

JUNIOR ESSAY – THIRD PLACE

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Age 11
Avoyelles Public Charter

"SCOOTER'S FIRST BUCK"

Halloween is our favorite holiday, so we stayed out pretty late trick or treating and visiting with family. I was dressed as Bumble Bee the transformer. At 9:00pm, mom had me say my goodbyes to all our family as they waved me off, wishing me good luck on my big hunting adventure. I had been selected for the 2015 Youth hunt at Flay McElroy WMA in Rayville. We headed home for a short nap. I dug through my candy, shucked my costume, cleaned up. I then went right to bed, although I don't know what for, because I was too excited to sleep. Mom stayed up packing & loading. Dad had been sleeping so he could make the drive. At midnight the alarms went off.

It was now November 1st. We piled into the SUV and headed north for the long drive to Floy McElroy WMA. We were all so pumped up and excited in hopes of me harvesting my first buck. I was so pumped up I wanted to blow my lid! We were the first to arrive at the WMA gate that morning at 4am and just waited. Once everyone arrived, the WMA workers called roll and we were allowed to draw numbered dominos from a Crown Royal Whisky bag! I pulled stand number 2. The WMA workers went over the rules & safety, and then we all loaded up on a long trailer. All the other youth hunters had come to hunt with their dads. We were the only family. We headed out to the stand as my mom took photos and waived us off, wishing us luck.

It was so cold as Dad and I climbed up and settled in. The stand was so nice, new, and comfy. As the sun came up, we could see over a big open food plot surrounded by timber. There was a bad, whirling wind blowing around. The beginning of the hunt was a little disappointing because we only saw a doe and a coyote. A little later we saw a big seven point buck. Right when I got my 7mm08 rifle up to the window, the buck took one bite of grass, through his head up, and hurried back into the woods. I was bummed! Before I knew it the morning hunt was over, I didn't know if I was excited for seeing deer or upset because I did not get a shot.

We were picked up by the trailer, and returned to the WMA shed. One of the girls on the hunt had harvested a buck. They began to skin and process her deer. We were given instruction of what time to return for the evening hunt. We decided to go check into our hotel, get some food & take a nap. When we awoke, dad told mom that she better suit up for the evening hunt because she was always my lucky charm. We all laughed because mom was with me for the first two deer I harvested. When we returned to Floy McElroy, we were given the option to keep the stand we hunted that morning or draw for a new location. It was so funny because everyone wanted to keep their stand. It was time to load up on that trailer again and everyone started joking with our family because dad was giving up his chance to come with me so mom could go. They thought it was cool that mom was my lucky charm. It really is different hunting with mom versus hunting with

dad. Anyway, we rolled out on that rough trailer in the evening sunlight. It was still cold but we were so excited you could hardly feel the cold. We settled in for the evening hunt. Mom had her binoculars and was scoping out the place as I fell asleep. All of a sudden she gently awoke me and told me there was a small 3 point making his way into the plot. She instructed me to quietly but quickly get the gun up and take the shot. Mom videoed with her phone, while I squeezed off a shot. That buck bolted straight up about 10 feet, then ran off, as the dust flew behind him! I missed. I was so angry at myself. I wanted to go look for blood but after watching the video it was clear that I had missed.

After about an hour had passed and I had calmed down, I noticed movement in the far back left corner of the plot when out trotted a doe, a six point buck and a three point buck. Oh here was my chance. As I prepared myself and my rifle, mom watched all three thru her binoculars and told me which one was the biggest. I found him in my scope but I had to wait, for what seemed like forever, for a clear shot. All three deer were huddle around each other eating. I had my scope centered on that six point and when mom gave me the okay of a clear shot, I pulled back the trigger. Oh my goodness! When we looked off we noticed all three deer disappear into the woods where they had entered the plot. I wanted to run out and look but mom would not let me. She made me reload and wait. Within moments, we saw a deer slowly re-enter the plot at that far back corner. Mom was all up in the binoculars. She started to tremble and told me that was the six point and she could see red blood dripping from his mouth. She instructed me to get the scope on him and be ready for another shot in case. The buck slowly walked to the center back of the plot. We were both trembling! He slowly laid down, folding his legs under himself but keeping his head up to look around. I was on him with my rifle and mom with her binoculars. Just as peaceful as it could have happened he slowly rolled his head over and expired right before our eyes! I had done it! I had Harvest my first buck!!! Within seconds mom's phone was ringing with dad on the other end. High fives, tears, and excitement was all you could hear. We called my family and told them all the news. Then it was time to claim my prize! We closed the windows, repositioned the chairs, locked up the stand, and made sure to leave it as we found it. I wanted to run to my buck but mom made me slowly approached him. I didn't know how to react. Mom took lots of pictures and expressed how proud she was of me. I filled out my tag but wasn't real sure what parish we were in or how to spell it. As we were finishing the tag, dad pulled up with the WMA worker and they began to congratulate me on getting the job done with no tracking required. Dad was so proud of me! We loaded my buck and began picking up all the other kids. Guess what? We all saw deer and almost everyone harvested that day! The other hunters joked around about how they were right about my mom being my good luck charm.

The funniest part was when we all made it back at the WMA shed with all the deer we harvested. It was time to skin our deer but we had a small problem. There were 5 deer, 1 gambrel, a dead sawzall battery, a hand meat saw with a broken blade and a lot of work to be done. We all pitched in to help each other to get them job done. I think we finished skinning and quartering at 10pm. We ended our night by icing down my buck in the hotel parking lot. We were all so happy but exhausted. It was definitely a family adventure I will always remember.