



# KNOW YOUR CAMPMATES

STORY AND PHOTO BY JOSHUA SWANAGON

**D**eer camp is a very serious thing. Sometimes. It's that time of year when friends and family get together to return to our roots, spend some quiet time with nature, fill our freezer and sit around camp swapping lies about the one that got away. This is a time of reflection, preparation and shenanigans.

If you have ever spent any time in a deer camp, then you know the types of hazards that can be present when your friends and family are involved. I remember one year that one of our cousins brought a huge blow-up mattress. It was queen size and about two and half feet tall. It's not that the rest of us—who were sleeping on cots—were jealous, just opportunistic.

One night, we waited until he went to the bathroom, and we let most of the air out of his mattress. When he came back, he couldn't believe that it had gone down so much. But, unflinchingly, he refilled it.

Shortly after, he went back into the bathroom to get himself cleaned up for the night, and we deflated his mattress again. He seemed a little more perturbed this time around, and started looking for the problem. When nothing stood out as an issue that could cause such calamity, he filled it back up again.

The White Fang from TOPS Knives has assisted in processing a few deer in camp.

Ultimately, for the final straw, we waited until he went outside for a few minutes, and we released the air one more time. Upon entering the lodge, he lost it. He tore the bedding off, got a bowl of water with dish soap in it and rubbed it all over the bed, frantically looking for bubbles. His brother, who was sleeping in the cot next to him, finally said, "Do you get the feeling they're messing with you?" It was at that point that the entire lodge erupted in laughter.

**"THIS IS A TIME OF REFLECTION, PREPARATION AND SHENANIGANS."**

You might be asking what this story has to do with knives. The answer is: nothing. It is just an anecdote to help you relive some of your best deer camps and get you ready and excited for this year's big hunt.

But it also has a moral. When something like this happens to you in deer camp, before you get excited and start frantically looking for the cause, first look to those around you. You just might be the cheap entertainment for the rest of camp.

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

*Joshua Swanagon*