

The Luckiest Man In Nevada  
By Bill Redman

My sheep hunting started in 1989 when, after three years of applying, I received a letter in the mail informing me I had received a desert sheep tag for the Pintwater Range. Knowing nothing about sheep hunting and never having seen one in the wild, I knew my work was cut out for me. The area I had drawn was within a bombing range, so scouting was out of the question. I was on the phone with anyone who would talk to me about sheep hunting or had hunted the same area I was going to hunt.

Stanley Palmer and I arrived in Las Vegas late Wednesday night before Saturday's opener. Thursday was spent shopping for food, seeing some sights and visiting relatives. Late Thursday night, my other hunting partners, Doug Woytek and Pat Blake showed up. Friday at 9:00 am we arrived at Indian Springs where we had to go through a mandatory sheep indoctrination and a bomb class, which gives you an uneasy feeling. After completing the classes, we had about an hour to kill before the Air Force would open the gate, so we milled about talking to the other hunters. We arrived at camp around 3:30 pm and by the time camp was set up it was too late to do any spotting.

The morning started early with all of us walking up a draw. After an hour, I spotted a ram about 200 yards away. With my sights on him, we figured he would score 155 to 160 Boone and Crockett points. To my partner's amazement, I passed on him being only an hour into opening day. With my lack of experience, it turned out to be my worst mistake. We hunted the next two days without seeing any rams over three years old. Two days into the hunt, Doug and Pat had to head back into Reno to return to work. Stanley and I, being dejected and worn out due to the long hours of hiking and the lack of mature rams, sat out the third day and just laid around and did some glassing.

The fourth day we were up early and headed up to where we had seen the most rams. After a couple of hours, I spotted three rams on the side of a hill. After a long stalk, I decided to take the largest of the group. It was a long shot, about 400 yards, but I knew my 7mm Remington mag. could do the job. I took the shot and my first sheep was down!

With my sheep down and lots of pictures taken, the task of caping and boning took a couple of hours. When we got back to camp, after the long pack out, we celebrated and rested up for the long drive back to Reno. Even though my ram wasn't as big as I had hoped for, I consider this hunt a great success with great friends and beautiful country.

After getting my desert sheep I had sheep fever. I started putting in for California and Rocky Mountain Bighorn tags. Six years later (1995) my lucky day came again. I received a California sheep tag for the Jackson Mountains.

Well it didn't take long before my friends and I were out scouting (Kres Hilts, Doug Woytek, Andy Bradley and my wife Melanie). We scouted a total of four times seeing rams every time but no rams of any size. On every trip we stashed food and water at different locations on the mountain. I was planning on staying on the mountain the whole 10-day season or until I shot a sheep.

Before I knew it I was kissing my wife and my son good-bye. The drive felt long but it was only 3 1/2 hours. I was on top of King Lear two days early in hopes of locating a big ram before Doug arrived on Friday afternoon. Since there was an early season and

two hunters were still hunting I limited my hiking for fear of messing up their hunt so I mostly used my spotting scope.

Doug arrived late Friday afternoon and I still had not spotted a single sheep. We hiked up to our spike camp and while spotting for sheep, I explained what I had done and seen in the previous two days. We hit the sack early that night but like every other night before opening day sleep didn't come easy. At 4:30 am lightning and rain woke us. The storm was right on top of us. So, I stashed my gun and backpack in my tent and we ran to a clearing away from the trees. We ended up sitting there for 2 1/2 hours before we were able to head up the mountain. We glassed most of the day but only found seven ewes. Then at about 4:00 pm the lightning started again. As we were getting ready to come off the

mountain, I picked up my rifle and a very loud sound of static electricity was coming off it. I put my gun down very fast and we ran to a cliff's edge so we would be off the top of the mountain. At one point lightning struck right above us and I thought it had struck my gun, but luckily it was not hit. After two hours, the lightning stopped. So much for opening day!

We decided to leave that part of the mountain and sleep in the trucks that night. We were up early the next morning and heading for another location. Almost immediately we were spotting sheep, but again nothing with decent horns. After spotting numerous sheep without locating a shooter, we headed back to our spike camp and that was when I noticed the smell of smoke. The smoke was from a brush fire started by the lightning at the base of the mountain. The fire was heading in the direction of our trucks, so the decision was made to go to the trucks and get them out of the fire's path. About two hours later and well past full dark, we arrived at our trucks.

