



# WYOGA HUNTING STORY CONTEST WINNER FATHER/SON HUNT MEMORIES

BY JIM EVANS



## IN 2018 MY SON, JAMES, AND I HUNTED

together for bighorn sheep in the mountains west of Cody, Wyoming. It started about twenty years ago when, having each harvested a moose and several deer, elk and antelope over the years, we decided we would like to hunt bighorn sheep. Since sheep tags are difficult to draw and we wanted to hunt together we began buying points each year until we had accumulated enough to ensure both would draw.

Late November 2017 I had a heart attack and had bypass surgery. The heart attack and surgery were a wakeup call. If we were going to hunt together it would have to be soon. We checked our points and thought we had each acquired enough to ensure drawing. Neither of us had ever hired a guide before but knew that for sheep we would be lost without one. We also knew we didn't have the time or capability to spend weeks scouting and hunting so a good outfitter who had the equipment and knowledge to make the hunt a double success would be necessary. The outfitter and his guides must have knowledge and experience hunting sheep and must do the scouting necessary to know where to find good rams at any given time. It is also important that they learn and accommodate the capabilities of the hunter. Jimmy Owens with Lost Creek Outfitters was recommended and I contacted him. After we explained my limitations, they told about other hunters they had guided with medical issues and were enthusiastic about accommodating my situation.

We received our permits. We arrived at Jimmy's ranch the morning of September 3rd and met the hunters who had just come out of the mountains the day before and admired the sheep they had taken. We loaded our gear into the trucks and headed out with Jimmy, his brother Mike, and Cameron Schmidt. Jimmy and his guides were great and took my abilities into account choosing locations to hunt that would allow me to be successful. We rode horses into the Big Creek drainage where our camp was set up. That evening and the next morning we glassed a large basin where the guides had observed sheep a couple of weeks earlier. A pack of wolves had followed a herd of elk into the basin which caused the sheep to leave also. We left that area by about noon on our second day and drove to the Mormon Creek drainage where we packed in to a high camp near



another basin where the guides had seen nice sheep while scouting. That evening we observed some sheep from a vantage point overlooking the basin and had high hopes for getting a chance at sheep the following day.

Early the next day we were on an overlook and eventually spotted several sheep a couple of miles away on the other side of the basin. They were staying in an old forest fire area with burned standing trees and new growth cover. We worked our way along a steep rocky ridge with lots of loose rock and watched them from a rock outcrop overlooking their location and determined a route to approach. We got close in the burned timber and new growth but they spooked and left before we could get a shot. It had taken most of the day to get to that point and it was late afternoon so we immediately headed

back to camp straight across the basin. It was about 1:00 a.m. when we reached camp, had a quick meal and went to bed.

The next morning we didn't get an early start and I was not up to another hike like the day before. We watched awhile from the overlook we had spotted the sheep from the day before without seeing sheep. Mike and James traversed a ridge to hunt another basin. Jimmy and Cameron climbed to another overlook to see another area leaving me to watch the first basin and recuperate.

That afternoon, on the way back to my location, Mike and James spotted sheep in one of the draws in the basin I was watching. Jimmy and Cameron could also see them from their location. Mike got James into position and he shot his sheep. The others all went down to the sheep and collected the meat, head and cape. It was late when we reached camp but it had been a successful day. The next day we went back to the overlook and glassed the basin. We spotted some sheep below us with a nice ram in the group. It was about 800 yards away, too far for my rifle. The guides decided the ram was too exposed for us to get close to unobserved and that I should take the shot with Mike's rifle, a 6mm-284 that he built. They dialed the range into the scope and I took a shot, clean miss. They thought it was about 5 inches too high. The sheep spooked and we didn't see any more for several hours. About noon, while various options were being considered, I spotted a ram lying on a little ridge in the basin. Again it was about 800 yards. This time we were able to stalk to about 400 yards and I took a shot

with Jimmy's rifle, a 7mm-STW, also built by Mike. The ram dropped in his tracks and we headed down to dress it out. The guides all thought it was bigger than the others they had seen come out of the area that year.

We packed up the meat, head and cape and Jimmy and Cameron carried it to the top of the ridge while I did my best just to get myself there. While we were getting the sheep, Mike and James broke camp and loaded the animals. They got to the top of the ridge about the time we came out of the basin saving us another half mile of hiking. We headed out and reached town about 8:00 that evening. Monday morning, after taking the heads to the Game and Fish office in Cody to have the horns plugged, we took the sheep to Dewey's Wildlife Studio in Cody for mounting. 🏹

