

Effort & Pe

By Col. Craig Boddington, USMCR

Professional Member

Boone and Crockett Club

THIS MAY COME AS A BIG SURPRISE, but the primary purpose of Boone and Crockett's records keeping system, and our long tradition of records books, is not to honor the lucky hunters. Oh, sure, we appreciate that a primary market for the books is to the hunters who are listed with their trophies . . . and the Club certainly does want to sell books! However, the primary purpose and intent is to serve as a historical and, if not altogether scientific, at least orderly and properly validated record of North American big game animals.

There are limitations. It must be understood that Boone and Crockett's measuring system, albeit the oldest and most generally accepted, is just one of many ways of evaluating the complexities of horned and antlered animals - and animals such as bears and cats that are neither. It is also accepted that not all great trophies have been or ever will be measured according to this or any other system. You can try to find the fabulous heads hanging on barns, and the Club does. You can try to make measurers accessible in all parts of the continent, and the Club does. But you won't find them all, nor do all owners of great trophies, for many reasons, desire to have them measured. So it cannot be argued, nor should it be suggested, that B&C's or any other measuring system is all encompassing or all pervasive. But, especially with our long-standing series of records books and the stringent requirements for inclusion, Records of North American Big Game stands as a wonderful body of reference for what constitutes superlative North American trophies, where they came from, and when they were taken.



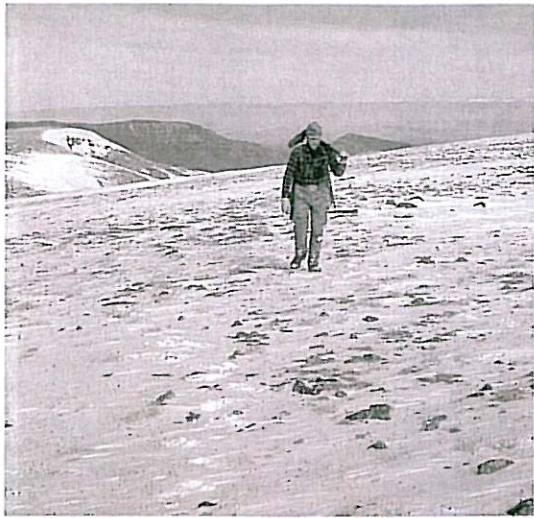
SPECIAL SAGAMORE HILL AWARD SECTION

The Sagamore Hill Medal is given by the Roosevelt family in memory of Theodore Roosevelt (Founder and First President of the Boone and Crockett Club), Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., and Kermit Roosevelt. Created in 1948, it may be awarded by the Big Game Final Awards Judges Panel, if in their opinion there is an outstanding trophy worthy of great distinction. Only one may be given in any Big Game Awards program. A special award may also be presented by the Executive Committee of the Boone and Crockett Club. The Sagamore Hill Medal is the highest award given by the Boone and Crockett Club.

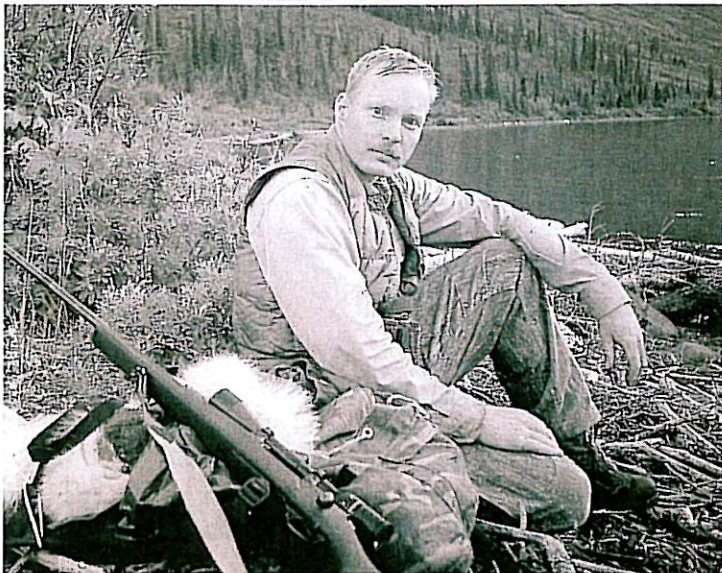
rsistence

A person wearing a green jacket is positioned on a dark, rocky mountain peak. They are holding a camera up to their eye, and another camera is mounted on a tripod nearby. A pack is secured to a sled or frame on the ground. The background features a vast, rugged mountain range under a clear sky.

Luck is good if it finds you, but there's no substitute for trying!



MIND YOU, I'LL NEVER CRY IF LUCK COMES QUICKLY OR EASILY, BUT THE TROPHIES I VALUE MOST, REGARDLESS OF SIZE, ARE THE ONES THAT I REALLY WORKED FOR.



