



Faithful Companion

BY JOSHUA SWANAGON

With hunting season almost upon us yet again, our thoughts turn towards our gear. It is not uncommon to have that one trusty hunting knife you've used for most of your life and you couldn't possibly think of retiring it.

Once you've placed your trust in something for so long and it's proved faithful, it's hard to let it go. Every year, I bring my Wicked Edge sharpening system with me to deer camp and work on everyone's knives, and it's very cool to see the variety of knives that show up each year; all different knives for all the different personalities, physiques and methods of processing deer.

There is one, however — an old Schrade that's brought by one of the old-

er gentlemen in camp — that has been on the hunt for more years than some of the hunters in camp have been alive. A knife as seasoned as its owner himself, with an edge that has been sharpened so many times that its original form is worn down and almost indistinguishable. But make no mistake, this knife has faithfully served its owner from day one and has earned its permanent place at his side. There are times when you see someone with an old knife and the conversation

rises about replacing the knife, but this is not one of those situations, and that question would not dare come up.

When you find the right knife it can be like finding the right friend; you may not know it in the beginning, but as the years pass and it has been there through the toughest of times, you know you've found the right one. On the hunt you have to be sure that you can trust your knife to dress out your game without failing or causing undo fatigue, or you'll be forced to drag out unnecessary weight or hike back in for it later with a more trustworthy knife. Knife selection can be a very expensive and daunting task, but when you find that right one, just like a good friend, never let it go.

One day, you may be the old guy sitting around deer camp with a knife that's older, more seasoned and wiser than most of the hunters in camp with you.

Stay sharp and keep it real. **KI**