

# The COWBOY HUNT

at the Nail Ranch

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #49 —



*We were a patriotic bunch, flying the American and Texas flags over our camp.*

It was like a page from a western novel, if you leave out the part about how we traveled to Texas. Our camp was six ranch-road miles from the bunkhouse, in a pasture called Northeast Collins, on the historic Nail Ranch in Shackelford County, Texas. This was buffalo and Comanche country 150 years ago, but today it's half grown up in mesquite trees and prickly pear – great whitetail country, which is why we were there.

The centerpiece of camp was an honest to goodness chuck wagon -- provided and tended by Mr. Bill Cauble -- as authentic as the chuck wagon itself. Bill prepared three memorable meals each day, far beyond the expectations of cowboys, when chuck wagons were part of their way of life.



*Bill Cauble is the real deal; his chuck wagon meals and storytelling are legendary. My rifle is a Winchester Model 1894 SRC in 30-30.*

We wore western boots and hats, Carhartt jackets and leather gloves. Every morning we saddled up our horses, slid our Winchester 94 Saddle Ring Carbines into their scabbards

and rode out in pursuit of big bucks. Rattling was the hunting strategy, so we simply rode from one good rattling canyon or flat to the next, spending a few minutes to see what would come in. It was always easy to bring in the young bucks, but the older, wiser ones were – older and wiser. Sometimes, we would tie up the horses and make a big loop, rattling several times along the way. On occasion, a coyote would come to the rattle, much to his surprise and anguish. Morning and evening we enjoyed a campfire, where stories were told and knowledge was shared. Dark

comes early in November, and the campfire was a welcome respite from the cool night air. Shackelford is a dry county, so medicinal spirits had to be brought in from the outside, but there wasn't too much doctoring required.

Whitetail hunting is an early morning and late afternoon activity,

**"Rattling was the hunting strategy..."**

so there was time during the mid-day for some loafing and napping. Typically I would bring a swinging metal target and a couple of old .22 rifles – perhaps a Winchester Model 1890 pump action or a 1902 bolt action – always something different. One year I brought a Winchester Thumb Trigger Model .22 single shot; and that was a surprise and treat for everyone.

The original Cowboy Hunts, at the Nail Ranch, are gone now; but they remain some of the most memorable and enjoyable hunting experiences of my life.

**Midway** USA

Larry Potterfield

Western Camp  
The Nail Ranch  
Albany, Texas  
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*Jack Ogilvie, a professional salesman in his real job, takes the week off to serve as one of our guides. Here he is rattling up a buck.*