Effort & Persistence

TOP LEFT: Wyoming Outfitter Ron Dube in the "high lonesome" on a Wyoming sheep hunt. It's cold, windy, and there isn't much air. That's what sheep hunting is all about. I think it's worth the effort. You don't have to — but why start something and not finish? TOP RIGHT: While I believe in hunting hard, it's important to know what you can do and what you shouldn't attempt. If you can't get your game out, then you are hunting beyond your sensible limit.

LEFT: The goat I'd just packed off the mountain wasn't a very large goat, but it was one of the steepest, toughest stalks I've ever made. I will never forget it... which is part of the stuff hunting memories are made of.

BELOW: This was our first spike camp on my 1999 Yukon hunt. Nice place to camp, but this was just the jumping off point. We had to go up one of those steep chutes in the background in the morning, and neither my partner nor I looked forward to it.



YES, my name is in there, and maybe yours is too. We got lucky. We can purchase our copies of the most recent edition and show our name in the listing to our friends and relatives, but this is really a very secondary purpose to the records. The primary purpose, to my mind, should be to honor the animal for the dimensions it attained. This is because a one-line records entry, even in the top spot for its category, can say nothing about the circumstances under which that animal was brought to bag. The vagaries of chance encounter play heavily in this sport of hunting. Relative newcomers to the sport take many great trophies. Many others are taken by experienced hunters who are looking for winter meat, a nice day in the woods, and the chance to fill a tag, with no inkling that the trophy of a lifetime will cross their path.

This is not to denigrate the accomplishments of these hunters. They kept their cool and performed when many others would have suc-

cumbed to buck fever. And their trophy, with their name associated with it, took its rightful place in the annals of hunting history. We all want heroes, and the sad part of the business is that a hunter who is fortunate enough to land a trophy in the top of the listings is acclaimed as an instant expert. In the case of the more popular species, a whole new career can be launched! I guess this is okay, but before such acclaim is awarded I'd prefer to know that the hunter had a conscious plan, that he or she did the research and put in the effort, and that the research and effort was rewarded with success. A one-line record book entry can't tell you this. What it comes down to is that the record book is really about the animal, not the hunter.

We as hunters, not only believers in but also the authors of our concept of fair chase, simply must believe in the value of effort. No, when Lady Luck comes calling, we don't believe in kicking sand in her face, and we should properly revere and honor any animal taken by fair means, and congratulate the hunter. But we also must believe in hunting hard and well, and that the results of such effort transcend this matter of placement in the records.

The Boone and Crockett Club certainly supports this concept. The mission of the records book is to identify the biggest and best according to our measuring system. Some entries are listed as "pickups;" a few older entries have "unknown" in the "hunter" category. In the eyes of the records keepers, these entries are fully the equal of those entries listed with living, active hunters. Beyond the determination that the animal was harvested legally and in fair chase, and the accuracy of the dimensions listed, the records books make no further judgment on the level of accomplishment involved in the harvesting of that trophy. But the Club does have an award recognizing the hunter's achievement.

This award is, of course, the Sagamore Hill Award, presented irregularly when the taking of a truly exceptional trophy coincides with equally exceptional effort. Note that the Sagamore Hill Award is not presented at the conclusion of every Awards Program. Even very few

SAGAMORE HILL AWARD RECIPIENTS



Following is a complete list of Sagamore Hill Award recipients who were recognized for an outstanding trophy worthy of great distinction. This award was created in 1948 and is the highest award given by the Boone and Crockett Club.

