
Old Ike

Posted by TreeTramp - 02/05/2008 09:28am

In my job I go to people's homes to survey their heating and cooling systems and that takes me to all points in the Kansas City Metro area. Monday was a rare day for February, 67F and mostly sunny with periods of brisk winds. A cold front was coming to take us back to normal. Once the wind changed to the north the mercury was to fall like Sprint stock prices.

I had at least two hours before my appointment time and the home was near the largest Burr Oak in Kansas that I haven't visited in at least 20 months. Checking my city map of notable trees I saw the same creek that ran near the Burr continued north thru a city park named Eisenhower Park. The car is always loaded with my tree tools so off I go to see the Wizard. That is the champion Burr tree that is too knarly to have any other name.

My route took me pass an abandoned farm that had a few nice red oaks so by the time I was done touring them I decided to pass up visiting the Wizard and go to the park instead. At the park near the creek is a shelter and playground but in the middle of the day no one was to be seen. I could see this was a fertile place for big trees and found a big Chinquapin Oak that I would like to climb but is too close to the shelter and too visible during the winter. Once in full foliage to conceal my altitude I will be back. As I bushwhacked thru the rose brambles I was able to get to the base of a 80 foot tall Red Oak that was scared from top to bottom from a lightning strike decades ago. The top had toppled off a few months ago as noted by the fallen limbs still had the leaves attached. The scar was at least four feet wide at the base and exposed the decayed heartwood that was riddled with ant trails. You could look up 30 feet to thru the hollow crown and see daylight where the limbs were once attached. Along each edge of the scar the cambium had grown and curled inward 6-8 inches indicating decades of trying to heal the damage. I scouted for a tie in point aloft so I could inspect where it separated but no safe limb presented itself.

Farther into the draw I found a large Red Oak that I named Ike. I didn't have enough time before my appointment to climb but at least I could set a line and come back afterwards. Little did I know that climb would turn out to be a rescue mission for not one throw bag but for two.

I used my Pole Vault for the first time this year and again underestimated its power. The Launch Tube not only passed thru my target but also fell over a large dead hanger. No problem if I can isolate the line over a sound limb I can pull down the hanger. All went well until the hanger fell. So here it comes zipping down following my throwline and just before I can let go it tangles up in an overhead limb to high to reach. Every effort I make to undo it just causes it to get further tangled. Back to the car I trudge to get more throwline and checking the time and hoping for a good next shot. Second guessing myself I should have done it different. Ok this time I will toss to a lower limb so I can climb to the tangle and then use it to set a higher tie in point. But no! Another hanger intercepts my pass and causes it to spin around the mess I already have made making me wonder if I will ever get set.

Time is gone so I hide everything and leave it for later. After my appointment I return with every tool in the bag and go to work. I leave the messed up tangle and try for the other side. Ready, aim, fire and over a limb it goes. Haul rope and set my sleeve and in 5 minutes I am aloft. But by now the wind has changed to the north and is gusting. SURFS UP! As the wind comes the other trees dance and wave to announce its arrival. The temperature was still in the 40's and the sun was setting. I advanced to the upper limits and felt like a human paddle ball tied to the web of oak branches at the top.

I soaked up the feeling and after my soul battery was fully charged back to ground I had to go still wishing I had more time. The tangled mess was retrieved and no tool was lost.

No harm was caused and I am still high reminiscing the thoughts of breeze up in old Ike.

See you at the top,
Dan

Re:Old Ike Adventures

Posted by oldtimer - 02/05/2008 11:12am

Hello Dan, Thanks for the report of your adventures at Old Ike. Glad you managed to get your gear back and have fun in the process. Nothing like a rescue scenario to make for an excuse to climb.
Take Care :laugh: