

WYOMING OUTFITTERS & GUIDES ASSOCIATION 2022 HUNTER OF THE YEAR

— Bill Young —

I AM HONORED AND HUMBLLED to be selected to receive this award. I don't consider myself to be a super hunter, but I will admit that no one loves to get into the mountains or appreciates their ruggedness and beauty more than I do.

I was raised in a Christian home in the rolling hills of west-central Pennsylvania, surrounded by farmland and forests. Dad and Mom loved Jesus and I accepted Him as my personal Lord and Savior in my early years. My family attended every service at our small, country church, which was only two doors away from home.

I married my childhood sweetheart, Pennee, when we were 20 years old and we were later blessed with Ryan, Kelli and Brent, and much later with seven wonderful grandchildren.

Pennsylvania has a rich hunting heritage, as demonstrated

by the claim in the past that one million hunters entered Penn's woods annually on the first day of whitetail buck season. My Dad enjoyed hunting, squeezing it in between his mill job, carpentry work and part-time farming. I was always intrigued with Dad's firearms and his hunting excursions. I would wait anxiously when he spent the day afield to find out if he was successful, and to hear the stories associated with that success. I grew to love the outdoors. Hunting, to me, was like the icing on the cake.

I am a graduate engineer from the University of Pittsburgh, and my career included working in the coal industry, then with my brother-in-law in construction and other business opportunities, and ultimately in the consulting engineering field when I started a firm that my youngest son Brent and son-in-law Josh now own and operate.

God has richly blessed our family and I'm thankful for the opportunities to hunt in numerous western states and Canada in my earlier years, but particularly in Wyoming over the last twenty years. Words can't describe the time spent exploring the beauty of God's creation on each hunt, with dear family and friends, and the making of new acquaintances and lifelong friends.

Dad's hunting trips in the western states were somewhat limited but in 1971 when I was a senior in high school, he and my future father-in-law hunted with L. D. Frome, when L. D. had the Hawk's Rest and Pass Creek hunting camps in the 'Thorofare'. They hunted out of the Pass Creek camp but overnighted at Hawk's Rest on their pack trips in and out of Pass Creek.

It was their 1971 hunt that spurred my interest in hunting in Wyoming, and particularly the remote 'Thorofare' area in the Teton Wilderness. I soon began researching the area as best as I could with the only available means back then: occasional articles in Outdoor Life and Sports Afield magazines. The more I could find and read, the more I was determined to someday hunt the Thorofare area.

In 1980, my father-in-law organized mule deer hunts with Everett Peterson's outfit, with eight of us booked to hunt out of Everett's Mink Creek camp. That trip became my maiden voyage to the Rocky Mountains and Wyoming. I'll never forget my first glimpse of the Teton Mountains as we traveled west on Route 26 near Dubois. That view captivated me as we stood along the road—it is still vivid in my mind—much more so than the photos I shot back then with the Kodak 110 camera. We brought six muley's back to Pennsylvania and eight pronghorns that we collected on a hunt south of Shoshoni.

That trip instilled a love of the Rockies in me and a desire to travel west often to visit, but especially to hunt, in the pristine high-mountain back country.



I recall reading about Randy Haecker and Nate Vance being affiliated with the Pass Creek and Hawk's Rest camps for a while, and eventually became aware that Everett Peterson (a name I recognized from my past) had purchased the Hawk's Rest camp with a guy whose name I did not recognize back then - Lynn Madsen. Once while on an October trip to Wyoming, I stopped in at Yellowstone Outfitter's Turpin Meadows base camp. It happened to be the day after the Hawk's Rest camp was pulled for the year and the boys at base camp were pulling shoes off the horses on a 'tilt' trailer. I met Lynn that day and we've developed a real friendship over the years. I always

appreciated him for the life he chose, and for his skill and success in it.

Not long after that, I organized and booked, with three friends, my first hunt with Lynn's outfit. That first ride on the

trail up to Hawk's Rest was truly special for me—riding the very trail my dad (who passed in 1994) and father-in-law had ridden on, 23 years earlier. I fell in love with the "Thorofare" area.

I never had the chance to ride that trail with my dad, but I have been blessed numerous times to ride it with my sons, son-in-law, cousin, pastor, and friends, including an archery hunt where I shot a bull elk—my first ever kill with a bow.

Lynn and I talked for a couple of years about hunting sheep together. The idea thrilled me, and as time went on the focus of discussion changed to not just hunting with him but hunting with him out of Hawk's Rest. We had both accrued about the same number of preference points, and I was really excited about the prospect of hunting alongside Lynn. In 2020 Lynn drew a tag but I didn't draw (I along with five other nonresident applicants with the same point total were eligible for the four remaining tags—my 67% chance proved to be 0%), but I drew the following year.

My Bighorn sheep hunt with Lynn and new outfit owners Brandon and Kendra Kunz, as well as Kendra's dad, finally came to fruition in 2021. It was my sixth trip to Hawk's Rest and that hunt was one of the most exceptional and memorable experiences of my life. I could write a half dozen pages about what transpired during the twenty minutes leading up to the shot! I was watching the four rams and a lamb at 355 yards and waiting for one of two "legal" rams to reposition and give me a better shot. At the same time, a grizzly bear was on a path heading directly for me, managing to get within fifteen feet only ten seconds before I successfully squeezed the trigger on the ram. I knew the bruin was there—I could hear Brandon and Kendra's highly emotional, loudly whispered conversation that was only constrained by their fear of scaring the five sheep, but I couldn't turn my head away from the rams for fear of losing the shot. I never saw the grizzly bear—that was disappointing. I did shoot the ram—that was exhilarating! This paragraph doesn't do the outfit justice—my bighorn sheep hunt was absolutely top-shelf. Brandon and Kendra did a great job of getting me on the sheep and keeping the grizzly off me! It was a super-excitement-packed hunt, and I was treated like Prince Albert hunting with Buffalo Bill. What a hunt!

The Lord willing, I'll make another trip to Hawks Rest in 2023 for one more opportunity to hunt elk with Lynn on what will be my seventh ride up that trail and into the backcountry, with Yellowstone Outfitters.

My heartfelt thanks to Lynn, Brandon and Kendra for nominating me, and to the WYOGA members for this award. 🙏