TROPHY AWARD RECIPIENTS

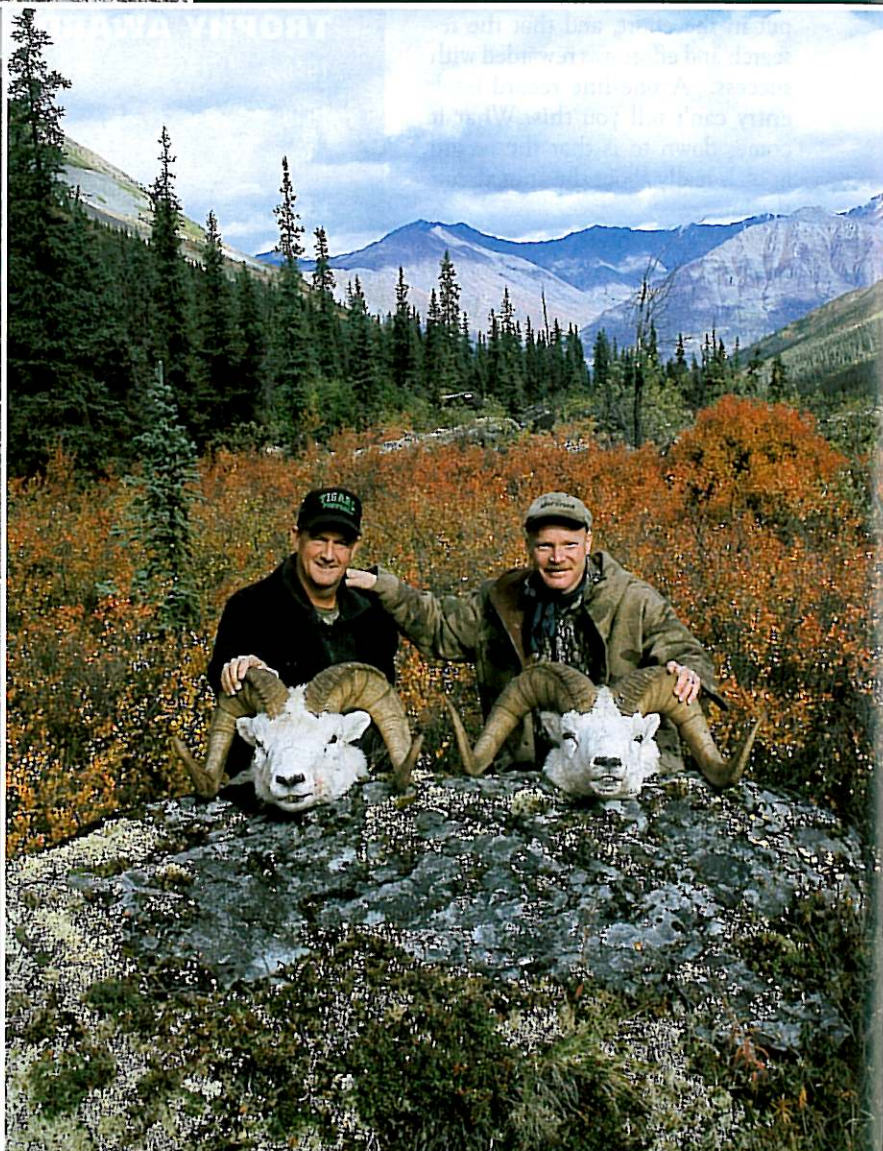
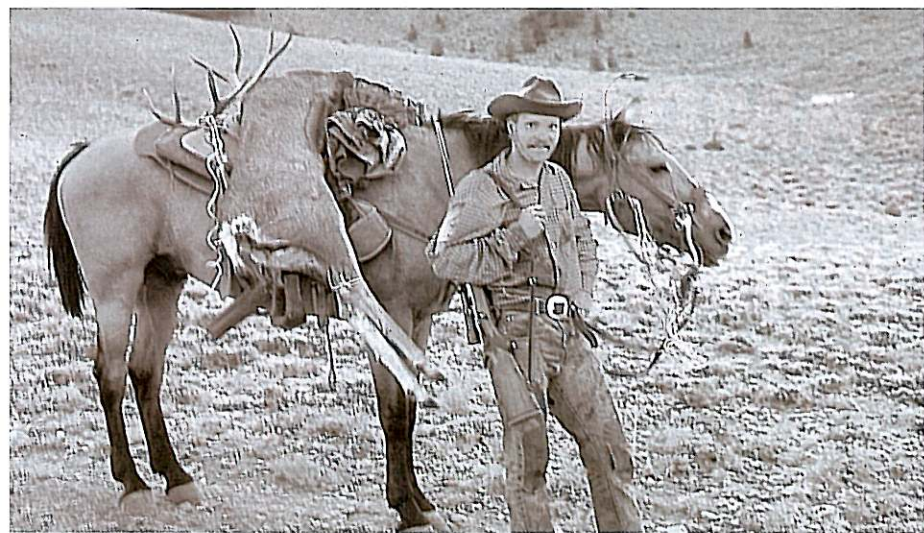
- 1948 ■ **Robert C. Reeve** ■ AK brown bear
- 1949 ■ **E.C. Haase** ■ Rocky Mountain goat
- 1950 ■ **Dr. R.C. Bentzen** ■ wapiti typical antlers
- 1951 ■ **George H. Lesser** ■ woodland caribou
- 1953 ■ **Edison A. Pillmore** ■ mule deer typical antlers
- 1957 ■ **Frank Cook** ■ Dall's sheep
- 1959 ■ **Fred C. Mercer** ■ wapiti typical antlers
- 1961 ■ **Harry L. Swank, Jr.** ■ Dall's sheep
- 1963 ■ **Norman Blank** ■ Stone's sheep
- 1965 ■ **Melvin J. Johnson** ■ whitetail deer typical antlers
- 1973 ■ **Doug Burris, Jr.** ■ mule deer typical antlers
- 1976 ■ **Garry Beaubien** ■ mountain caribou
- 1986 ■ **Michael J. O'Haco, Jr.** ■ pronghorn
- 1989 ■ **Gene R. Alford** ■ cougar
- 1992 ■ **Charles E. Erickson, Jr.** ■ Coues' whitetail non-typical antlers

