

# 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 five 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.

Available this fall, *Boone and Crockett Club's 23rd Big Game Awards*, has a wealth of information plus hours of reading enjoyment to offer today's big game hunter. Watch your mail for details.

# 23rd BIG GAME AWARDS

## New Mexico's First Desert Bighorn in 16 Years

**HUNTER: TOM PAWLACYK**  
**TROPHY: DESERT BIGHORN**  
**SCORE: 181<sup>4</sup>/<sub>8</sub>**

**My hunt took place in** the Peloncillo Mountains, located in southwestern New Mexico's Hidalgo County. The Peloncillo's are a low, narrow range rising 1,500 to 2,000 feet above the Animas Valley on the east, and the San Simon Valley on the west. This mountain range is renowned as the last holdout of the great Apache Chief, Geronimo. In 1886, after 20 years of fighting, he surrendered his tribe to General Miles in Skelton Canyon. Almost 100 years later, in June 1981, history was

made again in the Peloncillos: 28 desert sheep (*Ovis Canadensis Mexicana*) were released into the central portion of the range.

This date marked the return of desert sheep to a range they had once populated. Historically, desert bighorn were present in most of the rugged mountain ranges of southern New Mexico. Over the past 100 years, a number of factors, including human disturbances, livestock competition, periods of drought and disease, caused their decline. Sheep hunting was prohibited in 1889, but uncontrolled market hunting continued to be an important cause of mortality in some areas.

In 1972, the Game and Fish Department established bighorn pastures at the Red Rock Wildlife Area for propagating desert sheep. Twenty-two bighorn from the San Andres Mountains and the Loma Prieta Range in Sonora, Mexico formed the nucleus of the new herd. Loma Prieta bighorns were chosen because they were the

closest relatives to the indigenous New Mexican bighorn. The original 450-acre pasture was increased to 1300 fenced acres in 1990, increasing the carrying capacity to 150 sheep.

Red Rock bighorn feed on natural vegetation, are exposed to predators, and now freely roam over the 5 miles of canyons, springs, and steep slopes. Red Rock resembles free ranging conditions, however confinement increases their vulnerability to predation, disease, and the harassment of ewes by rams. Predators were selectively controlled, health of the sheep was closely monitored, and an attempt was made in 1989 to reduce harassment of ewes by rams by segregating the rams. The problem of excess rams needed to be addressed because it ultimately reduced the carrying capacity and productivity of the facility.

Since its establishment in 1972, the Red Rock herd has increased almost every year bighorn were removed. During 1986 to 1990, and in 1994, the herd showed a 25 percent annual increase. Between 1979 and 1983, 118 bighorn were removed from Red Rock for experimental work, to supplement the Hatchet Mountain herd, and to establish populations in the Peloncillo, Alamo Hueso, and Ladron Mountains. Until wild populations are large enough to be used as a source of transplant stock, Red Rock will continue to be the foundation for New Mexico's desert bighorn restoration program.

The Peloncillo Mountain population was established in 1981, with bighorn transplanted from the Red Rock Wildlife area, from the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge, and the Plomosa Mountains in Arizona. Red Rock bighorn lacked previ-

ous exposure to pathogens carried by the Arizona bighorn and died of pneumonia in 1981 through 1982. For the first 10 years of the transplant, the population did not increase and pneumonia was the suspected factor limiting lamb survival. In 1991, Red Rock's rams experimentally released to the Peloncillos survived, suggesting that the disease had run its course and that Red Rock and Arizona bighorn could coexist in this herd. The population subsequently increased to an estimated 80 sheep by 1994. This increase, the availability of trophy quality rams, and its non-endangered status, led to opening a limited hunt during the 1995 season.

I hired Roy Lerg from Smith, Nevada, to guide and outfit my hunt. I chose Roy over other very reputable guides because Roy agreed to guide me personally, and his schedule would allow ample time to harvest one of the best rams. My hunt started on December 1, 1995, and after three days a very large ram was spotted over a mile away. Roy felt we should try and get in close the following day, so we could get a better look.

