

WYOGA HUNTING STORY CONTEST WINNER

“ALWAYS LOOK BEHIND...”

BY AARON LENTZ

AFTER AN EXCEPTIONAL 2016 ELK HUNT, my father and I couldn't wait for another opportunity to hunt with SNS Outfitter and Guides. Fortunately, we didn't have to wait long and successfully drew antelope tags in 2017. We quickly made travel plans and started counting down the days until our return to Wyoming!

While my father had taken several Wyoming antelope in the 1970's, this would be my first opportunity to chase "speed goats". I have always been intrigued by antelope because it is such a unique species to North America. With only one preference point, this was not considered a "record book" hunt and my expectations were focused on spending quality time with my father, enjoying the wide open landscape, and harvesting a beautiful antelope buck to share with friends and family.

Upon arrival in Casper, we met our guide for the week, Randy George. Within minutes we started to develop a friendship and camaraderie with Randy that fellow hunters and outdoorsmen can certainly appreciate. I was impressed by his guiding experience and his knowledge of the ranch we would be hunting. On top of everything else, the weather forecast looked perfect. There was no chance I would be able to sleep the first night in camp!

The next morning dawned clear and crisp. After a hearty breakfast, we were on our way and within minutes we were glassing antelope. We spent the morning exploring the ranch and saw hundreds of antelope, including some beautiful bucks. Randy convinced us that it was worthwhile to be selective this first morning and look for one of the spectacular bucks that called this ranch home. It wasn't long until we spotted a true monster. Even at 500 yards, the mass and height of his horns stood out among the sagebrush. It set



up for a perfect stalk and my pulse began to increase. There was one small problem. The buck was on the neighbor's property. After checking our GPS position, we confirmed that this buck was off limits and regretfully moved on in search of another Wyoming giant. Needless to say, our optimism was sky high after this encounter.

We continued moving around the ranch and spotted numerous herds of antelope. It was late morning when we pulled to the top of a tall rise in order to glass the valley in front of us. Maybe it was having one too many cups of coffee in the bunkhouse, but my father felt the call of nature and walked to the back of the truck. He immediately notified Randy that we had just driven past a good buck feeding in a low swale. Randy took one look through his binoculars and quickly announced, "he's a toad!" I had never heard

this expression to describe an antelope, but Randy's excitement dispelled any doubts about his size.

We swiftly planned our strategy and within minutes I had a stable rest from 200 yards out. The shot was true and a once-in-lifetime antelope was on the ground. As we approached, he just kept getting bigger and bigger. The old warrior had a complete cataract that likely blinded any vision from his left eye. This was serendipitous as we had driven within a hundred yards of him just minutes earlier. His position in a low spot combined with the course of the road almost saved him that morning. As a practicing urologist, I appreciated the irony of what led to my father spotting the massive antelope!

After harvesting my buck, it was time to find something special for my father. It didn't take long and that afternoon we jumped an amazing non-typical antelope with a third horn growing just above his eye. The extra horn partially obstructed his left eye. Whether it was his limited vision or the ongoing rut, this buck was wild and unpredictable. It took two days of glassing, hiking, and stalking until everything came together. A buck that we couldn't get within 500 yards of was ultimately taken at less than 50 yards after the most exciting stalk I have ever been part of. The buck's unique frame and elusiveness highlighted an unforgettable 3 days of hunting.

I can't thank Randy George and SNS Outfitter and Guides enough for their professionalism, hard work, and friendship. My father introduced me to the outdoors and sharing this experience with him is a memory that will last a lifetime. Without him, the trip and the magnificent buck would have never happened. Now I guess it's time to book that mule deer hunt... 🍷