SPECIAL SAGAMORE HILL AWARD RECIPIENTS

- 1952 ■ **DeForest Grant** ■ "For long and distinguished service to conservation"
- 1968 ■ **Richard King Mellon** ■ "For devoted and dedicated service to the conservation of our North American wildlife heritage"
- 1977 ■ **Robert Munro Ferguson** ■ "For unswerving loyalty to his heritage, his principles and his friends"
- 1987 ■ **C.R. "Pink" Gutermuth** ■ "For life-long conservation service to the nation and for achievement of the Boone and Crockett Club's goals"
- 1992 ■ **William I. Spencer** ■ "For tenacious focus on the vision of the Club's founders and absolute insistence on the perpetuation of their original mission"
- 1996 ■ **Philip L. Wright** ■ "For lifelong commitment to conservation; For dedication to the principles of fair chase and scientific integrity with the records program"
- 1997 ■ **George C. Hixon** ■ "For steadfast devotion to the preservation of the Club's rich traditions and its historical legacy of wildlife conservation"

Effort & Persistence

LEFT: This was the end of a very long day in Nevada, the last day of a mule deer hunt that took us farther than we should have gone. I don't know who was in worse shape: me, the buck, or the horse.
BELOW LEFT: I took this bull in a place we call "Mutiny Mountain." This is because a number of hunters have refused to go further, even with bulls in sight. I don't understand that.
BELOW RIGHT: My old Marine Corps buddy, Mike Satran, and I with our 1999 Yukon rams. I don't even have enough sense to consider quitting on a sheep mountain, but Mike (being smarter than I) thought about it. He figures it was our Marine Corps training that kept him going.



UPPER LEFT: This was one of the many hunts I haven't written about, a hunt for Arctic grizzly that just didn't work. Pretty country, good outfitter, but a late spring with too much snow. Sometimes things don't work out, and there's no one to blame and nothing to be done about it.

LEFT: A few hunts left in this world are just plain ordeals, and the dog sled hunts for polar bears are among them. This is something you must want very badly to subject yourself to — but many do and find it worthwhile. PHOTO BY RANDY BROOKS

World's Record trophies have been found worthy of the Sagamore Hill Award. This is validation of the concept that a great trophy is a great trophy, but a chance encounter resulting in a great trophy is not necessarily a great and historic hunt. The verbiage associated with the very few Sagamore Hill Awards that have been presented remind me of citations that accompany our Armed Forces' highest awards for bravery. Legality and fair chase are not enough; the hunter must go "above and beyond the call of duty," demonstrating extremes of effort, persistence, and dedication. In almost all cases the hunter is unguided, and often the hunter has searched for a certain animal for multiple seasons - certainly for many days and weeks.

This level of effort is not exceptionally unusual. Many thousands of good hunters exert such effort each and every fall, and there are many dedicated whitetail hunters who pattern a certain buck and hunt him exclusively for season after season. The Sagamore Hill Award, of course, is reserved for those rare occasions when such effort is rewarded with a trophy that approaches the top of the all-time listings. The reality is that this won't happen very often. The vagaries of our sport are such that one might study a great buck throughout the year, hunt him properly and effectively for several seasons without getting a shot, and then that same great buck chases a doe by the treestand of a first-time hunter.

That's sort of the way it goes. Effort will not always be rewarded . . . not with a great trophy, nor with any trophy. But I think effort counts. There are some among us who value a record book entry far more than the way in which it was garnered, but I'd like to believe they are in the minority. In our perverse way we humans tend to value most highly the things that we worked hard to achieve, and I think this applies to hunting. To me, it applies far more than inches on a tape measure, but that's my own subjective viewpoint.

Even if entries in the records are more important to you than memories of great hunts, there's a practical reason why effort is worth-

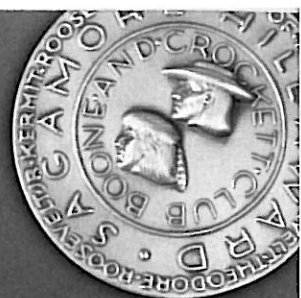
while. Luck is wonderful, and although it seems to follow some folks more than others, we will all experience some measure of it in our hunting careers. The problem is that luck is an elusive gift. You can't go looking for it, and you never know when it might (or might not) strike. So all you can do is try. The other thing about luck is that, with some consistency, the hunters we regard as "lucky" are often those who try the hardest!

Effort can take many forms, not all purely physical. I know good whitetail hunters who sit in well-sited treestands all day long, day after day. Sometimes their efforts are rewarded, and sometimes not, but I sure admire their persistence. The theory, of course, is that if you're not in a stand you won't be in position to take a buck that comes along. It's a sound theory, but I have a lot of trouble sitting still for that long. As I've mentioned previously in these pages, I was with Tucson gun maker David Miller when he took a fine Coues' whitetail in Chihuahua a couple of seasons ago. He made a circuitous stalk over rough country to get into position, which took plenty of physical effort. He made a long shot, requiring massive concentration and all the preparation that came before. But the real effort preceded all this. Miller spent a solid week hunched behind big binoculars, glassing the same country over and over again. I don't have that kind of persistence, either.

