



The Parting Shot

by Thom Jorgensen

A couple years ago I had the opportunity to share a campfire with several cold bowhunters from all over North America. About thirty of us fought the winter weather to hunt some public land in Georgia for hogs. Not an extravagant hunt, but one I'll never forget!

That entire first day a misty rain fell, and by evening the temperatures hovered just above freezing. We all brought in the driest wood that each of us could find, but there just wasn't much to be found after several days of rain. We all huddled close to that sad little smoky fire sharing a big pot of venison chili. We must have been a sorry looking bunch of guys in our wet woools and boots!

Now you never know where a moment of magic is going to happen, but in my experience it's much more frequent when you get a bunch of longbow folks together. Every single person in camp was hunting with a longbow, and the magic was made of the tales of a couple fellows

who had hunted with them all over the world in the preceding forty years. I sat silently for hour after hour listening to tales of exotic hunts in faraway lands.

Apparently two of us were particularly awestruck by the tales that evening as we basically cornered those two poor gentlemen the next day! We asked a great many questions, and we got a lot of sound advice along with some encouragement to go and chase our dreams. The one thing that was stressed to us was this: go buy two matching heavy bows and get really good with them. Then pursue the biggest game on our bucketlist first. Their philosophy was that if it took us 40 years to get to the big stuff, we wouldn't be able to draw a heavy bow by the time it came around.

Later that same month the MLA was celebrating the beginning of our 30th year at our 2013 Winter Banquet. The same year Northern Mist Longbows was celebrating its 25th year and

Steve Turay graciously donated a spot on his build list for a special edition Whisper. The "Silver" would be limited to 25 bows but instead of numbering them 1 through 25, they are marked 1988 through 2012. In an inexplicable series of events I ended up holding the losing bid, and my name was the one added to the build list. Steve asked me what I wanted, and I told him of some big dreams spawned earlier in the month.

Steve arrived at the 2014 banquet with a rather long stick in a wool sock. He walks up to me, unties the sock, pulls out that longbow and strings it up. He places that bow in my hand and it is remarkable in its simplicity and beauty. It has black glass on the back and the belly. Laminations are thick bamboo. A short piece of Birdseye maple makes up its riser section. There was one marking on the belly of the upper limb, "1997".

1997 scales 85 pounds so it's legal to hunt any quarry on any continent. It also meant I had some exercise to do to get ready to hunt with this bow! I worked on arrows for quite awhile, but I came up with a great one. I wasn't quite accurate enough with it in time for the spring hog hunt where member Donovan Watson got his first hog, but it made that trip and I shot it in camp a bit. Just wasn't quite time yet. I kept shooting it through the summer and was doing really well with it coming into the fall. I hunted with it a few days for South Carolina hogs, then for a week in Georgia for deer. After those trips I brought it back to Michigan for our season. I pursued whitetails on several hunts downstate, and then for a week in Grayling. Rut was winding down and I had hunted this bow for 20 days, I couldn't believe that I still hadn't had a chance to draw on game yet! 2014 was proving to be a tough year for 1997!

Michigan firearms season was in full swing when I left to go hunt hogs on my last scheduled trip of the year. A group of hunters from Trad Gang met up at Wild Things in South Carolina and we hunted hard for a week along the Savannah River. While I'd been there in September I found trail cam-

era pictures of a really fantastic boar. It was a very long, very deep, very thick boar with a visible shield probably a couple inches thick. Knowing the caliber of hog I could get into, I stuck by 1997 for this trip too. There were a lot of factors working against us that week, but I still saw hogs every day I was there. On the third day I picked up on a bedded boar at 16 yards, but it's vitals were down in its bed. This one was the wrong color scheme to be the one I was after, but it was still a dream hog and I went after it! He picked up my movement while I was trying to get a good shot angle. He stood up as my foot hovered over some dry twigs I was trying not to snap. At 12 yards I met his gaze and he broke into a trot. I drew back and held the string as I watched him angle away, just didn't feel right.

Other than that encounter I'd drawn 1997 and let down for different reasons about a half a dozen times in the first four days. Finally on the fifth day of the hunt it came together we took our first shot on game together. I did my part, and the bow did its part. The results were exactly what every bowhunter hopes for with a perfect shot placement and a smooth pass through. It was a good day for us. I got to put a nice meat pig in the freezer and break in my new bow right. As for the trophy animals, I can always hope for next year!



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