

BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB'S



23rd Big Game Awards 1995-1997



FOUNDED IN 1887 BY

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

The trophy stories on the following pages of this special section are just three of the 101 stories that are compiled for the upcoming publication, *Boone and Crockett Club's 23rd Big Game Awards*. This book features the stories behind the top 101 trophies accepted over the past three years including five new World's Records, plus the most current data available on all species of North American big game accepted by the Boone and Crockett Club.

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What Elk Hunters Dreams Are Made Of

HUNTER: JAMES A. GOOK
TROPHY: NON-TYP., AM. ELK
SCORE: 414⁴/₈

An elk hunt filled with great expectations, bitter lows and memories to last a lifetime started as a dream for me. I have a passion for elk -- big elk. My dream was to someday put my tag on a Rocky Mountain bull that would reach the elusive 400 B&C mark. My dream became a reality in 1996.

I did my homework, talking with different state biologists and researching the many tag and permit options that were available. After a short time, I started intensifying my studies into the best areas in Nevada for a big bull. After talking with Ne-

vada wildlife experts, I started to hear the same refrain: big bulls -- Nevada -- Marques Brothers.

The Marques Brothers are a story in themselves. There are five brothers; Chuck, Alvin, David, Jim and Kim. These guys eat, drink, and sleep elk. They are in the woods before work, after work and on their vacations. They follow the bulls through the summer months taking pictures and video. In the fall, they watch their rutting areas and then put them to bed for the year on their wintering grounds. They follow the herds like coyotes, collecting trophies as the bulls shed their antlers. They know their elk personally, and you could not find a finer bunch of guys anywhere. My wife, Terri, and I, (she accompanies me on most of my hunts and only occasionally campaigns for her own tag) decided to book a hunt with this bunch for the fall of 1996.

Spring and summer slipped by quickly while we waited for hunting season to arrive. My brother, Frank, and I practiced shooting weekly at our local gun range until it was time to leave for Nevada. When we finally did arrive in Ely, Nevada, we anxiously called Chuck

before checking into a motel. He met us at a local restaurant and invited us to join him for a day of scouting before our hunt. The next morning we found ourselves overlooking a wide valley, glassing the finger ridges. We watched as a nice 6x6 bull, with a group of cows, kept five other mature bulls at bay as they bantered back and forth. Quite the heated conversation, but none of them were what we were looking for. We did spot three more bulls further up the ridges, so we took off for higher ground. Again, these were nice bulls, but not the big one!

Sunday morning, opening day, we went to a different area, high up the ridge. As we crested a ridge above a large, grassy bowl, a group of bulls disappeared over the rocky top. They were just close enough to see they were mature bulls, but far enough away to leave us wondering how big. We saw several bulls that day that would push 360 to 370 points. By the end of the day, we checked in with the other brothers to see what they had spotted.

Brian reported seeing a big bull, but how big was big? Alvin went out that evening to see if he could get a better look at Brian's bull, and later reported this bull was worth serious consideration. He excitedly told us it was the biggest non-typical bull he had seen in years. With darkness approaching, we flew back to the area and set up our optics on a ridge three-quarters-of-a-mile away. It didn't take long to find him, and Chuck, Terri and I moved in for a closer look. My heart was thumping as we stalked closer and closer, watching him move between the aspens. Finally, at 50 yards, he stepped into the open. He was such a magnificent sight I had to look at him through my rifle scope. Terri whispered, "Are you going to shoot him?" I pondered the thought.

We live in Washington where we have Roosevelt's elk with their typically non-typical shaped antlers. I have been fortunate in taking several bulls that made the records book. My heart's desire was for a big

typical bull. Also, this was just the first day of a scheduled long hunt. I kept my safety on while Chuck ran video tape on him, and I decided to pass. We quietly left the area and returned to town, while the brothers argued whether this was the bull they had nicknamed "Roadie."

Two years prior, Bill had found a nice set of shed non-typical antlers lying in the road, hence the name "Roadie." When we got back to town we hustled over to Bill's house, hauled out the sheds and argued over the video footage about how big this bull really was. The consensus -- I had passed up a record book bull.

