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Dear Sportsman,

With Father's Day around the corner, I wanted to share a very touching testimonial from one of our hunters. Eric and his family have not only hunted many times at Dead Man's Pass Ranch but he has also contributed many hours working with us at the ranch. It has become a tradition for him and his son Davis, now 12 years old, to hunt with us every year.

I hope you enjoy this testimonial written by Eric. It is a long read, but it is so worth it!

*Sincerely,
 Michael W. McGee, Sr.*

*Every happy memory created for a child is another treasure of a lifetime.
 ~Donna Marie~*

A FAMILY TRADITION CONTNUES

The Best Hunting Memory for 3 Generations of Hunters

When I was eleven years old I got my very first chance to go deer hunting. A few years earlier, my Great Uncle had gotten my father involved in hunting and while I had been able to go on the trip and stay in that East Texas cabin, I never went with them on the actual hunt. That year was different though...they had built a new stand for my dad to hunt out of and there was room for me in there too. I knew from previous years that they didn't always return victorious, but I was convinced that on that afternoon hunt my dad and I were going to shoot the biggest buck in East Texas and "strut" back in to camp. I remember the excitement I felt just looking out at the landscape and waiting for a deer to emerge, but more importantly I remember just sitting there quietly with my dad feeling complete pride. There was no Mom around and no Sister around, just a couple of "men" ready to bring the bounty back home to the family. After a while, a buck did come out of a tree line into a clearing and I think I could actually see my heart beat as it jumped out of my chest. The way I remember it, I think it was about an 80-point buck (that's actually possible when you're eleven!), but my Dad said it was about 300 yards away and wasn't comfortable taking the shot. The following morning was so cold that I actually rolled up in the sleeping bag on the floor of the stand and slept. Then on the afternoon hunt we didn't even see a deer. We went home that weekend without a deer, but the memory of that time with my

Dad and the excitement of seeing that deer stuck with me. It was an experience unlike any other, and I don't know if it was the special bond that I felt with my Dad... or that I felt like I was one of the guys... or the excitement you get when you see the deer, but that trip held a special place in my heart. Unfortunately, my sports obligations kept me from being able to go over the next couple of years and then eventually my dad stopped going on hunting trips.

Fast forward about 23 years and I'm in my Mid-30s and I had an opportunity to go to Dead Man's Pass for the first time. I had never shot a deer and didn't even own a rifle, but went with a friend who had been a hunter for years and I was able to borrow my Dad's rifle that he had used so many years before. The first morning, I was sitting in a stand with the guide and so much had changed since I had last sat in a deer stand. Life was a hectic blur. I had a family of my own and a career that kept me way too busy. But silence and the crisp air started to bring back the excitement I remembered from years before. Then the feeder seemed to go off at the same time that the sun was coming up and soon I could make out the shape of several deer. Almost instantaneously the full excitement from so many years before came rushing back ... my heart began to pound out of my chest.



And while my father wasn't sitting next to me, I felt like he was with me as I raised his rifle and slowly placed it out of the window and took aim at the deer. I took the shot and dropped the deer, and knew that soon an 11-year-old boy in the body of a 30-something-year-old man was going to "strut" back to the lodge. Later that night at the lodge I remember sitting around with the other hunters and guides and enjoying some great food while telling jokes and sharing stories. Also being so far away from the "big city" and looking up at a perfectly clear sky made it seem like life was slowing down even if just for those few days, needless to say I had opened up that one special memory of hunting and I was fully hooked on it.

Over the past 6-7 years I have gone back to Dead Man's Pass several times and have really come to look forward to those trips several months in advance. I have also gone to a few of my friend's leases, but nothing is like going there. Every time we pull into the drive we are quickly greeted by the Ranch Manager and the Guides and soon meet other hunters ready to have a great weekend. I truly have a lot of memories there (including the time my wife decided to call me to let me know we were having a 3rd...). However, the trip I took there in November of 2014 was the best hunting trip of my life.

The reason is because in the years leading up to that trip, I would come home from hunting trips and it would be my son asking when he was going to get to go on the hunting trip. The hunting trips seemed to be "guy's weekends", but that's when I realized exactly what my 11-year-old was asking. Just like me, he wanted to be one of the "men" that was going hunting. Then the 11-year-old boy sitting in the stand with his Dad in 1986 flashed through my memory. Unfortunately, that hunting season had just ended so we wouldn't be able to go that year. But that's when I began to plan the hunting trip that would hold an even more special place in my heart. He would be 12 by the start of the next season and he informed me that he not only wanted to go, but he wanted to hunt too. Which was fine with me, I immediately began to think of all of the hunting trips we could take together in the coming years. However, there would be quite a bit of preparation that would have to be done. While I had previously taught him to shoot a 22 Rifle (which happened to be my Grandfather's and the same one that my Dad taught me to shoot on), I needed to get him comfortable with a hunting rifle. We bought him a Youth Model .243 and spent the next 8 months making sure that he knew everything about that rifle and spent countless hours at the range, but every minute spent together was well worth it.



The time for the trip was nearing and I don't know who was more excited, me or my son, or possibly even my dad. That's right, this was a hunting trip 30 years in the making, and 3 generations

were heading to the best ranch in Texas for a weekend hunting trip. On November 7th, I rolled down I-10 with my dad, my son and my dad's old rifle that I have been using for years (of course by now I've kind of claimed it as my own). The whole way down there I could see the excitement on my son's face and that made my heart race. I was so excited for him to have the experience that meant so much to me when I was younger, and to have my dad there as well ... whom I hadn't been hunting with since that one time 30 years earlier, it was just awesome! Each mile marker that we passed got us not only closer to the Ranch but closer to the one hunting trip that I knew would mean so much to all of us ... especially me. And once we got there, I can't even begin to say how much to staff went out of their way to make sure it was a special trip that we would remember forever. The Owner, the Ranch Manager, the Guides, even the chefs exceeded every expectation that I ever could have imagined. Like any other trip there, I expected that the Guides would be friendly and knowledgeable, the food would be great and the time back at the lodge would be relaxing. But on this trip, the guides made sure to include my son on everything that they were doing, explained things to him, they answered every question that he had and let him help wherever he could. They made sure that he was just like one of the "guys". He was the first one up each morning ready to go, and then in the evening watched every single deer get skinned and cleaned (even the other guest's deer). I knew from all of the preparation before the trip that he was excited, but now I could see that he too was getting hooked.

Overall it was a wonderful weekend and I have told everyone about it ... I think I probably have a grin from ear-to-ear when I talk about it, but it is the new special memory that fills my heart. There may be other places to hunt in Texas, but there's only one place that my son and I plan to go to every year for the foreseeable future. In fact we're already planning a trip for next season, and apparently it is still possible to believe that there is an 80-point out there! Thank you to everyone at Dead Man's Pass Ranch, you have truly made this the greatest hunting memory that 3 generations will keep with them forever.

~ Eric ~



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DEAD MAN'S PASS RANCH!*

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