

WYOGA HUNTING STORY CONTEST WINNER #1

"First and Probably Last" Big Horn Sheep Hunt

By Brad Moore, Casper, Wyoming

After waiting for the last nineteen of twenty years, the day finally came that I received that magical white envelope from the Wyoming Game and Fish department containing my first big horn sheep license. Observation of the drawing odds paid off especially since I was one point short of the maximum accumulated points. At that point, the exhibition was on.

The adrenaline was flowing high during the next few days. I began receiving literature from Wyoming Outfitters offering their services for this once in a lifetime hunt. After speaking with nine different outfitters, I felt the most comfortable with Justin Jarrett of Wapiti Ridge Outfitters in Cody, Wyoming. Many telephone conversations followed during the next month to prepare my self physically and mentally and having the correct gear for my hunt. Justin was always prompt in response and I felt that I had made the correct choice for an outfitter. Justin's sheep hunts filled up quickly and I was glad I made an early choice so I could get an opening day hunt.

Knowing full well that this was my "First and Probably Last" opportunity at age 53 to hunt a big horn sheep, my motivation for training kicked in. I wasn't going to let my physical ability drag me down for an opportunity for a good ram. I began hiking four and a half miles three times a week with a forty pound pack with one intermediate hill included. After three months of dedication, with a 50 lb. pack, I could climb the west end of Casper mountain, gaining 800 feet of elevation, .7 miles in 24 minutes. I felt I was confident that I was in good physical condition.

The day finally came that I was on my way to Cody to meet Justin and Flint Selby, my guide. Flint picked me up Sunday morning and I helped trailer the horses and after a good breakfast, we were off to the trail head on the South Fork of the Shoshone River. We left the trail head about noon and started the journey through some the most scenic country a person can see. Four and a half hours later, we arrived at our spike camp location. Jimmy, our cook and wrangler, Flint and myself set up the camp and had a delicious dinner. Following dinner, Flint dug out his spotting scope and we had the thrill of seeing six rams in a bowl about two miles away. We were in sheep country!!!



Opening morning came and after a good breakfast, we all started up the drainage on horseback for about three miles. We tied up the horses and began our foot pursuit of the mighty ram. Within an hour, we started seeing sheep. Amazingly enough, within two hours we had seen over twenty five rams. As we got closer, Flint broke out his spotting scope, looking for the "big boy". Within a few minutes, Flint's jaw dropped to the ground. At a distance of over two miles, he had found the dominant ram that we were hoping to find. We continued our stock for the next two hours working our way up amongst all the rams in the area. We got up to 850 yards of the ram that we were stalking, but due to the open terrain at the elevation of 10,500+ feet, we could not get any closer. We observed the group of six rams for over 5 hours, thru Wyoming's high country weather.....sleet, snow and wind, but the rams were bedded down for the rest of the evening. We elected to walk out that night and make a second attempt the next day.

The second morning arrived quickly and once again we started observing rams on every ridge in the high elevation mountain bowl. Within an hour, Flint pickup on our "shooter" and the stalk was on. After four hours on our feet, crawling on our hands and knees, butt crawling across rock slides, we slowly were getting into shooting range. The biggest challenge of our stock was working around all the sheep in the area so we did not blow them out of the country. We were fortunate enough that our "shooter" had moved down the mountain to a shot range of 309 yards. What seemed like an eternity to getting

into position, the next few minutes where the most memorable. After Flint set up his video camera, we had the opportunity to look down the gun barrel to be sure that there were no obstructions between us and the six bedded rams. Flint identified the dominate ram and my first shot hit the vitals. As the ram tried to follow the group of rams, it was obvious that he was hit hard. I was able to get a second round in him, but he still tried to follow the other rams. My third shot went high as I tried to hit him on the dead away trot. The ram turned back toward us and my final shot put him down with just a couple of body rolls in the steep terrain.

It was a trophy for all, as I learned that this was the largest sheep that Flint had got in his guiding career. We all took photos and told our story of the adventure on Flint's camera. This was only the beginning of remembering this "First and Probably Last" sheep adventure for me but, what a lifetime of memories it will hold. ■