

The Tony Semple Foundation For Hope

The Tony Semple Foundation for Hope was established three years ago by former Detroit Lions offensive guard Tony Semple, who played in the NFL for nine years. The foundation's mission is dedicated to providing inspiring and meaningful outdoor experiences for youngsters who suffer from life-threatening illnesses. The foundation has partnered with great sponsors like Bass Pro, Mothwing, Thompson/Center Arms and Leupold to provide complete hunting experiences for terminally ill

five whitetail hunts in Michigan and three elk hunts in Missouri. In 2008, the foundation plans to sponsor 15 whitetail hunts, 10 in Michigan and five in Wisconsin. In addition, several more elk hunts are planned in Missouri, along with some alligator hunts in Florida.

Whenever the foundation provides an outdoor adventure for a particular youngster, Tony is either there in person or he calls upon one of his many athlete friends to attend. In some cases, the youngster's favorite

A LUNCH WITH STRANGERS BY BRIAN RUSK

I've been doing freelance video work for *Bowhunter TV* and *North American Whitetail TV* for four years. Some hunts have been great, while others have been quite challenging. On my last hunt, it rained for four days straight, and trying to keep the camera dry was not easy. But I've met some great people on each of my trips. And it never fails that the people I've met end up making even the most challenging hunts memorable.

I recently served as cameraman for Duncan Dobie, editor of *North American Whitetail* magazine, on a mid-October bowhunt in Adams County Ohio. I was excited. I knew that Adams County had the potential for producing some great action. Our host was outdoor writer and photographer Tom Cross, who did the exclusive story and photos on the "Amish Buck," taken by crossbow hunter John Schmucker in September 2006. At 295 3/8 non-typi-



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TONY SEMPLE FOUNDATION FOR HOPE

In September 2007, young Mitchell Jimison of Florida went on a dream hunt at Deer Tracks Ranch in Fife Lake, Michigan, where he bagged this outstanding 7-pointer. Pictured with Mitchell on the right is a smiling Tony Semple; on the left is Craig Mortz, one of the founders of the Tony Semple Foundation for Hope.

or severely life-challenged youngsters.

On each hunting adventure, all expenses are paid for the youngster and his or her family, including transportation, lodging, guide services, licenses (if required), meals, clothing for the event, footwear, outerwear, taxidermy service and any other related items. In short, the Tony Semple Foundation for Hope is dedicated to providing a first-class experience for the youngsters who participate.

Last year, the foundation sponsored

athlete shows up. Having the ability to do this has set the Tony Semple Foundation for Hope apart and makes it singular and special in the outdoor world.

There are no paid staff members working for the foundation, and 100 percent of all money raised is used to provide unique outdoor adventures for life-challenged youngsters. For more information about the Tony Semple Foundation for Hope, call (517) 372-3226 or go on the Web to www.tonysemplefoundation.org.



PHOTO BY DUNCAN DOBIE

North American Whitetail TV cameraman Brian Rusk got a lot more than he bargained for when he traveled to Adams County, Ohio, last year. Here he poses with the 295 3/8-inch "Amish Buck."

cal inches, John's buck is one of the biggest bucks ever killed by a hunter.

Tom arranged a meeting with John Schmucker so that we could videotape a "big-buck profile" on the 35-point megabuck for *North American Whitetail TV*. In fact, John and his wife Marlene invited us to have an Amish

lunch with them. I must admit that I didn't know what to expect. I was excited to meet John and his family and to have the opportunity to see the "Amish Buck," and I was not disappointed!

As John met us and led us into his home, we were greeted by Marlene and two cute little girls. After a brief introduction we walked into John's living room. There on the wall in front of us was one of the finest bucks I have ever laid eyes on. As we admired the deer, John told us how he had watched it many times out in a bean field behind his house during the summer of 2006. As John spoke, I realized that he was an avid whitetail hunter much like me who truly enjoys the challenge of hunting.

Marlene had prepared a wonderful meal. After being seated around the table and having a silent grace, we were treated to a real Amish feast of delicious homegrown vegetables, homemade bread and delicious beef from a cow that John had raised himself. For dessert we were treated to a mouthwatering "three-berry" pie that Marlene had made. We talked and laughed and had an unforgettable meal.

At some point during the conversation, Marlene asked how long we had all known each other. I looked at Duncan and Tom, and we all realized that none of us had ever met before that week. There I was, eating lunch with a table full of strangers. We all came from different religious backgrounds, we had all met fairly recently, and on the wall in the other room hung one of the biggest whitetail bucks ever taken by a hunter. It just doesn't get much better than that! Whitetail hunting had brought us all together that day, and I can honestly say that it was truly one of the best moments of my life!

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