After a quick trip to Reno we were back and decided to glass from the west side. After about an hour, we spotted three rams. I grabbed my pack and gun and made a mad dash up the hill but we couldn't get within 1,000 yards before it was too dark to see. We were up the next morning on the east side of the mountain at 5:00 am because I had arranged for horses to take us up the mountain. With the horses we made spike camp by 9:00 am. We headed straight to where the three rams were the night before. At 3:30 pm we arrived and started glassing. I knew the rams were there because we were the only hunters on the mountain since the other hunters had already filled their tags.

That afternoon at about 4:45 I heard some falling rocks. I looked below us to see nine rams about 175 yards away. Since this was the second to last day, one of these rams was going down. But to our surprise, the rams didn't notice us and just milled around, which gave us plenty of time to field judge them. There were two good rams in the band. We thought one would go 165" but he was broomed off so much that I chose the other ram. We thought he would go 160". His horns were long and barely broomed at all. I had to wait a few tense moments before the ram cleared the rest of the rams and gave me a broadside shot. At the shot from my 7mm Remington mag. with 150gr. Core Lokt the ram just stood there and locked up his legs. I thought I was going to have to fire again but his knees buckled and he was down. I had just harvested my second Nevada bighorn sheep. With the ram down, and with all the adrenalin pumping it still took us about 45 minutes to cover that 175 yards, that was how rough it was. Upon reaching the downed

ram, I was amazed at the sheer size of the animal compared to my desert ram. Well, after high fives and pictures, the fun stopped and the real work began.

After caping and boning out the ram, we put the meat into pillowcases and hung them in a tree. We then draped the tree with surveyor tape and started the long hike uphill with the head and cape. We started our hike at 8:00 pm. It was pitch dark with no moon whatsoever, so flashlights were used every step of the way. After about three hours Doug asked me if I had any idea where we were headed. All I knew was if we headed uphill until we got to the top and then headed north, we would run into our spike camp. The days were shirtsleeve weather but when the sun went down, it got cold, real cold! Every time we stopped for a rest, we could feel the sweat freezing on our arms. We knew that hypothermia was going to be a problem, so we made sure that we didn't fall asleep during any of our many breaks. At about 1:30 am we got to the top of the mountain and the hiking got a lot easier. Around 3:30 am we made camp. What a beautiful sight! We both dropped our packs and got out of our sweat soaked clothes and hit the sleeping bags. Most of our water was half frozen, so I brought some into my sleeping bag to thaw. It was a miserable night. At 8:30 am we were up. While two cans of chili were heating, we scored my ram. The rough score was 159 7/8. I couldn't have been happier. Now we had to pack out our camp and head to our truck and drive around the mountain to the canyon to get the meat. We started hiking around noon. By the time we picked up the meat and got back to the truck, it was 11:30 pm. As tired as we were, we decided to drive into Winnemucca and get a motel room and some food that didn't come out of a can. Doug and I were two of the most tired guys you would ever meet, but we were also two of the happiest. Out of 39 hours of hunting, we hiked 26 1/2 hours in rough country, carrying heavy packs. The next day we drove home to Reno.

Five years later it was the year 2000. After 3 days of calling my wife at about the time the mail was suppose to be delivered, she informed me that I had two envelopes. I asked her to open the larger envelope, which I knew contained a tag. It did. It was an archery deer tag for central Nevada. Next she opened the smaller envelope and informed me it was a refund check. I had her go down the list. Archery deer-successful, archery antelope-unsuccessful, archery elk-unsuccessful, Nelson bighorn sheep-unsuccessful, Rocky Mountain goat-unsuccessful then I heard a big sigh and then she said Rocky Mountain bighorn-successful. I started shaking and asked her if she was kidding, thinking my hunting partner Kres Hilts and my wife were playing a joke on me. After making her swear she wasn't kidding, I hung up and told my boss I was leaving early. My boss is not a hunter but he supports hunters and doesn't have a problem letting me have time off to go hunting. I arrived home about 15 minutes later. My wife handed me the envelopes. I couldn't believe it. I had just received my Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep tag. I am the luckiest man in Nevada. I must have jumped, screamed and shouted for 15 minutes. My wife and kids were all laughing at me and my antics. I finally calmed down enough to start calling everyone I knew. Everyone was in disbelief at my great fortune, and they all said they would find out any information they could.