Tuesday, December 5th, started out sunny with the weatherman forecasting a warm, dry day. Shortly after sunrise we were in position near Granite Peak, the location where the big ram was seen the day before. Shortly after 8:00 a.m. we spotted three rams slowly walking on the skyline. Through his spotting scope, Roy identified one of the rams as the big ram that he and his guides, Frank and Gary, had seen the day before. Even from three-quarters of a mile away it was clear that the ram not only had very large horns, but also had an extremely large body. As we watched the rams,

they suddenly appeared spooked and disappeared quickly, heading in a southerly direction. The terrain surrounding Granite Peak was made up of large boulders, numerous draws and canyons. The vegetation was all thorns and needles - cholla cactus, prickly pear cactus, and Yucca trees.

Our rams appeared again an hour later and we decided to stay with them until they bedded. We watched them feed on prickly pear for another hour before they finally settled in for the day. The large ram bedded about 200 yards from the others. This allowed us to make our move, a very long hike, that would put Roy and I above and to the east of the bedded ram.

Two hours later we were above the ram and Roy hastily assembled his spotting scope to confirm our anxiety over the size of this ram. Before Roy's scope was assembled our ram left his bed and was on the move. Roy estimated his B&C score to be between 176 and 178, possibly more, since Roy was not used to seeing a desert sheep with such a large body. We decided this was the ram we wanted, so I rested my rifle in the rocks for a shot. By the time I found the ram in my scope he was 350 yards away and still moving, which made me decide not to take the shot! We had a magnificent chocolate colored desert ram with horns near or exceeding the 180 mark, and I did not want to chance wounding or missing this magnificent animal. Roy agreed, so we decided to stay with the ram until we could get close enough for a clean, one-shot kill.

The sheep in the Peloncillos are hunted by cougar, and this one, although he had no idea we were above him, was as cautious and spooky as



any ram I have ever hunted. We followed him through some very nasty terrain, and lost sight of him for over an hour. Roy felt the ram would keep moving and sooner or later he would appear again. In order to keep up, we were forced to take some circuitous routes due to the steep rugged terrain. Sometime later, we found ourselves looking down on a flat bench which protruded outward from the mountain side. Roy thought there was a good chance our ram would be somewhere in this area, so we decided to move down on to the bench and carefully glass all sides. It didn't take long before we spotted our ram moving 150 yards below us. I found a rest in the rocks and fired a well-placed shot in the center of his back.

It took us a lot longer than we anticipated to make our way down to the ram. Upon locating the ram, Roy's first words were "we definitely have a 180-inch ram here." His horns were huge,

and his body was larger than any other desert sheep Roy or I had ever seen. We estimated his weight to be more than 200 pounds. Frank and Gary were almost speechless when they first saw the ram up close. One of their first comments was "they just don't grow rams like this in Nevada."

For this first desert sheep hunt in 16 years to be held in the Peloncillo Mountains, I would like to thank all of the private landowners who graciously signed an agreement to allow us access. I would especially like to thank Ed and Carol Roos for their generous hospitality during my hunt. The New Mexico Game and Fish Department must also be commended for their perseverance and hard work in establishing a huntable desert sheep population. The bighorns in the Peloncillo's have a great gene pool and although my ram is the new New Mexico state record, I don't expect it to stand for very long. ▲▲▲

**TOM PAWLACYK, B&C LIFETIME ASSOCIATE, WITH HIS DESERT BIGHORN RAM SCORING 181-4/8 POINTS TAKEN IN HIDALO COUNTY, NEW MEXICO, IN 1995.**

# 23rd BIG GAME AWARDS

As told by Jerome E. Arledge...

## Arledge's Ivory Tooth Buck

**HUNTER: ROBERT ARLEDGE**  
**TROPHY: NT - MULE DEER**  
**SCORE: 294<sup>4</sup>/<sub>8</sub>**

**ROBERT ARLEDGE WITH HIS NON-TYPICAL MULE DEER SCORING 294-4/8 POINTS TAKEN IN ELMORE COUNTY, IDAHO, IN 1997.**

**My son, Robert Arledge,** has been seriously hunting big bucks for four years. He routinely passes up several bucks per year, looking for a "big one". For one reason or another, three Boone & Crockett class bucks and one 37" four point had escaped all of our previous hunting efforts. Robert set a personal goal of harvesting a really big buck within four years, and 1997 was his fourth year. Another of his goals was to scout at least 30 days before this year's

hunt. In 30 days of scouting, Robert had only located one good buck... but what a buck!