In close country, when sign or scouting indicates a big buck is using a given area, I absolutely agree that staying put in well-sited stands is the best road to success. But a few hours a day is all I can do, and then I have to move. In open country, I believe equally in glassing. If you suspect a big animal is using a certain area, the best technique is to stay put and glass - but I lack that kind of patience as well. I can only glass a certain vista for so long, and then I want to look into new country. I greatly admire those who have the patience and confidence to stick with it. It's amazing how often they are successful.

Effort can, of course, be almost purely physical. I suppose everything can be carried to extremes. There are times when one should

SAGAMORE HILL AWARD RECIPIENTS



1948

ROBERT C. REEVE

ALASKA BROWN BEAR

SCORE: 29-13/16

COLD BAY, AK



1949

E.C. HAASE

ROCKY MTN. GOAT

SCORE: 56-6/8

BABINE MTNS., BC



1950

R.C. BENTZEN

WAPITI - TYPICAL

SCORE: 441-6/8

BIG HORN MTNS., WY



1951

GEORGE H. LESSER

WOODLAND CARIBOU

SCORE: 405-4/8

GANDER RIVER, NF



1953

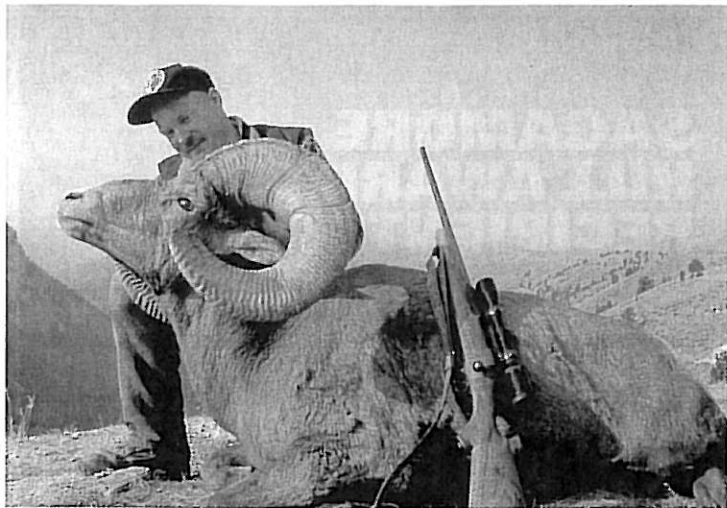
EDISON A. PILLMORE

MULE DEER - TYPICAL

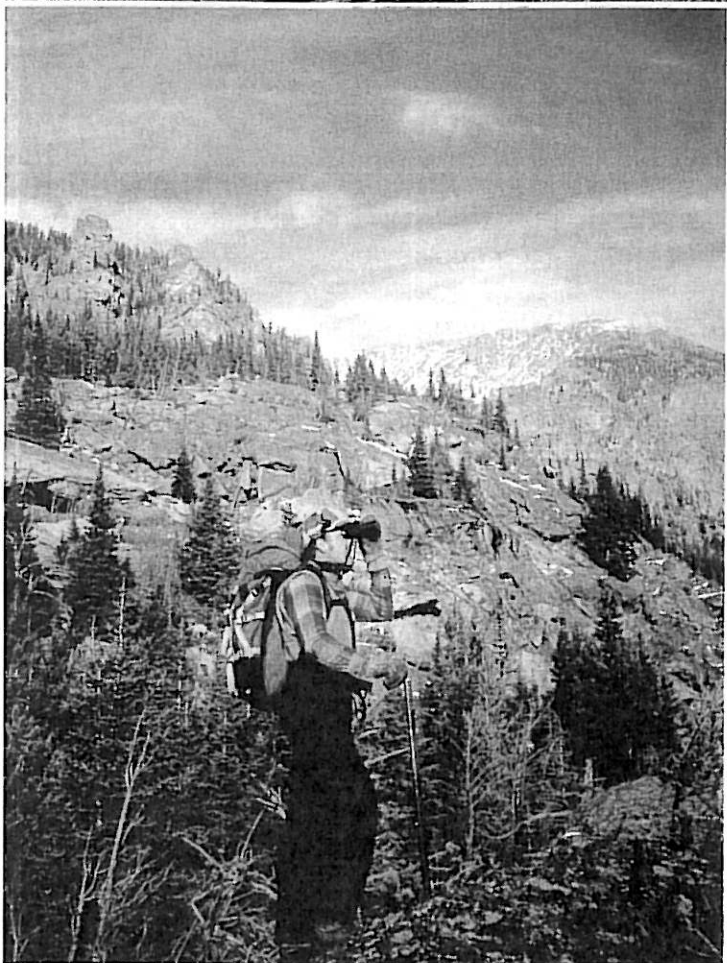
SCORE: 203-7/8

NORTH PARK, CO





THE VAGARIES OF CHANCE ENCOUNTER PLAY HEAVILY IN THIS SPORT OF HUNTING. RELATIVE NEWCOMERS TO THE SPORT TAKE MANY GREAT TROPHIES. MANY OTHERS ARE TAKEN BY EXPERIENCED HUNTERS WHO ARE LOOKING FOR WINTER MEAT, A NICE DAY IN THE WOODS, AND THE CHANCE TO FILL A TAG, WITH NO INKLING THAT THE TROPHY OF A LIFETIME WILL CROSS THEIR PATH.



