deer season; at best, the night before is restless. Sure the anticipation dulls a little with age, as dreams of the 30 point buck are replaced by the reality of what's been shot there over the last twenty years.

Deer camp is one of the most cherished traditions in the hunting community – and for good reason; it's a gathering place for multiple generations of family and friends, many of whom see each other only during that special time.

The young folks and newbies, always liven things up. They provide new opportunities to talk about deer rifles and cartridges and of course gun safety -- to retell and listen again to the worn-out stories of hunts gone by, often with important facts left out. They represent one more chance to teach how to judge the size and age of a buck and how to tell a button buck from a doe or female fawn -- how to be quiet when walking through the leaves and how to climb in and out of a deer stand.

First light is always magic; shapes and movement in the imagination turn into something or nothing as the binoculars come into focus. With each passing moment, everything brightens up and soon the day is full on. The woods are much quieter in the fall than during spring turkey season; sure the crows and geese are still around, but mating season for the song birds is over – and the turkeys hardly ever gobble. Perhaps there's some wind

When the weather is cold or rainy, an enclosed blind – on a stand or the ground – allows for longer, more comfortable time in the field. The food plot has beans, wheat and turnips.



Three generations of the Potterfield family gather around the campfire at mid-day, during opening weekend.

in the trees and hopefully the serious rustling of leaves, as Mr. Majestic makes his way past the stand.

Mid-day at deer camp is a chance to warm up and chow down; perhaps get a nap and lament that it's unseasonably warm or cold or wet or dry. That's when I like to hang around outside, sitting on a stump and tending a roaring campfire, with grandkids chasing each other and playing in the leaves. There aren't enough moments like that in a lifetime.

"...one of the most cherished traditions..."

And yes, there are the deer stories, one person saw nothing but does, another missed a big buck. The wind was right, the wind was wrong. "I'll need some help tracking this one." Deer camp will always have a very special place on my calendar and in my heart.

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Larry Potterfield
Deer Camp
Midway Farms
Fayette, Missouri
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Chris Cauley, with his best whitetail – to date; 160 class bucks, like this, are on the far side of the Bell curve -- in this part of Missouri.