On the 29th day of scouting, we found a non-typical buck, which we were able to glass for an incredible seven hours. The non-typical was feeding with twelve smaller bucks, and was twice the body size of his running

mates. During these seven hours, he showed us something very interesting. The big boy changed beds four times and didn't move more than 75 yards all day. When any of the other bucks were changing beds or feeding, he would only feed or change positions when all of the other bucks were bedded... making sure that the other boys were maintaining a watchful eye. On the last day of scouting, we didn't spot the non-typical, but felt confident that he was still there, because we did see four of the other bucks that were with him.

After the opening day alarm and a quick breakfast, the decision was made to drive nine miles around to the top of the hunting area, in order to hunt down on the buck. We arrived on top an hour early, and to a strong, cold wind. As we began to see the brush and rocks in the dawning light, Robert led the trek down the hill to find the exact draw where we had spotted the buck. As he cautiously peeked over the ridge, he saw three deer sneaking away from another hunter, down the mountain, right where the big buck should have been.

Robert remembers that he almost had a heart attack over his sudden bad luck, but composed himself by remembering that we had heard no shots. He figured that the buck would be using the escape route we watched him use before the season. Robert whispered back to me, "we've got to get into the next canyon, fast!"

We spotted a cow elk in the bottom of the next drainage, entering an aspen patch. Her mouth was open, and she obviously had been running hard, but was now walking, looking around cautiously. In a few seconds, the cow disappeared and our trotting resumed until Robert froze and turned back to me, pointing to a

15 foot high cloud of dust lifting into the sunrise. Continuing another twenty-five feet, he immediately stopped and raised his rifle. He thought, "the heck with the non-typical, what about this huge typical." Quickly he realized that it was a four point bull elk running hard with another cow.

As Robert ran forward another 30 paces, I spotted a high raked, two point buck, with only one antler. I broke silence with "a p...ssst!" Robert turned back to me, and I pointed to the bottom of the canyon and whispered BUCK! He turned back on full alert, ran another 15 steps, and swung off his day pack looking for the sturdiest sagebrush. He threw his pack on a thick bush, took careful aim, and fired. I immediately grabbed my head with both hands, as in shock and thought "OH NO... that was not the big buck." At the same time I saw movement above the aspen patch. I raised my binoculars and spotted two more bucks trotting to escape. The second buck stumbled and I recognized the heavy webbing on the right antler. As the buck turned downhill toward the aspen cover, I saw the webbed left antler. It was then I realized that Robert had shot at the big buck after all.

Once in the cover, the two bucks stopped and stood broadside, looking in our direction. Robert fired two more shots. The buck then jumped out of the aspens, in the open, and stood broadside. Another shot rang out and the big buck went down. Even though he was down, we both thought he had the look of getting back up again. Robert reloaded, as I fed him cartridges out of his pack. As if on cue, the buck promptly stood up as I yelled "you have to put him down again!" Another shot drew no reaction from the buck. The next shot put him down for good.



# DS SPECIAL SECTION

Robert fired a total of six times at a distance of 250 yards, and all of them were direct hits. Practicing shooting at gallon jugs filled with water at 300 and 400 yards all summer long had paid off handsomely! When I asked him about seeing the one-antlered buck, he commented that he had already spotted the other two bucks crossing in the shade, above the one-antlered buck. "Even after seeing his heavy horns and his

huge body size compared to the other buck, I wasn't sure that he was our big non-typical. He had the big body size and I was out of time. I had to take him now!" he continued.

The big boy also had an ivory tooth. We've only heard of two other bucks having ivory teeth and they were also non-typicals. The buck has 11 points on the left side and 15 points on the right, with a main beam-like abnormal point near the base of

the right antler and weighed an estimated 350 pounds.

Robert has hunted in Idaho since 1988 (10 years) and this is the first buck he has harvested. The buck was green scored at 295-3/8 Boone and Crockett points, with a nearly 195 inch mainframe, and slightly over 100 inches of abnormal points. Robert's lifetime goal has always been to take two big typicals and two big non-typicals. Now he only has three to go. ▲▲▲



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# 23rd BIG GAME AWARDS

## The Infamous Number 57

**HUNTER: CRAIG D. MARTIN**  
**TROPHY: BLACK BEAR**  
**SCORE: 22<sup>15</sup>/16**

**The most satisfying** hunt of my life actually began in the winter of 1996 while I was attending the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep convention in Reno, Nevada. During the Men's Luncheon Auction, an Alaskan self-guided spring black bear hunt for two, donated by Mike Justis, of Boise, Idaho, really grabbed my attention. I felt as though this might be a great opportunity to better my previous black bear, which scored 20-15/16. Besides that, I knew that Alaska's black bears

are prized for their long, beautiful coats, so I decided to bid.

