

# 7 DAYS IN THE M

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**JUNE 27, 1993:** Part of a 23 year long dream had come true. I received notice in the mail from the Nevada Division of Wildlife that I had drawn a tag for a bighorn sheep, Unit 271 in the Morman Mountains of southeastern Nevada.

The hard part was over, hopefully! I had drawn the tag, next was to be able to harvest a sheep. In Nevada, desert sheep tags are drawn on a lottery system. You apply for the unit you want and hope that you are drawn. After applying off and on for 23 years I had finally acquired one of the most sought after sheep tags in North America. Frankly, I was quite ecstatic and knew that there would be many nights ahead dreaming about sheep hunting.

**NOVEMBER 6:** I went to a mandatory pre-hunt indoctrination course in Reno, Nevada. Department biologists taught you how to score and age bighorn sheep. The Unit I had drawn required that a trophy male ram must be seven years of age or score a minimum of 144 Boone & Crockett points to be legal. Upon completion of the course I was issued my tag, which was number ten out of the quota of ten tags for the area.

Next in line for the hunt was to do some homework on the area, since I was not going to use a guide. I contacted the biologists for the region and was told that there would be approximately 500 sheep in the area. About 95 would be rams and

45% should be legal size. Most rams being in the 155 point class, three in the 170-175 points and one around 180 points. The latter being what I was interested in, but I knew it was a dream to take a ram of this class.

**NOVEMBER 13:** I went on a scouting trip to the hunt area with my cousin, one week before the hunt started. The drive to the Morman Mountains is eight hours from my home in Elko, Nevada. We drove most of the night and spent what was left of it in Henderson with my father, Art Montrose, who was going to go scout with us. We drove out to the area to get an idea where the roads went and what the terrain was like. We spotted five sheep, three small rams and two ewes. We turned around the next day and drove back to Elko. It was a short but prosperous weekend.

**NOVEMBER 18:** I left two days before the hunt from Elko to head back down to the Morman Mountains. This time taking my wife, Bobbi, and sons, Jeremy and Mike, to hunt with me for ten days.

**NOVEMBER 19:** That night the wind blew so hard that I had to get up in the middle of the night and put down the front awning on my camp trailer.

It made so much noise we couldn't sleep. After breakfast we decided to go for a scouting trip at Horse Springs. After a rough ride in the pickup truck, that took forever just to go two miles, we reached the end of the road. I got out and spotted three rams. Being a neophyte sheep hunter, they all looked big to me. After seeing the sheep, we decided to go back to camp for dinner. After dinner my dad arrived at camp with some friends who were experienced sheep hunters, Wayne Lister, his son, Bevon, and Bud Walkington. The more eyes you have looking for the sheep the better off you are. I told them about the rams I had spotted earlier and we decided that it would be a good place to start our hunt the next day.

**NOVEMBER 20:** Opening day of the season, I had a hard time sleeping that night with visions of sheep hunting. At 5:00 a.m. we left camp with our lunches and headed over to where I saw the sheep the day before. We drove up the canyon to the end of the road and started to glass the cliffs and basins. Finally, we spotted the sheep. After looking at them Bud and Wayne determined that all three of the sheep scored between 140 and 155 points, and one had a broken horn. We

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then decided that Bud, Wayne, and I would hunt to the west edge of the large canyon, glass it and hike down the other side. My Dad and Bevon would pick us up about five miles away.

Five miles may not seem like much, but this is some of the roughest country in Nevada—straight up and down, cliffs and ledges everywhere. Everything that grows here has spines or hooks on it that grab you as you walk by. We worked our way to the top of the canyon edge, sat down and glassed for what seemed to be hours. Finally, we found three ewes, two lambs, and five rams. Bud thought that one ram might score 160 points. We decided to take a closer look. We had to go around the back side of the mountain and then down a side canyon to where the sheep were. We took off and climbed for about an hour and a half.