The next day, Bill camped on the same ridge, keeping a lookout for the big non-typical, while we checked out some new areas. Again, we located several more good bulls. On Tuesday, we went back to the last place we had seen Roadie. After several hours of glassing, Chuck spotted him and we watched until he bedded down. He was laying in the shade of the timber, over a half mile away, with a small herd of cows. We patiently watched him while waiting for room service. David had to make a run into town and was due back with lunch. We passed the afternoon scattering barbecue rib bones and watching the big bull catnap.

As Chuck and I pondered a stalk route, the other brothers, as only brothers can do, argued over who had the best binoculars and spotting scope. It was family entertainment for Terri and I. When we decided to make our move, the rest of the crew held back to watch the drama unfold.

The "brothers elk" and Terri kept an eye on the bull, who was truly sacked out -- head and tremendous rack stretched out on the ground. The late afternoon sun followed us as we slipped up the ridge to surprise Roadie in his bed. What happened next surprised us! As we approached, a mule deer doe, in the same timber as our bull, started running around for no apparent reason. As we squinted in pain, she ran up

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to within 20 yards of the sleeping bull, twice, disturbing his snooze. He really got annoyed when she bounded by a third time at a range of five feet. This time he jumped up and chased her through a clearing and into another patch of timber. We waited, but they didn't come back out. Before continuing our stalk, we decided to stay put and watch for a sign of his location in the timber. Darkness forced us to abandon our quest. The next several days were spent watching that mountainside, so much I could see it in my dreams.

That Saturday was the opening of archery season and we hadn't seen Roadie again. Everyday we were spotting other mature bulls, but none a candidate for my tag. We picked up a rumor that a bowhunter had shot Roadie. What a sad day for all of us. I think my wife cried, although she won't admit it. We hit the lowest of lows with the news, despite being pleased for this hunter's good fortune. Later we learned the bowhunter didn't get a solid hit and the arrow fell out, the trail disappeared and they searched in vain. We stayed out of their area, giving them an undisturbed opportunity while they hunted. After three days they gave up their search and we wondered if the bull was still alive. Would he heal? Where did he go? Time would tell, and fortunately, we had enough time.

We continued to search for Roadie while still looking at other bulls. One morning we came into a meadow surrounded by fringe timber. We bugled and immediately got an answer. Somewhere in the timber screamed an aggressive bull. He continued to respond to our calls and we strained to see his rack through the trees. Finally, we spotted white tips followed by a large beam. Definitely a big bull, but something was odd. His other beam appeared to be either broken off past the eye guard, or he was deformed. If he had a matching set, he would have scored over 400.

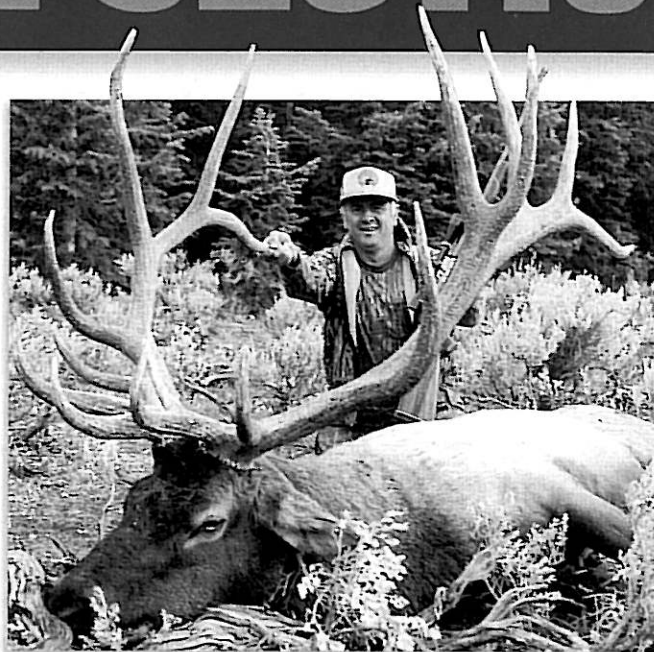
On another morning we drove to the lower reaches of the Schell

Mountain Range. As we waited in the bottoms for daylight, Chuck rolled down his window and bugled into the darkness. A bull answered to the left and one to the right. Several more responses came from further back and cows mewed all around us. We had parked in the middle of a herd. By the time we could see, the herd was gone. That day Terri did spot a dandy that would go 375.