Effort & Persistence

TOP: Sometimes persistence is just a matter of staying in the permit draws. It took me 20 years to draw my first bighorn permit, but this ram was surely worth it.

MIDDLE: Jack Atcheson, Jr., in Montana's "unlimited permit" bighorn country. This is unfinished business. I've tried a couple of times, but luck hasn't smiled. It's high and steep, but the sheep are there. I will keep trying.

BOTTOM LEFT: The beauty of Mackenzie Mountains is what I remember most about a backpack hunt I made there. I took a medium-sized ram at the end of the hunt, but I shouldn't have. I'm much more proud of the hunt and the effort.

BOTTOM RIGHT: One of the things I'm really bad at in hunting is sitting still for extended periods. Come to think of it, I'm kind of scared of heights as well. In close cover, it's often best to choke it up and sit it out — but I have trouble doing that.



move from any stand or vantage point, and there are times when it isn't sensible to climb another hill. Being stubborn is not in itself a sound hunting technique. Our sport is supposed to be fun, and not only enjoyable but also requires knowing your limitations and hunting within them. But this doesn't mean it will always be easy and comfortable. Sometimes you have to be wet, sometimes you have to be hot, sometimes you have to be cold . . . and sometimes you have to force yourself to the top of the hill.

Just a few weeks ago an old Marine Corps buddy, Mike Satran, and I went sheep hunting in the Yukon. To be perfectly honest, I had anticipated a leisurely horseback hunt. But in this particular range, the Bonnet Plume country, only the lower valleys are accessible by horseback. The mountains where the sheep live are far too abrupt. In this particular year, the Bonnet Plume River was also too high for horses to cross. So we

crossed by boat and our leisurely horseback hunt became a backpack sheep hunt in very steep country.

As sheep hunts go, it didn't last very long. In fact, both Mike and I took our rams on our second actual hunting day. After crossing the river early in the morning we climbed hard all the first day, eventually making camp in a box canyon surrounded by almost vertical chutes. This was business as usual for our guides. As for us, well, we're both in pretty good shape, and we did okay, but there wasn't much left at the end of that day.

The next morning, stiff and sore and laden with full packs, we had to climb up through those chutes to the crest of the range. I've done a fair amount of backpack sheep hunting. It was a bad climb, but I knew more or less what to expect. Mike had never hunted sheep before, and had only a vague idea of what he was getting himself into. We both made it, but neither quickly nor easily. From the top we spotted first one band of rams and then another. We split up, my guide, Rod Collin, and I going one way while Mike and his guide, Darrell Raymond, went another. Predictably, my stalk was worse than anything that preceded it, but we did get a very fine ram. No, he wasn't "Sagamore Hill" quality, but he was all I'd hoped for and then some. But the hunt was hardly over. Worse yet was the climb back up a horrible mountain to retrieve the packs. Then, of course, we split up the meat and trophy, doubling our loads. It was close to noon the next day when Rod and I stumbled into an old campsite, finding Darrell and Mike already there with their gear spread out all over the place.

Mike's experience had been similar to mine, and he was every bit as worn out as I was. We lay around for a full day, eating sheep ribs and telling stories. At some point in that day as we rested Mike said, "You know, if it hadn't been for what the Marines put me through, I might have quit on that mountain." Mike and I went through Marine Corps Officer Candidate School together some 27 years ago, a hard initiation into a tough club. Not everybody has the advantage of

learning early in life just how far you can push yourself.

There's also such a thing as being too dumb to quit. You haven't done anybody any good, and you certainly haven't had much fun if you have to be physically carried off the mountain. So it's important to know your limits, and if you're going to go on physically demanding hunts, it's downright foolish not to be in the best shape you can be. Everybody has limits, and no trophy is worth a heart attack or worse. On the other hand, guides often tell me about hunters who quit when success was literally within reach. I simply don't understand this. Yes, there may be physical discomfort, even considerable pain. But it passes quickly, and if the quarry isn't worth it to you, then why in the world put yourself in that position in the first place?

I'm not very good at sitting on a stand for days on end, and not much better at glassing the same ridge for hours on end. If I have any strength at all as a hunter, it's probably that I just don't know how to quit. Mind you, I'll never cry if luck comes quickly or easily, but the trophies I value most, regardless of size, are the ones that I really worked for. And if I worked hard enough and long enough, it really doesn't matter all that much if I was successful or not. The hunt remains a good memory.

Much of my living is derived from writing about hunting. It might be imagined that I am consistently successful. This is not true, for me or anyone else. By hunting hard and shooting well (at least most of the time) I do okay, and I certainly try to beat the odds by putting myself in the right place at the right time. You won't read a lot of stories about my unsuccessful hunts. This is not because they don't happen, or because I'm ashamed of them. Rather, it's the simple fact that most of the editors I work for are reluctant to buy stories about "the one that got away." I can get away with it once in a while, but that sort of thing won't pay the bills. So, in addition to working real hard on a hunt, I do things that you might not do and that I certainly don't recommend.

