

# Beams

## To Brag About!

*It's rare for even a Boone and Crockett non-typical to have main beams that stretch 30 inches, but this Ohio giant from yesteryear has a pair that beat that mark with room to spare!*

As a documentary filmmaker, I've traveled the world to interview some of the legendary record-holders whose sporting achievements have stood the test of time. Muhammad Ali, George Foreman, Joe Frazier, Reggie Jackson, Wilt Chamberlain and Monica Seles are some of the legends with whom I've had the honor of working. So, on a recent visit home to Ohio, I felt it my duty as a sports historian to interview another important record-holder. The man's a deer hunter, and he happens to be my uncle: Ed Dooner.

Uncle Ed's been hunting big game for most of his 73 years, but in a lifetime of great hunting memories, one from 43 years ago still stands out: downing a northeastern Ohio trophy buck that still ranks among North America's most impressive ever.

With my uncle's colorful hunting story tape-recorded for posterity, I paid a visit to his home and had him play it for me once more as we sat in his trophy room filled with a variety of sporting souvenirs. There's a mounted black bear from a few years ago, a showcase full of rifles, and a number of autographed photos of famous baseball players and such renowned boxers as Kid Gavilan and Max Schmeling. There's even a red boxing glove signed by "The Greatest," Muhammad Ali. But the centerpiece of this room is the large glass display case containing the trophy buck Uncle Ed shot in 1956.

As we snuggled up to the bar, he

*In this old photo, Ed Dooner poses beside the deer locals knew as "King of the Hill." Ed got him during slug season in 1956. Photo courtesy of Ed Dooner.*

by F. Daniel Somrack

replayed that momentous day for me as if it were only yesterday:

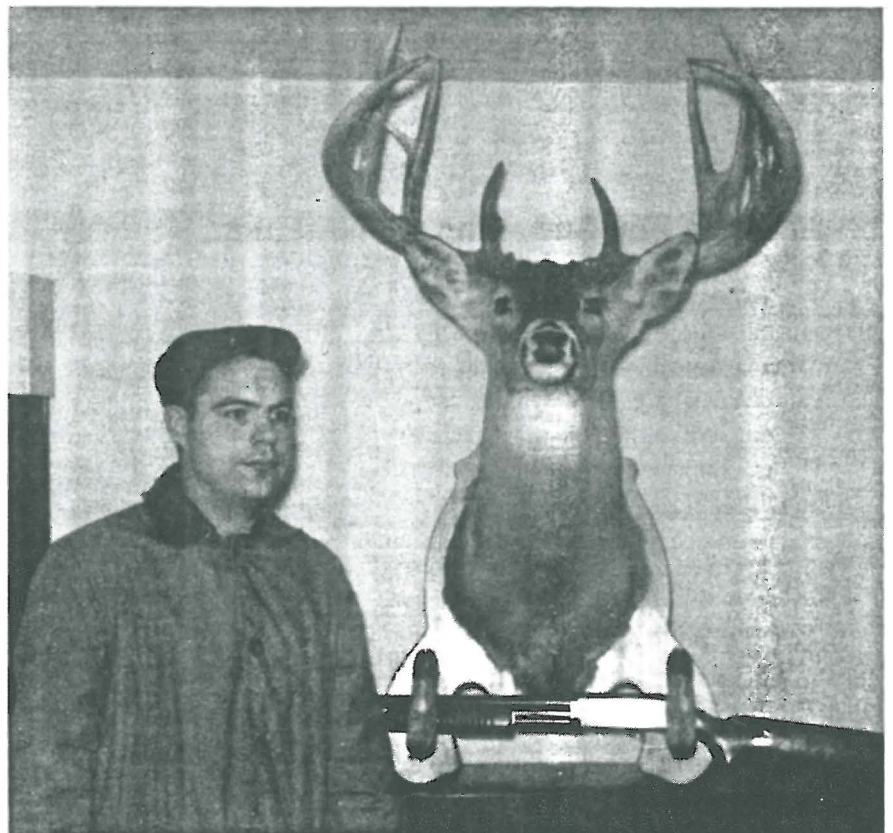
"I walked into the woods alone that morning at about 4 a.m. on the third and final day of deer season. I was determined to be in my stand well before daybreak. It was another dreary, cold morning like the day before and the day before that.