When the bidding started out slow, I got more excited. But when the donor of the hunt started talking and describing the hunt, the bidding heated up. By the time the price doubled, I found myself holding the highest bid. My excitement over the hunt erased any buyer's remorse I might have had.

The FNAWS Convention was a great success with over \$3.5 million raised for the foundation and its efforts in "putting sheep on the mountain." I was more than happy to help. I always enjoy the meetings, good company and interesting conversation.

As soon as I returned home to Dayton, Washington, I was on the phone. Unfortunately it turned out to be bad timing for my regular partner and he decided to pass. I contacted another close hunting friend, Craig Noble of Walla Walla, Washington. He jumped at the offer and said he had another friend, Bill Frazier, also from Walla Walla, who

wanted to come. Fortunately, there was room on the boat and Mr. Justis arranged to take the three of us. At the time, I had no idea what measure of success I would find, nor did I know that out on a remote Alaskan island lurked a well-known and much sought-after creature, and that fate would bring us together.

On my birthday, May 1, 1996, we found ourselves on the docks in Ketchikan, Alaska, loading our gear into a Beaver outfitted with floats. It was a 90-minute flight northwest to our destination; a pristine cove nestled in the Tongass National Forest. The cove would be our boat camp location for the next two days. On the day of our arrival, it was bright and warm with not a breath of wind - unusual for the area. After the introductions with the captain and crew of the Rite-Off, we ate a quick meal and got ready for an evening hunt.

After loading into a small skiff, we took off to start glassing the miles of shoreline. The waters were filled with sea otters and seals, which we enjoyed watching as they capered in the moonlight, but there were no bear sightings that evening. The clean, brisk Alaskan air made us forget that we had just eaten not too long ago and once back at camp, we were ready to fill up again. This didn't hurt the cook's feelings as we cleaned our plates for the second time that day.

The next couple of days were similar. The weather stayed unusually perfect, warm and clear with no wind. We did see a few bear, but nothing of the size we were hoping for from this area. Jim Bruce, Captain of the Rite-Off, and I talked it over and decided to move camp into another bay to the southwest, which took the better part of the next day.

On the fourth day we started to see more bear. My partners were

starting to get itchy while I felt content running the video camera. Craig Noble filled his tag that morning with his first bear ever. It had a long, full coat and was coal black. After lunch, Bill Frazier spotted the bear he wanted. I landed Bill and Craig on the beach downwind of the bruin. Then I paddled the skiff out to where I hoped to get some good video footage of the event. It was fun to watch the two old friends make the stalk together, taking Bill's first black bear.

After we had taken care of Bill's bear, we made a dash across the bay since we still had calm waters for our small hunting craft. As we idled into a small cove, we thought we spotted a large bear at the far end. As we paddled in further for a better look, we could see that this big boar had a thin coat but was probably the biggest bear we had seen thus far. We took some great pictures of him turning over rocks on the beach, and while relishing the solitude of the wilderness, we decided to let him go.

On our way out of the cove I spotted a gleam of black coat through the trees. This was the 25th bear we had sighted so far and he was even larger than the bear we had just passed. He had a big pumpkin-shaped head, but we were disappointed to see a large bald spot on his hindquarters. I took some quick videos of him before we headed out of the cove.

There were only a few hours of light left and as we left the protection of the cove we discovered that high winds had kicked up and the water was too rough for our small craft. We had on our life jackets and a hand-held radio on board for emergencies. We made a call to Captain Bruce aboard the mother ship, asking him to come across the bay and pick us up in the larger, 24-foot fishing skiff. The waters were

# DS SPECIAL SECTION

quite dangerous with white caps peaking over our heads.

It took 45 minutes for Captain Bruce to cross the bay. We transferred into the larger boat and tied the small skiff to the stern, and proceeded back to the Rite-Off. We moved slowly because of the hazardous rocks in the shallow water. I was standing next to the captain when he said, "Is that a dead seal floating out there?" I pulled up my binoculars and could see that it was a large bear. We motored past the bear at 100 yards and stopped to see where he would go ashore. The captain killed the engine and we waited. The bear started swimming faster the closer he got to shore. I asked to be put ashore as quickly as possible.