On any hunt I start out searching for the best animal I can find but

SAGAMORE HILL AWARD RECIPIENTS



1957

FRANK COOK

DALL'S SHEEP

SCORE: 185-6/8

CHUGACH MTNS., AK



1959

FRED C. MERCER

WAPITI - TYPICAL

SCORE: 419-4/8

MADISON CO., MT



1961

HARRY L. SWANK, JR.

DALL'S SHEEP

SCORE: 189-6/8

WRANGELL MTNS., AK



1963

NORMAN BLANK

STONE'S SHEEP

SCORE: 190

SIKANNI RIVER, BC



1965

MELVIN J. JOHNSON

WHITETAIL - TYPICAL

SCORE: 204-4/8

PEORIA CO., IL

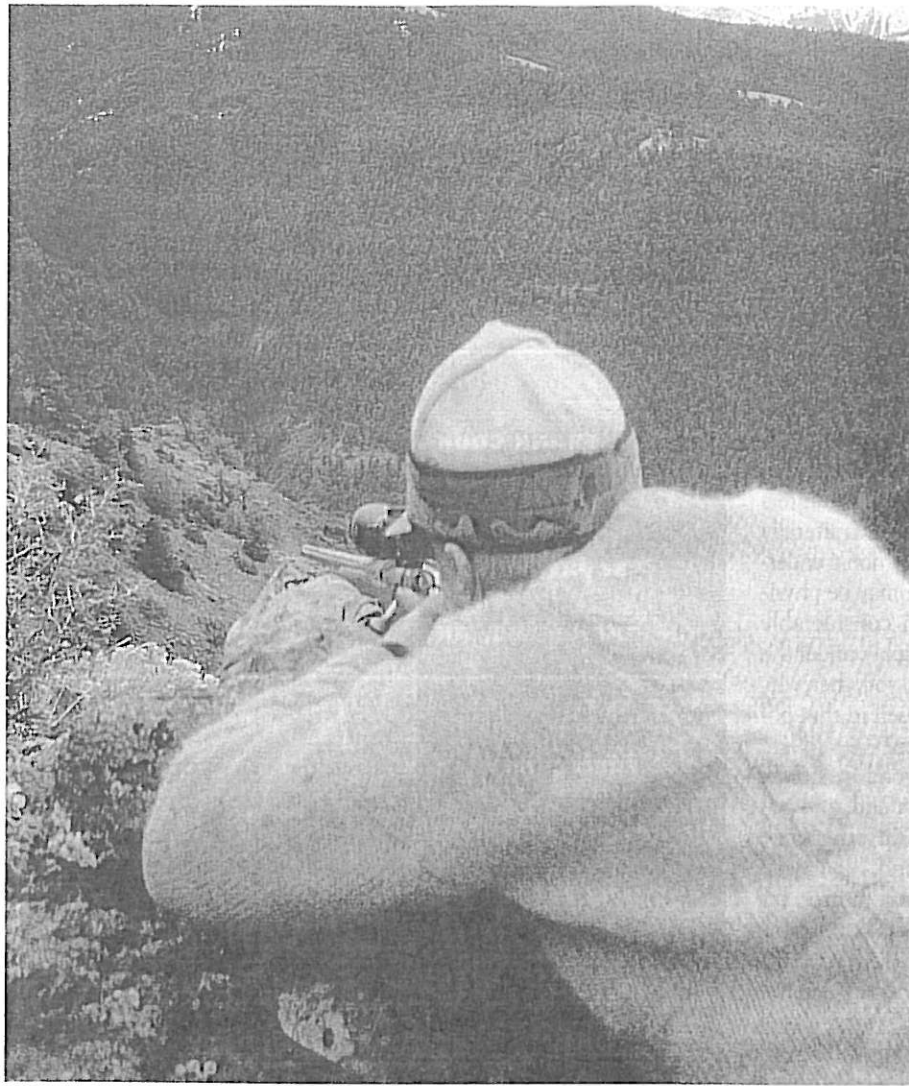


Effort & Persistence

LEFT: After ten days of serious effort, this is the position from which I shot my Wyoming bighorn sheep in 1998. It wasn't a big deal — except I had several cracked ribs from a fall off of a horse. It hurt, but I never considered quitting. Maybe I'm nuts, but today the ribs are fine, and the ram looks great on my wall.

BOTTOM: My good friend Craig Leerberg and outfitter Darrell Turner with a very good Alberta whitetail. The only thing wrong with this picture is that I'm not in it! I've tried several times to get a big Canadian whitetail, but have yet to see one. That's okay. They're there, and I'll keep trying.