We had settled into a routine: up at 4 a.m., milk and apple turnovers for the drive to our hunting area, and out by dawn, glassing miles of prime elk country. I had planned on hunting the full 30-day season if I had to, and I warned Chuck he was either going to love me or hate me after 30 days in the field. The days lined out until there were 20 of them in the books, and in that time, none of us spotted a bull in the same class as Roadie. I still held out hopes of finding him, but wondered whether our persistence and patience would pay off.

Finally, on the 21st day, our luck changed. Bill was glassing yet another hillside when he spotted Roadie in the timber. He could hardly contain his excitement as he hurried to find the rest of us. Once all together, we planned our strategy.

We reconvened on the mountain to search for this elusive bull. The rut was now in full swing and elk appeared and disappeared constantly. Suddenly, we spotted him in a small opening of timber, 1-1/2 miles away. Again we strained behind the spotting scope to catch glimpses of him as he fed through the trees. For hours we watched him and his harem, anticipating the ridge, and eventually the opening, they would appear in next. We moved into a position along a hillside where the timber met an open, grassy area. This location put me in a spot where I could view all of the timber edges. For over an hour I could hear him coming, squealing and bugling as he moved toward me. I worried about a vocal satellite bull interrupting his approach.



JAMES A. COOK WITH HIS NON-TYPICAL AMERICAN ELK SCORING 414-4/8 POINTS TAKEN IN WHITE PINE COUNTY, NEVADA, IN 1996.

The wind was whipping at close to 30 mph as I sat hunkered down on the hillside. I was shaking from the cold and anticipation. My guides had done their job, and now it was my turn to come through. Eventually, the cows started drifting out of the timber 350 yards away, feeding as they moved. If the cows reached me before the bull stepped out, they would have me pegged. We watched on pins and needles as the cows closed to within 60 yards. Finally, Roadie stepped out. I took a rest, leveled my rifle, took a deep breath and squeezed off the shot. There was no reaction! I quickly fired again and the bull wheeled and headed for the timber. I fired another shot, and he dropped in a heap. I later discovered any of my three shots would have stopped him.

I ran down to my bull overwhelmed by my feelings and awed by the magnificent animal God blessed me with, and I praised him for the experience.

I give my highest respect to the Nevada Division of Wildlife and the sportsmen of Nevada. Elk were nearly extinct in this state at the turn of the century. In the 1930s, sportsmen got together and were responsible for transplanting elk from Yellowstone Park. These animals have established healthy populations in numerous areas within the state. Now there are hunting opportunities that dreams are made of. ▲▲▲

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I started getting excited in the airport in Spokane, Washington, waiting on my good friend Keith Mack. "Montana's mountain lion season opens tomorrow, and I have a tag in my pocket," I said to myself.

I was confident that if anyone would put a big cougar in a tree in 1994, it would be Keith and his pack. I felt fate had brought me to northwestern Montana. I have always loved this beautiful state. In 1988, my wife and I came back home to Georgia with a 6x6 elk from these mountains. Several years later, I took a

Hunters Meet

HUNTER: STAN D. STAMEY
TROPHY: COUGAR
SCORE: 15¹²/16

STAN D. STAMEY WITH HIS COUGAR SCORING 15-12/16 POINTS TAKEN IN LINCOLN COUNTY, MONTANA, IN 1994.

course in taxidermy and met Keith, who lives near this area. When Keith found out we had hunted in his country, we immediately hit it off. This outdoorsman has spent his life working and hunting in

Montana's mountains, and his hounds are keen when it comes to tracking cougar.

In a conversation with him, he mentioned a large cougar he had treed the previous winter, during the "chase only" season. After seeing pictures of the large tom, it was obvious the area had potential. I also realized that these animals have a large home range, and we would be lucky to spot the same tracks, but I had to make a try for him.

During our trip from the airport, Keith explained that the conditions for mountain lion hunting were perfect, as we drove across the fresh, fluffy snow. When we arrived at Keith's place, we talked about the upcoming hunt and decided to use a muzzleloading rifle.