I couldn't wait to get started. Kres and I were out scouting two weeks later. If nothing else, to locate access roads and to familiarize ourselves with the mountain. This trip started at Angel Lake, words cannot express the beauty of this place. After a horrible night's sleep due to high winds, we were up early. We hiked up the south side of the lake. We were 3/4 of the way up the mountain when Kres spotted three bedded ewes up

above us. We sat down to do some spotting, but saw nothing but more ewes. After 45 minutes, a nap was in order, so we went to some trees behind us. As I was sitting down, I noticed sheep bedded 100 yards above us. They had been watching us the whole time. They all turned out to be ewes with lambs. We watched them and they watched us for about two hours before they started to stand and feed within about 50 yards of us. We then hiked off the mountain without seeing a ram but we were very happy about seeing all the sheep. We packed up camp and headed to another access that I had heard about. Upon arriving, Kres spotted eight rams. They were a long way off, but we could tell that at least two were good rams. We watched until dark, ate some dinner and hit the sack. The next morning we hiked up to get a better view and weren't disappointed. There were two maybe three shooters. We left the mountain early because I wanted to check out one more access. That's when we met James and Theresa Currivan. They own the Tent Mountain Bed and Breakfast. They are some of the nicest people you could ever hope to meet and they gave us permission to access the mountain from their ranch on our next scouting trip.

A couple of weeks later we went up to the Tent Mountain Ranch. After loading up the quads, we were heading up the mountain. Up to a certain point the road was good, but then it got pretty rough and since I had not been riding a quad very long, it made it even rougher.

After setting up camp, we headed out for a look around. A short distance from camp we located a good size basin that looked like perfect sheep country, but found nothing. The next morning we were heading up the mountain. We did a lot of glassing but found only a few mule deer bucks. However, when we neared the top we spotted some Rocky Mountain goats. They were nannies with some kids, 11 in all. We watched them for quite awhile then continued to the top. The goats moved off slowly, not worrying a bit about us.

When we reached the top I eased over the ridge and spotted the band of rams from the week before. Instead of 8 rams there were 14 rams and they were directly below us at 400 yards. With spotting scope and camcorder we watched these rams for over an hour. We scrutinized every ram and out of the 14, there were three shooters. The first one we figured would score about 155 to 160 points, the second we guessed would score in the 160-165 range. We named him Ear Tag, for obvious reasons. Then there was Bob. As soon as I saw him I told Kres that I thought if he didn't score 175" he didn't score an inch. We named him Bob after Bob's Big Boy. Bob stood out like a sore thumb, he was way past full curl.

The next and final scouting trip had us at Weeks access watching the same band of sheep but instead of 14 rams it was back down to eight. Bob was still there and so was Ear Tag. We headed home on Sunday after watching Bob and Ear Tag for a couple of hours.

Thursday, August 29th, 6:00 am the truck was packed. Everything was checked, double checked and triple checked, especially the tag, gun and ammo. When we arrived at Weeks access, there was already a truck there. It was another sheep hunter and his guide; they were also after Bob. I knew I could get Bob if he wasn't harassed. We had watched Bob for a month and a half and in that time he hadn't moved more than 1000 yards in any direction. However with another hunter in the area I had no clue how the sheep would react. We unloaded the truck and proceeded to watch the band of rams for

the rest of the day. A new ram came into the band, we called him Stumpy. We watched Bob and Stumpy bash heads on Thursday. They were, I think, working out the pecking order. Bob was clearly the best ram. Stumpy, we thought, would go about 150" to 155", but give him a couple of years and what a bomber he will be.

My other hunting partner, Doug Woytek, who now had been on all three of my sheep hunts in Nevada, was to arrive at 10:00 am on Friday at which time we would head up the mountain. I decided to go up the center of the bowl and make our spike camp halfway up behind some rocks, which had a stream running by it so water wasn't a problem. My thought was, if I hiked up the middle in the dark, no matter where the rams were I would have a 300-yard shot or be able to make a decent stalk within range.