...WHEN LADY LUCK COMES CALLING WE DON'T BELIEVE IN KICKING SAND IN HER FACE, AND WE SHOULD PROPERLY REVERE AND HONOR ANY ANIMAL TAKEN BY FAIR MEANS, AND CONGRATULATE THE HUNTER. BUT WE ALSO MUST BELIEVE IN HUNTING HARD AND WELL, AND THAT THE RESULTS OF SUCH EFFORT TRANSCEND THIS MATTER OF PLACEMENT IN THE RECORDS.



I have to be conscious that, at some point, business is business. So I will often settle for an average, sometimes mediocre, trophy when the real hunter within me is screaming for me to hold out for better. Part of the price of turning a hobby into a business is that you can't always do things the way you'd like. I did that on another Dall's sheep hunt in the Mackenzie Mountains a few years ago. It was the 13th day of a 14-day backpack sheep hunt, a truly wonderful and memorable experience. I must have seen more than 50 legal rams-but none were even close to the average for the area, let alone big. On that next-to-last day I saw and shot a very pretty, heavy-horned, but also very average ram. My guide, Stu Langlands, tried to talk me out of it. We had one more day, and from a purist's point of view, we would both have been happier to go home empty. But time was growing short, and I had stories I wanted to write. So I shot the ram, and he is on my wall, but I'd be much prouder of him if I'd left him on the mountain and kept looking - win, lose, or draw.

Sometimes I can hedge my bets by hunting for one thing but writing about another. I was really lucky back in 1981, taking a truly huge brown bear on my first outing. Things haven't gone quite so well since then. I've been shut out on three more hunts for Alaska's big bears, but on two of those occasions there was other game I could write about. This sort of thing often happens in Africa, where there's almost always other game involved. My first bongo hunt, for instance, was a very tough and disappointing three-week safari with no bongo, but I had some of the other forest animals to write about as "consolation prizes." Come to think of it, much the same happened on my first hunt for Lord Derby's eland.

Understand that now we're really talking about the weird business I'm in, not the psychology of hunting. That Dall's sheep hunt in the Mackenzies was a wonderful trip in some of the prettiest country I've ever been in, and I saw a vast number of sheep. It would have been a great hunt whether or not I settled for that mid-sized ram on the next-to-last day. And in real terms, it was unsuccess-

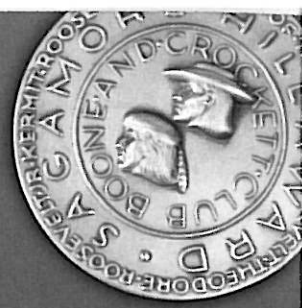
ful with or without that ram, because that wasn't the kind of ram I was looking for. It took some time, but I tried again. Early on in my '99 Yukon hunt I took the kind of white ram I've always wanted.

On that first bongo hunt I was actually quite lucky, taking a wonderful giant forest hog and some other forest animals. With or without these secondary prizes, I will always treasure the memories of that difficult, frustrating hunt, even though it was not successful. I tried again the next year, and fourteen days into my second three-week bongo hunt I took a wonderful bull. (Much the same happened on my second Derby eland hunt.) Part of the effort involved in hunting is that, to achieve success, sometimes you simply have to stick with it.

I still have quite a bit of work to do. I will try for Alaska's big bears again, and maybe I'll get lucky the next time. Nor is that my only Achilles' heel. I desperately want one of those big Canadian whitetails, and Lord knows I've tried. Not every year, not by any stretch, but I've hunted whitetails in Alberta three times now and have never fired a shot or ever seen the kind of buck I sought. I've beat my head against the wall in Alberta's "unlimited permit" bighorn area, and haven't fired a shot there, either. I've just about worked myself up to try it again, and I will one of these days soon. These are good examples of difficult hunts, hunts with high payoff if you are successful . . . but not everyone will be, no matter how hard you try. I am particularly fond of the desert mule deer hunting in Sonora. Initially the desert was very good to me, giving me a "representative" buck on my first try and a huge mulie on my second. That was nearly a decade ago, and I haven't fired a shot in the last three attempts. But I know the big bucks are there, so I'll try again.

These are not hunts you approach with the preconceived idea that you will be successful. Better that you go in accepting that you may not be. If you are, you will have a great trophy. But if not, you will have hunted hard in country that just might have produced the trophy of a lifetime. That alone is worthy of great memories . . . and you can always try again! ▲▲▲

SAGAMORE HILL AWARD RECIPIENTS



1 9 7 3

DOUG BURRIS, JR.

MULE DEER - TYPICAL

SCORE: 226-4/8

DOLORES CO., CO



1 9 7 6

GARRY BEAUBIEN

MOUNTAIN CARIBOU

SCORE: 452

TURNAGAIN RIVER, BC



1 9 8 6

MICHAEL J. O'HACO

PRONGHORN

SCORE: 93-4/8

COCONINO CO., AZ



1 9 8 9

GENE R. ALFORD

COUGAR

SCORE: 16-3/16

IDAHO CO., ID



1 9 9 2

CHARLES E. ERICKSON

COUES' WT - NON-TYP.

SCORE: 155

GILA CO., AZ

