

I finally got to Resolute Bay, Northwest Territories, on Tuesday, May 9. My flight out of Abilene, Texas, the previous Friday had been canceled due to a very destructive thunder and hail storm. Resolute Bay, 600 miles north of the Arctic Circle, is one of the classic locations to hunt polar bear, and I felt lucky to have been able to book the hunt through Wes Vining, President of The Trophy Connection in Cody, Wyoming. I caught a charter out of Resolute to the spike camp, which had been set up by my two guides, Nat and Martha Kalluk, Inuit Indians. Nat had guided his hunters to 48 kills over the past 12 years. Camp was a 6 by 8 foot double wall tent with caribou skins on the ice. After having a spot of tea, we broke down camp and finally started hunting about 8:00 p.m.

A snowmobile, driven by Martha, pulled the large sled. A smaller sled containing the rest of the load plus Nat and me was pulled by a dozen dogs. We searched for tracks as we slid through the snow and ice going between three and eight miles per hour. Periodically we would stop to glass for bears, which was made possible by the 24 hours of daylight during that time of the year. We saw two or three sets of tracks, but the bears were small — smaller than the nine foot minimum I was looking for which I had already communicated to Nat.

We traveled until about 2:30 a.m., at which point we set up camp, boiled a commercially packed dinner, ate and went to sleep in broad daylight. At 6:30 a.m., I responded to the familiar nighttime sensation of a full bladder by getting up in my long johns, putting my boots on, unzipping the tent front and stepping into the weather, and I do mean weather! The wind was blowing probably 30 miles per

hour with the temperature at minus 5° F. It felt as if needles were blowing into my back. I thought, "What am I doing here?"

We were weathered in until the following morning. During this time we just lounged around in the tent, talking and eating. One time the dogs started barking, with all of them facing one direction. Since we really didn't expect any other animals out there except for seals and polar bears, Nat got dressed and investigated. He spotted tracks from a sow with two cubs.

Thursday morning, May 11, the wind died down and bright clear skies prevailed. Nat's glassing was productive, so we



struck out on the dog sled to investigate a bear that we had sighted. The bear, which had been sleeping, got up. Nat used its tracks as reference and indicated to me that the bear was more than nine feet. With that in mind, we chased it in earnest, though initially the bear gained distance on us, it finally headed back toward camp.

As we started gaining on the bear, Nat let three dogs loose. We were getting close to camp by this time. The dogs didn't seem all that interested and the bear didn't seem to be affected at all. The bear continued to move with that slow pondering trot with his legs swinging in tandem from side to side. I had read that at this stage, when the hunting party is very close to the bear, the guide lets all the dogs loose, and they bay at the bear, giving the hunter plenty of time to choose the distance from which to shoot the bear. We didn't have

time to let the rest of the dogs loose due to our proximity to camp, as Martha had been left behind.

I stumbled out of the sled and ran to get a little closer to the bear. At 40 yards I shot it broadside, with camp only 50 yards away. The bear stumbled yet continued to walk forward. I put a second shot into its spine between the shoulder blades, and with that the bear tumbled backward.

The ordinance I used was a .375 Ackley Improved bolt action rifle with a Remington action and Shilen barrel, using 270 grain Barnes "X" bullets chronographed at 2725 feet/sec. We were able to recover the bullet that went through its chest and stuck in the hide on the opposite side. The bullet had mushroomed perfectly. When I got home, I weighed it at the same 270 grains - an incredible 100% weight retention!

The hunt was short and very well organized, with my exposure to the elements being limited. My sunshine loving thin-skinned body was certainly happy to get back to good old Abilene.

INSET: AUTHOR, JOHNNY, WITH ONE OF HIS GUIDES, MARTHA KALLUK, AND HIS POLAR BEAR THAT SQUARED 9-1/2 FEET.

By Johnny Bliznak
B&C Associate

RESOLUTE BAY BEAR

