



John Mitchell (above right) and Garth Harris pose with the moose John shot in 2004



John Mitchell (above left) and Garth Harris pose with the deer Garth shot in 2004

## 50-50

By Garth Harris

While thinking of my life I came up with only 3 things I have longer than my wife (30 years this year). That would be my first .22 (which was my dad's first gun), my 1<sup>st</sup> shotgun I bought when I was 15 yrs old and my friend John.

John and I went to high school together. We had many of the same friends and started hunting together in 1971, man that's a long time ago. After we graduated my other friends seemed to drift away, but John and I went on to grow up together. John stuck with me during my early 20's when my life consisted of having a beautiful girl friend and marrying my wife (both the same). Then as we moved through the rest of twenties, this consisted of me telling John I can't hunt now because I have a house to build and I just had 2 baby daughters. Moving into our 30's was a little better; we went on our first bear hunt, (John 1 Garth 0). There was also times that I had to say "John, I can't hunt now I'm setting up my business, my wife is in school and I have 2 daughters to watch play ball. John still stayed my friend. Then we hit our 40's I was still working on my business, One daughter got married, the other went on to be a police officer, my wife was teaching school and John and I got to hunt even more. We hunted bears in Ontario, ducks in North Dakota, pigs and deer in Texas. We even had venison in our freezers every year.

This past year we hit a milestone, we both turned 50. We both agreed this year we would have a hunt of our lifetime. For us this was going to be a moose hunt in Alberta, so this past October we packed up and headed north to get us some moose. I shot my moose the last full day of hunting. The last morning we made our last morning stand for John, no moose. We packed up the Argo and the trailer and headed for the main camp about an hour away. As we crested a hill there in front of us was a bull. John having a disabled permit was allowed to have bullets in his magazine but not the chamber. He chambered a shell fired once fired twice and then fired a third time as the bull ran to the right then the left and out of sight. As the guide looked at John in sheer amazement he said "you missed all three times". I reassured the guide this could not have been, I have hunted to many times with John. And he doesn't miss. (I only remember one miss, but that's a whole another story.) when we had driven up to where the moose left the trail there he was standing 50 yards of the trail ready to drop, so John put him down for good. Just to mention this is John's 3rd animal he took the last hour of the last day, a moose, a bear and a 6x6 elk, and he's not even Irish. This made starting out our 50's just great.

Later this fall we were hunting the t-zone in an earn a buck area. I shot a nubby on Saturday meaning that I would be able to now shoot a buck. While John hunted the bottom of a ridge I made my way to the top maybe about 300 yards from John. I had pased 2 does and to 2 small bucks when a big deer came flying across the ridge. I saw 1 horn but it was enough to know it was a good buck. I took 2 shots and knew that I had hit him. I radioed to John that I had hit a nice buck and proceeded to follow the blood trail. It lead down this ravine and wouldn't you know it, It was going right to John I heard 2 shots followed be a radio message saying" get done here quick" as he laid my buck to rest 40 yards from him. It was my best buck to date, an 8 pointer with a 20" spread.

Now it looked like I pulled ahead of my best friend, but not for long because then as the gun deer season came, on a drive John dropped a 10 pointer with a 21" spread. What a season to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> birthdays. John and I can't wait till next season to see what 51 brings.