

Two shots, two deer, three smiles

Story & photos
by Angel Carpenter

Walt Gentis - A hunting story



Walt Gentis shows a picture of his grandkids' first hunt, which he took them on four years ago.

Walt Gentis practically lives and breathes hunting, but his greatest joy is sharing his knowledge of the sport with family and friends. Gentis, a Canyon City resident and retired Malheur Lumber Company timber manager, has been hunting since he was 8 or 9 years old.

He started his hunting adventures on Miller Mountain near Canyon City, and still hunts there to this day with permission from Malheur, which owns the land.

That's where he took his grandkids Jack and Cheyenne Gentis for their first hunt four years ago, when Jack was 12 and Cheyenne was 15.

Before the big day, he taught them in target practice.

Among the basics he taught: "Keep the deer's shoulder in the crosshairs," and "Don't lift your head, keep your head on the stock, come back with the recoil, then count to three before you lift your head," he said.

"The kids were really excited about hunting, and it was the first time for them both," he said.

They had a buck rifle tag for the Murderers Creek Unit.

When hunting day arrived Walt took Jack out first – the senior Gentis had spotted three nice bucks earlier, and knew where to locate them.

In hunting, he said, the trick is to "know where the animal will be and intercept them."

Walking along and peeking over a ridge, they found the deer.

"I told Jack to sit down and get ready – remain calm and cool," he said. "There's no reason to get excited – once it's laying on the ground, then you can get excited."

Walt continued, "Jack asked 'does this gun kick, grandpa?' – I told him this gun is tried and true, and you won't miss. When that gun went off, it knocked him plumb over."

Jack shot his deer from about 70 yards with his grandpa's favorite hunting rifle, a 721 Remington in 30-06 caliber.

Cheyenne was up next, and she also hit her target on the first shot, from about 100 yards.

"It was two shots, two deer, two happy grandkids and a happy grandpa," Walt said.

He said he also makes the kids "gut what they hunt."

"I coached Jack, he gutted, and he did a good job," he said.

Gentis has had many successful hunts over the years, evidenced by the many antler displays in his home and shop.

He said that success developed as he learned about the habits of deer, elk and other wildlife he hunts.

Fifty years ago he followed a 6x7-point elk through the Strawberry Wilderness during a hunt.

He tracked the animal for 17 miles, then shot it.

A short time later, he was fortunate to come upon another hunter who drove him back to camp.

"Rule No. 1: if you can't get the pickup to it, don't shoot it," he said. "Rule No. 2: If you break rule No. 1, you're on your own!"

Since that long hike, going after that elk, Gentis has learned a better way to hunt.

He said it's important to understand the animal, knowing what they're going to do.

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