I climbed on the bow of the boat trying to keep an eye on the bear, which was nearly impossible as high winds and shallow water were making our approach to the rocky shore extremely hazardous. I kept signaling to Captain Bruce to get the boat closer. I stretched out trying to make contact with land and looked over in time to see the bruin climbing out onto the shoreline. Seconds later, I made a jump for it and fortunately hit shore to find my bear nowhere in sight. I took off at a quick sprint 70 yards uphill over slippery rocks and seaweed. When I stopped, I was above, looking down on the bear. He had just shaken off and was running for timber. I took a second to look for rub spots, not taking into consideration how huge he looked. My gun came up, I shot and the bear dropped.

I held my rifle over my head and let out a "whoop", partly to signal the guys and partly to express my joy. The captain and Craig had been watching the whole drama from the drifting boat. I hadn't realized it, but Bill had jumped out behind me and I had left him in the rocks in my



rush to reach the bear before he disappeared into the timber.

I signaled the boat to come in for the bear before the winds made it completely impossible. We had to work fast because the tide, the winds and fading light were working against us. We lashed the dingy to a ledge on the shore; then, using every ounce of strength we had, the three of us rolled the beautiful big bear into the small craft. We were all seriously concerned about whether or not the boat would stay afloat since he filled the entire skiff. There was barely room for me to get in with him. The captain came to shore with the bigger boat to pick up Craig and Bill.

We struggled through the waves back to the Rite-Off, worrying the entire time that the dingy would capsize. Even getting him into the Rite-Off with a boom and winch was a nearly overwhelming job. After the caping was finished, I came up with a crude measurement of 23-1/4 inches. I added it up several more times in disbelief. In Petersburg, we took the cape and skull to State Biologist Ed Crain, where he removed a tooth for aging, and sealed the cape and skull. When the report came back, it showed this wonderful creature to be 18 years old. But that wasn't all. It

turned out that I had bagged Bear Number 57, a former "dump bear" from Petersburg that had been sedated and transported to Kuiu Island the previous year. This bear, the infamous 57, would be remembered by many.

In 1995, during the relocation procedure, Alaska State Biologist, Ed Crain, mentioned 57 specifically and was quoted in the Petersburg Pilot, "This bear's a freak, he's so big." At that time, 57's live skull measured 22 inches and his weight was estimated at 600 to 650 pounds. That was a guess, since the state's scale topped out at 500 pounds. I brought the skull to Buzzi Cook, an official measurer for the Boone and Crockett Club; he looked shocked. It turned out that he had been planning a hunt to Kuiu Island for this very same bear after hearing about, "the monster," as one newspaper had called him.

I have been a dedicated trophy hunter for over 20 years and it has been a life-long goal of mine to be in Boone and Crockett Club's all-time records book. This hunt was the experience of a lifetime and if capturing this magnificent bear gives me the chance to join Boone and Crockett's list of elite hunters, it will be the one hunt I'll never forget. ▲▲▲

**CRAIG D. MARTIN,**  
**B&C ASSOCIATE, WITH**  
**HIS BLACK BEAR SCOR-**  
**ING 22-15/16 POINTS**  
**TAKEN ON KUIU**  
**ISLAND, ALASKA, IN**  
**1996.**

# 23rd BIG GAME AWARDS

## Big Buffalo Don't Come Easy!

I've always had a fascination with buffalo. As a kid, it was buffalo nickels. Later on, Granzel Fitz became my hero when I read how he had killed a trophy bull at Fort Niobrara, Nebraska, in 1952. I began dreaming of collecting a big, heavy-maned bull of my own.

My first buffalo was purchased from the surplus herd of the National Bison Range in Montana in 1977. This dandy old bull was hauled to Colville, Washington, and was put on live display for a couple of months.

**HUNTER: ROBERT D. JONES**  
**TROPHY: BISON**  
**SCORE: 122<sup>4</sup>/<sub>8</sub>**

**B&C OFFICIAL MEASURER, ROBERT D. JONES, WITH HIS BISON SCORING 122-4/8 POINTS TAKEN IN CUSTER COUNTY, SOUTH DAKOTA, IN 1995.**

He was a real attraction. Everyone in the country came to see him, not to mention the senior citizen bus that came by twice a week. Finally it came time to butcher, and my first buffalo ended up as a life-size mount in the museum at Washington State University.