"The area in which I was hunting consisted of open farmland with large corn fields, an adjacent wooded area and low, swampy terrain near the Cuyahoga River. I located my stand

where I had the greatest possible cover while maintaining the widest vantage point over the entire area.

"When I got settled, there was a light sprinkle of snow falling from dark, low-hanging clouds. At daybreak, I could see the morning light beginning to rise over the crest of the wooded hills and saw the rays pour down on the river across the field. I was constantly on watch for any sign of life, but on this morning the woods and fields were unusually serene.

"About noon, a cold gale began to blow, and the early-morning snow squall became a blizzard. With the



temperature standing at 10 degrees, my stamina and perseverance were being tested by the minute. After hours alone in my stand and shivering from the wind, I was growing increasingly restless. Only my eyes were exposed to the elements, yet my hands and feet were frozen numb. I thought about a warm fire. I thought about a hot meal. But mainly I thought about that giant buck the neighboring Amish farmers had called 'King of the Hill.'

"About 1 p.m., with the sleet and the cold unrelenting, I was seriously considering calling it a day when, to my surprise, the wind abated and the sun peeked through the clouds. Within minutes there was a dead calm all around me.

"A few moments later, a loud, single shot rang off in the distance. I peered across the field into the timber area where the shot originated. Like a mirage, I saw the sun reflecting off the antlers of a gigantic buck that had sprung from the underbrush and stood along the river.

"At this point, the large whitetail was out of range for me, and my only hope for a clear shot would be for the buck



*Ed's magnificent buck makes the B&C record book despite having only 11 scorable points. The 4x4 frame nets 182 4/8! Photo courtesy of Ed Dooner.*

to turn and move in my direction. As I whispered a prayer to myself, the buck miraculously turned and began charging upriver toward my stand. When he was within 30 yards, I lifted

my 12-gauge J.C. Higgins, aimed for the shoulder and slowly squeezed the trigger. The blast echoed across the fields. The buck danced for a moment in a circle, then dropped motionless. And thank God the buck dropped from a single shot. I was so cold by this time that I don't think I would have been able to load another slug.

"Luck stayed with me as I examined the buck, which weighed well over 300 pounds. The deer had dropped into ankle-deep water, and as I stood there pondering my fate, two Amish farmers happened out of nowhere and assisted me with the deer. To this day, I don't know how I would have retrieved that deer without their help."

Uncle Ed's 11-pointer, shot near LaDue Reservoir, in Geauga County, definitely was one for the record books. Using the 9th edition of the Boone and Crockett Club's *Records of North American Big Game* as a reference, I was amazed to learn that of the several thousand B&C whitetails taken over the years, this one has among the largest frames on record.

B&C officials in New York scored the rack of the 320-pound buck and

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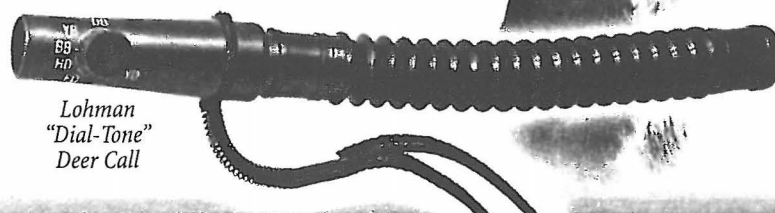
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came up with a net non-typical score of 197 5/8 points. What makes this so significant is that of all of the non-typicals ever accepted for B&C entry (minimum score 195), no other deer scoring as high as Uncle Ed's does so with so few scorable points (11). This speaks to the tremendous size of the rack, particularly the main beams and inside spread.

