

Never Signed An

BY CODY ROBBINS

Five miles down the road from my family farm in Saskatchewan, in a little town called Tessier, lives Mr. Bentley Coben. This very accomplished fellow has been producing hunting videos for the last 20 years and is known for having the largest shed antler collection in North America. Since the time I was barely old enough to hunt, this man was a 10,000-pound statue of solid gold in my eyes. Someday, I wanted to be just like him.

was as if a young girl had just bumped into Britney Spears in a shopping mall! There, standing right before me, was Mr. Glen O'Neil. I had a poster of him at home on my bedroom wall. I had watched him on TV, spurring the hair off every bronc he ever rode. It seemed impossible for me to digest that he was a real person and not just a make-believe super hero. Again, someday, I wanted to be just like him.

My absolute most favourite scene on any hunting DVD



Cody Robbins of Delisle, Saskatchewan, with the great whitetail he took with his muzzleloader in October of 2008. Brow-tines are impressive at over eight inches. The antlers grossed 172 5/8 inches.

At a pro rodeo in Pincher Creek, Alberta, in the summer of 1995, my friend Dustin Flundra and I were entered in the steer riding competition. Behind the chutes, I was hanging up my gear when I noticed a saddle bronc rider doing the same. I looked at him in disbelief, and my knees started to shake. It

ever produced is the moose hunt on Jim Shockey's *Hunting Adventures Two*. A monster Alaskan Yukon moose is headed straight for Mr. Shockey and his guide less than 15 yards away!

"He's going to kill us!" the guide whispers.

Autograph

"I got no shot!" Jim replies.

Throughout my teenage years, I watched Mr. Shockey on *Realtree Outdoors*, and read his articles in almost every hunting magazine I picked up. There was no doubt the man in the funky-shaped cowboy hat and red neckerchief was a legend, and my new king.

These are the kind of guys who sign autographs on a regular basis, and you can watch them on TV and see them in promotional advertisements in magazines. They're role models and leaders to people young and old. No question, these guys have definitely earned their spot in the limelight, but I'm here to tell you that sometimes you don't have to look so far to spot your hero.

When I was 13, I got my first bow and arrow, and in a jiffy I was obsessed. Sitting in science class, staring out the window, I would wonder when or if I would ever get the opportunity for a shot at a big buck with my stick and string. I just couldn't imagine how exciting it would be to actually have a deer that close to you and have it be completely ignorant to your presence.

In Saskatchewan, if you're under the age of 16, you must have a guardian with you while hunting at all times. This, for me, was a ginormous dilemma. My family farm was 17 miles out of town, surrounded by stubble fields, with no one else in my family that hunted – not very conducive to a young Robin Hood with no driver's licence or compadre that was of proper age. However, to every problem, there must be a solution, right? I had to find someone who had a driver's licence, a vehicle that they didn't mind driving through the twigs, a lot of spare time, and the clincher: didn't mind lying motionless in awkward positions while millions of mosquitoes built freeways on his or her forehead! Hmm . . . my parents, too busy. My brother, fat chance. My Grandma Robbins, perfect! What a genius idea! While growing up, I couldn't remember her ever letting me down. Whether I asked her to make me spiral Kraft



Cody has quite a track record as a successful big game hunter. This side view shows the mass on his whitetail.

dinner, a boiled egg mashed up in a cup, or even playing rodeo in her living room (I would ride a pillow horse, she would be the steer, and I would bulldog her!), she always came through. She is the best grandmother in the world!

The phone rang twice, Gram answered, and I gave her the used car salesman pitch with a bit of a sweet little grandson tone. She replied, "Yes. When do I have to be there?"

"ASAP! And don't forget, you can't wear perfume or any kind of smelly stuff. You must wear a hat, too; it's not a fashion show out there, Gram." She was on her way.

By 5:00 p.m., we had built a little blind out of silver willow situated 20 yards from a game trail that some whitetail bucks had been using to head out to a hayfield. Not expecting any deer until closer to evening, we were lying on our backs, staring up at the sky, while I brought my grandma up to speed on how the sport of bowhunting worked. Our stories were interrupted by the snort and stomp of a deer.

"Don't move, Gram!" I slowly got up on my knees and peeked over the blind. Three bucks were standing in a row on the game trail! To me, they were monsters; to the rest of the world, they were yearlings with their first set of antlers.



Thirteen-year-old Cody and his grandmother, Georgina Robbins, with his first archery buck.

Hyperventilating, I drew my bow, rose to my feet, and shot at the lead buck. I can tell you now that I never aimed whatsoever. I just aimed my bow in his general direction and sent it, only for the three little bucks to stare back at me and wonder what had just happened. I grabbed another arrow and drew back again, but this time I focused and made a perfect shot! This was the thrill I had been dreaming about.

We started tracking the buck. I followed the blood around in a big circle only to spot Grandma standing over the fallen deer that she had already found. I ran up to join her and was completely overwhelmed with joy. What a feeling! I carefully inspected my prize, then gave my hunting partner a big hug. She had a tear running down her cheek.

One year later, I got my first muzzleloader, and again I was in the same predicament as the year before. I had the equipment, the desire, and my tags, but no guardian. One phone call later, and Gram and I were marching across the prairie, heading for our evening perch.

Being the bossy little cud I was, I informed her of how expensive the equipment was that she was carrying. I think she had a camera in one hand and a rangefinder in the other. I made it quite clear that if she were to take a spill, she would have to sacrifice her body long before putting the gear in jeopardy.

We came to a really tight, four strand, barbed wire fence. I climbed through first, then held the wires apart for Gram. While swinging her body horizontally through the fence, she caught her pant leg on the wire, and her forward momentum

carried her onward, leaving her landing gear behind. Doing exactly as I had informed, she put her gadget-filled arms behind her in her descent to the ground. It all seemed to happen in slow motion as she fell face-first into my muzzleloader, cracking her nose on the ring of the scope, then continuing onward upside down in the dirt, still with her arms in the air protecting my stuff! Quite confident I had just killed my own grandmother, I swooped down to her rescue.

Once the dust settled, we added up the damages: a bruised shoulder and a cut across the bridge of her nose that could easily use a stitch or two to stop the blood from dripping down her face. Feeling about the size of a mouse, I held the

wires apart once again to head back to the truck. "What are you doing?" Grandma asked.

"Going home to clean you up!" I replied.

"No, I'm fine, let's get to your blind!" she demanded. Here was a lady very close to 80 years old who looked like she had just been in a bar room brawl and she insisted we carry on. Don Cherry would have been proud!

Last fall I shot my biggest whitetail deer to date in one of my favourite little hunting spots. This hunt is actually the first episode of my new show called "Live2Hunt" on *Wild TV*. While sitting and waiting for this buck to come in, I realized my blind was set up just over the hill from where my grandma and I had found a set of sheds together almost 15 years ago. During the hours I spent in that blind that night, I thought back to all the adventures that she and I had shared in the woods. Remembering that tear on her cheek the night I got my first buck with a bow made me realize she wasn't a hunter herself, and every one of those journeys we had shared, she had done for me.

On February 8th of this year, my grandmother turned 90 years old, and she's doing great! She is the most selfless person I have ever met. I've never heard her complain, and she always has a smile on her face. I'm sure if I called her up right now and told her I was going on a polar bear hunt and needed a cameraman, she would grab her coat! Even though she has never signed an autograph, Georgina Robbins is my hero. 🐾