

Catching Dreams:

Jace's Antelope

Richard Mann

A pronghorn hunt in Wyoming gives a young man from Louisiana some time away from his battle with leukemia.

Jace Trahan

is a high-school senior from Duson, La.

On Nov. 30, 2005, Jace was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL). Jace was 16 years old. By 4 a.m. the next day, Jace was admitted to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn., where a chemotherapy protocol was started immediately.

It's fairly common for a patient receiving the treatment Jace was being administered to enter remission by day 19. Jace didn't. His cancer level was still at 70 percent. A bone-marrow transplant was the next step. The difficulty with bone-marrow transplants is finding a matching donor. Generally, parents are not a good match for their children, but luckily, Jace's mother was a match, and the transplant was successfully completed.



A leukemia patient at St. Jude's, Jace Trahan is an outdoor enthusiast who experienced his hunt of a lifetime.



Catching Dreams: Jace's Antelope

It's been more than two years since Jace was diagnosed with leukemia, and he is not out of the woods yet. With support from his close-knit family and friends, Jace maintains a strong will and keeps the attitude of a survivor.

Dealing with a life-threatening disease is an incredibly difficult

emotional and financial task. Dreams and prayers for health are ever present and, to survive, patients need dedicated supporters at their side. During long struggles, it's sometimes the fulfillment of lesser dreams that keeps hope alive and courage from waning. Jace had a dream to

go big-game hunting. It was a financial impossibility for his family but the folks at Catch-A-Dream were listening.

Wishes Granted

Catch-A-Dream's singular purpose is to provide outdoor experiences to fill the gap created when the

Outfitting Dreams

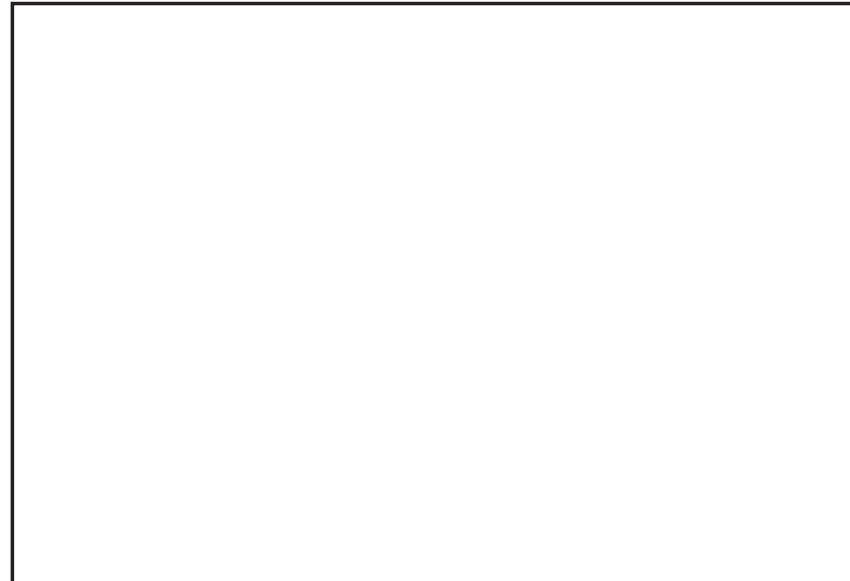
Table Mountain Outfitters is owned and operated by Scott and Angie Denny. They offer fair-chase hunts for pronghorns, whitetails, mule deer, elk, cougars, bears, buffalos and turkeys. Scott and Angie are dedicated parents and include their children in their business and the outdoors. One evening, their 7-year-old son helped skin an antelope and later that night was found washing dishes. Scott and Angie's daughter helped with meals and helped her dad haul Jace's antelope out of a rugged Wyoming canyon.

A hunt with Table Mountain Outfitters feels like a hunt with family and friends and that's the way it ought to be. This caring, family atmosphere is also reflected in the fact that Table Mountain has sponsored three

*Scott and Angie Denny (left) guided
Jace and his parents.*



Catch-A-Dream hunts. Scott told me, "We get requests for donations and sponsorships all the time, and, of course, we have to be concerned about the integrity and motivation behind the requests. We have been continually impressed with Catch-A-Dream and are honored to support the organization and be a part of making dreams come true for these brave kids."



Catching Dreams: Jace's Antelope



Hunt chaperone and Catch-A-Dream representative Phil Hanberry presents Jace a plaque recognizing him as a Catch-A-Dream Junior Partner.

Make-A-Wish Foundation established a national policy precluding granting a child's wish involving hunting or the use of "firearms, hunting bows or other hunting or sport-shooting equipment." Catch-A-Dream grants outdoor experiences to children under 19 years of age who have a

life-threatening illness.

Catch-A-Dream was conceptualized by noted outdoorsman and cancer patient Bruce Brady. Brady drew strength and hope from the outdoors, and during the last days of his struggle, he envisioned a program that would provide outdoor adventures for terminally ill children. Catch-A-Dream was created by Brady's friends and family members a few months after his death. In 2003, the Catch-A-Dream Foundation was chartered to provide a 501(c)(3) nonprofit home to support the program by the same name. Any child under 19 years of age who is a United States or Canadian citizen, has a qualifying, physician-certified, life-threatening illness and has not had another hunting or fishing wish granted, is eligible for consideration.