I only received two hours of sleep that night due to a late flight and the long drive. Despite my jet lag and lack of sleep, I was thrilled to see daylight come, and I was very anxious for the hunt to begin. The skilled hounds jumped about noisily in anticipation of the odyssey. Hawkeye and Trapper were the leaders of Keith's pack and during the early moments of dawn, we cut a track. By the size of the track, it was obvious they were made by a big cat. The dogs immediately began the pursuit up a steep mountainside. We then proceeded to chase the animal on foot the entire day through rough, mountainous terrain. The fast pace made it hard to stay within hearing distance of the steadfast hounds. Chasing a wild cougar through the Montana mountains is definitely a test of one's endurance. We were constantly sliding down steep hills on our haunches, in pursuit of the cat. By dusk, the dogs had given up, and we were ready for a hot meal.

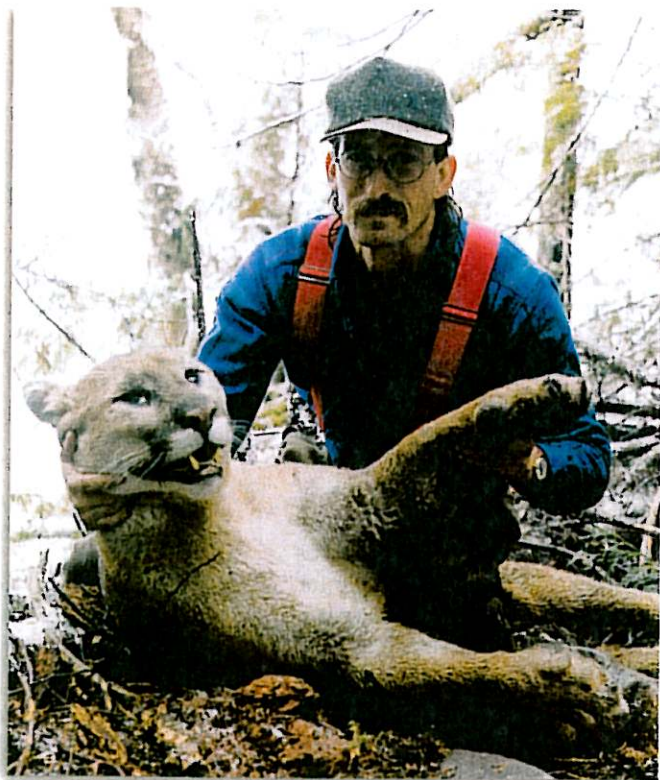
We were up early again the next morning, ready for more of the same. I breathed in the cool, northern air and I felt happy to be alive. We hunted an area adjacent to where we were the day before and crossed a track from another big cat. "Here we go again on another tour of the

mountains," I thought. The dogs were hot on the trail of what we hoped would lead to a trophy tom. This time we didn't have to press on the entire day. Two hours into the chase, we realized that the prized pack had the lion up a tree. The courageous cougar was hanging in a fir tree, over a gorge, 100 feet above the ground.

As I was about to squeeze the trigger of the old smoke pole, I was hoping it would fire in spite of all the moisture in the air. After the shot, but before all the thick, gray smoke had completely cleared, I saw the lion stepping down the tree. He came to rest approximately 100 yards later. Keith and I stood in awe as we looked upon this beautiful animal. As we admired the huge claws and teeth, I wondered about his experiences as a hunter.

That evening, after caping the cougar in Keith's taxidermy shop, he did a rough score of the skull. His calculations told us that my tom could be the new all-time head for Boone and Crockett Club's records book. The next day we took the skull to a wildlife biologist, as required by the state.

It wasn't until the jet was going over the mountain, into the midst of a most beautiful sunrise, that I realized what I had just experienced. Since childhood I was accustomed to the deep feelings that move about in a hunter's soul. This time it was different, because I had taken the life of another hunter, a pure hunter that was powerful and proud. I felt kinship with the cougar, and unworthy of him. I decided that this was it for my cougar hunting. The big old panther represents everything I cherish about hunting in wild places, such as freedom, solitude, and mystery. He will always live in my memory. I like to imagine him up there, someplace high up. Maybe he is sitting in the shadows watching a buck mule deer in an alpine meadow. During this hunt, I was in good company. The mountains gave me something special, and I was thankful. ▲ ▲ ▲



23rd BIG GAME AWARDS

The Ultimate Hunt

HUNTER: CARL W. SCHMIDT
TROPHY: DALL'S SHEEP
SCORE: 174⁵/₈

In some respects, my Dall's sheep hunt actually started seven years earlier when I got a chance to experience what authors like Jack O'Connor and others referred to as "the ultimate hunt." I had drawn a bighorn tag in one of Montana's best trophy areas. By the time I had completed the cram course in sheep behavior, ranges, scoring and scouting, and had successfully completed my hunt with a ram scoring 191-7/8 points, I was hooked! I managed to tag along on a half dozen other successful bighorn hunts, all the while hop-

ing to get a chance to go again, tag in hand.