At our spike camp, we watched our ram until it was too dark to see. The rams had moved to the north side, up into the cliffs, to do their fighting. This was to our advantage because the other hunter was on the south ridge, which took them out of the picture. All that night I could hear Bob and Stumpy clash heads-not that I was sleeping. If you haven't heard rams clash heads, it's a sound you will not forget. It is almost like a rifle going off.

At 3:00 am Saturday, the alarms went off and by 3:30 we were heading up the hill, but instead of going up the middle, we went straight towards the last place we saw the rams the night before. We weren't sure if the rams were still there or if they had moved to where they usually slept, which was under the south ridge, but it was a chance I was willing to take.

At 5:30 am we were at the base of the cliffs. 5:35 was legal shooting time, but the sky was overcast with a light rain and it was quite chilly compared to all of our scouting trips. Around 6:15 am we spotted our first ram. It was one of the small ones but after a while four more came out and were feeding right above us. I was set up for the shot but the big ones didn't come out, which had me worried. I thought that they might have wandered to some other place during the night.

With all of us glassing, looking intently for Bob or Ear Tag, a loud crash came from above us. We knew that it was Bob. After a few minutes, we finally spotted the three rams. The range finder told us they were 330 yards away. I was set up for the shot but Doug suggested we try to sneak closer. We waited for the five smaller rams to feed back and bed down. A few minutes later they had fed out of sight so we started our ascent of the cliffs. Bob was bedded down at 130 yards and he didn't have a clue we were there. He looked so majestic and absolutely beautiful.

I bolted a shell in and had my cross hairs on him. It wasn't the greatest rest so after a few minutes, knowing they weren't going to bolt, and while Doug was watching and Kres was filming, I moved to a sitting rest, leaning against a rock. I lowered my Harris bipod and there I sat for the next 35 minutes waiting for Bob to stand up. My only shot at this steep angle was about nine inches of his back and all of his neck, but I was afraid a pass-through would hit the back horn.

Finally Stumpy, who we couldn't see, stood up and started staring at Bob who was still bedded. He would stare at Bob for five or ten minutes and then turn and stare out into the bowl for five or ten minutes. This went on for 35 minutes. I told Doug that as soon as Bob stood I was taking him. Kres was on the other side of the rock filming the sheep.

Finally it happened! Bob came out of his bed, turned 180 degrees and head butted Stumpy to push him away. His worst mistake was standing broadside at 130 yards. It took about two seconds for me to settle my cross hairs behind the right shoulder and squeeze the trigger. My 7mm Remington mag. did the job, and he went down in his tracks. The problem now was it was so steep he started rolling. He rolled 70 yards before he stopped on the last rock that could have stopped him. If it hadn't he would have rolled all the way to the bottom.

While I was watching Bob, the other seven rams stood up. They didn't know which way to go, follow Bob or head for the escape route. After a couple of minutes Ear Tag took the lead and all the sheep followed him.

When they were heading out they were kicking off rocks the size of softballs and bigger, which were flying at us. Thanks to Doug, Kres narrowly escaped being hit in the head by one of the rocks.

I shot Bob at 8:55 am on opening morning and after pictures, caping and boning we hiked back to our spike camp to eat and rest for about an hour. We decided to stay the night in our trucks. We finally made it there around 8:00 pm. After changing clothes and while dinner was cooking, we scored Bob by flashlight at 175  $\frac{4}{8}$ ." Bob officially scored 174  $\frac{4}{8}$  Boone and Crockett points which earned the first place belt buckle for 2000.

The next day Kres and I hiked back to pick up our spike camp. When we got back, Doug had our trucks loaded and ready to go. It was a long drive home. I wanted to show Bob to everyone but I still had six hours to drive.

Monday morning Kres and I took my ram to the Department of Wildlife in Reno to have it sealed and inspected. When we got there Mike Dobel informed us they had no seals and that they would arrive in a couple of days. A few days later Mike came over to my house to seal and inspect my ram. That's when Mike informed me that he did a little research and found out that I was the first person in Nevada to draw all three sheep tags and harvest all three without the use of a guide.

Sheep hunting is not for everyone but if you are in shape and go prepared for anything you will come away with memories of friends and the great outdoors that no other hunting can provide.

I would like to thank, my wife Melanie, my son Hunter, my daughter Heather, Kres Hilts, Doug Woytek and Stanley Palmer. I hope they all understand how much their support, encouragement and friendship means to me. Thanks again!