



# WYOGA HUNTING STORY CONTEST WINNER

## Hunt of a Lifetime by Curtis Bates

BIG GAME HUNTING

My hunt of a lifetime actually took place in October of 2014, but the story of the hunt began a long time ago.

It all started in 1988, while I was a senior in high school. I desperately wanted a job at a local cabinet shop (Johannings, Inc.) in my hometown of Louisville, Ohio. I persistently called the owner (Bill Murphy) for two weeks. Frustrated and tired of taking my calls, he finally hired me! I started out sweeping the shop floors, and over the years, worked my way up through the company. In 2001, my wife Christy and I purchased the company from Bill when he was ready to retire.

Over the years, Bill has been many things to me, a mentor, father figure, friend, and hunting companion for all these years. Bill and I had gone on a couple trips out west, unsuccessfully hunting elk without a guide. Back in 2012 Bill said, "Curt, I'm going to find us quality outfitter, and we are going on a trophy Elk hunt". After much research, our accountant recommended an outfitter to Bill, "The Triangle X Ranch" in Moose, Wyoming. Bill made the call, and said "Curt, this is the place and it's going to be my gift to you!" Close friends of ours, Jim Feeny Jr. and Carl Bliss accompanied us on this hunt.

Being of a curious nature, I immediately began researching the Triangle X. The history of the ranch blew me away! The ranch has been family owned and operated by the Turner family for four generations. Being the last family owned concession within our country's entire National Park system, this is a great read. Please visit [www.trianglex.com](http://www.trianglex.com).

When we arrived at the Triangle X, we were treated like kings. I was awed by the majestic views of the Grand Tetons and the Turners hospitality. The next day our guides took us on a six-hour journey, by horseback, to our spike camp. Our spike camp was genuinely primitive. The guides, wranglers, camp jacks, and camp cook were all first class! I was enjoying every minute of our journey. To experience the Grand Teton Mountains on horseback, alongside Bill was something I knew I would treasure forever.

On the 1st day of the hunt, at our 4:30 am breakfast, our guide (Robert Turner) asked

Bill and I which one of us was going to be the first one to shoot. Bill said "Curt, you are going 1st ole buddy"! Bill at this point was 74 years young, and blessed with many hunting accomplishments, including the Prestigious Grand Slam of North American Wild Sheep, and is working on the Super 10 right now, with only the Mountain Lion left to bag, (Good Luck in January, Bill.) At 5:00am, we saddled up and set off into the mountains, Robert had us on Elk at 8:00am. We jumped off our horses and took off by foot to get set up, only to have missed a 330 class Elk three times. Now very upset with myself, and trying to catch my breath, we saddled up and continued hunting. On a side note, while we were making sure the animal was not wounded, we spotted a grizzly bear headed our way, looking for an easy meal! The 2nd day was a great hunt, unusually warm but with no shots taken. On the 3rd day, we woke up to snow cover. I asked Robert "hey buddy, how's the snow tires on my horse?" He looked at me and just laughed! We set off in the dark as usual. Riding horseback in the snow-covered mountains was a surreal experience, something everyone should experience. Our day was cut short because of low visibility due to the snow squalls. Robert said "Curt, why don't we go down and shoot your gun, to see if your miss was from you or your gun. The results were my gun would not hit a paper plate at 100 yards. On the 4th day, Bill began to feel his 74 years of age and the effects of riding horseback over the rugged terrain. He decided to stay back at camp and said "Here Curt, you take my rifle and go". So, Robert and I saddled up and headed out, with Bill's rifle in my scabbard. A couple of hours into the hunt, Robert spotted some Elk in the distance and decided we needed to get moving fast to get set up. After a very fast-paced descent down the mountain, having to get off our horses a couple of times because of dangerous inclines, we made it to where Robert wanted to set up. While setting up, we heard a shot that seemed to not be very far away. At this time Robert seemed disappointed, thinking someone had just shot the same animal we were pursuing.

He said, "Let's just sit tight here for a few minutes". A few moments later, we saw a bull moving towards us, Robert said, "that's a Good Bull". I sat down, rested the 300 Remington Ultra Mag on my knee, with a perfect broadside 125 yard shot in an open meadow. I pulled the trigger, the Bull turned and looked at me as if I missed him, so I shot again. He then disappeared. I started yelling to Robert "where the hell did he go?". Robert said, "I don't know"! Feeling very sick, thinking I missed another bull, we started walking towards where the bull was and Robert spotted the antlers sticking up in some fallen trees, which is when the Celebration began!!! When we got to the downed bull, after a lot of celebration Robert asked, "You don't know how big this bull is do you?" That is when I realized I had bagged a Bull of a Lifetime!

In August of 2015, I received a letter from the Wyoming Outfitters and Guide Association informing me that our (Bill, Robert and I's) Elk had tied for first place in the Elk Typical Rifle category for 2014, with a score of 391 7/8". So because of Bill, I not only experienced the "Hunt of a Lifetime", but was also lucky enough to have a record Elk in Wyoming, which is also currently ranked number 49, a Gold Metal Trophy, in the SCI record books.

Thank you Bill and Robert for my "Hunt of A lifetime"! ~Curtis Bates 🍖