I began researching Dall's sheep outfitters. I had always hunted with family and a few select partners. Although a guided hunt had less appeal, the laws dictated that if I wanted a Dall's sheep, I'd have to find an outfitter. I chose a backpack-type of hunt and narrowed the list from 50 to three; two in Alaska and one in Northwest Territories. When several friends returned from Alaskan hunts with great sheep and great stories, it was settled. A friend and fellow sheepnut, Gene Meyers, and I booked with Dan Montgomery of Alaska Trophy Adventures. Dan is based out of Wasilla, Alaska, and hunts the Chugach Range. He has, as of this writing, had 100% success on his sheep, of which many have made the 40" mark, and are 10 years or older. He uses a Super Cub to access the Chugach Range, then backpacks in -- my kind of hunt! We had booked a two-on-one hunt, for the second hunt of the season.

Dan couldn't emphasize enough the need to be in excellent shape to stand up to the rigors of Dall's sheep hunting in the

Chugach. We took his advice to heart and spent the spring and summer getting into hunting condition. Between wedding plans and hunting arrangements, the summer went by fast. Our hunt dates were the last 10 days of August, but there was a possibility of starting earlier if others filled tags quickly, so we arrived a week early. I was on my honeymoon (I have an understanding wife) and Gene had talked his sweetheart into making the trip. We toured Alaska together, fishing, hiking, sightseeing and of course, anticipating the big hunt. It was a great time!

Dan and his wife, Loren, made us feel right at home with great cooking and warm hospitality. We shared the cozy cabin with six other sheep hunters from our home town of Missoula, Montana. Our camp became known as Missoula North. One of the highlights was having Dan fly us over the Chugach Range, while checking on his other camps. It was awe-inspiring country, filled with huge glaciers, blue-green lakes and extremely steep terrain throughout. It was my first experience in a Super Cub and Dan put me at ease with his flying skills and good sense.

Two days before the hunt, we hit the shooting range for a final sight-in. I shoot a .270 Remington Model 700 BDL. For sheep, I was shooting handloaded 130 grain Nosler Ballistic Tip. Gene was shooting a .338 with Ballistic Tips and we had no problem getting good groups out to 300 yards. We flipped a coin for who would take the first shot, and I won.

Dan's other hunters and guides returned to camp with outstanding trophies; two rams over 41", one at 40" and another at 30-5/8". We stayed up late into the night recounting each stalk, shot, and missed opportunity. Many of these rams were lone animals, and we knew the odds of finding two rams of this caliber in the same area were remote. Still, we were as excited as two kids on Christmas Eve.

The night before the hunt,

it was raining with low clouds and wind. If this weather pattern held, we wouldn't be flying anywhere in the morning. Fortunately, we awoke to a clear, sunny day! Dan and Gene flew to an airstrip 80 miles away, while the rest of us drove with the gas, gear, guides and other hunters. Dan shuttled hunters, guides and gear across the river while Gene and I did a final check. Being an insulin-dependent diabetic, I had be sure to have blood-monitoring equipment, extra insulin, needles, emergency kits and food enough for any unexpected delays. After a complete check, we were set. Gene drew the long straw and flew in first. While waiting, I saw sheep in the rocks above the airstrip, and on the flight into camp, we saw mountain goats, a few sheep and three grizzlies.

I could hardly believe I was in Alaska sheep hunting! This had been a dream of mine since Dad took us to a hunting movie about Alaska in the mid-sixties. When we arrived in camp, Gene had the tent up and was out scouting. We secured the plane and rocked down the tent. Dan decided we would spend the day hiking to a ridge top, north of our base camp, so we would be at a better vantage point in the morning. The hike to the ridge was quite steep, but made easier by the many sheep trails. We flushed numerous flocks of ptarmigan and saw a fair number of ewes and lambs, but the rams stuck to the nastiest terrain where no hunter in his right-mind would go! When we reached the top, the view was spectacular -- a 360° panorama of some of the most rugged and beautiful country anywhere. This was sheep hunting at its finest!