Then, in 1982, I drew one of 10 non-

resident buffalo permits for the Henry Mountains in Utah. The Henry's are a rough piece of country, and a trophy bull was hard to find. Prior to my hunt, I spent 16 days on a backpack Dall's sheep hunt in Alaska; killing a buffalo at 10,200 feet elevation on Mt. Pinnell made the efforts of the sheep hunt look pretty tame. It took seven horses to pack out the meat, cape and skull. This Utah bull scored 113-6/8 B&C points, and it was the biggest bull taken in Utah that season.

In the 1980's and early '90's, I outfitted buffalo hunts on the Triple U Ranch outside Pierre, South Dakota. I harvested several more bulls on the ranch, but these trophies, while probably the prettiest buffalo I had ever seen, just didn't get enough years on them to make them record-class. I was in on the kill of close to 200 mature bulls, and this led to my learning how to field judge buffalo with a little consistency. My advice: Forget all about horn length and look for third-quarter mass only.

Finally, after a lot of research, I applied for a permit at Custer State Park in South Dakota. I drew a permit for a three day hunt in January of 1995 and arrived at the park a few days early to scout the herd. I found a great old bull late in the afternoon the day before my hunt and photographed him until dark, confident that I had found a record-book bull. Unfortunately, my luck was about to take a turn for the worse. A truck's headlights came down the jeep trail. It was a park ranger guiding the only other hunter in the same three-day time slot. The old bull I had found was standing just off the road in a snow storm. They came back the next morning and followed his tracks for five miles in the fresh snow until the other hunter filled his tag. That bull was a dandy, and would have scored close to 125 points.

I finally took an old, rugged-looking bull with horns that were broomed back so far that they are the shortest horns on record. They also have the largest third quarter mass, and score 118-6/8. He had character, and I finally had my record-class buffalo!

After my hunt, I stayed to photograph wildlife in the park and, after a few days, found the buffalo of a lifetime! I was one of the last hunters for the 94-95 season, and after the hunts were over I called the park office to see if this huge bull had been taken. He hadn't, so I put in again for the 1995-96 season. I also requested the first hunt of the season. I was drawn and my hunt was set for December 6, 7, and 8.

I arrived early, did a little scouting, but failed to find the old bull. Not unusual, since the park consists of 73,000 acres with a herd of 1,400 buffalo. On the first morning of my hunt I met Vern Ekstrom at the park headquarters. Vern is in charge of the buffalo program at Custer, and does most of the guiding on the hunts. We had a great time on my last hunt, and it was a pleasure to see him again. We immediately headed for a part of the park that he hadn't been into for awhile. It wasn't a half-hour after daylight when we spied a band of seven old bulls on a hillside, in heavy timber. A jeep trail leading into the area was blocked with downed trees, so we went on foot. The bulls spooked when they saw us, and went uphill and around into the bottom of a huge basin. They stopped there to feed and we glassed them from a high rocky point. The tremendous old bull that I had seen the previous year stood out like a sore thumb. Of all the buffalo in the park, and of all the country this bull could have been in, we had found him the first morning! I told Vern I would take him.



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We had to wait for the meat inspector to come out before I could shoot. Under South Dakota law, all harvestable bison bulls must be observed by a meat inspector before they can be taken. Vern went back to the truck to radio this information to town, and came back with the bad news. The meat inspector was not available and we would have to wait until tomorrow!

I told Vern I wanted to glass this band of bulls until it got dark so we would at least have an idea as to where they might be in the morning. There was no snow on the ground, so tracking was not an option. The weather was cool and very calm, which probably led to the buffalo holding tight. The lush feed in the basin didn't hurt anything

either. They were still in the basin at dark when I left for the truck by flashlight.

After a long, slow night, Vern and I hiked into the basin right after daylight. The little herd was in the exact same spot. They hadn't moved more than 50 yards in 24 hours. Luck was on our side. Vern went back to the truck to call the inspector while I glassed the big bull with my spotting scope. After a couple of hours the okay was given, and I harvested the old bull with a 150-gr. Nosler to the base of the skull from my .270.