On each trip the children and the family members who accom-

pany them are surrounded by outdoors-minded people who understand these children are often "sick and tired of being sick and tired!" Catch-A-Dream has touched the lives of more than 140 families, granting outdoor adventures to children from 43 states. Compassionate outfitters and volunteers who donate their time and energy play a big part in helping the organization make dreams come true.

The Hunt

Jace and his family arrived in Wyoming on a Friday evening. The next morning, with his rifle zeroed and dressed in new hunting gear supplied by Catch-A-Dream, Jace was ready to experience a trophy Wyoming pronghorn hunt. But Jace is a dedicated LSU football fan, and the Tigers were scheduled to play Tulane that day. All recipients of



Jace's antelope was shot in a deep Wyoming gorge from 280 yards out.



Catch-A-Dream trips are accompanied by a chaperone who travels with the family to ensure the quality of the experience. Phil Hanberry, a businessman and hunter from Mississippi, was serving in this capacity for Jace, and he insisted Jace watch his beloved Tigers on television before the hunt.

Guide Scott Denny's daughter helped to haul out Jace's trophy.



The pride was apparent on the face of Jace's father (center) as the two hunters and the author admired the pronghorn.



Catching Dreams: Jace's Antelope

After LSU trounced Tulane, Jace was all smiles when he and his father loaded up in the truck for their hunt with Scott and Angie Denny of Table Mountain Outfitters. While cruising the Wyoming prairie, Jace pointed to a deep canyon and commented to Angie that he sure would like to shoot an antelope "down there." Scott told Jace he rarely saw antelope in that ravine and had never had a hunter shoot one there. But about that time, Scott spotted a group of antelope moving along a ridgeline in the general direction of the gorge. Scott formulated a plan and started Jace moving toward an ambush spot ahead of the antelope.

To the astonishment of Scott and Angie, the antelope seemed to be headed directly to the spot where Jace said he wanted to shoot one. Scott worked the group of hunters and observers into a location behind some rocks along the edge of the gorge. They all watched with amazement as the antelope began to work their way down into the rocky chasm like they were conceding to Jace's wish.

Just before the buck descended into the ruggedness and out of sight, he stopped and looked across the deep gash in the land-

scape directly at Jace. Scott told Jace it was time to shoot, and when Jace pulled the trigger, the bullet sailed across more than 280 yards of space and sage, striking the buck perfectly. The pronghorn took several steps and tumbled into the canyon. Jace's dream had come true.

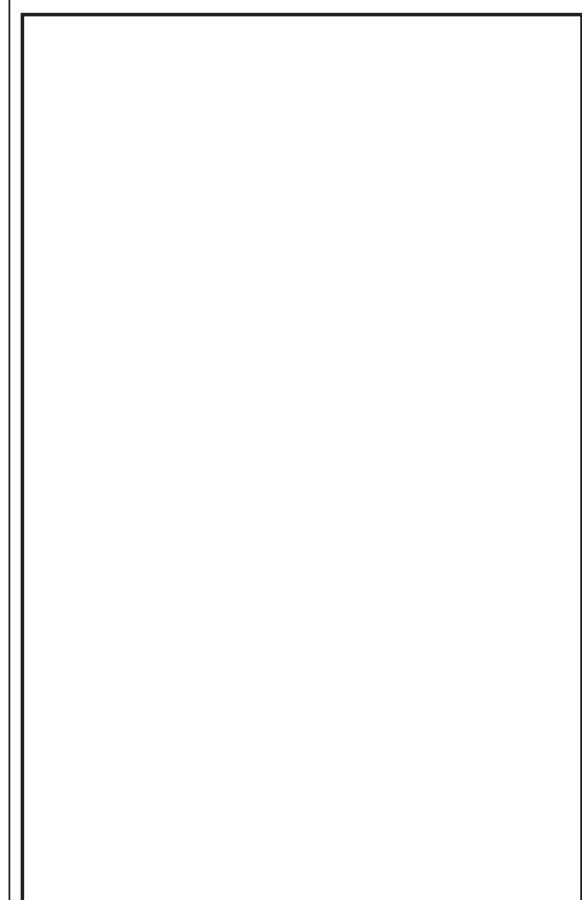
Sometimes it's the little miracles that make the larger ones seem possible. ■

www.cabelasoutfitterjournal.com

Contact Jace



Jace Trahan maintains a Web page where you can follow his story and send him wishes of good will. Visit Jace on the Web and share your hopes and prayers for his recovery at www.caringbridge.org/visit/jacetrahan



Resources

Catch A Dream

(662) 325-8149,
<http://catchadream.org>

Table Mountain Outfitters:

(307) 632-6352,
www.tablemountainoutfitters.com

Jace Aaron Trahan

Jace Trahan, 401 Althea Drive,
Duson, LA 70529
www.caringbridge.org/visit/jacetrahan
(337) 278-2875