After a quick bite I hit the sack. I didn't sleep much, and it seemed as though I had just dozed off when Dan roused us to hit the trail. It had rained during the night and the sky was gray and overcast. We sorted through our packs and took only the necessities for heading into very rough country. Dan

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had a place in mind where he had seen some nice rams. We were hiking along a knife ridge, and between us and our destination stood several turret-shaped outcroppings. We couldn't avoid them without losing a lot of elevation and risk being spotted, so we picked our way up and through them. It was as rough as any goat hunt I'd been on and Dan kept asking to be sure if we wanted to continue. Gene and I had both experienced steep, rocky places, but this was on the very edge of our comfort zone. We made it through without incident and were rewarded with a sighting of white specks, a mile away on an opposing ridge. It was a pair of rams, and as we glassed and planned a stalk route, Dan dropped down the side of the ridge and signaled us to follow. He had spotted six more rams feeding lower, on the same ridge where we were.

As we peeked over the edge, I could see that at least three were very respectable, and my heart started pounding wildly. The rams were feeding up the ridge, and it appeared we could intercept them at a saddle, 400 yards down. We dropped over the backside and positioned ourselves 75 yards above the saddle. The wind was blowing in our faces and everything looked great!

We waited for what seemed an eternity (probably 15-20 minutes) and when the rams didn't show, Dan went back up the ridge to check on their progress. He signaled us to quickly come back up the ridge, since the rams had changed course, and were headed back toward the inaccessible country around the turrets. He suggested we drop into a chute and try to get them as they crossed a bench below us. We had just set up when the first ram came into view. Soon the rest followed. Dan picked out the two best rams and Gene and I decided to shoot on the count of three. The shots were very steep and downhill, at 175-225 yards. On the shot, Gene's ram staggered. Mine flinched, then turned back the way he'd come. I ran to the next



chute, and as he ran across and jumped the chute below, I shot again. He was hit in midair and took a nasty tumble down the chute. Meanwhile, Gene's ram had staggered to the same chute and collapsed, falling down to land within 30 yards of mine.

We made it to Gene's ram first. His horns were impressive, long and heavy. He was a 9-1/2 year old, very heavy-bodied ram. Dan got out the tape and confirmed our dreams! The long horn measured an incredible 42-3/8" with 14-4/8" bases! We must have checked the tape 10 times trying to believe it! A Boone and Crockett Dall's sheep to go with his Boone and Crockett bighorn. What a story! As we hiked down to my sheep Dan said he thought mine was the bigger of the two. I couldn't believe it could be bigger yet! He was a beautiful snow-white color with golden horns. He had broken one tip and cracked the other on the way down the chute. It was hard to believe when Dan took the tape out and read off 42-2/8" by 14-6/8" and 11-1/2 years old -- a trophy of a lifetime!! What a hunt! Two great sheep and two lucky hunters, each now with two in the book, and a very good, dedicated guide. It doesn't get much better than that!

We decided to pack the sheep to arrive in the valley below, where Dan could land the plane. He packed the extra gear and headed back to pick up the spike camp, after which he made an airdrop of sleeping bags, food, etc. on the east shore of a lake. It was dusk when we staggered onto the lake shore. We had no more than taken our packs off when Dan flew over, but he couldn't see us through the alders, so we quickly built a fire so he could see where to make the drop. Along with food and sleeping bags, he dropped a map of where the plane would be and his planned route in to help us pack out the heads, meat and capes. The next morning, he hiked into camp, went part way back up the mountain to retrieve the rest of the sheep and caught up to us before we got to the river -- all this with 150 pounds on his back! The flight out was uneventful except for the beautiful scenery and the chance to reflect on my great experience of sharing, ever so briefly, the rugged home of the wild sheep.

Thanks to Gene for being a good hunting partner, and thanks to Dan and all the guys and gals of Alaska Trophy Adventures for going the extra mile! ▲▲▲

B&C ASSOCIATE, CARL W. SCHMIDT (RIGHT) AND HIS HUNTING PARTNER GENE MEYERS, WITH CARL'S DALL'S SHEEP SCORING 174-5/8 POINTS TAKEN ON BARNARD GLACIER, ALASKA, IN 1995.