This dandy old bull weighed 2,450 pounds (live weight), making him the heaviest ever recorded from Custer State Park. His horn measurements, after the required 60-day drying period,

scored 130-4/8 inches. At that entry score the *Records of North American Big Game*, 10th Edition, would have listed this bull behind seven other entries: two of these were picked up, and four were taken from the Wood bison herd in northern Alberta. My bull would have been the largest plains bull ever taken by a sport hunter. Unfortunately, when the Final Judges' Panel in Reno scored my bison, the final score dropped to 122-4/8 points. This drop in points occurred because the base measurements were not taken in the correct place when it was initially measured.

Fifty years of dreaming, forty years of big-game hunting, twenty years of experience with buffalo, and a lot of luck resulted in my taking this great animal. ▲▲▲



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**I am only a young man,** but hunting is a family tradition that is already dear to my heart. I went on my first hunting trip with my father, mother, and six-year-old brother when I was three months old. Hunting is bred into me, as I come from at least five generations of hunters.

In 1994, I turned 16, which had its advantages. I now had my driver's license and could go out driving to scout for deer on my own! As a sophomore in high school, I participated in sports. As soon as practice was over, I

## A Hunting Tradition

**HUNTER: CHARLES J. HOGELAND**  
**TROPHY: NT - MULE DEER**  
**SCORE: 265 1/8**

would head out into the surrounding country to scout for deer. I had received my hunting permit for the Frenchman Unit of southwest Nebraska, so I knew that I would be hunting deer that November. Many hours were spent in the months preceding deer season looking through binoculars and a spotting scope, glassing the countryside.

One particular evening will stay in my mind forever. It was just prior to a huge red sunset. It had been very hot that day, and as the sun dropped in the sky I caught a glimpse of a very large buck and several does heading for a watering hole. Through my spotting scope, I realized that this deer was something special. I had never before seen such a spectacular rack. I could see that there were at least eight points on each side, but there were some smaller points that would show when the buck turned his head just right. I watched the deer until they walked down a draw and disappeared.

I was very excited and raced home to tell my parents. For awhile only Mom would believe that such a trophy could actually exist. Dad and Grandpa had seen a large buck at the close of muzzleloader season the previous year, but I don't think that Dad believed me about the size and the mass of this deer. Then one evening, a week or so later, my dad ran into the house with a big grin and exclaimed, "I saw him!" That meant he was real. However, my brother was still a non-believer.

Opening day was fast approaching, so we made our annual stops and phone calls to local landowners to get permission to hunt. Three days before the season, I had to attend the National FFA Convention in Kansas City. Several of us at the convention had licenses for deer, so it was my job to get the advisor to leave on Friday, early enough for us to get home. Our Advisor was my dad, so I did not have to work too hard to leave a few hours early.

Saturday, November 12, started out like a typical morning. We woke up early, got dressed, and had breakfast. The only thing different was that we were all more excited than usual, since we were loading the vehicles to go hunting. On this hunt, I was joined by my dad, who was our guide, my 62-year-old grandma, who was looking for any buck, and my brother, who was just going along, not really believing my story. As for me, I was only looking for "The BUCK."

Finally, the time had come and we were now off to find the monster buck. The weather that morning was overcast and chilly, with only a slight breeze blowing out of the south. We carefully checked each pocket in every draw we came to. As we approached each draw, tension mounted until the draw would prove empty. Oc-

asionally, we would flush a few pheasants or have a covey of quail explode at our feet, momentarily stopping our hearts. At about 9 a.m., we started seeing a few does as we continued to check draws, but no bucks.

Dad was the first to spot a nice buck, but he was a long way out at 500 yards. Looking through the spotting scope we could see that he was at least a 6x7, with good width and some mass, but it wasn't my buck. Dad tried rattling the buck closer for Grandma to shoot and got him to come within 150 yards, but was still too far out for Gram'. The buck did stop for a short time, looked toward the sound of the clanging antlers, then towards the two does he was leaving behind. This time the does won out, as the rut was in full swing. After the deer disappeared, my dad asked me if I would have shot that nice buck. I replied, "no, it is only the first day and I am in no hurry. Besides, Grandma was in the best position for a good shot."

We moved to another set of draws and immediately started seeing more does. I also noticed that these deer appeared to be nervous. The next pocket produced the reason for the watchful deer. As we approached and were able to see more of the draw, I saw movement. My heart started pounding, only to see a woolly white coyote run over the hill. The time was now 11:30 a.m. and another two pockets were ruled out.

