

MICHIGAN OUTDOOR PROPERTIES

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER ON OUTDOOR REAL ESTATE



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TEDS PLACE

RICK PATRIDGE

This month's adventure is about hunting with friends. One thing I've learned over all the years I've spent hunting is that hunting is an activity best enjoyed with friends and family. Yeah, there are times when it feels good to be out there by yourself, perched high in an old oak, bow in hand, watching the world go by. But I've found over the years the memories that seem to stick in my mind the best are those that involved being with friends.

For instance, there was the time I got invited up to a buddy's bow camp near Baldwin Michigan. It is a place I always affectionately knew as "Ted's Place".

Today there's a top-notch beautiful home there, but when I frequented the place, it was an old travel trailer, pit toilet, and a fire ring. One of those places where memories are born, most of the time nearly every hour. First off was the place we called home for the weekend, the "huntin" trailer.

If you traveled the highways of Michigan around deer season you've seen what I mean. They usually appear as if they are certain to break apart at any moment while they are pulled at 85MPH north up I-75. Usually painted some form of camo, with leaves and sticks flying off the roof. Probably haven't been moved since they were parked after last season. Sometimes, if you look close enough, you can see all the resident mice inside on the window ledges. Eyes wide, looking for all the world like a bunch of kids on a bus headed for summer camp. Yep, Ted's Place was a lot like that. The "huntin" trailer had beds on each end, complete with mattresses thick as a sheet of notebook paper.

The only heat source was lighting the burners on the propane stove. There were a few issues with the heat source. Biggest was at night while you were trying to sleep, the mice kept ganging up round the flaming burners singing old camp songs. I also found it difficult to get much sleep standing up all night, since any heat the stove burners produced was stored at ceiling height. Down there at couch / bed level the air temps always seemed to hover just above zero, and you had to deal with both your nostrils and eyes freezing shut.

Beyond a doubt thought, the most memorable part of the "huntin" trailer was the mice. During the daylight hours they were non-existent but come nightfall all hell broke loose. Most were ganged up round the flaming stove burners, while the rest were in constant search of food and refreshments. All night long they ran back and forth across your sleeping bag. Some occasionally stopping long enough to be warmed by your breath as in the morning there'd always be a small pile of crumbs next to your nose.

In a vain attempt to control the population Ted always had those sticky glue traps, small sheets of sticky paper, set out to catch the mice. Now I must tell you, those things work. Why I bet you we went thru at least a couple dozen every weekend. A few caught mice, but most somehow found their way attached to the bottom of your socks. As mentioned earlier, the propane stove served double duty. It not only kept the ceiling warm, but it did also function as intended, to heat food. Now granted I suspect it heated more food for the mice at night than us during the day. Every morning, we had to spend 15 minutes wandering around trying to find where the mice had left the "roasting sticks" we needed to heat our toast.

There were some mornings, the "roasting sticks" were nowhere to be found, and we were forced to use forks, normally plastic ones. The trick here was keeping them from melting before the toast got done.

The bathroom facilities consisted of the good ole outhouse. This one happened to be a "two holer", which always seemed rather odd to me. The whole vision of two guys, who have eaten nothing, but chili, beans, and toast coated with plastic fork, setting next to each other in an outhouse is, well, just wrong. As for a place to shower or wash up, that involved a trip down to either the closest river or lake. Oh yeah that was an eye-opening experience in October. Grab your swimming trunks, a bar of soap, and usually having forgotten to bring a bath towel, a roll of paper towels. Nothing like breaking off a layer of skim ice from the lake surface to wade out and bathe.

As with most deer camps, there were few deer taken, but a lot of memories made.

PAGE 1

NOV 2023 • ISSUE NO. 1

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