We came to some 200 foot cliffs and

couldn't continue any further. We had to turn around. Three hours later we were back to where we had started. This time we decided to go directly toward them and hope that they wouldn't spot us, even though they were over a mile away. Once in position so we could judge the sheep better, the wind began to blow up the hill right toward them. We decided we would come back in the morning when

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the wind was more favorable. Just then we spotted two hunters on the ridge, skylined above us. Well, plans changed again. There is nothing easier for an eagle-eyed sheep to spot than a man skylined on a ridge. We then opted to go across the canyon and try to sidehill into range of the sheep. We got into a gully for the final 300 yard stalk. We got to where we could see the sheep and they could also see us. Bud decided to use the decoy ploy. He would stay in the open while Wayne and I would sneak along the gully edge and up a small cliff. Hopefully the sheep would be watching Bud. It worked. Wayne and I sneaked within 25 yards of them. I laid my pack on a rock and slipped a cartridge into the chamber of my rifle, then raised slowly up to look over the rocks. There were nine rams standing there within 25 yards of me. I asked Wayne which one was the biggest. He told me the second one from the rear. I positioned my cross hairs on his chest and asked Wayne, "How big?"

He said maybe 157 points and then added that we could probably find a bigger one. I stood up and took the bullet out of the chamber. Bud hollered up and said we did a good stalk. Wayne said that it took a lot of nerve to pass up all those rams. Most hunters would have shot any of them without hesitation. We saw fourteen rams that day, thirteen were legal by B&C score but not by age. We went back to camp and had dinner and a well deserved night's rest.

**NOVEMBER 21:** We left camp at 5:00 a.m. and headed toward Moapa Peak. It was just Bud, Wayne, Bevon, and me because my dad had to return home the night before. We hiked and glassed all day long and saw two rams and four ewes. None were legal to shoot.

We arrived back at camp at dark. Bobbi, the boys, and I had dinner while Bud, Wayne, and Bevon packed up to head home. I was exhausted and felt that it was going to be easy to fall asleep. Morning would come soon enough, I thought.

**NOVEMBER 22:** It rained all night and was cloudy in the morning. I left camp at 6:00 a.m. on the four-wheeler. I drove up to Hackberry Springs and left it there. I climbed to the top of a mountain pass and over the other side. I saw one lone ram and one ewe. The ram looked like a good ram but he just kept feeding over the top of the canyon and into the next. It was too far to go, so I decided to come back and look for him another day. I moved to the south along a ridge for about 1/4 mile and spotted some more sheep — three ewes, three lambs, and three rams. The bigger ram kept chasing the smaller two rams away from the ewes. It was fun to watch him run around and chase the others. He looked to be a 5-year old, his horns were long but not broomed off on the ends. Maybe another day I decided, and headed back to camp before it got dark. I saw four rams, that day, two that were legal.

**NOVEMBER 23:** The wind blew hard all night. It seemed to never stop blowing. I left camp

at 6:00 a.m. and went back to the canyon where I had seen the lone ram feeding the day before. On the way, I spotted a small ram and decided to get a better look at him later in the day and see if there are any more sheep with him. I spent four hours climbing to the top of the canyon where I had seen the lone ram the day before. When I got to the top and looked at the other side, the canyon was full of big pinyon trees and knee deep snow. Yes, that's right, the snow was on the north slope and the elevation was about 7500 feet. My camp was at 3000 feet. I sat down and glassed for a while but didn't see anything. I headed back down the hill to the area where I had seen the small ram earlier in the morning. I hiked up into the basin, sat down and glassed. I didn't see anything but that doesn't mean that they were not there. Sheep are like looking for a needle in a haystack unless they are up and moving around. It was getting dark so I headed back to camp to have dinner with my family. I saw one ram, and he wasn't legal.

**NOVEMBER 24:** I had the alarm set for 4:30 a.m. and was going to get an early start, but it didn't go off. I woke up at 6:00 a.m. and started the coffee. I heard a truck pull up. It was my dad. He had come back to hunt for a couple of days and to spend Thanksgiving with us. We left camp at 7:30 to hunt a ba-