The next pocket started out the same. I didn't see anything at first. Then all of a sudden, I saw three deer. I quickly realized that one looked awfully big and awfully familiar. What probably took seconds seemed to take hours - like super slow motion. I looked at the antlers and my mind went on auto pilot. "Damn, it's him!" I said to myself. Range? - 150 yards. I knew that my .270 was sighted in for

# DS SPECIAL SECTION

200 yards, so it was a dead-on hold. I felt this shot was a piece of cake, since I had taken hunter safety and practiced many hours for this shot. I took the gun off safe, took a deep breath, settled the cross hairs behind his front shoulder and squeezed the trigger. I prayed that my shot would be accurate and the deer would not suffer. The majestic buck reared up on his back legs like a horse. I chambered another round as the deer came to the ground on all fours. He started to move, so I took aim and squeezed the trigger one final time. The big buck was down for good.

A new excitement now started as I approached the deer cautiously. My dad, brother and grandma came up to me and my trophy; Dad let out a loud yell, and my brother shook his head and my hand at the same time. Grandma later said that by the time she reached the three of us, I was just sitting beside my buck stroking his soft coat and admiring his antlers. I guess I was in a state of shock, both happy and sad at the same time. I had great respect for that splendid animal.

Grandma had come prepared, pulling out her camera for some quick picture taking. By then, my smiles told it all. Dad asked if he could have the honor of field dressing my deer, and asked jokingly if I wanted this small thing mounted. Little did he know that I was shaking too much to handle the job myself.

We finally got the deer loaded, and headed first to the landowner's house to thank him and show him the buck that his land produced. He could not believe that a deer that size was taken one half mile from his house, and he had never seen him before.

We headed for home where Mom and Grandpa shared in the excitement as we relived the story.

We then took the deer to the check-in station, where a few successful hunters congratulated me and admired the massive buck. On the way back home we had the buck weighed. The scales tipped at 290 pounds, field dressed.

The following days were filled with many well wishes and hand shakes. We estimated that close to 500 people stopped to see the buck the first week. Many people suggested we make sure to have the deer scored. I knew that the buck was an exceptional trophy, but little did I know how exceptional. A few days after the big hunt, Dad, Mom and I took my trophy to North Platte. Arrangements were made with Barry Johnson of Johnson's Taxidermy to do the mounting. He was impressed with the mass of the buck and suggested that we should make an appointment with George Nason. Mr. Nason is the District Manager of Programs Section with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and is an official measurer for the Boone and Crockett Club.

On January 13, 1995, Dad, Mom and I watched patiently as Mr. Nason measured and re-measured the antlers. After what seemed like several hours the totals were added. "It's official," Mr. Nason proclaimed. "Congratulations, Charlie, you are now the proud owner of the new Nebraska State Record non-typical rifle mule deer. This head is the most perfect non-typical specimen I have ever seen," he continued.

From that moment on the chain of events continued. My hunting idol, Ted Nugent, called and later mailed a letter to congratulate me on my deer. In August, 1996, I had the pleasure of meeting him in person. Ted is a musician, an avid bow hunter, a strong supporter of family hunting, and an active member of numerous hunting organizations.



On April 30, 1995, my trophy was ready to pick up from the taxidermist, Barry Johnson had a big surprise awaiting me. Art Thomsen, the previous record holder came to North Platte to meet me and see my deer. His state record had stood since 1960. We spent part of the day swapping hunting stories and getting to know each other. Before departing, Mr. Thomsen left me with these words, "don't worry that your deer broke my record, records were made to be broken."

Several newspapers and magazines contained articles and pictures about my trophy deer including: *Hayes Center Times Republican*, *McCook Daily Gazette*, *The Omaha World Herald*, *Franklin County Chronicle*, *Field & Stream*, *Great Plains Game and Fish*, *Ted Nugent Adventure Outdoors* and *Fair Chase*.

As a result of this hunting experience, I continue to receive letters, phone calls and unexpected visits. I knew I would never forget the thrill of this hunt, but I had no idea how many doors it would open. ▲▲▲

**CHARLES J. HOGELAND  
WITH HIS NON-TYPICAL  
MULE DEER SCORING  
265-1/8 TAKEN IN  
HAYES COUNTY,  
NEBRASKA, IN 1994.**