The left beam is 32 3/8 inches and the right 31 5/8, measurements that compare quite favorably to those of any other buck in the B&C records, typical or non-typical. In fact, the 9th edition of the record book shows that among all B&C whitetail entries — typical or non-typical — this buck's left beam still ranks No. 2, the right No. 5. Moreover, the inside spread measures 25 2/8 inches, ranking the buck 18th among B&C non-typicals in that regard.

This trophy still holds the unofficial world record for the longest left main beam on a non-typical whitetail. Jack Reneau, director of big game records for B&C, points out, "Although our club doesn't recognize records for individual beam lengths, Dooner's

buck is the only one ever killed in Ohio with both main antler beams measuring more than 30 inches."

Scientists at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, where the mount once was on display, estimated that the buck was 4 years old when harvested.

"When I shot the deer, I didn't know anything about trophy bucks," Uncle Ed says. "I was just a hunter." So how

***"My hunting partner asked, 'Why would you want a deer hunting license for Ohio if there aren't any deer here?'"***

did he first learn of the "King of the Hill" buck?

"It all started the day my beagle, Sam, picked up the scent of a rabbit along the Cuyahoga River," he says. "While following the dog, I came across two Amish gentlemen who were cutting firewood. They told me about a giant buck they had seen recently in their corn fields.

"They said that it lived in the heavy underbrush along the river. They had never seen anything quite like it in their lives. They called it 'King of the

Hill.' They claimed that you could see its large rack shining in the moonlight.

"After hearing their story, I decided to get a deer hunting license. My hunting partner asked, 'Why would you want a deer hunting license for Ohio if there aren't any deer here?' (Note: Ohio had never had a statewide deer season in modern times before that year, and deer numbers were much lower than today.) I went out and got my license anyway, and I'm glad I did. I only wish that my dad would have been living. He would have been real proud of that buck. My father was a great hunter."

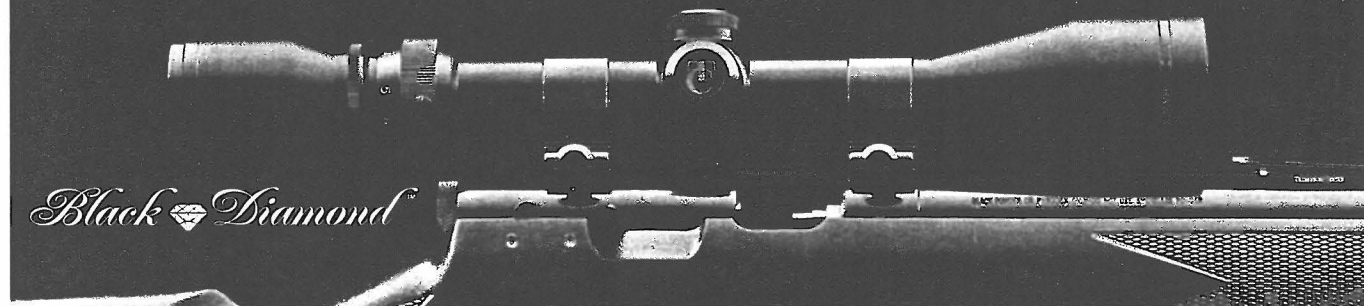
Uncle Ed spends his days welcoming friends and even some strangers into his home to see his prized deer. "That's what this room is for," he says, proudly standing alongside the case containing the mount. "I've had a lot of fun with this deer, a wonderful time."

Retired as a union representative for Cleveland Pneumatic Tool Company, Uncle Ed still hunts whitetails with his son, Eddie Jr., in the Salt Fork Lake area to the south. The veteran hunter manages to take a deer every year, and he claims he won't quit until he can find a successor to the 'King'!

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